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CHRISTOPHER PAINTER

GROUP INTERACTIONS AND LOBBIES IN WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL
ECONOMIC PLANNING (1965-72)

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SUMMARY

The influence of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council on government decisions since 1965 can be traced through the use of pressure-group and decision-making theories. Crucial to its influence is the nature of its interaction with other groups in the region.

A pressure-group methodology is necessary because the Planning Council is only an advisory committee within the structure of government and does not reflect the creation of a regional governmental process.

Conflict between local authorities and economic affluence have held back regional consciousness in the West Midlands, although the Planning Council's "Economic Appraisal" (1971) recorded the growing apprehensions about the state of the region's economy.

The inability of the W.M.E.P.C. to influence decisions enough to promote a coherent regional strategy led to continuing intra-regional conflict between local authorities. The Planning Council did, however, act as a catalyst for the formation of the Standing Conference and developed closer relations with L.A.'s via this medium.

The difficulties for the W.M.E.P.C. in transcending intra-regional conflict were seen in North East Warwickshire, the latter pursuing its own lobby to deal with its employment problems, partly a consequence of the Planning Council's neglect of the area's needs.

The W.M.E.P.C. assumed a central role in the attack on the Government's I.D.C. policy through the "Economic Appraisal". The Working Party that produced the Report included formal representatives of major economic groups. There was a favourable response to the Report in the West Midlands, followed subsequently by a modification of Government policy.

The success of the National Exhibition Centre lobby, in turn, illustrates the disadvantages under which the W.M.E.P.C. has laboured. This lobby did not involve the Planning Council in the effort to secure the agreement of the Government to the project.

(ii)

For all the weaknesses of the regional administrative innovations of 1965, however, the repercussions have not been inconsiderable in the widest context.

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CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: PRESSURE-GROUP AND DECISION-MAKING THEORIES

A political study of regional economic planning in the West Midlands must encompass two aspects. Firstly, the formal relationship of the regional institutional structure, which since 1965 has centred upon the Regional Economic Planning Council and Planning Board, to the structure of British Government. Secondly, there is the question of the "dynamics" of the relationships emanating from the creation of this regional structure in the West Midlands. Here the objective is to trace the influence of the Planning Council on government decisions. This also involves a discussion of a vital pre-requisite of the potential influence of this body, which is its interaction with other groups and forces in the Region, and the extent to which this interaction has been consensus- or conflict-oriented.

The emphasis of this study is primarily on the dynamics of the process of regional influence, as it has evolved in the period since the inauguration of the Planning Council/Board in 1965. A study of the actual workings and impact of the regional dimension will enhance the comprehension of the political process at this level. As such, this work does not concentrate on a formal description of the internal organisation of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council and its committee structure, or on the procedural relationships between the Council and the Board, although these aspects must inevitably feature to some extent and especially where they affect the wielding of influence.

Systematic study of the process of regional influence requires a conceptual framework to provide the tools of analysis. This framework is provided by pressure-group and decision-making theories. This contrasts with a conceptual framework based solely on advisory committee theories, and is indicative of the endeavour to depart from a more formalistic approach.

1. Pressure-Group Theory

Before considering how the West Midlands Economic Planning Council can be accommodated within theories relating to pressure-groups, a brief resumé of the general application of such theories is necessary. From this, certain hypotheses can be identified which can be tested empirically at the regional level.

The intellectual insight into the importance of groups in society has a long history. Hegel's (1770-1831) exposition of civil society is a case in point. In his opinion, groups introduced order into a situation otherwise dominated by acquisitive and anarchic individualism, and the personality of the individual became moulded through the inextricable link with the group life of society. This group life became increasingly complex with the growing division of labour as economic organisation developed. Such groups also fulfilled the role of mediators between the individual and the state through their dealings with the bureaucracy. This effected a union between government and the interests of society, although Hegel considered the state as being of a higher moral order than particular interests.¹ In some respects this represents the first insight into a modern pluralistic political system, that typified by intimate pressure-group/civil service relationships. To Hegel then, groups were an integral part of the organisation of society, in contrast to Rousseau's elevation of the "General Will", with its implicit concomitant of an atomistic individual whose views were untainted by the influence of particular interests.

De Tocqueville (1805-59) is also associated with the early evolution of group theory. He favoured the existence of organised groups to mediate between the state and the individual. This was to avoid the juxtaposition

1 The following two works are illuminating in relation to Hegel's thought: L.W. Lancaster, "Masters of Political Thought" Vol 3, George G. Harrap 1959; H. Marcuse, "Reason and Revolution", London 1954.

of a strong central government and a mass of helpless atomised individuals. He regarded the predilection in the United States towards the formation of groups and associations for the advancement of interests as constituting a safeguard of liberty.¹ This eulogy of groups did, of course, have its early opponents. Apart from Rousseau's preference for the "General Will", Bentham criticised the phenomenon of "sinister interests" which undermined the general/majoritarian interest.

The fundamental tools of political science, in relation to pressure-group analysis, emanate however from the concepts developed by Bentley and Truman in the twentieth century.² These American group theorists contended that society consisted of a kaleidoscopic pattern of groups, that political and governmental institutions could only be understood in terms of group activity, and that such concepts as the "General Will" and the "Rules of the Game" were only potential interests and groups. This reductionism has led to abundant criticism of them, especially the criticism that the term "group" was being used so indiscriminately that it ceased to be very useful as an analytical tool in the study of the constituent parts of a political system. Criticism was also levelled against their use of mechanical language, language derived from an attempt to formulate concepts that could be used to measure and quantify (ie. measurement of the influence of groups). Overall, the theories of Bentley and Truman sought to reduce the complex and intangible, that is so much a part of the subject matter of any social science, to a simple measurable common denominator. In actual fact, the difficulty of assigning proportional influence to each of the participants in the political process

1 "Democracy in America", Alfred A. Knopf, 1945.

2 A.F. Bentley, "The Process of Government", 1908, re-issued by Principia Press, 1949; D.B. Truman, "The Governmental Process", Alfred A. Knopf, 1950.

means that the political scientist often has to deal in terms of tendencies and interpretation, rather than precise causal analysis (ie. the cause, the pressure-group, led to the effect, the decision).¹

The value of the thesis of Bentley and Truman resides in the very importance of their insight and interpretation. They adopted a standpoint that emphasised an important aspect of political activity. The role of pressure-groups in complex and "open" societies has become increasingly conspicuous, and formed an intimate part of the functioning of government and the making of decisions. In this respect they were right to recognise that a political scientist needed to examine the factors that give various groups political advantage. It is in this context that one can accept the value of the proposition of Truman that:-

"the behaviours that constitute the process of government cannot be adequately understood apart from the groups."²

Such a framework is, of course, only applicable in a political system which is based on a consensus on fundamentals. Here, groups can compete for advantages from government without destroying the state itself, as opposed to a political system dominated by a few sharp irreconcilable cleavages, or in which one group is completely dominant in terms of political control. Hence such prerequisites as dispersed power and competing elites for the existence of a pluralistic political system.³

It is the American system of government that has provided a breeding-ground for pressure group activity, and the accompanying pressure-group theories. This has been facilitated by the existence of a fragmented political structure there. It is derived from the Founding

1 For an elaboration of such criticisms see O.R. Young's "Systems of Political Science", Prentice-Hall 1968, and R.S. Parker's "Group Analysis and Scientism in Political Studies", Political Studies February 1961.

2 "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit., P.502.

3 R.A. Dahl, "Pluralist Democracy in the United States", Chicago, Rand McNally, 1967.

Fathers' vision of the American community as a series of interests rather than as a single general will,¹ and the determination that no one interest should dominate the political system. Therefore, the constitution of the United States is characterised by decentralisation and federalism; separation of power between the executive and the legislature; and also dispersed power within Congress itself, through the importance of the committee system. This constitutional framework is also reflected in decentralised and fragmented political parties, so much so that one commentator has described the national parties as "ghost" parties.² Thus, American political scientists underline the substantial role assumed by pressure-groups, originating from this multiplicity of access points, and the opportunities for influence in such a fragmented system.³

The role of pressure-groups has also become very apparent in the British political system. Cole and Laski were two of the earliest British pluralists, especially signified by the latter's idea of "authority as federal", being built up from, and ideally accommodating, the diversities in society.⁴ The key factor in the development of pressure-group activity in Britain has been the emergence of the omnipresent state. The growth of a collectivist creed on the part of governments has had a long and broken history.

The demand for a more interventionist approach was exemplified in the controversies within the Liberal Party at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. There was a growing polarisation between the proponents of the "negative liberty" of the traditional Liberal laissez-faire philosophy and those of a "positive liberty", to be promoted by government intervention. There was a

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- 1 These attitudes are discussed in A.M. Potter's "American Government and Politics", Faber 1956, Chapter One.
 - 2 E.E. Schattschneider, "Party Government", H.R. & Winston 1942 P.164.
 - 3 An example is J. Burns, "The Deadlock of Democracy", Calder 1964.
 - 4 H. Laski, "Grammar of Politics", Allen & Unwin 1925, Chapter Seven.

manifestation of the latter approach when Lloyd-George and the young Winston Churchill established the initial foundations of the Welfare State after 1906. The First World War accelerated the tendency towards state intervention, although much of the panoply of control was dismantled in the wake of the nostalgia for the pre-1914 "normality" at the end of the War. The trend towards a more positive role on the part of government was resumed in Britain in response to the crisis years of the 1930's, albeit in a tentative manner.

It was from the Second World War onwards that the omnipresent state assumed greater permanence in this country. Bullock has, for example, traced the role that Bevin, as Minister of Labour during the War years, played in building up the edifice of tripartite consultation between the Government, the trade unions, and the employers.¹ After 1945, the momentum of government intervention was maintained by the Labour Government (1945-51), effecting a transition from physical controls to what S. Beer has described as the Welfare State/Managed Economy consensus, the latter involving the application of Keynesian economic techniques.² In spite of the so-called "bonfire of controls" by the succeeding Conservative Administration, the essence of the Welfare State/Managed Economy orthodoxy was accepted.³ This process ensured that government would greatly impinge on the interests of society on a continuing basis. It has stimulated the formation and political activity of pressure-groups on a commensurate scale, while government co-operation with such groups has become imperative for it to successfully carry out its new wide-ranging tasks. In the economic field, it was a relationship that was further institutionalised by the creation of the National Economic Development Council in 1961, again with a tripartite structure (the Government, employers and trade unions).

As compared with the United States, pressure-groups in Great Britain

1 A. Bullock, "Ernest Bevin" Vol II, Heinemann 1967, P.97.
 2 S.H. Beer, "Modern British Politics", Faber 1965, Chapter XII.
 3 Ibid, P.304.

have functioned within a different constitutional framework. It is one which is centralised, with a strong executive commanding the support of national disciplined parties. Groups have consequently concentrated their activity at the level of the central administration where the real political power resides, for as Truman asserts:-

"Interest groups tend to concentrate about any locus of power able to affect appreciably the objectives that the groups seek to achieve."¹

The constitutional/institutional framework does, therefore, affect the activity of groups, and this illustrates the importance of differentiating between the state and pressure-groups. The structure of the former is an independent factor in determining the nature and location of the activity of the latter.

The essence of the above discussion for our purposes can be summarised as follows.

Political science is increasingly pre-occupied with the implications of plurality in "Western" political systems, a plurality inherent in the existence of diffuse centres of power in the absence of an all-embracing state. Yet the State in the British political system, while not being omnipotent, has become omnipresent through its growing interventionist role in the economic and societal relationships of the community. This development has turned the attention of the diffuse power-centres, mobilised in the form of pressure-groups, toward government in order that they may influence decisions impinging upon their autonomy. Group analysis, emanating particularly from the theories of Bentley and Truman, therefore necessitates the study of the prerequisites for the successful application of pressure on government and decisions. The dynamics of the political system are the essence.

However, care must be taken not to completely banish constitutionalism from an analysis of a political system in an attempt to reduce all to a

1 "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit., P.398.

single common denominator such as the "group". There is a qualitative distinction between government, as an authoritative decision-making structure, and pressure-groups, which merely seek to influence the decisions of that structure. This is not the only distinction in political analysis, but it is a fundamental one if a political system is not to be seen in terms of a Hobbesian anarchic state of nature, apparently amorphous and formless. The formal constitutional framework is important, and it is the relationship between the institutions of Authority and pressure-groups that constitutes the governmental process. This relationship is expressed in Wootton's formula, PA(not Pol. P.) - Pub. T:G, that is, a private actor other than a political party directs influence towards a public target in order to achieve some goal.¹ Latham also sees the state in terms of its privileged and authoritative stature, and groups turn to it precisely because of this ultimate role.² This concept of the "governmental process" will be illuminating in analysing the role of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council in the structure of government, and in looking at the methods and approach of groups in the West Midlands.

A synthesis between the above two elements, the formal and the dynamic, was seen in the controversies surrounding the proposed trade union reforms of the Labour Government, embodied in "In Place of Strife" in 1969. Here the proposals became untenable, partly because of a revolt in the Cabinet and in Parliament (i.e. in the formal institutions of the State), and partly because of the lobby and pressure of the trade unions on the Government and within the Labour Party.³

2. Decision-Making Theories.

A full understanding of a pluralistic political system requires a

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- 1 G. Wootton, "Interest Groups", Prentice-Hall 1970, P.16.
 - 2 E. Latham, "The Group Basis of Politics", Octagon 1965, P.33-40. Also pertinent to this point is W.J.M. Mackenzie's "Pressure Groups in British Government", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 6 1955.
 - 3 For one account of these events see P. Jenkins, "The Battle for Downing Street", Charles Knight 1970.

synthesis between pressure-group theories and appropriate decision-making theories. The concepts of Lindblom are especially relevant in relation to the latter.¹ The theory Lindblom expounds centres on the twin phenomena of "mutual adjustment" and "incrementalism", inferring that a pluralistic system of political bargaining will only produce slight shifts of policy. Governments and pressure-groups constantly seek to reconcile their divergent needs and desires in terms of compromise. This is because of the absence of some self-evident or imposed criteria for all participants, and therefore political partisans continually endeavour to manipulate to secure a favourable response from other partisans, or adapt to the decisions and actions of other partisans. Decisions are not the ideal ones reached after a consideration of all the hypothetical possibilities, in an atmosphere free of the influence of vested interests. The disagreement on criteria, together with the difficulty of predicting the consequences of any given course of action and of obtaining perfect knowledge, make this impossible in reality. Therefore, actual decisions tend to be attempts to deal with the ills and problems that manifest themselves (ie. a coping strategy), and a multiplicity of participants means that there is more chance of picking up and remedying the adverse consequences of any previous decision. To Lindblom the system he describes is also rational. In short, government is a mutual adjustment process with decisions taken in the context of political bargaining and reaction to manifest short-term crises.

Dahl makes a similar distinction between so-called "strategies of perfect rationality" and those of "limited rationality".² Again, the latter is nearer to the reality. Decisions are made in the face of many uncertainties and unknowns, and consequently tend to take the form of small changes from a given state of affairs, relying all the time on "feed-back".

1 C.E. Lindblom, "The Intelligence of Democracy", Free Press 1965.
 2 R.A. Dahl, "Modern Political Analysis", Prentice-Hall 1970 P.108-112.

This accords with Lindblom's incrementalist approach, and with the taking of satisfactory rather than perfect decisions.

Views analogous to those of Lindblom are also propounded by Schultze, and the following quotation is worth reciting in full as it epitomises the approach of these decision-making theories:-

"A 'good' decision is one which gains consensus rather than one which meets outside criteria of efficiency or effectiveness. The political decision process has evolved in this direction because it is a successful means of coping in a reasonably free society, with the reconciliation of divergent interests and values."¹

Such decision-making theories are not without their critics in the United States. Prominent in this respect is Wolin, whose main critique is that such theories avoid any examination of fundamentals or of normative considerations, and as such they implicitly accept the status quo. To his mind, American political scientists have been emphasising the virtues of "incremental" decision-making at a time when it is becoming more and more apparent that the problems of American society are calling for radical measures.² Nevertheless, there is a considerable element of truth in the above decision-making theories as a description of how the American political system actually works, although there is room for dissension when Lindblom and others transform their argument from "is" to "ought".

Similar analyses to those of the above American decision-making theorists have been applied in this country. R. Brown has described the process whereby not all possible factors are taken into account in a decision as "selective perception".³ Administrators have finite amounts of time and attention at their disposal, and often the immediate every-day pressures relegate any planning to the background. Their perception and inclination is conditioned by external cues and pressures, then, as well as the administrative organisation itself and the system of communications

1 C.L. Schultze, "The Politics and Economics of Public Spending", Brookings Institution 1968, P.52.

2 S.S. Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation", American Political Science Review, Vol. 63, 1969.

3 R.G.S. Brown, "The Administrative Process in Britain", Methuen 1970, P.142-5.

within it. Again, the fundamental premise is the limit of human rationality. Likewise, F. Willson has said of the policy-makers that they produce decisions out of an instinctive response to the need to accommodate and reconcile the considerable political pressures that are exerted upon them.¹ P. Self and L. Joy have also exchanged views on the failure to reconcile goals and examine alternative courses of action systematically in decision-making.² It is contended that the approach is rather that of an impulse to immediate pressures once more, and that even the planning process itself, where it exists:-

"does tend to mean a process of successive approximations and adjustments going on within the administrative machine and under the buffeting of short-term pressures and forces coming from without."³

In fact, it is generally accepted that civil servants in this country see their role mainly in terms of protecting their ministers from political embarrassment and securing compromises to assuage the demands of pressure-groups - the idea of the Civil Service as an umpire between interests.⁴ Not only is the reality of decision-making in the British political system very much to do with the reconciliation of interests, but the perception of civil servants also elevates this to the ideal. From another angle, Mr. Crosland has been quoted as saying:-

"Ministerial life is one constant and endless rush."⁵

He also considers that although the Cabinet does discuss long-term issues, short-term crises take up a great deal of its time.⁶

Such interpretations of decision-making in this country are in some respects over-simplifications of the actuality, especially in the post-Fulton era. The refinements of the machinery of government by the

1 "Policy-Making and the Policy Makers", printed in R. Rose's "Policy-Making in Britain", Macmillan 1969, P.355-68.

2 "Decision Making", B.B.C. Publications 1967, the chapter entitled "Planning and Policy-Making", P.70.

3 Ibid., P.78.

4 P.G.S. Brown, "Organisation Theory and Civil Service Reform", Public Administration, Vol. 43, Autumn 1965, P.313-30.

5 M. Kogan, "The Politics of Education", Penguin 1971, P.156.

6 Ibid, P.162.

Conservative Administration in October 1970 are interesting in this context. The White Paper setting out the proposals¹ stresses the importance of strategy and the definition of objectives:-

"under the pressures of the day to day problems immediately before them, governments are always at some risk of losing sight of the need to consider the totality of their current policies in relation to their longer-term objectives."²

It continues by emphasising the task of:-

"evaluating as objectively as possible the alternative policy options and priorities open to them."³

The purpose of establishing the multi-disciplinary central policy review staff in the Cabinet Office is to help promote such an approach.

Businessmen were also seconded to the Civil Service Department by the Conservative Administration to advance managerial and analytical techniques in Whitehall. With a longer history, going back to the Flowden Report of 1961 in origin, there is the greater emphasis being placed on the overall allocation of resources as a result of the development of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee. This relates public expenditure programmes to the national economic resources likely to be available over a five year period, complemented by another post-1970 development, Programme Analysis Review, whereby departments formulate statements of objectives and priorities.⁴ All these approaches are an attempt to move the policy-making function along the spectrum from the political day-to-day pressures, to the formulation of long-term objectives and the managerial location on that spectrum. As such, they aspire to a modification of the process conceptualised by Lindblom and others.

While there may be significant new forces at work in decision-making in Whitehall, the decision-making theories discussed in this section do indicate that political decisions in the real world are very susceptible

1 "The Re-organisation of Central Government", HMSO, Cmd. 4506.

2 Ibid., P.13.

3 Ibid., P.13.

4 Consult R. Clarke's "New Trends in Government", HMSO 1971, Chp's I & II, and P.Jay's "PESC, PAR & Politics", The Times, Jan. 31st '72.

to short-term pressures. It is a matter for considerable scepticism how far a studied analysis of problems can supersede immediate reactions to social forces, tensions and dislocations. The fate of the Roskill Commission's recommendation of Cublington as the site for the third London airport is revealing. This recommendation was the result of an attempt:-

"to bring disparate factors together on a common scale of measurement by an elaborate exercise in cost-benefit analysis."¹

There were criticisms of the appropriateness of the application of the technique, as developed by the Commission, in such a complex planning decision, and the Government eventually opted for Foulness as the site, in response to a sophisticated Cublington lobby which pointed out the environmental disaster involved in carrying out Roskill's conclusion.² Governments still respond more positively to forceful pressures and lobbies than to the outcome of highly-developed analytical techniques.

Therefore, the reality of decision-making brings one back full circle to the influence and activities of pressure-groups. Brown's concept of "selective perception", for example, poses the question of which factors are taken into account. Also, the decision-making theories referred to above have profound implications for long-term national and regional economic planning in a pluralistic political system and, by deduction, for the efficacy of the Regional Economic Planning Councils/Boards. These implications will be pursued subsequently, in relation to the discussion of the objectives of economic planning and regionalism for the Labour Administration after 1964.³

At this point the need is to consider the reasons for treating the West Midlands Economic Planning Council as a pressure-group, and to indicate how the above conceptual framework is applicable to an empirical study of its role.

1 "The Times", the Editorial, January 22nd 1971.

2 This lobby is discussed in "The Times", April 5th 1971.

3 See Chapter Two.

3. The W.M.E.P.C. as a Pressure-Group.

Prior to a detailed analysis of the role and function of the West Midlands Planning Council in the structure of government, suffice to say here that constitutionally it is only an advisory body with no executive decision-making powers. Accordingly, the important consideration becomes an assessment of its influence on statutory decision-making bodies.

This Planning Council would not be classed as a pressure-group in the context of the usual terms of reference, for it obviously is not a voluntary, non-official, sectional interest with a grass-roots membership. The *raison d'être*, however, is for it to function as a "feed-in", primarily to central government. In terms of the prescribed function, this "feed-in" might be interpreted as that of offering "objective" and "expert" advice.¹ Even if it were possible to attach any precise meaning to such descriptions as "objective", this raises the danger of a static and formalistic consideration of the role of advisory committees, for they often develop latent functions. The principal of these functions is where the "feed-in" is subtly transformed into special pleading, and where the advisory committee becomes an important focal point for the application of pressure in relation to decision-making. In other words, the term "pressure-group" can be applied to the West Midlands Planning Council by virtue of its function as a potential "pressurising" body in relation to a decision-making body, although being an advisory committee, the environment and circumstances within which it works present their own peculiar dilemmas.

In fact, the role of the Planning Council satisfies a number of pressure-group criteria. Its composition is that of an amalgam of representatives from horizontal interests (such as trade union organisations) and local geographical interests, although not as delegates of those

1 B.C. Smith's "Advising Ministers" contains a classification of advisory committees, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1969, P. 5-11.

interests, in order to constitute a new vertical and geographical interest. In this context, as indicated above, it seeks to influence political decisions without being in a position to make such decisions itself.¹ Although its advisory role vis-a-vis central government makes it an "arm of the state" in many respects, some occupational/economic pressure-groups have been so institutionalised within the administrative structure of government that they too have assumed a posture analagous to that of being an "arm of the state".² Lastly, as suggested by Finer,³ the attempt to influence public policy does not necessarily imply that sanctions can be invoked in the process, and the West Midlands Economic Planning Council obviously has little in the way of direct sanctions at its disposal, having no mass membership nor vital executive economic function.

If one is to look at the influence of the Planning Council, there is the important consideration of how one determines this influence. It involves relating the policy stance of this body to changes or modifications in government policy. G. Wootton, for example, interprets influence as a situation where one actor induces another to act in a manner which he would not have done without that additional pressure. In his opinion, it also demands a consideration of the number of decisions where there has been a conspicuous change as a result of such a relationship or interaction, and the extent and significance of the induced change in decisions.⁴ Elsewhere, Dahl has put forward similar criteria, interpreting influence in terms of producing a change in the position of another, the cost or sacrifice involved in the decision-maker's change of policy, and the scope within which influence is effective.⁵

1 A pressure-group is often defined as an organisation which seeks to influence political decisions without itself becoming the government. H. Eckstein's "Pressure-Group Politics", Allen and Unwin 1960, is an example (P.26).

2 The position of the National Farmers Union, for example, is discussed in P. Self & H. Story, "The State and the Farmer", Allen & Unwin, 1962, P.37.

3 S.E. Finer, "Anonymous Empire", Pall Mall 1966, P.3.

4 "Interest Groups", Op. Cit., Chapter 5.

5 "Modern Political Analysis", Op. Cit., Chapter 3.

It must be realised though that the complexity of the governmental process makes it impossible to precisely delineate the influence of each pressure, a point emphasised in the criticisms of Bentley's method. Adrian Cadbury, the former Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, has exclaimed that it is impossible even for the participants (ie. the members of the Council) to know with any certainty the extent and nature of their influence.¹ Dahl warns us of the precarious nature of trying to measure influence in complex and many-faceted relationships, and especially to avoid the mistake of equating participation in decisions with the influence of those decisions.² The above mentioned procedure should only be seen in the context of informed judgement about influence, based on as much available evidence as possible on the relevant relationships, rather than the description of any precise chain of cause and effect.

4. Criteria for the Influence of Pressure-Groups.

The final stage in this conceptual framework is to formulate the criteria for successful pressure-group influence on government, with the aid of pressure-group case studies to categorise further general hypotheses for application to the West Midlands Economic Planning Council and the Region.

Firstly there is the need for access to the machinery of government. In the British political system this involves primarily the question of access to the executive and to the Departments, for as we have seen pressure-groups must act within the constraints imposed by the structure of government. Pressure-group studies have clearly indicated the tendency of groups to concentrate on the executive, and how they benefit from the fact that:-

"the great majority of governmental decisions are those made by regulations and orders, not by legislation"³

Apart from access to the relevant Department, the effectiveness of pressure-

1 See, for example, "Chairman is Hopeful About the Future Role of Planners", Birmingham Post, January 5th 1970.

2 "Modern Political Analysis", Op. Cit., P.34.

3 J.H. Millet, "British Interest Group Tactics", Political Science Quarterly, March 1957, P.75.

groups is dependent on inter-departmental co-ordination where more than one department is responsible for the policy sphere with which the group is concerned, and particularly dependent on the attitude of the Treasury. Also for the group, the strength of "its" Department within the structure of government is crucial, as is the strength of the Minister within the Cabinet.

Access to Parliament as a last resort may be important in certain situations. Here, H. Wilson has shown how a well-organised group of backbenchers, with limited objectives and a favourable combination of circumstances, can be effective.¹

An important constraint on influence is the principles and policies of the Parties, for pressure-groups need to take account of the policy predilections of the political party in power. Eckstein has documented the failure of the British Medical Association on fundamental and basic policy issues, its main influence being on details within the statutory context.² In connection with the role of pressure-groups in the politics of education, it has been asserted that:-

"In the last resort ... central government has its way."³

The success of the lobby for commercial television was partly attributable to the fact that the Conservative Party's general orientation was towards business and competition.⁴ Parties, in general, have a different perspective from that of pressure-groups. The former have to create a majoritarian coalition if they are to achieve power, accommodating many different interests, whereas pressure-groups have a much narrower perspective, that of a particular functional or geographical grouping.

A third criteria of influence relates to the internal characteristics and features of pressure-groups, that is strengths or weaknesses originating

1 "Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television", Secker & Warburg, 1961.

2 "Pressure Group Politics", Op. Cit., P.96.

3 "The Politics of Education", Op. Cit., P.45

4 "Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television", Op. Cit.

within the group itself. There is much material in Truman's thesis dealing with this aspect - the degree of cohesion and unity within a group, and especially the phenomenon of "overlapping membership" where membership of more than one group may create a source of conflicting loyalties.¹ The wider connection inherent in overlapping membership may, on the other hand, enhance the strength of an organisation if such contacts can be used to its advantage. Further considerations in this category include the skills and quality of leadership, and membership fluidity and turnover.

Next, there is the ability of a pressure-group to mobilise resources and a power-base. These resources, as well as money and a large membership, include the development of alliances and coalitions to broaden the base of support, and generally any device that produces a formidable combination. The lack of economic power, for example, may be a drawback in the exertion of political influence however.²

Usefulness to the Government is another category. This assesses pressure-group influence from the point of view of the needs and demands of government, which will be suitably deferential towards a group where it is advantageous to the enhancement of its objectives and the effective realisation of its policies. This includes the provision to a government of vital information necessary for "good" decisions. The needs of government in this respect have multiplied as it has woven its web into the fabric of society more and more. G. Wootton, taking this into account, classifies groups according to "Target's perception of Actor", this being more favourable the greater the group's (ie. Actor's) social contribution is conceived to be, a contribution anchored above all in economic groups, therefore linking up with the factor of economic power.³ Along a similar line of reasoning, Eckstein reflects on the fact that government considers:-

1 "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit., Part Two.

2 See, for example, A. Potter's "The Equal Pay Campaign Committee", Political Studies, February 1957.

3 "Interest Groups", Op. Cit., P.31.

"persuading the B.M.A. usually is tantamount to persuading the medical profession."¹

The B.M.A. is a source of technical information for the Government, and a liaison body with the medical profession. This is facilitated by the authority of its officers, able normally to make decisions binding on those whom they represent. Likewise, the National Farmers Union's close relationship with the Government has made possible a "partnership in the field" in committee administration.² In educational policy it is, according to Mr. Crosland:-

"very important to try and go as far as you can by consultation and co-operation."³

In this statement he is speaking from experience as a former Minister of Education.

Schattschneider has formulated the concept of the scope of conflict in his consideration of influence. This basically states that:-

"Conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it."⁴

The restriction or widening of the conflict is an important factor of influence. By this proposition Schattschneider is referring to a relationship between the "players" and the "audience" (ie. the public). However, this is also a useful concept when applied to the elimination of, or drawing into the conflict, pressure-groups other than the one initiating an attempted influential role vis-a-vis decisions.

The idea of the interaction with the public is significant, in so far as a prerequisite for the success of pressure-groups is often their ability to appeal to a wider interest than the merely sectional one that they may represent. Self and Storing have given a practical example of this

1 "Pressure Group Politics", Op. Cit., P.46.

2 "The State and the Farmer", Op. Cit., Chapter VI.

3 "The Politics of Education", Op. Cit., P.175.

4 E.E. Schattschneider, "The Semi-Sovereign People", H.R. & Winston 1960, P.4.

phenomenon at work, that of the N.F.U. reconciling the interests of agriculture with those of the broader interests of the country, in claiming that the encouragement of agriculture is vital to the nation in order to safeguard the balance of payments.¹ There is however considerable difficulty in applying the concept of the "public interest", because of the confusion over its meaning and content. Truman would equate it with a shifting aggregate of individual views, constituting potential interest group formations.² He also refers to the importance of prevailing values in society, and the advantage given to a group if it can associate itself with these, as, for example, in the case of business in the United States.³ The public interest might thus be interpreted as the highest common factor of agreement between individuals or groups on particular issues; as somehow being a manifestation of eternal verities or underlying values in society that have a resistance through time; or as mere sophistry to justify a government's or sectional interest's viewpoint. Yet, in spite of this ambiguity, the concept is often useful to invoke. There are issues which impinge on everyone as members of the public, although there may be difficulty in eliciting public opinion on any particular issue or in identifying those issues where the public interest is of importance, at least outside the confines of Rousseau's small city state.⁴

The above analytical distinctions between factors of influence are not mutually exclusive, but interwoven in reality. They are indicative of the criteria that require to be established in looking at the relationship between pressure-groups and government though, and exemplify the enormous number of variables involved in assessing this relationship.⁵

In the application of such observations in an empirical study of the

1 "The State and the Farmer", Op. Cit., P.222.

2 "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit., P.260.

3 Ibid. P.248.

4 For a useful short discussion of some of these points see B. Barry, "The Public Interest", in "Political Philosophy" ed. A. Quinton (especially P.123-4), Oxford 1967.

5 For further succinct comments on pressure-group activities and campaigns see A.H. Birch's "Representatives and Responsible Government", Allen and Unwin 1964, Chapter 15.

West Midlands Planning Council, the following general guidance can be given in relation to its role and influence.

Firstly, the question of access to government. Here, one needs to look at the changing central government departmental structure, and inter-departmental co-ordination, from the point of view of the implications for regional influence in Whitehall. Further considerations involve the access of the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council to Ministers, and the relationship between the Planning Council and the Planning Board (ie. the regional officials of Departments), especially as the latter is a potential transmitter of the views of the Planning Council to Whitehall, making the presence or lack of conflict between the two bodies an important aspect. Also, one can consider the parliamentary access channel for the Planning Council, that is, its relationship with the West Midland Regional Groups of M.P's and the nature of the organisation and activities of these Groups.

The question of the principles of Parties raises the important consideration of the extent to which the recommendations of the West Midlands Planning Council have been in conflict with the fundamental policies of the Government, together with the nature and outcome of any such conflicts. The Governments concerned are the Labour Government up to 1970 and the Conservative Administration that took over in June of that year.

Next, there are the internal features of pressure-groups. In the case of the Planning Council, this touches upon the rate of turnover of its membership, the degree of consensus among its members, overlapping membership and the consequences of the intermeshing of membership of groups in the Region with membership of the Planning Council, the leadership provided by the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, and generally the question of regional leadership.

Fourthly, there are those matters relating to the ability to mobilise a power-base. If the West Midlands Planning Council, as an advisory committee, cannot mobilise significant resources of its own, this

aspect involves a consideration of the indirect mobilisation of political resources. The vital factor is the extent to which groups within the Region have re-orientated their activities and seen the Planning Council as a focal point for effecting decisions that they want from central government. This in turn relates to the extent to which a regional interest has developed, as perhaps defined by Schattschneider when discussing sectionalism in the following terms:-

"a system of politics in which all classes within a region collaborate in order to advance the interests of one region as a whole as opposed to the interests of other regions."¹

Has vertical cleavage as opposed to horizontal cleavage become any more conspicuous in the West Midlands?

These considerations do pose the problem of a "vicious circle", as groups within the Region are unlikely to orientate their activities toward the Planning Council unless it proves its ability to wield influence, for groups tend to concentrate around centres of power.² The degree of influence of the Council should determine how far interests find it efficacious to court its support, through contacting its Chairman or using the members of the Council with whom they have a connection, for example, in attempts to elicit decisions from the Government on those matters not within the competence of local governmental processes. At the same time, the influence of the Planning Council is likely to be diminished if it cannot invoke a response in terms of a considerable regional backing in the West Midlands.

It is a dilemma that might find its resolution in a situation where a common view exists between the Planning Council and organisations in the Region, and a common view that brings all such bodies into conflict with the Government. This will be partly affected by changing circumstances creating a greater potentiality for a developing interest at the regional level, such

1 E.E. Schattschneider's "Party Government", Op. Cit., P.111.

2 See the previous quoted proposition of Truman's (P.6 of this chapter).

as a transition from economic buoyancy to recession. Have the views and initiatives of the Planning Council, in such circumstances, created a regional unanimity, with other groups registering this through close contact with it? Has it merely been another vehicle within the Region projecting interests, with little cross-fertilisation with other groups? This will necessitate looking firstly at inter-regional conflict and the role of the Government's policies in such conflict. Secondly, it will involve a consideration of whether intra-regional conflict in the West Midlands has been a more conspicuous feature (including conflict between the local governmental processes), and the degree to which the West Midlands Planning Council has been able to transcend and overcome such conflict and fragmentation.

In short, has the Planning Council served as a focal point in mobilising interests in the Region around a common viewpoint, providing an effective device for consensus among divergent interests, and created a dynamic regional dimension as opposed to an abstract administrative one? Now that more government decisions affect the regions, has this encouraged greater pressure-group activity at this level in the West Midlands, with the Planning Council itself functioning as a catalyst? Is the task of the West Midlands Planning Council in effecting regional unanimity facilitated by the emergence of any such regional groupings? Such questions will in fact constitute the most important part of this work.

Where usefulness to government, as a factor of influence, is concerned, there is the problem of the inability of the Planning Council to deliver any goods or carry out tasks in the light of its lack of executive power. It has no direct economic power. Yet there is the matter of the value to the Government of its informative role and its advice.

Under the heading of scope of conflict, one can consider the implications of the regional structure for the West Midland Planning Council's ability or inability to limit and overcome the conflict between

the regions where it is to its advantage to do so, and the strength of the Planning Council vis-a-vis other regions in such conflict, plus its strength vis-a-vis other participants in the governmental process.

Lastly, on the idea of the "public interest", to what extent has the West Midlands Planning Council come into conflict with it, or tried to reconcile its recommendations with a wider interest?

It should be made clear at this point that there is nothing sacrosanct about the numerical order in which these criteria of influence have been discussed. The aim is to provide a framework for analysis rather than to establish any rigid sequence.

There is one final pressure-group proposition that can be tested at the regional level, and this is the criticism that not all pressure-groups in a pluralistic democracy have equal access to the decision-making process or command equal legitimacy. It raises the whole question of the inflexibility of an established web of interests involved in the governmental process, particularly in a centralised political structure. Does the composition of the West Midlands Planning Council indicate the institutionalisation of the big battalions within the structure of government, and the representation of only an "inner circle" of strongly organised groups? As members of the Planning Council are nominated by the Minister, it is a useful testing ground.¹

The purpose of the next chapter will be to look in detail at the objectives set for the West Midlands Planning Council - the purposes for which it and other planning councils were established, as this determined the nature of the regional structure and the type of policy where there has been an attempt to exert influence. It will require a consideration of the thinking of the incoming Labour Administration in 1964, in relation to the concepts of "economic planning" and "the region". The resulting regional structure can be interpreted in terms of the concept of the "governmental

¹ See, for example, D. Truman's "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit., P.264-70, where he raises the question of "outsiders" and "insiders", and P.467-78 for a discussion of "The inflexibility of the established web".

process", which will clarify in a more comprehensive manner how pressure-group theory is a suitable approach to a study of the role of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council. Also, the problems that the decision-making process create for an institutional structure related to economic planning, as in the one set up by the Labour Government, can be pursued, and problems which have been a crucial factor in determining the ability of the West Midlands Planning Council to exert influence.

CHAPTER TWO

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING AND THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

The inextricable link between "the region" and "economic planning", that became so prominent a feature during the 1960's and was institutionalised in the Regional Economic Planning Councils/Boards, can be fully comprehended only through a separate analysis of the two concepts. This is necessary because the two components of "regional economic planning" are themselves ambiguous in meaning. Economic planning can be located anywhere on a spectrum ranging from the use of Keynesian economic techniques, to totalitarian planning for example. How precisely has the concept of "the region" been applied in British Government? What was entailed in the "economic planning" of the 1960's in this country? Finally, how did the convergence between the two concepts come about and what were the implications for the structure of government and regional institutions?

1. The Region.

The regional concept has encompassed a bewildering variety of meanings, each with their own implications for the machinery of government. As Robson has remarked:-

"there is no single authoritative definition."¹

In the interests of simplification, there are three main applications. These are the reform of local government, the constitutional issue, and central government regionalism.

In relation to local government, debate has centred on the lack of correlation between the traditional structure and the needs of contemporary society. The multiplicity of small local government units have manifested an inability to satisfactorily cope with the functions bestowed upon them, particularly with the problems of urban growth, physical land-use, commuting and transport. One of the most serious defects has been the artificial

1 W.A. Robson, "The Missing Dimension of Government", Political Quarterly July-September 1971, P.233.

administrative division between town and country. Equally as serious has been the division of responsibility within a continuous built-up area or conurbation. Even the Local Government Commission, which considered boundaries prior to the setting up of the Maud Commission on Local Government in 1966, failed to recommend a single planning authority for the whole of the Birmingham conurbation.¹ Radical over-haul of an anachronistic system seemed elusive until the early '70's.

One of the results of this outmoded structure was the transfer of functions and power from local authorities. A diverse set of ad hoc administrative bodies have been established.² These now include Passenger Transport Authorities in conurbations, to plan transport over an area larger than that of any single local authority, and regional authorities outside the local government system to consider, among other matters, land-use planning over wider areas. Accompanying this has been the accretion of power to the centre and increased supervision by central government over local political structures.

Defects in the local government structure, along with the associated consequences, have prompted an impressive array of critics to apply regional concepts in schemes for reform. Geographers have been to the fore-front in establishing new criteria. The aim in mind was to create political units which corresponded to the "pattern of living" and the spatial characteristics of contemporary urban society - 'natural' as opposed to artificial administrative entities. As one such critic has put it:-

"the problem is to establish new political units which will harmonise with the existing geographical structure and the need of society for efficient government and organisation."³

The applicable concepts for the geographers are those of "city regions" and

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- 1 "Local Government Commission Report No. 1 - West Midlands Special Review Area", H.M.S.O., May 1961.
 - 2 See W.A. Robson's, "Local Government in Crisis", Allen & Unwin 1968, Chp's 1 & 2, and J.P. Mackintosh's "The Devolution of Power", Penguin 1968, P. 25-26.
 - 3 R.E. Dickinson, "City and Region", Routledge & Kegan Paul 1964 p.439.

"urban regions", notions which reflect a concern with the distribution of population, the nature of commuting zones, together with spheres of influence of cities and conurbations. Their quest has been for integrated functional units, embracing place of work, location of home and a wide range of accessible services.

Derek Senior is one of the more famous proponents of such an approach. In one of his schemes he identifies "mature", "emergent", "embryonic" and "potential" city regions, suggesting about thirty units in all.¹ He was prompted to produce a memorandum of dissent from the Maud Commission based on the arguments for the application of the city-region idea, this time recommending thirty-five major units for functions relating to planning, transportation and development.² The Maud Commission also used the contemporary socio-geographic facts of life as one of the criteria for new local government boundaries.³ Lastly, Peter Self has identified himself with indicating the importance of city- and urban-regions in relation to the limitations of the traditional local government machinery. He cites how the town/country administrative division has produced a tug-of-war over every attempt to tackle the question of overspill from conurbations.⁴

This approach is not only of recent origin. As early as 1919, one of the major criteria in a scheme devised C.B. Fawcett was to create a local structure which avoided interference with the ordinary movements of people and accorded with coherent areas of common living. He categorically stated that any reformed system should start from the application of such principles.⁵ In 1947, G.D.H. Cole took into account the reality of new urban and rural patterns, including the problems of overspill and dispersal, in

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- 1 "The City Region as an Administrative Unit", Political Quarterly Vol. 36, 1965, P.82.
 - 2 "Royal Commission on Local Government in England", Vol. II, H.M.S.O. Cmd. 4040-I, P.159.
 - 3 Ibid., Vol. I, Cmd 4040, P.6.
 - 4 "Cities in Flood - The Problems of Urban Growth", Faber & Faber, 1961, Chapters 1 & 2.
 - 5 "Provinces of England", revised 1961, Hutchinson, P.62 & 70.

his recommendations for a new local government structure. The proposals for fourteen planning authorities at the regional level were an integral part of his reformed machinery for England, as were single authorities for each of the major conurbations.¹ These are only two examples among many.

There is often, however, difficulty in applying such criteria, especially the concept of the city-region. The variety in the size and type of region delineated exemplifies the imprecisions involved.² The method is usually utilised only in combination with other criteria, as was the case with the Maud Commission's recommendations.³ In addition, city-regions are sometimes referred to as "sub regions", to distinguish them from larger provincial regions. Although Senior's thirty-five upper level city-regions cover extensive geographical areas, the Birmingham Region taking in centres as far afield as Worcester, Shrewsbury and Dawley, for example, he recognises the need for a provincial tier to complement them. The intention in his proposals is to overcome the need for any city-region to look beyond its own boundaries to re-house its population (most of the present Birmingham overspill reception centres would be in his Birmingham Region), but he advocates the setting up of five provinces for comprehensive strategic planning. He does not propose that such provincial authorities should have executive powers to fulfil their role though.⁴ The need for a provincial structure features in the Maud recommendations, for with a proposed sixty-one new local government units, each authority would cover an area less extensive than those of Senior's. This is the case in a comparison between Maud's proposed West Midlands Metropolitan Area and Senior's Birmingham Region.⁵ Maud suggests eight provinces, whose main

1 "Local and Regional Government", Cassell 1947, CH. VII.

2 See J.W. Grove's "A Practical Regionalism", New Society, Jan. 23rd 1964, reprinted in W.J. Stankiewicz's "Crisis in British Government", Collier-Macmillan 1967, P.347.

3 Op. Cit., P.6. Fawcett also enumerates other relevant criteria.

4 "Royal Commission on Local Government in England" Vol. II, Op. Cit., P.160.

5 Ibid., Vol. I, P.237.

functions would include the provision of the framework for land-use planning and assistance to province-wide projects.¹ The proposal that they should be indirectly elected has met with criticism, as has, what some see, their imprecise role.² These weaknesses pointed to the danger of the Provincial Councils assuming an ill-defined sandwich position between the Unitary Authorities and central government.

From the above outline, it is evident that regional concepts have been invoked to provide answers to the inadequate structure of local government. One body of thought on regionalism is mainly pre-occupied with, what Robson refers to as, the projecting of local government onto a regional plane.³ Larger units of elected government, below the centre, are considered necessary to check the loss of functions from local government, to rationalise the existing heterogeneous and ad hoc "intermediate" level of administration and subject it to less remote democratic control. Such a reform would also overcome the expedients of joint planning committees of local authorities of the kind that Birmingham, for example, has in the past had to work through in providing for overspill arrangements. These aspirations involve a value judgement on the desirability of such functions and arrangements being directly accountable to local elected authorities, the kind of judgement inherent in Mackintosh's desire to prevent any matter from slipping between local and national democratic supervision.⁴ It means that the discussion of local government re-organisation can entail controversy over responsibilities and over a re-alignment of functions between local government, regional administrative bodies and central government. Maud's terms of reference were limited however to the existing functions of local authorities in any recommendations for reform.⁵ Even starting from such a limited premise,

1 Ibid., Chapter X.

2 See L.J. Sharpe's "Regionalism and the Provincial Councils", a Paper presented to a Regional Studies Association Conference, University of Birmingham, 29th November 1969, P.2.

3 "Local Government in Crisis", Op. Cit., P.141.

4 "Devolution of Power", Op. Cit., P.47.

5 "Royal Commission on Local Government in England", Vol. I, Op. Cit., the page opposite to the beginning of Chapter I.

the concept of "the region" was still considered relevant.

The constitutional aspect of regionalism is concerned with a more fundamental alteration in the structure of government than is the reform of local government. The primary consideration here is unmistakably the devolution of power from central government, to subordinate legislatures on the prorogued Stormont, "home rule", model, or even to fully-fledged regional institutions. They represent proposals that have been related particularly to the position of Wales and Scotland, reflecting their sense of a separate national identity and a desire to control the decisions affecting them. The Scottish National Party has complained that:-

"there is something seriously wrong with a constitution like that of the U.K. which leaves Scotland ... with less than one decision-maker in fifty in the United Kingdom."¹

The Nationalist Parties have manifested such discontents in their most extreme form. The creation of the Welsh and Scottish Nationalist Parties goes back to 1925 and 1934 respectively. It was not until the middle and late '60's that they achieved notable victories, the Welsh Nationalists winning a Parliamentary by-election in 1966 and S.N.P. in 1967. At that point, the rising nationalist pressure resulted in the setting up of the Crowther Commission on the Constitution in 1968, with terms of reference:-

"To examine the present functions of the central legislature and government in relation to the several countries, nations and regions of the United Kingdom;
to consider, having regard to developments in local government organisation and in the administrative and other relationships between the various parts of the United Kingdom, and to the interests of the prosperity and good government of Our people under the Crown, whether any changes are desirable in those functions or otherwise in present constitutional and economic relationships;
to consider, also, whether any changes are desirable in the constitutional and economic relationships between the United Kingdom and the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man."²

This constitutional strand in regional thinking is often related to the whole problem of the power of the legislature vis-a-vis a modern,

1 "Commission on the Constitution", Minutes of Evidence IV Scotland H.M.S.O. 1971, P.40.

2 "Commission on the Constitution", Minutes of Evidence IV, Op. Cit P.2.

powerful central executive. The creation of regional legislatures is seen as a method of enhancing the role of the courts and of constitutional restraints in the British political system. This would be necessary to police any entrenched devolutionary arrangements and it would result in the executive being less immune to the probings of the courts than at present. Such considerations, it has been argued, provide the:-

"strongest reason for giving serious attention to the future of constitutional arrangements in Scotland."¹

Sawer, for example, is insistent that federal arrangements involve guarantees of autonomy to "geographically distributed governments". According to this view, the Stormont system is conceived to be only "incipient federalism", as the Government of Ireland Act did not restrict the ultimate sovereignty of Westminster.²

Constitutional aspirations must therefore be distinguished from the re-organisation of local government. Even in the Stormont example there was the clear distinction between the legislative and constitutional role of the Northern Ireland Parliament, and the use of Stormont as a ready-made tier for local government functions that needed to be administered at that level.³ It is the difference between having a separate legislature in a region, whether subordinate or otherwise, and functions conferred on a region by central legislation only. The demand for the more radical change embodies the argument that with increased government intervention in social and economic life, devolution becomes imperative to counter the emergence of an over-burdened and insensitive central government machine.

The third and final category of regionalism relates to the efficient and effective performance of central government, as opposed to local government functions, or the diminution of central government power implicit

1 "Government and Nationalism in Scotland", Ed. by J.N. Wolfe, Edinburgh University Press, 1969, P.41.

2 G.F. Sawer, "Modern Federalism", Watts 1969, P.58 and 186.

3 The Times, "New Plan in Ulster", June 26th 1970.

in the constitutional issue. It concerns the regional organisation of central Departments and the co-ordinative and consultative machinery evolved to complement such regional organisation. The system is one of "deconcentration" rather than "devolution".¹ Various terminology has been applied to describe this phenomenon, among which are "bureaucratic decentralisation"², "non-elective central government regionalism"³ and "administrative regionalism".⁴ The unifying factor in all such descriptions is that this form of regionalism does not entail elected regional parliaments or government.

Regional organisation here is essentially a product of administrative exigencies and convenience. Accretion of power to the centre makes it an administrative necessity to work close to the ground in the implementation of many policies. In short, it is a consequence of:-

"the intervention of government in areas hitherto the responsibility of private groups or left to the free play of market forces".⁵

In a Paper in 1970, J.A. Cross re-stated the official case, couched very much in the above terms. Decision-making now needed to take into account regional and local variations, making contact with the "receiving end" crucial.⁶ A positive and active state needs a regional arm. The justification of administrative convenience is apparent in the boundaries drawn up for such regional organisation. The Standard Regions of 1946 did not necessarily correspond with entities that were 'natural'. The main aim was to restrict the number of English regions to nine to make staffing feasible and to facilitate co-ordination at the centre. The fewer the number of units, the less complex is the administrative network.

The association between the level of central government activity and

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- 1 H. Maddick, "Democracy, Decentralisation and Development", Asia Publishing House, 1963, P.23.
 - 2 A.H. Hanson, "Planning and the Politicians", Routledge & Kegan Paul, P.106, 1969.
 - 3 "Local Government in Crisis", Op. Cit., P.50.
 - 4 J.W. Grove, "Regional Administration", Fabian Research Series No.147, 1951.
 - 5 B.C. Smith, "Advising Ministers", Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969, P.12.
 - 6 "Regional Decentralisation of British Government Departments", Public Administration, Winter 1970, P.426.

the growth of a regional dimension in its departmental structure can be traced through the marked variations from the Second World War. Leaving aside the unique period of the War itself, the contrast between the period of the Labour Administration of 1945-51 and the succeeding Conservative Administration is revealing. In the former period there was a promotion of inter-departmental liaison at the regional level, in the form of the Distribution of Industry panels and the Regional Physical Planning Committees. In addition, there were Regional Boards for Industry (which survived until 1965), bringing together departmental and industrial representatives in the regions. Such liaison was particularly necessary in the aftermath of the War, when the Government still needed to administer physical controls over the economy. The elaborate regional machinery was directly related to the large-scale intervention of the Administration in the light of post-war shortages. There was also an ideological aspect, the Labour Party seeing "planning" as an alternative to the injustices of market forces.

Although, in the 1950's, the Conservative Administration accepted the enhanced role of the government in society and the economy, its approach was much more that of using general measures of economic management. It rapidly consummated the transition from physical controls, begun in the latter part of the Labour Administration. The result was a run-down in the regional organisation of central government, the inter-departmental committees gradually falling into dis-use.¹ The effectiveness of departmental regionalism came in for increasing criticism. As early as 1951, one observer was claiming that the influence of regional administration on policy was strictly limited, and that central government's regional organisation needed to be more coherent. More organised consultation with

1 These organisational structures are discussed more fully in B.C. Smith's "Regionalism in England 1: Regional Institutions", Acton Society Trust 1964, and in his "Advising Ministers", Op. Cit. Chapter 2.

local authorities was called for, which might be achieved through a regional consultative assembly.¹ A study in 1956 stated that regional organisation was haphazard and repeated the deficiency of the poor consultation with local authorities at this level.²

Administrative regionalism, then, has normally been more pronounced and systematic under a Labour than under a Conservative Government. Regional organisation within central government was certainly at a low ebb in the 1950's, with an Administration in favour of general financial measures and helped by the gradual easing of shortages.

Apart from regional machinery, British governments have developed specific policies to deal with the problems of particular regions, namely those with high unemployment and structural problems resulting from the decline of their staple industries. A landmark was the passing of the Special Areas Act of 1934, in the context of the depression years. The need to tackle unemployment in such regions became more pressing after the political commitment to full employment in the Coalition Government's 1944 White Paper on "Employment Policy". After the War there were a series of measures to attack the problem, such as the Distribution of Industry Acts in 1945, 1950 and 1958, and the Local Employment Act in 1960. A variety of devices were invoked, including the building of government advance factories; financial assistance and inducements to industrialists setting up in Development Areas and Districts; and, in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, the inauguration of negative control on industrial location by means of Industrial Development Certificates.³ The boundaries of the "unemployment" regions have not been constant though. The 1960 Act manifested a very narrow interpretation of the basis of such boundaries, in creating Development Districts - what came to be known as

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- 1 J.W. Grove, "Regional Administration", Op. Cit., P.28-9.
 - 2 The West Midland Group, "Local Government and Central Control", Routledge and Kegan Paul 1956, P.174 and 211.
 - 3 See "Regional Planning and the Location of Industry", D. Lee, Heinemann 1969, for a comprehensive list of these measures.

the "pockets of unemployment" approach. Government regional policy has, in fact, usually been motivated by political and social considerations, responses to crises on the basis of very narrowly conceived criteria.¹ I.D.C.'s have been used to steer industry to areas of high unemployment, rather than to effect locational decisions based on an economic analysis which illuminates the forces underlying regional and inter-regional economic relationships. As late as 1967, narrow unemployment indices were to be used in the creation of Special Development Areas, those suffering from a run-down in the coal industry. It was an approach that prompted a call for a national locational plan as an alternative to the implementation of regional policy on an ad hoc basis.²

Some attempt was made subsequent to the 1960 Act to broaden the criteria in regional policy. In the early '60's, in fact, there was a discernible change of emphasis in the purpose of central government administration in the regions. It constituted a belated revival of the regional concept under the Conservative Administration. The revival took place in the context of the new attraction of "economic planning", and it is to an examination of this concept that one must turn next. At this point it merely remains to conclude that, in relation to the concept of "the region", of the three different schools discussed in this section, the third has generally provided the rationale for regional machinery in Britain. The machinery has functioned as an integral part of central government administration.

2. Economic Planning.

"Economic planning" is as bewildering in its variety of meanings as the concept of "the region". One can broadly distinguish between totalitarian and various types of limited planning. The aim here will be

1 This crisis orientation of policy is discussed in B.A. Finlayson's "Political and Administrative Forces Influencing the Operation of Regional Policy", Strathclyde Msc. Thesis 1971.

2 R.C. Tress, "Next Stage in Regional Policy", Three Banks Review, March 1969, P.28.

to locate the "indicative planning" of the Conservative and Labour Administrations in the 1960's within these types.

Totalitarian planning is the absolutist interpretation of the concept. All economic targets and decisions are centrally determined and imposed by the state. It implies the total supersession of the free market mechanism. Other, more palatable, means have been sought to produce a replica of a Plan which, according to Oules, in Russia has made it possible:-

"to integrate pressure groups in the pursuit of a social ideal."¹ Laski, for example, believed this "integrated social ideal" could be achieved without an intolerable amount of state coercion. He had hoped that the last War and its aftermath would establish the necessary atmosphere for the setting of common objectives. In this way the suspension of the mechanism of the free market would come by common consent, which would bring about a "transvaluation of values".² The unity of purpose of that period was soon to be dissipated however.

A totalitarian approach to planning provoked the statement of an absolutist case at the opposite extreme, constituting what has been referred to as the "polemics of the grand alternatives".³ The tendency of those advocating laissez-faire was to depict a model of a market mechanism, often involving something approaching perfect competition. Not always was the metamorphosis in the industrial structures of advanced economies, that had occurred since the "heyday of Victorian Liberalism", fully taken into account. However, this school was fairly convinced that the market mechanism was the only means of efficiently allocating resources, while being a safeguard against arbitrary power in the hands of a government. Similar objections to planning still exist. Broadway, for

1 F. Oules, "Economic Planning and Democracy", Penguin 1966, P.105.

2 H. Laski, "Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time", Allen & Unwin 1944, Chapter VIII.

3 G. Sartori, "Democratic Theory", Praeger 1965, P.393.

example, claims that government intervention produces undesirable distortions in the market and that the ultimate logic of such intervention is a drift towards an authoritarian state.¹ Polyani asserts that planning is bound to be arbitrary in the face of the impossibility of assembling any "rational" criteria for a planned optimum allocation of resources.² This is a criticism of what might be considered a very extreme aspiration for the methods of planning.

Sartori, nevertheless, claims that the "polemics of the grand alternatives" has largely been superseded by a more empirical approach to the question of planning. The discussion has become less one of a confrontation of ideologies which are totally opposed and more one of partial planning.³ This evaluation derives from a recognition of the increasing role of the state in the economy. The relevant considerations are how best to exercise and co-ordinate such influence, how far to take it, along with the best method of relating it to the free market sector of the economy. Limited planning then, involves the co-existence of public control and private enterprise, the so-called "mixed economy". Such an approach to the discussion of planning is conspicuous in Crosland's writings. He asserts that planning has become a matter of slightly more or less in relation to the needs of particular situations and that:-

"no one of any standing now believes the once-popular Hayek thesis that any interference with the market mechanism must start us down the slippery slope that leads to totalitarianism".⁴

Limited planning, in itself, can have many gradations of meaning. Occasionally it is equated with the mere aspiration to a consistent set of policies, involving the notion of strategy, including one for the promotion of greater competition. More commonly, planning is used to refer

1 F. Broadway, "State Intervention in British Industry", Kaye & Ward, 1969, P.180.

2 G. Polyani, "Planning in Britain: The Experience of the '60's", I.E.A. 1967, P.108.

3 "Democratic Theory", Op. Cit., P.393-96.

4 C.A.R. Crosland, "The Future of Socialism", Jonathan Cape 1964, P.343.

to the application of Keynesian economics, that is, macro-economic demand management through the mechanism of fiscal and monetary policy. The approach came to be known as "Butskellism" in the 1950's, as both Gaitskell and Butler, belonging to the Labour and Conservative Party respectively, were attracted by this method of economic management.

Thirdly, limited planning is associated most frequently with "indicative planning". A government indicates to private industry and interests how they can help to fulfil the overall objectives or targets of a plan, as opposed to the state itself trying to control all economic decisions. It is possible for a government to employ a great variety of techniques in such an endeavour. There can be reliance mainly on the dissemination of information, exhortation and persuasion; promotion of the objectives through the use of discriminatory and interventionist measures, ranging from fiscal incentives to physical controls; and the threat of ultimate public ownership to exert pressure if the response from private industry is unsatisfactory.

Finally, in an outline of the planning spectrum, it is useful to invoke a further concept mentioned by Sartori, that of "Dirigiste Democracy".¹ It refers to a situation where there may be considerable intervention in the economy on the part of the government, but which does not constitute a planning process, in the sense of co-ordination of the various measures in pursuit of the objectives of an overall plan. Such a system is often confused with planning. Planning can also easily degenerate into this, albeit imperceptibly.

It was the indicative variety of planning that became fashionable in Britain in the 1960's. This can be examined more fully, now that the above distinctions in the concept of "economic planning" have placed it in perspective, with the ultimate aim of linking it with the resurgent regional

1 "Democratic Theory", Op. Cit., P.396-98.

planning of the period.

3. Indicative Planning and the Role of Regional Economic Planning.

By the beginning of the 1960's two things were becoming apparent. Firstly, an increasing awareness of what has been called the:-

"web of mutual dependence which knits together the public and the private sectors."¹

In the case of the Government, this emanated particularly from the acceptance of Plowden's suggestions that public expenditure should be planned ahead, in relation to the economic resources likely to be available.² Planning of public resources, in relation to the total resources available in the economy, made the exchange of information and consultation between the Government and private industry a necessary exercise. Large corporations in the private sector were in many cases also indulging in long-range corporate planning. In this situation, the usefulness of Government/industry cross-fertilisation was obvious, in terms of the reduction of uncertainty for both sides - both could act on the basis of fuller information about the intentions of the other.

Secondly, the growth rate of the United Kingdom was relatively unsatisfactory and "Stop-Go" was the order of the day rather than sustained steady expansion. The conclusion was that the two-way flow of information between the Government and industry could be harnessed to the achievement of specific ends of economic policy, namely increasing the growth rate. This was the logic behind Selwyn Lloyd's creation of the National Economic Development Council in 1962. It was an advisory body that provided a forum for a more purposeful relationship between industry and government at the national level than hitherto:-

1 J.W. Grove, "Government and Industry in Britain", Longmans 1962, P. 77-78.
 2 "Report on the Control of Public Expenditure", H.M.S.O. Cmd. 1432, 1961.

"a coming together of representatives of trade unions, management and government in a context very different from the usual encounters".¹

The National Economic Development Council was to be a pressure-group for growth. It initiated the vogue for long-term planning strategies (ie. usually for five years ahead),² while attempting to relate the intentions of individual industries to the overall objectives of the strategy, indicating the action they needed to take. Such a consultative process and planning exercise would reveal the factors which were likely to undermine the achievement of a faster rate of growth. It all pointed to the greater pre-occupation with structural reform in the economy in the last years of the Conservative Administration.

Regional planning came to be regarded as part of this structural reform and as an important aspect of the promotion of national economic growth. The successful handling of the economy was now considered to require an enhanced emphasis on micro-economic policies, at the level of each industry and region, as opposed to merely the use of general monetary and fiscal weapons. Social and political motivations were still very much a part of regional policy, as reflected in the appointment of the Lord President of the Council, in January 1963, as an adviser to the Cabinet on the North-East. This was a political initiative taken in the face of the serious unemployment problem in the Region, and the accompanying electoral consequences for the Government. Nevertheless, the new dimension encouraged a more comprehensive conception of regional planning. It was exemplified in the idea of "growth points", locations based on areas where sustained growth could be viably promoted, as contrasted with the steering of industry to centres of unemployment regardless of future growth potential. The new considerations were apparent in the White Papers on the

1 R. Shone, "The National Economic Development Council", Public Administration, Spring 1966, P.19. M. Shank's "What Future for Neddy", Political Quarterly, Vol. XXXIII 1962, P.348-59, is also worth consulting.

2 See N.E.D.C.'s "Growth of the U.K. Economy to 1966", H.M.S.O. 1963, which sets out the implications of a 4% growth rate for 1961-66.

North-East and Central Scotland in 1963.¹

There were a number of other implications of this approach. Regions needed to be larger than those of the Development Districts of 1960 and a size more comparable to that of the Standard Regions of 1946. If the ultimate intention was to produce regional plans for the whole country, for practical reasons there would have to be a small number of large regions, to assist central co-ordination and enable priorities to be established. The interests of simplicity in administrative arrangements would put a premium on averting the proliferation of numbers.²

The concept of "growth points" also implied a convergence of economic and physical land-use factors in regional planning - a co-ordinated approach to the problems of overspill, distribution of population, location of industry and public expenditure on infra-structure. This pointed to a change in the Government's attitude to land-use and overspill policies. Previously it had tended to stand aloof from these problems, assuming the role of a neutral umpire between conflicting interests at the local authority level.³ The objective of faster national economic growth was enticing the Conservative Government into the realm of the difficulties associated with city- and urban-regions, in relation to its own effectiveness rather than that of local government.

The appointment of Edward Heath as Secretary of State for Trade, Industry and Regional Development, in October 1963, confirmed these trends.⁴ A start was made on studies for regions other than the "problem" ones. A group of officials from the relevant Government Departments embarked on a survey of the West Midlands, for example, eventually completed in 1965.⁵

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- 1 Consult, for example, "The North-East", H.M.S.O., Cmnd 2206 1963.
 - 2 See G. McCrone's "Regional Policy in Britain", Allen & Unwin 1969, P.238.
 - 3 "Cities in Flood", Op. Cit., P.174.
 - 4 Consult F. Willson's "Organisation of British Central Government", Public Administration Spring 1966, P.80.
 - 5 "The West Midlands: A Regional Study", D.E.A., H.M.S.O. 1965.

It was in the circumstances of the emergence of policies for national economic growth and indicative planning, then, that regional planning came to hold a new importance.¹ One would expect such purposes to be reflected in the machinery for regionalism. This need not strictly be the case, for as Mackintosh observes:-

"It is typically British to imagine that it is possible to reform local government or any other institution without first being clear about its purpose and without first settling the value judgements and working out the objectives of the reformed institutions."²

One is still entitled to pre-suppose a certain correlation, even if it is not precisely formulated in official thinking. The overriding objective in the regional revival of the early 1960's would lead one to expect the machinery to reflect very much the central government regional emphasis. This is borne out, as illustrated in an article by Sir Keith Joseph in 1964, then the Conservative Minister for Housing and Local Government. He was advocating:-

"regional development, based on the regional plans we are producing, each of which will be regularly reviewed and administered by a partnership between re-organised local government and strong regional arms of a regionally conscious central government."³

As the "re-organised local government" he envisaged in no way corresponded to a regional type of organisation, rejecting even the city-region concept in his desire to retain the town/country division, the emphasis was, by deduction, to be on the development of a strong regional arm of central government.

Such proposals were fully in accordance with the previous non-existence of regional government in Britain. In 1964, it was predicted that regionalism was likely to continue to develop as an arm of central government, in line with the evolutionary character of British administration. The evidence suggested that the earlier precedents of regional inter-

1 For further evidence of this link see N.E.D.C's "Conditions Favourable to Faster Growth", H.M.S.O. 1963, P.14.

2 "Devolution of Power", Op. Cit., P.39.

3 "Local Authorities and Regions", Public Administration, Autumn 1964, P.226.

departmental committees and regional advisory councils would be built upon.¹ Grove, as in 1951, wanted a form of regional N.E.D.C's, as an alternative to elected regional councils, to make administration more effective at that level. They would be comprised of delegates from local authorities, industry and trade unions, for example.²

In spite of the change of government in October 1964, the themes that had emerged in the closing years of the Conservative Administration laid the foundation for the initial orientation of the Labour Government,³ although they were now to be pursued more vigorously. The Conservatives had played down the role of the State in the indicative planning process, signifying an ideological reluctance to intervene more than necessary in the market.⁴ It had pursued the weaker form of such a planning exercise, relying particularly on the dissemination of information and persuasion. This was not sufficient for Mr. Wilson:-

"now that we have got from the Tories the N.E.D.C. plan in its broad outlines, this isn't enough; we need more than paper plans".⁵

The significant development after October 1964 was that the Government assumed greater responsibility for indicative planning. It was to place its weight behind the "purposive mobilisation of resources",⁶ to be achieved by a more ready use of interventionist weapons if need be.

Mr. Wilson had stated in a pre-election speech that:-

"by planning we don't mean the publication of academic statistics and blueprints, but plans and priorities - planning with teeth".⁷

The key to these aims was the creation of the Department of Economic Affairs. R. Clarke was to claim soon after, that although the new departures had originated under the previous Conservative Administration:-

- 1 T.E. Chester, "Challenge of Regional Planning", District Bank Review, June 1964.
- 2 "Crisis in British Government", the essay entitled "A Practical Regionalism", Op. Cit. P.353.
- 3 S. Brittan, "Steering the Economy: The Role of the Treasury", Secker & Warburg 1969, P.141.
- 4 A. Shonfield, "Modern Capitalism", Oxford University Press 1965, P.160.
- 5 Speech made at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, 21st March 1964, reprinted in "The New Britain: Labour's Plan", Penguin 1964, P.48.
- 6 T. Balogh, "Planning for Progress", Fabian Tract 346, 1963, P.1.
- 7 "The New Britain: Labour's Plan", Op. Cit., P.47.

"it was the present Government's machinery of government decisions in October 1964 that provided the first comprehensive re-organisation of the central economic departments in the light of new tasks".¹

The objective of the D.E.A. was to mobilise "real resources" for growth. While the function of the Treasury was demand management, the D.E.A. was to ensure that the correlation between demand and supply could be achieved at a higher rather than a lower level, by improving the supply side of the economy.²

This was to be accomplished through the medium of the National Plan, a sequel to the N.E.D.C. indicative plan, although unlike the latter it was drawn up by a Government Department. The exercise started from a built-in hypothesis of a 4% growth rate, as it turned out an over-optimistic premise that did much to subsequently discredit the setting of targets. An Industrial Enquiry was carried out to identify the implications of this growth rate for individual industries, culminating in an attempt to co-ordinate and reconcile all into a consistent whole.³ The philosophy underlying the process was succinctly stated in George Brown's remark that:-

"The whole point of the National Plan was to identify the areas where there were weaknesses in the existing situation and where we should concentrate our resources. In that way individual industries and sectors could see clearly what they had to do to enable this overall national result to be achieved".⁴

This led naturally to the so-called "Action Programme" of the National Plan, which high-lighted structural deficiencies in the economy adversely affecting the planned framework for growth.⁵ Brittan subsequently claimed that the "Action Programme" was not necessarily related to the figures in the Plan. This was a view concurred in by Sir Douglas Allen, who admitted that a programme of policies to foster faster growth did not depend on any particular numerical projections.⁶ Such a reading of the

1 "Machinery for Economic Planning: The Public Sector", Public Administration, Spring 1966, P.62.

2 M. Shanks, "The Innovators", Penguin 1967, P.110.

3 See J. Brunner, "What Use is the Plan", New Society, 25th March 1965, P.13.

4 "In My Way", Victor Gollancz 1971, P.119.

5 Sir Douglas Allen, "The Department of Economic Affairs", Political Quarterly, Oct.-Dec. 1967, P.352.

6 Ibid., P.355-6.

situation prompted Brittan to describe the National Plan as merely a "virtuous confidence trick" to promote favourable expectations of the future performance of the economy.¹ Nevertheless, the "Action Programme" provided the rationale for the D.E.A. to promote micro-economic intervention in the economy, as a counter-weight to reliance on general demand management.

Within the D.E.A. was a Industrial Division to maintain close Government/industry liaison, in part facilitated by the growing number of "Little Neddies" for individual industries, designed to promote growth potential in their respective spheres. This was soon complemented by such agencies as the Industrial Re-Organisation Corporation, to promote the re-structuring and rationalisation of industry. The D.E.A. also had a Prices and Incomes Division. Most significantly, for our purposes, there was a Regional Planning Division.

Just as the role of regional planning had come to be seen as an important element in the promotion of faster economic growth in the last years of the Conservative Administration, so it was under Labour. The creation of the Regional Planning Division within the D.E.A. was born out of the belief that regional policy could assist in overcoming the obstacles to growth. As such, it features in the "Action Programme" of the National Plan.² If the implications of growth had to be broken down for individual industries, overall aggregates also needed to be dissected into regional components. A system of disaggregated economic management had to pay attention to the needs of each individual region. W. Rodgers, a Minister in the D.E.A., claimed that the objectives of regional planning after 1964 went far beyond the welfare motivation of the Special Areas philosophy, for they constituted an integral part of the efficient mobilisation of

1 "Steering the Economy", Op. Cit., P.280.

2 "The National Plan", H.M.S.O. Cmd. 2764, P.19-20 and Chapter 8.

resources that was the aim of the National Plan.¹ This intimate relationship between national and regional planning comes out in a statement in the Commons of Mr. Brown's, that:-

"My own Department (the D.E.A.) will be able within itself to draw together both regional and national economic planning so that each can be related to the other and contribute to the other".²

Accordingly, on the 10th December 1964, regional planning was given two main objectives:-

(i) to promote the full and balanced development of the country's resources.

(ii) to ensure that the regional implications of growth were fully understood.³

Two important examples of this kind of reasoning can be given. It was reflected in the notion of the "manpower gap" in the National Plan. There it was stated that 200,000 of this could be made up by mobilising the under-used labour resources of the "unemployment" regions.⁴ An effective regional policy would also alleviate the pressures on the "congested" regions of the South-East and West Midlands. If the "imbalance between the regions"⁵ could be put right, it would help the management of the economy, by reducing the inflationary pressures that arose in some regions as soon as expansion got under way, pressures which in turn had made it that more difficult to operate an effective incomes policy. Such were the justifications for the stricter enforcement of distribution of industry policy through the Industrial Development Certificate mechanism, for:-

"a selective pressure ... on expansions proposed in the congested areas and fully employed areas to move towards a suitable under-employed area, must surely contribute substantially to higher production".⁶

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- 1 W.T. Rodgers, "The Future of Regional Planning", Journal of the Town Planning Institute, June 1966.
 - 2 Hansard, Vol. 701, Column 228.
 - 3 Hansard, Vol. 703, Column 1829.
 - 4 "The National Plan", Op. Cit., P.4.
 - 5 Hansard, 7th April 1965, Column 537.
 - 6 D. Jay, "Distribution of Industry Policy", Economic Journal, December 1965, P.741.

The second example was the belief that decisions needed to be taken on the co-ordinated location of new employment, expanding population and spending on infra-structure, so that:-

"regional policies will not be concerned with bolstering up small areas ... they will be concerned with developing those parts of each region where there is real growth potential."¹

This was a re-statement of the "growth zone" philosophy that had been emerging under the previous Government. The Labour Government regarded it as a strong justification for the preparation of regional studies and strategies, where not already in existence.

Regional planning was therefore an intimate part of the new institutional framework revolving around the D.E.A., although the proposed dove-tailing of national and regional planning involved very complex procedures.² It was hoped that the D.E.A. could achieve this complex task, as a consequence of being cast in the role of a "super" co-ordinating Ministry within Whitehall, to relate the policies of the Administration to National Plan objectives. The problems of co-ordination were considerable. Apart from the division in economic policy between the D.E.A. and the Treasury, there were a number of Departments with regional interests. Examples were the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources, and the Board of Trade. There is evidence that the Board of Trade never came to terms with the regional role of George Brown's Department.³ Mr. Brown subsequently claimed he now doubts whether there was an acceptance on the part of the Prime Minister that the D.E.A. should play the elevated co-ordinating role,⁴ while the Department's lack of executive powers placed it at a disadvantage vis-a-vis those established Departments wielding such power. However, there was allegedly to be a serious attempt to augment the regional input into central decision-

1 "The National Plan", Op. Cit., P.85.

2 "Regional Policy in Britain", G. McCrone, Op. Cit., P.247.

3 S. Brittan's "Steering the Economy", Op. Cit., P.58.

4 "In My Way", Op. Cit., P.113.

making. One authoritative observer even wondered whether regional developments in the machinery of government would progress to the point where public services would be provided in regional units, rather than in separate functional units.¹ The latter had traditionally been the prevailing system in England.

The essence of the argument this far can be brought together in the following manner. The process whereby national economic aspirations were instilled into a private, autonomous economic system by means of the Keynesian "Managed Economy" was reinforced by indicative planning in the early and mid-sixties. Just as Keynes had liberated the economy from the worst features of the Trade Cycle, so the new approach was an attempt to liberate it from the milder contamination of "Stop-Go", thereby achieving faster sustained growth and averting the twin evils of recession and inflation. Lord Balogh, who became an influential economic adviser to the Labour Government, had, for example, been closely associated with the recognition of a need to venture beyond Keynesian economics.² Regional economic planning was seen as a necessary dimension in the central management of the economy by this method. In other words, the further involvement of government in society and the economy, entailed in planning, made it prudent to recognise the diversified interests of the regions.

Although Macmillan's Conservative Government initiated the indicative planning era, a conception of government that should increasingly concern itself with economic and societal relationships was taken up more readily by the subsequent Labour Administration, with its closer ideological affinity to the concept of planning.³ It was left to the Labour Government to apply more comprehensively regional developments that were incipient in the last years of Tory rule. This was in accordance with the fact that

1 R. Clarke, "The Machinery for Economic Planning: The Public Sector", Op. Cit., P.63.

2 "Planning for Progress". Op. Cit., P.5.

3 The contrast between the attitudes of the two Parties is depicted in J. Bray's models in "Decision in Government", Victor Gollancz 1970, P.84-6.

historically regional organisation has been more systematic under Labour.

National economic planning, with the concomitant regional economic planning, was a means, then, of creating an integrative mechanism in a pluralistic political system. An active State would attempt to bring diffuse power centres into a common framework, by means very different from those of the monolithic state, which would include the recognition of different needs such as those of the regions.¹ Again, Lord Balogh has been a proponent of the view that planning was vital to bring about greater social integration.² It was the problem of a democratic integration of aims that Laski³ and Mannheim had earlier applied themselves to. The latter had claimed that uncontrolled capitalism had become disintegrative and that there was a need to:-

"discover new methods₄ of creating a unified political will by voluntary agreement".⁴

Indicative planning endeavoured to achieve such aims by intimate government/pressure-group relations, involving the growth of consultative interest-group government, as typified in the N.E.D.C. structure. On one occasion it was even described as a "kind of economic parliament".⁵ The procedure was a further variation on the theme of the Civil Service having a conception of itself as an umpire between interests, rather than as the promoter of a "General Will" over and above the sum of the separate interests.⁶ It denotes the pre-occupation of government and administration with the reconciliation and accommodation of pressure-groups. Even the approach of the Labour Government, which was willing to use interventionist weapons to a greater extent than its predecessor in pursuit of the National Plan, was ultimately persuasive in relation to the private sector, government:-

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- 1 The context of broad national economic aims for regional planning is brought out in K. Hartley's "Public Policy and the Regions", District Bank Review, September 1966, P.49.
 - 2 "Planning for Progress", Op. Cit., P.45.
 - 3 H. Laski, "Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time", Op.Cit., P.341.
 - 4 K. Mannheim, "Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning", Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, P.35.
 - 5 A. Shonfield, "The Planners and Whitehall", The Listener, Dec. 20th 1962, re-printed in W.J. Stankiewicz's "Crisis in British Government", Op. Cit., P.231.
 - 6 A.H. Hanson, "Planning and the Politicians", Op. Cit., P.134.

"not by compulsion, but by co-ordination, initiation and stimulation."¹
 There are references in the National Plan to "co-operative planning".²
 This approach of Labour's originated directly from the ideological disputes in the Party prior to 1964, with the Revisionist argument against large-scale nationalisation being accepted in practice. The election programme of 1964 seemed to imply:-

"that the primitive techniques of nationalisation were being laid to rest, and that more sophisticated methods of controlling the economy would be applied."³

Mr. Wilson intended to guide the existing economic structure rather than abandon the "mixed economy".⁴

The emphasis on "co-operative planning" under Labour was apparent in the role given to N.E.D.C.⁵ Its representational nature was consummated when, at the end of 1964, the employers' members became official representatives of the C.B.I. In addition, Mr. Brown has described the great lengths to which he went to persuade the leaders of industry and the trade unions to accept the National Plan, which was put to N.E.D.C. in August 1965.⁶ This all raised the spectre of the Corporate State - the relegation of the role of democratic institutions and an enhancement of the role of the pressure-group. It was a development vehemently criticised by Paul Foot, referring to the "vast undemocratic corporatist machinery" that evolved under the Labour Government, and citing the example of the National Plan being released without it first having been presented to Parliament.⁷ Another critic of such tendencies has gone as far as to advocate taking planning out of politics, as an antidote to the reconciliatory objectives of interest-group planning.⁸ It seems that in the British decision-making

1 M. Shanks, "The Innovators", Op. Cit. P.111.

2 "The National Plan", Op. Cit., P.3.

3 V. Bogdanor and R. Skidelsky, "The Age of Affluence", Macmillan 1970, P.106.

4 P. Foot, "The Politics of Harold Wilson", Penguin 1968, P.151.

5 See S.C. Leslie, "The New Planning System", The Banker, Dec. 1964, re-printed in W.J. Stankiewicz's "Crisis in British Government, Op. Cit., P.239.

6 "In My Way", Op. Cit., P.104-6.

7 "The Politics of Harold Wilson", Op. Cit., P.316-18.

8 F. Oules, "Economic Planning and Democracy", Op. Cit., P.355-7.

process, the phenomena of "bargaining" and "mutual adjustment" constitute an integral part of any planning exercise. This confirms the previously quoted theses of Lindblom and comparable British decision-making theorists.¹

Apart from the planning process manifesting reconciliatory objectives, a further tendency is for the centrifugal forces to eventually assert themselves in a pluralistic political system. Long-term integrative policies and the associated institutional framework tend to succumb to the traditional decision-making process of responding to short-term crises, and assuaging short-term demands. The D.E.A. and the National Plan soon encountered such difficulties, having to contend with the policies of the Treasury to meet short-term economic crises, together with the difficulty of bringing into line the autonomous decision-making centres of individual firms and unions, as opposed to abstract entities such as industry in general (ie. via the C.B.I.). The vulnerability of the national planning framework in this respect was crucial to the position of regional economic planning, bound together as they were. Hence the importance of the above general considerations for regional policy after 1964. Long-term regional planning could easily find itself contending with a disjointed situation - a system of "Dirigiste Democracy", ad hoc intervention on the part of central government without any overall plan as a reference point. Some of these features of national planning were also duplicated at the regional level, and this will be discussed shortly.

4. The Regional Structure and a Regional "Governmental Process".

As the purpose is a guide to the machinery, the integrative social and economic aims of the Labour Government, that supplied the initial context for the regional structure of 1964-5, would not imply any radical deviation from previous forms of regional machinery. During 1964 Labour leaders made clear the relationship between the recognition of geographical/regional diversity and the promotion of a common framework of national aspirations. Mr. Wilson, for example, stated that:-

1 Consult Chapter One.

We must reconstruct our institutions to make us capable of courageous decision-making and of evoking the spirit of national partnership that will be required ... it means a degree of decentralisation, for not all wisdom abides in London; it means the creation of regional organs of Government".¹

These "regional organs of Government" demanded "a real willingness on the part of Whitehall to delegate authority",² and "a courageous degree of administrative decentralisation".³ Elsewhere he states that he insisted on such developments being pursued by George Brown at the D.E.A. in the first few days of office, reflecting a desire to create regional mini-Whitehalls.⁴

The context of national planning, although the new regional machinery was set up a few months before the publication of the National Plan, meant that the thinking behind the regional structure was not of a devolutionary nature. A word used frequently by Mr. Wilson was "decentralisation" not devolution. The aim was not pluralistic, in the sense of bringing into existence further strong diffuse power centres. As Brian Smith says:-

"most of the pre-Election statements from the Labour Party concentrated on the administrative rather than the democratic aspects of regional policy... it appeared to prefer to by-pass local government altogether and extend the arms of central government into the regions".⁵

The intention was to strengthen the outposts of central government and not to create a new tier of government. What was being sought was a method of ensuring that planning somehow reflected regional needs, together with improved machinery for the co-ordination of Government Departments in the regions.⁶ This was well within the ambit of "central government regionalism". Mr. Peterson, Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Regional Policy at the D.E.A., made a clear distinction between the earlier regional movements designed to improve the efficiency of local government, and the regionalism of the 1960's which was very much considered as part of the organisation

1 A speech made at the Town Hall, Birmingham, on 19th January 1964, re-printed in "The New Britain: Labour's Plan", Op. Cit., P.15.

2 Ibid., P.40.

3 Ibid., P.69.

4 "The Labour Government 1964-70", Weidenfeld & Nicolson/Michael Joseph, 1971, P.64.

5 "Regionalism in England 3: The New Regional Machinery", Acton Society Trust 1965, P.18.

6 Hansard, Vol. 701, Column 229.

of central government.¹ Further evidence of this came in a Commons statement, in 1965, on the reports of study groups in the regions, which emphasised that:-

"The findings in the reports and any proposals for action will of course have to be considered in the light of the National Economic Plan, with particular reference to competing claims on the Nation's resources, the size of housing and road programmes agreed for the country as a whole, and the Government's general policies on regional development, the distribution of industry, agriculture, land-use and related matters."²

The corollary of the above aims was that the Regional Economic Planning Councils, which were established in 1965, were only of an advisory status vis-a-vis central government. They in no way represented the creation of new regional executive tiers of government. Dr. Eversley's hope that they would function as regional cabinets³ was invalidated because they were not intended to be elected, accountable executive bodies, although George Brown claims that he envisaged they might be the embryo of future regional government.⁴

The Economic Planning Councils had to work within the following terms of reference:-

(i) To assist in the formulation of a regional plan, having regard to the best use of the region's resources.

(ii) To advise on the steps necessary for implementing the regional plan on the basis of the information and assessments provided by the Economic Planning Board.

(iii) To advise on the regional implications of national economic policies.⁵

With the Planning Councils performing these functions it was felt that:-

- 1 A.W. Peterson, "Machinery for Economic Planning: Regional Economic Planning Councils and Boards", Public Administration, Spring 1966.
- 2 Hansard, Written Answer, George Brown, 26th July 1965, Vol. 717, Column 24.
- 3 D. Eversley, "The Trouble with Regional Planning", New Society, 10th August 1967, P.188.
- 4 "In My Way", Op. Cit., P.108.
- 5 Hansard, Vol. 707, Column 613.

"central government can then make much better-informed decisions than it has been able to make up to now."¹

The Councils were to be comprised of representatives from local authorities, trade unions, management, universities and "independent" sources, although they were all to sit as individuals. The distinction between being delegates of corporate interests on the one hand, and individuals with corporate connections on the other, is however tenuous. The significant point, from the point of view of pressure-group theory, is that corporate representation was given preference over democratic, elected representation. The only link with the democratic process were those members nominated from the local authorities. The composition of the Planning Council was therefore demonstrative of the correlation between economic planning and the increased institutionalisation of nominees of groups within the structure of government. It was an example of the growing intermeshing of central government and the institutions of society, accompanying proliferation of government intervention.

The Regional Economic Planning Councils were to work alongside the regional officers of central departments, the latter comprising Economic Planning Boards, inter-departmental committees with the particular objective of long-term regional planning. In spite of protestations of wanting "to get the utmost decentralisation",² the Planning Boards suffered from a lack of delegation of power from the centre. Industrial Development Certificate applications for large projects had, for example, to be referred to Whitehall before being approved,³ ostensibly because parliamentary accountability requires Ministers to take responsibility for such decisions. In the opinion of Brian Smith, discretionary powers of field officers outside Whitehall were strictly restricted, so that they:-

1 Hansard, Vol. 718, Column 1061.

2 Hansard, Vol. 703, George Brown, Column 1834.

3 This was stated to be the case in an interview with the Midland Region C.B.I.

"do not exercise the sort of administrative discretion which could be responsive to the demands of local communities or interests."¹

He did insert a proviso. Regional controllers would expect to be consulted when new policy was being formulated in Whitehall. J.A. Cross has recorded the further problem of the level of discretion in the regions varying from Department to Department, and the difficulty of comparability in the face of the heterogeneity of the work of the different Departments at this level.² Nevertheless, his principal conclusion was that, in spite of the regional economic planning machinery:-

"departmental controllers are regional in the sense of being informed about regional views and circumstances and conveying this as fully and forcefully as necessary to head-quarters, but not in the sense of possessing a discretion which is really susceptible to regional pressures".³

The unsatisfactory nature of regional departmental co-ordination also remained in evidence. The Chairman of the Planning Boards only have a persuasive influence over the regional departmental officials, as compared with the undivided authority of the area chief in a prefectorial system.⁴ Brian Smith is again critical in this respect. He has pointed out that the functional organisation of British Government, with lines of control direct to the individual Departments, has affected the possibilities of co-ordination in the regions, claiming that the Regional Boards have made little impact on the authority of these individual Departments.⁵ A further point that J.A. Cross has made is that, although after 1965 Departments attempted to bring their regional organisations into conformity with the Planning Regions, some Departments still did not have separate regional officers for the East and West Midlands for example.⁶ Departments like the Ministry of Transport were without an integrated regional structure at all.⁷

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- 1 "Field Administration", Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, P.29.
 - 2 "Regional Decentralisation of British Government Departments", Op. Cit., P.428-33.
 - 3 Ibid., P.435-36.
 - 4 See "Democracy, Decentralisation and Development", Op. Cit., P.104.
 - 5 "Field Administration", Op. Cit., P.43.
 - 6 "Regional Decentralisation of British Government Departments", Op. Cit., P.436.
 - 7 Ibid., P.432.

The regional machinery set up in 1965 consisted therefore of advisory Planning Councils, and Planning Boards which were strictly circumscribed in their role as executive arms of the Councils. It was specifically stated that the new regional institutional structure was not to affect the existing powers of local authorities and Ministers. Consequently, the number of decisions taken at this level were negligible, thereby excluding the possibility of a "governmental process" at the regional level ie. an executive governmental body interacting with pressure-groups in arriving at policy decisions. Here one can reiterate the importance of the institutional factor in affecting the activity of pressure-groups, for they tend to mobilise their forces around centres of substantial executive power, and this the regional structure does not have. The new regional organisation was clearly built upon the precedent of earlier inter-departmental and advisory structures at this level, with the Planning Councils replacing the advisory Regional Boards for Industry.

The Planning Regions, of which there were ten, were also similar to the former Standard Regions in many instances. The West Midland Region incorporated the five administrative counties of Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Staffordshire in both cases. There were some concessions to economic considerations in delineating the regions, Lindsey going into the Yorkshire and Humberside Region to quote an instance.¹ However, the question of administrative convenience was again uppermost - the convenience of building on the established regional system and of creating few enough regions to minimise the staffing problems.

A bureaucratic/advisory structure, such as exists in the regions, apart from its lack of decision-making powers, does not necessarily reflect a real social, political, geographical or economic entity. Pressure-groups and communal loyalties only emerge from such unity of interest, or as one observer has put it:-

1 B.C. Smith, "Advising Ministers", Op. Cit., P.41.

"whenever a regional consciousness based primarily on cultural, linguistic or historical factors coincides with a serious economic grievance".¹

Peter Self has claimed that the West Midlands Economic Planning Region satisfies most criteria, being a definable economic region and an urban region based on Birmingham, although the Potteries of North Staffordshire (officially in the West Midlands) posed something of a problem in that their orientation was more towards the North-West in many respects.² It is nevertheless difficult to identify any regional pressure-groups in the West Midlands, apart perhaps from some conservationist societies such as the Midland New Towns Society, and since 1966, the Standing Conference of Local Authorities. Groups within the Region tend to take two forms, neither of which is indigenously regional. The first form is that of Local groups, corresponding to the local governmental structures, such as the Chambers of Commerce. The second is that of the organisational sub-divisions of national groups, such as the Regional Advisory Committees of the Trade Union Congress, and the regional organisations of the Confederation of British Industry.

The Midland Region C.B.I., for example, is very centrally-oriented, for the C.B.I. evolved from industrial organisations created to redress the balance nationally with the locally-oriented Chambers of Commerce, and its federal structure is not strong. The C.B.I. has experienced little which is comparable to the intermittent revolts staged by the County National Farmers Union organisations against their national body. Even during the lobbying for a Birmingham site for a National Exhibition Centre, the Midland Region C.B.I. was equivocal in its support and ideally preferred a London location.³ Here there was little in the way of a clash with the C.B.I. nationally. The Midland Region C.B.I. is essentially a "filtering" organisation between industry on the ground and the centre - a regional "feed-in", aided by the fact that a quarter of the membership of the C.B.I.'s

1 G. McCrone, "Regional Policy in Britain", Op. Cit., P.27.

2 "Regional Planning in Britain", Regional Studies, May 1967, P.7.

3 "Birmingham Favoured for Exhibition Centre", Birmingham Post, December 12th 1969.

Central Council is regional. This role indicates the tendency towards conformity between pressure-group organisation and the structure of government, for the Regional Planning Councils and Boards see their role primarily as a "feed-in" to the decision-making of central government. The correlation is also confirmed by the fact that the C.B.I. has given a great deal of thought to the changes that may be necessary in its regional organisation in the event of regional government, although nothing positive has been done with the report of the Crowther Commission still being awaited.¹

The absence of a decision-making structure in the Region is therefore paralleled by an absence of regional groups of a distinct character. In all, it is evident that in the West Midlands both sides of the equation of the governmental process have been absent - regional executive government and regional pressure-groups.

This is not to assert that such observations are universally applicable to all the English regions. There are exceptions where the right conditions exist and where a unifying problem, such as unemployment, engenders evolution of regional pressure-groups before regional government. The North-West and North-East Industrial Development Associations, although still basically amalgams of separate interests, frequently lobby the Government on behalf of their respective regions. Then again, Scotland manifests more of the pre-requisites of a regional governmental process, owing to ~~its~~ cultural and national identity. This is exemplified in the emergence of a regional party, the Scottish Nationalists, and the existence of active pressure-groups such as the Scottish Council. There is greater administrative devolution to Scotland from the centre. It is seen in the existence of a Scottish Minister and Department, which have encompassed many of the activities performed by a number of individual Ministers and Departments for England. There is a Scottish Grand Committee and Scottish

1 This was revealed in the interview with the Midland Region C.B.I. in 1970, previously referred to.

Standing Committee in Westminster to supplement this.¹ Even in this case, though, there is a problem in the complex division of responsibility between the Scottish Office and other central Departments. The control of the Scottish electorate is remote and the accountability of the Scottish Minister to the British Cabinet and Parliament militates against responsiveness to local conditions. Deviations from the policies of other central Departments are difficult to effect.²

The non-existence of a regional governmental process leads one on logically to a study of the influence of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council from the point of view of its role as a pressure-group and a focal point for pressure-group activity at the regional level. For all its weaknesses, the new regional machinery of 1965 did institutionalise a regional voice and create a mechanism for its projection and articulation. To what extent has the regional micro-economic element increased in the decision-making of central government then, and how far can decision-making and government organisation be said to have advanced in taking into account the needs of the West Midlands? The question is particularly pertinent in the light of the seemingly inauspicious context for the West Midlands Planning Council, in so far as there appeared to be little evidence of a distinct regional political alignment to direct and mobilise. The next chapter will look more closely at the nature of the West Midlands Region, the issues and problems that have confronted it in regional economic planning terms, the conflicts around such issues, and the extent to which the problems have changed or been transformed in the period 1965-72.

It should be realised at this point, however, that regional planning assumed a minor role within the spectrum of issues facing the Labour Administration of 1964-70 - a subsidiary force within the constellation

1 The structure is described in "Handbook on Scottish Administration", H.M.S.O. 1967.

2 These problems are discussed in J.P. Mackintosh's "Regional Administration: Has it Worked in Scotland?", Public Administration, Autumn 1964, and "Scottish Nationalism", Political Quarterly, October-December 1967.

of forces and pressures that were brought to bear on the Government. To take one simple measuring rod, in Mr. Wilson's record of his Government, the Regional Economic Planning Councils/Boards only merit a mention on seven pages in a volume of eight hundred pages, especially as it was:-

"a Government all but a year of whose life was dominated by an inherited balance of payments problem".¹

A study of regional economic planning and its associated institutional structure must be kept clearly in perspective, although it was seen as one of a number of measures to promote faster economic growth and strengthen Britain's economic structure. Such a subsidiary role does not preclude one from calling for an elevation of its role of course, of concluding that it has played too minor a role and needs to be strengthened.

1 "The Labour Government 1964-70", Op. Cit., P.XVII in the Foreword.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

In 1968 Mr. Emanuel, the Chairman of the Economic Planning Board at the time, pointed out three basic problems that faced the West Midlands. The first was the growth of population. Next, there was the need for sufficient economic growth to provide employment for the population and decent living standards. Lastly, there was the question of maintaining the competitive position of the economy in the West Midlands, in terms of productivity, efficiency and technology.¹ This, then, was one assessment of the situation.

For a detailed analysis of the Region's problems one has to turn to the four official studies that were completed between 1965 and 1971. In chronological order, they were as follows:-

(i) "The West Midlands - A Regional Study", produced by a group of Government departmental officials in 1965.²

(ii) "Patterns of Growth", constituting the first strategic report of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council, published in 1967.³

(iii) An "Economic Appraisal", again published by the Economic Planning Council, on the basis of work carried out by a special Working Party of the Council, in June 1971.⁴

(iv) "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands", a study presented to the Standing Conference of Local Authorities by a Technical Panel, consisting of officers from local government, in September 1971.⁵ Via a consideration of these documents, not only can the regional problems be presented, but it also enables one to trace any change of emphasis or emergence of new problems. Taking the four studies together offers a "running picture" of the changing situation. Before carrying out this

1 Talk to the Walsall Junior Chamber of Commerce, 29th October 1968, P.6 of the typescript.

2 Department of Economic Affairs, H.M.S.O.

3 H.M.S.O., published for the Department of Economic Affairs.

4 H.M.S.O., published for the Department of the Environment.

5 Report by the West Midlands Regional Study, Birmingham B2 4HQ.

exercise, there is a need to look more closely at the idea of "regional consciousness" in the West Midlands.

Within the West Midlands Region there are sixteen major local authorities - five county councils and eleven county boroughs. Seven of the county boroughs are in the central conurbation complex of the Region, giving some indication of the concentration of population in that location. The lack of regional consciousness and the ascendancy of internal division, has been reflected in the conflict between these separate local government processes. It has manifested itself particularly in the overspill population question, related to the need to disperse this concentration of population from the Birmingham conurbation.

As early as 1961, Peter Self was remarking on the detrimental effects of these conflicting forces, in the context of the issues raised by expanding urban regions.¹ Birmingham's first reaction to the problems of population and housing in the Conurbation, of which it formed the core, was to seek a solution in peripheral expansion. There were also the benefits of economic concentration in this central urban complex, derived from the inter-relationships of many of the metal trades and manufactures. These advantages were compounded by the fact that Birmingham Corporation had made little attempt to restrict the amount of land allocated to industry within its domain. They were all trends militating against planned dispersal. Simultaneously, regional planning was thwarted because local authorities outside the Conurbation were not amenable in accommodating overspill, with the exception of Staffordshire County Council. A joint committee formed by Birmingham and the three adjoining counties, with the aim of steering away development from the central Conurbation, produced only negligible results. The situation, then, was of Birmingham wanting to expand into the provisional green belt as its housing problems became more acute, and of fierce resistance from most of the neighbouring county

1 "Cities in Flood", Op. Cit.

authorities.

The territorial demands of Birmingham were displayed in the desire to expand its urban area by peripheral expansion into Wythall. A public enquiry in 1959 had resulted in the Minister's rejection of the development. The issue was re-opened in 1961 and 1964, with the respective Ministers re-considering the possibility of building there. On both occasions development was ultimately refused.¹ Peter Self, discussing the original application in 1959, states that the Minister opted to uphold the green belt principle, but as an alternative was forced to examine organised dispersal, including the possibility of new towns.² This was urgent because the restrictive use of green belts had run far ahead of proposals to redistribute population and employment from the Conurbation. At the same time, Self considered that if the City of Birmingham had been given a housing outlet under its own control, it would have lost interest in the whole idea of dispersal. As another observer of the scene later stated:-

"For Birmingham Corporation, regionalism, being interpreted means: how can we get land for our overspill population? And it would still prefer to have that land at the City boundary, rather than in some distant cornfield."³

Dawley and Redditch were eventually chosen as sites for new towns,⁴ although peripheral expansion at Chelmsley Wood, just to the east of Birmingham, had been agreed upon before the appearance of the "West Midlands Study" in 1965.

In another analysis, it was argued that the advisory regional plans of the immediate post-war period had subsequently made very little impact on the ground in the West Midlands, in their attempt to resolve the conflict between the Conurbation and the countryside. This meant that:-

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- 1 For a discussion of these events see the "Birmingham Post", April 6th 1960 and December 21st and 23rd 1964.
 - 2 "The Wythall Enquiry", Ed. by J.R. Long, Estates Gazette Ltd; P.IX.
 - 3 P. Barker, "Rejuvenating Birmingham", New Society, 3rd November 1966, P.678.
 - 4 Consult the "Birmingham Post", March 7th 1962 and December 21st 1964.

"From a position twenty years ago when less than half of the Conurbation was built up, there is now a shortage of land in every local authority and as yet no overspill development sufficient to ease the pressure".¹

The arbitrary limit to suburbanisation imposed by the green belt had led to the basic forces of growth being bottled up inside the Conurbation. This same analysis asserted that the situation demanded a regional approach to planning to bring about a proper balance between town and country.

The land-use problem in the West Midlands was therefore not resolved. The separate interests of the local authorities and the conflicts between them had played a large part in preventing solutions. In some instances, such internal disunity in the Region has taken a sub-regional form, initiated and given permanence through the local authority joint committee procedure. The most conspicuous example is that of the Five County Boroughs Joint Committee in the Black Country, an entity tenacious in trying to preserve its "independence". This was seen in the outcry over the Maud proposals to join the area with Birmingham in a Metropolitan Authority.² The earlier Local Government Commission report on the local government structure in the area referred to the civic pride of the inhabitants of Birmingham and concluded that:-

"neither they nor the people of the Black Country would acknowledge any common bond of loyalty and tradition".³

There are a number of underlying factors contributing to the absence of regional consciousness and unity in the West Midlands, which go to the heart of the economic and historical structure of the Region. First, the West Midlands is part of the West European industrial triangle and, within Britain, part of what is sometimes known as the "Great Industrial Belt". One description of the latter entity has it stretching from the South-East to the North-West, with even the Midland sub-division extending outside the boundaries of the West Midland Planning Region, going as far south as

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- 1 G.M. Lomas, "Conurbations and the Countryside", Journal of the Town Planning Institute, June 1968, P.278.
 - 2 "Royal Commission on Local Government in England", Vol. I. Op. Cit., P.237.
 - 3 "Local Government Commission Report No. 1 - West Midland Special Review Area", Op. Cit., P.3.

Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.¹ This presents difficulties in the search for economic identity and uniqueness, in contrast to the regions where there are specific economic problems originating from their dependence on declining industries. The lack of uniqueness in the economic structure of the West Midlands has been further emphasised through becoming the centre of the national motorway system. The Region therefore merges into a modern industrial structure concentration which is considered to extend over a large geographical area.

Secondly, there has been a diversion of industry from the West Midlands to the less prosperous regions by means of Industrial Development Certificate policy. Most notably, the Government exerted pressure on the car industry in this respect, from the beginning of the 1960's. Such a policy has threatened the integrated economic complex of the Region - the "industrial machine par excellence",² based on the economic advantages of concentration, particularly in the Conurbation, as previously mentioned.

Thirdly, the West Midlands has been experiencing the consequences of industrial rationalisation in strategic industries. It raises the matter of the industrial micro-economic dimension of central government planning and intervention. Government recognition of the separate needs of individual industries takes more of the decisions affecting them into central decision-making. This includes the promotion of mergers and re-structuring, which can profoundly affect employment in the regions. The effect was seen in the West Midlands with the involvement of the Labour Government's interventionist agency, the Industrial Re-organisation Corporation, in the merger between British Leyland and British Motor Holdings in the car industry³ and in the G.E.C/A.E.I. merger in the electrical industry.⁴ The second example seriously affected employment in Coventry. Such rationalisation destroys regional economic interests by

1 A.C. Hobson, "The Great Industrial Belt", *Economic Journal*, September 1951.

2 P. Self, "Cities in Flood", P.30, Op. Cit.

3 "Birmingham Post", January 18th 1968.

4 "Birmingham Post", September 29th 1967.

making most industries national, or even trans-national, in character. Joseph Lucas is one of the few major firms in the West Midlands that has its head-quarters there. These large national corporations are even more inclined to approach the Government directly at the centre, through such organs as the National Economic Development Council and the "Little Neddies". The former provides close links with the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and other economic/industrial sponsoring Ministers. The consequences of these developments are, of course, felt by all regions. In relation to Scotland it has been said that mergers and the Neddy system have centralised decision-making and:-

"add to the dilemma for self-conscious regions."¹

Interventionism therefore has the effect of accentuating centralisation, already very evident in the British political system, consolidating underlying technological rationalisation. Such an intimate government/industry relationship was epitomised in the role of the Ministry of Technology in the Labour Administration.²

The economic/communications structure of the West Midlands does not, then, appear to provide a suitable sub-structure to under-pin the idea of regional consciousness and politics. For most of the post-war period the West Midlands has manifested the qualities of an "affluent" region, with the concomitant absence of any feeling of unity of purpose centred on a common economic problem or malaise. In addition, within the Region there are identifiable localised economic entities, of no significance to the area as a whole, but of considerable importance to those localities. Examples are the Potteries of North Staffordshire and coal mining in North Warwickshire.

Taking the West Midlands as an entity, there is little in the way of a

1 The Times, "Planning for Scotland", January 2nd 1970.

2 J. Bray, "Decision in Government", Op. Cit., P.155-62.

regional tradition, history or culture; nothing comparable to such feelings in Scotland and Wales. A tradition of separateness is important in the emergence of federal, regional, or sectional geographical politics, as exemplified in the separate character of the original colonies in the case of the federal system in the United States.¹ The historical identities in the West Midlands point to fragmentation within the Region. It is characterised by heterogeneity rather than homogeneity.

Overall, the West Midlands has been caught between the strong concentration of power at the centre and local patriotism and interests on the other - sandwiched between the national and local forces. Of the claim that the West Midlands Economic Planning Region is an identifiable economic region and an urban region based on Birmingham, one can only conclude that the claims for the former have been dubious, while solutions to the problems posed by the latter have been impeded by the disunity displayed by local authorities in the Region. This, then, was the Region whose problems the "West Midlands Study" applied itself to, providing the first official perception of the regional planning issues in the 1960's.

1 "The West Midlands Study".

The Study describes a Region of nearly five million people, dominated, in terms of communications, the economy and the population pattern, by the influence of the Birmingham conurbation:

"It is a region which at present has the outstanding characteristic of continuing prosperity and growth at its centre - and the problems to which these can give rise."²

The main industrial strength of the West Midlands existed in the concentrations in the middle of the Region, especially in Birmingham and the Black Country. The Conurbation also had a population of nearly 2.4 million out of the 5 million for the entire Region and it faced the problems of congestion:-

1 G.F. Sawyer, "Modern Federalism", Op. Cit., Chapter 1.

2 Op. Cit., P.1.

"This combination of growth and congestion, in an area which although highly prosperous is still much in need of physical renewal, is the Conurbation's main problem - and the Region's too."¹

The Conurbation, then, was the active centre of what, since 1951, had been the fastest growing region in terms of population.

In terms of employment, the Study depicted a situation consisting of a rapid increase in the number of jobs in an essentially manufacturing Region, employment in this sector constituting 53% of the whole, compared with a national average of 38%. Unemployment in the West Midlands had been almost constantly below the national average in the period 1953-63, varying from a differential of 0.7% to 0.1% below it. The main employment growth followed the areas of expanding population, again particularly in the Birmingham conurbation and its fringes, plus in the Coventry belt.

The general picture portrayed was one of vigorous expansion, both in terms of population and industrial growth. The main pressure for the accommodation of jobs and people was in and around the already congested and sprawling central urban areas.

The Study went on to develop its analysis of the Region's economic activity. In no part of the West Midlands had there been unemployment on a major scale in recent years, such as to imperil the general prosperity. This was because of the **leak** of a high concentration of industries in sharp decline, although the same economic expansion as in the central areas was not being experienced on the periphery, in the Rural West and North Staffordshire. The Region was not significantly dependent on the declining primary industries for employment. It lived on its major manufacturing industries of metals, engineering, vehicles and electrical goods, all of which had successful growth records. The Region's strong industrial structure was therefore a result:-

"of having on the one hand no major declining industries, and on the other hand a higher than average proportion of what nationally have been growing industries."²

1 Ibid., P.4.

2 Ibid., P.14.

Reference was made to, by now, the commonly acknowledged fact of the importance of the industrial linkage of the metal industries in the Birmingham conurbation. Lastly, although the service sector was under-represented in the Region, it was already beginning to show signs of rapid expansion between 1953 and 1963.

It was clear to the Study that the West Midlands fulfilled a crucial role in the national economy and it was necessary to maintain the dynamic of its economy. The future was auspicious in this respect. Its industrial structure would remain a powerful asset, enhanced by the Region's central position in terms of communications and by its pool of skilled labour:

"the chances of continued economic growth in the West Midlands must on structural grounds be rated high".¹

The one significant proviso was that there should be scope for some diversification of the industrial structure, the chemical industry not being strongly represented in the Region for example.

The economic strengths of the West Midlands pointed to a likely excess of labour demand over labour supply up to 1981 - a shortage of labour. This meant that the Region would benefit from a continuation of a firm policy of steering industry to other regions, which would generally help to alleviate the problems of congestion.

The "West Midlands Study" next turned its attention to the physical environment of the Region, for this would contribute to the level of industrial efficiency. It projected an increase of 800,000 in population from natural causes by 1981, along with the possibility of some net immigration into the Region. This was likely to create a considerable housing and land problem, along with the need to make good the deficiency in the provision of decent housing for the existing population. The needs were likely to be the greatest where there were the fewest sites - in the central urban area. The Conurbation was surrounded by the provisional green belt and yet:-

1 Ibid., P.29.

"there have not been sufficient arrangements made for a compensating amount of development beyond the green belt to meet even the minimum needs up to 1981."¹

The Conurbation was, in fact, faced with a land shortage equivalent to 170,000 sites by 1981. Even taking account of prospective sites in the hinterland and in the designated overspill reception projects, the most noteworthy of which were the new towns of Dawley and Redditch, there would still be a deficiency of 50,000 sites. This would be higher if any net immigration occurred. Therefore:-

"this land problem of the Birmingham conurbation and its hinterland may also be taken as the main land problem of the region as a whole."²

The Study also drew attention to communications congestion in the Conurbation. There would be further deterioration if plans for accommodating the growth of population were based on an additional concentration in and around the central urban area. Population and land-use needs could only be solved, then, by a positive approach to development, rather than a negative and restrictionist resistance to change. Solutions would depend on more joint effort between neighbouring local authorities and on the foundation of a regional strategy.

The overall observation was that the:-

"basic requirement is to settle broadly for the period up to 1981 - but with an eye also to the longer term - an economically and socially acceptable disposition of the region's population growth and new housing and the jobs available to support them in particular it means deciding how to handle the continued growth in the population, housing need, and labour demand, of the Birmingham conurbation."³

The crucial question was the degree to which there should be further concentration in the Region's central urban complex - how to deal with overspill from the Conurbation.

The "West Midlands Study" confirmed traditional notions about the nature of the West Midlands Region. There was no discernible serious economic problem. The issues raised by an expanding urban region posed the dilemma, along with the inadequacy of the local government structure in

1 Ibid., P.44.

2 Ibid., P.46.

3 Ibid., P.58.

coping with them. The Study concurred with observations that the restrictive use of green belts had run ahead of proposals to redistribute population and employment from the Birmingham conurbation. Spatial, physical and land-use problems, then, were presented as the over-riding issues in relation to the full and balanced development of resources in the Region.

The National Plan, published soon after, referred to the congestion in the West Midlands, equating it with the similar problems of the South-East region. The aim of promoting balanced regional development necessitated control over expansion in some parts of the Region. The National Plan reiterated the specific problems identified in the "West Midlands Study" - population, physical renewal, the growth in the demand for labour, and of how the difficulties of the Birmingham conurbation raised the questions of overspill and new towns. The Study was to be considered as the basis for regional plans in the light of the National Plan.¹

2. "Patterns of Growth".

It was to the West Midlands Economic Planning Council that the task fell of invoking the analysis of the Region, embodied in the "West Midlands Study", and of using the identification of problems to move towards the formulation of a regional strategy. "Patterns of Growth" first had to decide to what extent it agreed with the analysis.

Industrial and commercial effectiveness in the Region was considered. There was agreement that the industrial structure of the West Midlands was favourable, although more knowledge was required of the regional factors affecting industrial growth. The accompanying assumption was the same as that of the "West Midlands Study". The Region's demand for labour was likely to remain high, given that regional industry generated growth in response to change. Even taking net immigration into account, the growth of the population of working age would not be sufficient to remove the shortage of labour. This shortage would have to be offset by increased

1 "The National Plan", September 1965, Op. Cit., especially P.11-12, Chapter 8 and Appendix B.

productivity.

The impact of communications on economic effectiveness also prompted conclusions analogous to those of the "West Midlands Study". Traffic congestion was sapping the efficiency of the Birmingham conurbation. This led directly on to the question of the Region's future pattern of development, of overspill to reduce congestion.

In the opinion of "Patterns of Growth", of the problems identified by the Study, the most important were posed by the expected increase in the Region's demand for houses. On the growth of population, the estimate was that the numbers would be some 80,000 higher than suggested in the previous survey. This would produce a regional population nearer 5.8 than 5.7 million by 1981, the difference being derived from an allowance for an increase due to net immigration. The total estimate for new household formation needed between 1963 and 1981 was therefore 630,000, rather than the previous figure of 600,000. This did not alter the fundamental nature of the problem - the concentration of the pressures in the Birmingham conurbation. More than half of the Region's total housing need would arise there. "Patterns of Growth" accepted the Study's estimate that needs elsewhere in the Region could be accommodated locally.

As in the "West Midlands Study", then, the emphasis was on the problems of the Conurbation, the need for its redevelopment, accompanied by a relief of the ever-growing congestion there. The sites for housing within its existing physical limits were insufficient to meet all the demand, amounting to 355,000 new dwellings by 1981. Overspill would have to occur on an unprecedented scale, for only some 25,000 people had been moved from the Conurbation as part of planned overspill between 1945 and 1965. More than twenty times that number would be needed in the following fifteen years.

This overspill movement would have to be complemented by increased movement of industry within the Region, if more commuting was not to result. On the re-location of economic activity within the West Midlands, P.A. Wood

had revealed that dispersal had hardly begun on the scale and distance required. Development had mainly occurred close to the principal centres of the Conurbation and the Coventry belt. A pattern of manufacturing similar to that of the Conurbation had therefore spread outside its physical limits to nearby geographical centres such as Redditch - to the inner zone (A). There was a transition through to zone B, where 30% to 60% of manufacturing industry was similar to that of the Conurbation's. In short, the growth was in inverse proportion to the distance from Birmingham. Wood insisted that this pattern would have to be taken into account in any strategy. Fundamental changes in policy were necessary, if new regional growth points were to be promoted away from the central Conurbation.¹

Much earlier, M. Beesley had researched the advantages of the Conurbation in breeding enterprise. Between 1947 and 1951 there had been the same proportion of establishments due to new entrants as previously, in spite of the policy of restrictions on new plants and the discouragement of firms from going to Birmingham.²

If the difficulties involved in the movement of industry had to be taken into account in developing a regional strategy, "Patterns of Growth" stated that account also had to be made of preservation needs, mineral deposits and good agricultural land. Full weight should be given to the protection of these resources where possible.

Two broadsheets published by the West Midlands Economic Planning Council in 1968 dealt with the facts and issues arising from what was termed as the "population explosion". The first of these reiterated the Council's projected figures for the population increase in the Region and asserted that:-

"There we have the problem that in this West Midlands Region during the next thirty-five years we have got to find room for the equivalent of about three present-day Birmingham."³

The magnitude of the problem in the Birmingham conurbation was illustrated

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- 1 "Regional Planning Strategies and Manufacturing Industry - Some Lessons from the West Midlands", Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol. 52, October 1966.
 - 2 "Birth and Death of Industrial Establishments", Journal of Industrial Economics, Vol. 4, October 1955, P.45-61.
 - 3 W.M.E.P.C. Broadsheet No. 1, "Midlands Tomorrow", HMSO 1968, P.2.

by quoting population densities - 14.54 persons per acre, compared to 1.56 in the rest of the Region. Planned growth was essential to prevent the destruction of the countryside, to enable the Conurbation to continue its productive growth and to inject into other cities new development, based on what was economically sound and commendable in terms of social planning.

The second broadsheet looked at the possible range of actions and the alternative forms of development, assuming a vigorous industrial re-location policy. These possibilities included redevelopment at high density of existing centres, corridor growth, and development in free-standing towns. The pre-occupation with the Conurbation was again evident. Without a strategic plan, its overcrowding, congestion and social deficiency would deteriorate still further and impede the full realisation of economic potential. The broadsheet concluded by stating that an intensive re-assessment of the situation was being carried out on behalf of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities.¹

3. The "Economic Appraisal" and Changing Assumptions.

The next publication of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council, in June 1971, showed a definite change in pre-occupation, compared with the above emphases and analyses. Its main purpose was to look at the economic prospects of the West Midlands Region, the action needed to foster its growth and to make the most of its economic resources. In this respect, it was claimed that the "Economic Appraisal" was a pioneering work, no other region having carried out a comparable industrial/economic survey. It looked closely at the facts of the economic position in the West Midlands and the manner in which it might develop.

The Region was described as the "hub of the industrial wheel of this country".² The ability of its industry to adapt to changing patterns was its greatest strength. Yet, there existed a widespread apprehension in

1 W.M.E.P.C. Broadsheet No. 2, "Midlands Tomorrow", HMSO 1968.

2 Op. Cit., P.1.

some respects. The dependence of the West Midlands on manufacturing could prove to be a weakness, as might the over-concentration on a few industries, particularly metal-based industries. There was concern for the position of the substantial number of small businesses in the Region and the problem posed for them by redevelopment in the Conurbation. A further worry was the danger of the Region being by-passed by technological change. The small stake in new science-based industries, as a result of restriction on industrial expansion in the West Midlands, was evidence of this. The competitive position of industry and its adaptation to new techniques was also hindered by the difficulties which were generally faced in the Birmingham conurbation, in terms of out-moded and inefficient accommodation and the communications problems. The "Economic Appraisal" stated that:-

"As we enter a new industrial phase marked by rapid change in technology, the Council is concerned at the lack of clarity of the economic prospects of the Region and at the need for a positive attitude towards the development of the West Midlands".¹

Provision would also have to be made in the economic field for the considerable increase anticipated in the population up to 1981.

The aim of identifying the special features of the economy in the Region and assessing their significance for policy was necessary because:-

"The fact that the Region is often classified as prosperous compared with other regions ... does not render a study of its prospects and problems any less important or relevant to national policy formulation".²

There was a possibility that the weaknesses in the economy might produce symptoms of depression in the future. The Region's central position placed its industry in an inter-dependent relationship to the economy of the whole country. The national economy would not expand if the West Midlands stagnated, nor would sufficient industry be generated in the Region to help the problems of other areas. The well-being of the West Midlands could therefore be reconciled with the objectives of national policy:

1 Ibid., P.3.

2 Ibid., P.4.

"The question that needs to be considered in the light of what has been said about the special features of the West Midlands is whether, given the need for a policy of dealing with the problems of the assisted areas, there is scope for a positive economic policy for the West Midlands. Our view is that such a policy is both possible and desirable."¹

It was suggested that the "positive economic policy" should include help to West Midlands industry to maintain its competitive capacity, along with an evaluation of the economic consequences of steering industry away from the Region. Industry should be encouraged to invest in new plant and technology, to make more intensive use of its existing assets so that industrial land and buildings would not be under-utilised. A positive policy would provide enough jobs for the growth in population and provide for an adequate range of skills, for although in the past it had been a Region of low unemployment there was no guarantee that this would continue. There was need for a selective introduction of new industry, as an insurance against technological obsolescence and to take advantage of the unique regional economic strengths of the West Midlands - its adaptive industrial structure, skilled labour and entrepreneurial tradition of exploiting new ideas. The economy of the Region was also vulnerable to cyclical movements in the national economy and policy needed to avoid accentuating these fluctuations. Generally, the objectives of policy should be to maintain competitive ability, make the most of the Region's economic potential and build on its capacity to innovate.

The "Economic Appraisal" sought to reinforce its case by means of an analysis of the employment structure of the Region. It pointed out the contrast between 1961-66, the range of the statistical base for the earlier regional studies, and 1966-69. The West Midlands economy had reacted rapidly to the down-turn in the national economy in 1967. In 1970 there had been a resumption of the decline. In addition:-

"The total unemployed measured in absolute terms in the Region had been rising throughout the period from 1951, with a tendency for the base of each unemployment cycle to be higher in the numbers of unemployed."²

1 Ibid., P.7.
2 Ibid., P.15.

The Appraisal continued by stating that it was not attempting to formulate a balanced strategy that gave weight to all the relevant factors of regional policy, for this was, by now, in the hands of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities. It stressed the need to establish the economic facts of any planning proposals. The population of the Region was expected to go up from 5,145,000 in 1969 to 5,516,000 in 1981. This had to be combined with the need for replacement in the housing stock. The costs and benefits of alternative planning options to meet this growth in population had to be weighed, in relation to their influence on economic development. As in previous studies the problem of the intra-regional location of industry was mentioned, with the need for faster regional growth to promote it. In this context, the necessity to examine the economic consequences of the existing I.D.C. policy was re-emphasised - its implications for growth, the use of resources, competitive ability and the future industrial structure of the West Midlands. This led on to the general question of how to stimulate the growth of industry in the Region.

Overall, the evidence had:-

"left the Working Party in no doubt that if the West Midlands continues on its present course its rate of growth will not be sufficient in the years ahead to meet regional or national economic needs, nor will it be able to adapt fast enough to the changing markets in which it has to compete."¹

The requirement was for new policies with the objective of facilitating "planning for growth". A more positive policy, at the national level, towards economic growth in the Region was imperative, if it was to fulfil its role as the industrial heart of the country; an important supplier of the home market and a significant contributor to exports. Such a policy should attend particularly to the promotion of the service industries, for the West Midlands was under-represented in this key growth sector.

The change of emphasis in this "Economic Appraisal" was such as to tackle directly the considerations that had been an integral part of

1 Ibid., P.78.

indicative planning objectives of the early and mid-60's - the full and efficient mobilisation of economic resources and the contribution that regional policy could make. It was a reflection of rising doubts about the future health of the economy in the West Midlands and a direct challenge, in changed circumstances, to the traditional notions of "affluence". Regional economic planning assumptions in the Region were perceptibly changing. There was less pre-occupation, therefore, with the spatial, physical problems of the location of houses and population than had been the case in the "West Midlands Study" and "Patterns of Growth". This did not ignore the fact, made clear in the "Economic Appraisal", that the economic and physical aspects of regional development are closely intertwined.

4. "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands".

"A Developing Strategy" was published soon after the "Economic Appraisal", in September 1971. It pointed out that the immediate issues before the Region were the pressures of its population growth, the stresses of its industrial structure and the thrusting development of its Conurbation. The aim was to look at these problems up to the end of the century, with particular attention up to 1981, to decide:-

"where and in what form future growth within the Region might best be deployed".¹

This required a close look at the elements of the Region, the forces at work in directing the pattern of growth and the possible forms that the pattern could take.

The first element of the Region the Study turned its attention to was population. There were over five million people in the Region by now, as indicated in the figures in the "Economic Appraisal". Over the previous five years the population had grown at a rate of 0.9% annually, which was above the average for the rest of the country. As to the concentration of the population, over 48% had resided in the Conurbation in 1966, a proportion similar to that given in the "West Midlands Study" in 1965. The

1 Op. Cit., P.1.

trend, however, was for this proportion to decline, due to a counter-current of migration to the sub-regions adjoining the Conurbation, a migrational pattern which had also occurred at the expense of the outer regions (North Staffordshire and Rural West). "A Developing Strategy" stressed the unreliability of population projections for the future though. The estimates of 1968, for example, indicated a reduction in the total population forecast for 2001, as compared with the figures of 1966. The estimates now given assumed a likely population of over 6.4 million by 2001, although possible deviations meant the range could be anything from 6.7 to 6.1 million. More than two fifths of this growth would occur by 1981, producing a figure of 5.5 million for that year. This figure for 1981 was indicative of the downward trend in future population estimates, for "Patterns of Growth" had forecast a figure of 5.8 million for the same year.

Of the expected increment in population by 2001, 900,000 would be outside the Conurbation, mainly in the inner sub-regions. In the Conurbation itself, the increase was likely to be in the range of 638,000 on the 1966 population, an increase which could not be physically met there, raising the question of overspill again. This overspill would have to be added to the natural increase of the other sub-regions and the drifts of migration, outside the Conurbation, into one sub-region from another. Then one would arrive at the population that would have to be distributed within the Region by a strategy - the total "option" population. It meant that the areas outside the Conurbation would hold a further 1.8 million by 2001, a 70% increase on their existing population.

These population figures were related to housing. It was estimated that some 2,120,000 households would be needed in the West Midlands by 2001. The deficiency in the period 1968-81 in the Conurbation would be 85,000, or 100,000 if 1966 was taken as the base line, and:-

"It was evident that the dimensions of the Conurbation's housing need would continue to exceed its inherent opportunities for new development".¹

Overspill movement between 1966 and 2001 was likely to be in the order of 252,000 households.

The next element to be examined was the economy - the course of economic change, the process of growth and decline, and the changing economic structure of the West Midlands. Concern was expressed that the economy of the Region should maintain its inherent strength and growth, although it could not be taken for granted that its prosperity would last in the long-term without the stimulus of positive measures. Yet, as in the "West Midlands Study", it was recorded that:-

"The economic base of the Region is characterised by industries ... which have developed vigorously during the present century".²

These industries (metals, engineering and vehicles) fed a host of related trades. All told, over half the labour force was engaged in manufacturing. Additional economic advantages of the Region were mentioned, such as the large force of skilled workers. Unemployment rates had tended to remain below the national average:

"During the years 1961-66, the manufacturing, construction and service sectors of the regional economy experienced a rate of growth that was consistently above the national average".³

This would all sound familiar to anyone conversant with the "West Midlands Study". Within the Region, employment in the Conurbation had grown between 1961 and 1966, but at less than the regional average. The most significant growth had been in the sub-regions flanking it. Nevertheless, in 1966-7 54% of the jobs of the Region were to be found in the Conurbation.

"A Developing Strategy" stated that the labour supply was likely to be between 2.43 and 2.55 million by 1981, and 2.77 to 2.94 million in 2001. This raised the question of labour demand, calculated on the basis of studies of the economic sectors of the Region, with assumptions generally about the future state of the regional economy and its inherent potential

1 Ibid., P.12.

2 Ibid., P.17.

3 Ibid., P.19.

for growth. Projections indicated that labour demand was likely to fall within the range of the forecast supply, although this had been derived before the onset of the economic difficulties at the time of publication. It was a retreat from the idea of a "labour shortage" that had characterised the studies of the mid-60's, but could hardly be construed as pessimistic. The estimate was related to the assumption that the West Midlands would gradually lose its dependence on manufacturing through a re-shaped employment structure, an assumption that it felt had been brought out in the "Economic Appraisal". The implication was therefore that serious employment problems would not recur once the existing imbalance was corrected. Employment in the Region was sensitive to changes in the economic climate, because of its relative dependence on manufacturing, and the rising levels of unemployment were due to the decline in the general level of economic activity.

The trend up to 1981 would be that of a further decline in agriculture and mining, although these constituted only a small fraction of the total employment in the Region. There would be a reduction in manufacturing jobs of 77,000, the start of a long-term change. Services would provide the largest share of the net increase in employment, that is, most of the predicted growth of 265,000 jobs. This would further offset the relative weakness in the representation of this sector in the Region. The renewed demand in services would continue in the longer term. Changes in Government policy and in the domestic state of the economy could, however, have a serious determining effect. The overall picture described, then, was of a re-structuring of manufacturing and an expansion of services.

Without taking account of the effect on the Conurbation of diverting some of its potential growth to other areas, it would be the sub-region with the largest measure of growth over the long term. Sub-regions flanking the Conurbation would have growth above the regional average, but there would be stress in the peripheral north and west of the Region.

The pattern of economic growth would have implications for any

regional strategy, for areas of development would need to possess sufficient assets of location to offer substantial economic potential. In estimating the extent to which employment was likely to move within the West Midlands, account had to be taken of the Government's I.D.C. policy. The Region would provide continued support for the less-favoured areas, although the position would need to be seen in the context of the Region's importance to the economic welfare of the country. It was possible, however, that the proportion of mobile manufacturing jobs retained in the Region might alter, as a result of urban and industrial renewal and the growing momentum of the new towns. This was not to underestimate the strength of the complex links between industries in specific locations. Taking all these considerations into account, the level of employment mobility for 1967-81 was likely to be about 29,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector and about 37,000 in the service sector, the latter depending on the size of overspill movement. In the longer term the figures would be 55,000 and 119,000 respectively. Not all the projected growth of services of a regional character would be in the heart of the Conurbation - there would be 45,000 further jobs in the long-term in places such as Solihull and Redditch.

"A Developing Strategy" next looked at some social implications. The extension outwards of the socio-economic influence of the Conurbation and the growth of a commuter belt was one example. This brought in its wake the social problems of rising levels of mobility. The problem of movement and congestion in the Conurbation was being accentuated by the regional decline in public transport. There was also the danger of the consolidation of a hard core of unskilled and immobile labour in the heart of the central urban areas. Lastly, the rate of movement away from manual occupations was below the national average. The Region's employment structure was only moving slowly in the indicated direction of change, towards service industries. The rate of change would accelerate, but there would remain a marked emphasis on manual groups. The Region might find itself with a larger

share of unskilled workers and a lower proportion of non-manual employees than the national average.

A picture was therefore being built up of how the physical, economic and social aspects of a strategy would have to reinforce one another, including the social problems of population movement.

On the physical setting for a strategy, as in previous studies, the competing claims on land-use were mentioned. Good farming land, for example, had to be safeguarded. It was calculated that about 37% of the land area of the Region was untouched by any form of physical constraint on development, enough to allow growth to be distributed in a number of different forms and directions.

All these elements, then, were inter-related, while:

"the issues which would be central to the shape of the strategy were related ... to the continuing potential for growth throughout the central urban complex of the Region."¹

These problems rippled outwards and there would be a need to take account of this wide urban complex, together with its regional setting. The strategy would have to resolve such conflicts as those between the likelihood of the Conurbation retaining its attractiveness for employers and the problems of transportation. Overall:-

"issues of resources and priorities are evident throughout the involved pattern of relationships that we have noted here."²

This was the framework of analysis to be related to the objective:-

"to get a logical and objective assessment of the implication of the present and future situations for the Conurbation, and the area around, to make recommendations."³

The problems that "A Developing Strategy" had to tackle descended from the general:-

"to provide opportunities for the satisfaction of the social, economic and physical needs of the Region's population."⁴

to the more precise, as for example:-

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- 1 Ibid., P.44.
 - 2 Ibid., P.46.
 - 3 Ibid., Appendix I.
 - 4 Ibid., P.47.

"to provide within a satisfying total environment a range of housing in accordance with future assumed population characteristics."¹

The task was to fulfil such objectives in the light of the broad range of possible patterns. This was achieved by looking first at alternative dispositions at the general level, known as "course options". It was assisted by a transportation model, examining the effects of varying degrees of employment mobility and commuting, together with the inputs resulting from the study of the elements of the Region. In this way, the alternatives were narrowed down to four "fine options", enabling the second stage of evaluation to commence. This was aided by a cost benefit analysis of the alternative strategies at the regional level, expressed in the form of a "planning balance sheet"; by an economic evaluation of the communications element; and by a financial appraisal to take account of such factors as capital expenditure and effects on local authority finances. A fifth option was also used, consisting of all these elements of each fine option which appeared to be advantageous.

Any preferred strategy had therefore to emerge from a number of considerations - terms of reference and objectives, basic assumptions (such as the regional economy continuing to perform above average because of its inherent strength), the detailed studies of the elements of the regional structure, the constraints and opportunities in this structure, and the results of the evaluation process. The whole procedure was a sophisticated deductive process.

The wider inter-regional view was also taken into account. If a policy to deal with the central problem of the Region, the scale of its population growth, was to be feasible, it had to be consistent with the inter-regional context. This was in addition to taking account of sub-regional studies within the West Midlands and the problems identified in studies such as the "Economic Appraisal". Detailed studies undertaken into

1 Ibid., P.47.

population and communications trends led to the identification of three possible contexts for growth in inter-regional terms. These were a North-West/South-East axis, a North-East/South-West axis, and development along a U-Shape axis, flanking the southern rim of the Pennines. There were also elements of growth common to a number of these axes.

Finally, there was the matter of existing commitments in the West Midlands. They would serve as a basis in the short-term, for it was not realistic to radically alter them, providing a framework for pre-1981 development. The physical capacity of the agreed schemes over 1966-81 was, in fact, 100,000 homes, although they did not constitute a pattern directed towards the broader need of the Region or have any necessary coherence. They formed a number of incremental decisions.

The main pre-occupation of "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands" was therefore the question of coping with the Region's projected population, particularly the imbalance in the Conurbation and associated commuting problems. It was the problem of where land for new urban development should be found, while making the West Midlands a pleasant environment in which to live. This was especially the case in the search for new developments after 1981, the existing expansion schemes providing most of the answers in the short-term. In this pre-occupation with the problems of population growth, overspill from the Conurbation, and the devising of a strategy to cope with the problems, its orientation was analogous to that in the "West Midlands Study" and "Patterns of Growth", rather than to that of the "Economic Appraisal". It assumed that new jobs would be provided in the service sector, concentrating on the long-term and anticipating an upsurge in the economy. The statistics were based in the main on 1966. There had been significant changes since, as emphasised in the "Economic Appraisal" and briefly alluded to in "A Developing Strategy". In its economic projections, therefore, were a number of assumptions which might be considered highly dubious. However, "A Developing Strategy" did

take account of socio-economic processes, rather than merely physical factors.¹ The economic factors in its analysis included the mobility of industry, locational advantages and the changing structure of the economy.

Where the Strategy did contrast markedly with the "West Midlands Study" and "Patterns of Growth" was in its use of sophisticated management techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis, to resolve the problems. They were claimed to be unique in their application to this sphere and helped the process of reducing the number of possible alternative strategies, by evaluating their relative merits and advantages. The "planning balance sheets" had attempted to take into account intangibles in their reckoning.

The purpose of this chapter has been to state the problems of the Region. In this respect the above analyses provide a background, as seen through the eyes of official studies, for the issues to be raised in subsequent chapters. They have provided statistical data and an outline of the nature of the third principal concept in this study (the previous two being "the Region" and "Economic Planning"), namely, the "West Midlands". In general, the problems of the West Midlands have been equated with those of the South-East - congestion, the pressing claims on land-use and the need for a concomitant restriction on growth through the use of I.D.C. policy. There were, however, apprehensions growing about the future of the West Midlands economy, challenging stereotype views of the Region, particularly as articulated in the "Economic Appraisal".

The proposed concrete solutions for the problems raised here will be dealt with in relation to the following discussion on the politics of regional economic planning in the West Midlands, in the context of the additional input of the Regional Economic Planning Council and its activities after 1965. It is in this setting that the criteria of influence, enumerated in Chapter One, can begin to be utilised.

1 Ibid., P.91.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WEST MIDLANDS ECONOMIC PLANNING COUNCIL

Reaction to the creation of the new regional machinery in 1965 was characterised by a rapid succession of euphoria and disillusionment. It has been pointed out previously, in this study, that administrative innovation in this country is rarely revolutionary in nature, usually emerging gradually from precedent. Conversely, it is not without consequence.

It is to the impact and influence of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council that the discussion must now be directed, both within the Region and on the decision-making of central government. One determinant of influence is the internal features of any organisation purporting to function as a pressure-group. The first task, then, is to assemble data on the internal characteristics of the West Midlands Planning Council - its composition, membership and leadership.

1. The West Midlands Economic Planning Council.

There has been little published material on the evolution of the membership of the Economic Planning Councils which traces such phenomena as the changing emphasis in composition and the rate of turn-over. To chart a moving picture of this kind in the West Midlands, three base lines for purposes of comparison will be used - the initial membership of the Planning Council in 1965, its membership in 1968 after the end of the members' first three-year contract, and finally the membership in July 1971.

Composition of the W.M.E.P.C. (by broad category)

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1968 (July)</u>	<u>1971 (July)</u>
Local Councillors/			
Officials	9	10	12
Industrialists	5	5	6
Trade Unionists	4	5	4
University	4	4	3
Nationalised Industries	-	-	1
Miscellaneous	4	1	1
TOTAL	26	25	27

The above categorisation is in danger of gross over-simplification and cannot reflect the full range of members' connections. It should, again, also be borne in mind that members are supposed to sit as individuals and not as delegates. But the figures do reveal a broad picture of the changing composition of the Economic Planning Council.

Three significant features emerge from the break-down. Firstly, the growth in the size of the local authority contingent is apparent. The geographical composition of this group can be ascertained from the following table:-

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1971</u>
County Boroughs	5 (Birmingham 2, Stoke, Dudley, Coventry)	4 (Birmingham 2, Stoke, Dudley)
County Councils	3 (Salop, Worcestershire, Staffordshire)	7 (Salop, Worcestershire 2, Staffordshire, Herefordshire 2, Warwickshire)
Urban/Rural Districts	1 (Willenhall RDC)	1 (Leek UDC)

The heavily populated sub-regions were the most comprehensively represented in 1965 - the Birmingham conurbation, the Coventry sub-region and the North Staffordshire sub-region. In 1971, unlike 1965, all five administrative counties in the West Midlands were represented and the emphasis of the L.A. component on the Planning Council had moved conspicuously in this direction. It is worth noting that one of the Birmingham representatives included in the 1965 figures became Chairman of Telford Development Corporation, one of the major new towns in the West Midlands.

The second feature to emerge from the composition of the Planning Council, between 1965-71, is that the agricultural interest was not directly represented. This was in spite of a desire on the part of some of the county organisations of the National Farmers' Union (eg. Worcestershire) to have a nominee on the Planning Council, a request not acceded to. The weak

representation is surprising, given that agriculture is such a vital component in land-use thinking. All the regional studies in the West Midlands had emphasised the importance of taking account of resources such as good agricultural land. The only saving grace is that two of the local authority members on the Planning Council in 1971 also had farming connections.

The third feature is the sparsity of representatives from the nationalised industries, even though, from 1968, a local authority member, since resigned, had links with British Rail, and the Chairman of the West Midlands Gas Board had become a member by 1971. Here, the long-standing weakness in representation probably reflects the fact that there is not a nationalised industry that stands out as being uniquely vital to the economy of the West Midlands, in the same manner as the coal industry is for the East Midlands, for example. In the case of the latter, there are very close links, including membership, between the Planning Council and the Midland Region of the National Coal Board. Generally, though, nationalised industries do pass on any relevant information to the Regional Planning Boards and to the chairmen of the Planning Councils. The National Coal Board includes notice of pending pit closures in this information. In 1968, this gave the West Midlands Planning Council an opportunity to display concern at the imminent closure of Highley colliery in Shropshire. The closure was deferred for six months, but this was more a consequence of local pressures, such as those from the local branch of the National Union of Mineworkers, than pressure from the Planning Council.¹

Apart from this exchange of information, nationalised industries are represented through the relevant government Department on the Regional Boards. This is natural, as fuel policy, for example, emanates in its essentials from the Government. The Government is then reluctant to change

1 The details of this case were described in an interview at the Midland Region of the National Coal Board in May 1970.

the policy in any particular, as a result of problems that may be identified in exchanges between the regional organisations of the fuel industries and the Planning Councils. The Labour Government did make some concessions on pit closures, however, where Regional Planning Council scrutiny showed that the unemployment position would be seriously affected.¹ Development Areas were the main beneficiaries, rather than areas, like the West Midlands, where the coal industry is not of tremendous strategic importance. To move on from the fuel sector, in the case of British Rail, any links with the Regional Planning Councils go up through the organisational hierarchy of the industry to the Ministry, which then deals with the Councils itself. This is in marked contrast to the direct Divisional contact of British Rail with the Passenger Transport Executive and Authority in the Birmingham conurbation, although at regional level there has been the difficulty of the Divisional and Regional organisations not corresponding to the West Midlands Planning Region.

So much for the nature and change of the composition of the West Midlands Planning Council. Another consideration is the rate of turn-over in the membership:

	<u>Total Members</u>	<u>Members since 1965</u>	<u>Members since 1968</u>
1965	26	-	-
1968	25	10	-
1971	27	4	10

From the above table it can be seen that sixteen members of the original twenty-six left between 1965 and 1968. This represents a considerable turn-over. In 1968, only forty-five members had left the eight English Planning Councils as a whole² and the proportion leaving the West Midlands Planning Council in this period was certainly well above the national average. A contributory factor to this rate of turn-over may have been the

1 H. Wilson: "The Labour Government 1964-70", Op. Cit., P.430.

2 An oral answer given by Mr. Shore in Parliament, Hansard, 23rd May 1968, Vol. 765, Column 846.

unfulfilled expectations at the largely negative reply of the Government, in January 1968, to the Planning Council's document, "Patterns of Growth". Yet, the turn-over in the second three-year period was still high (ie. only ten of the twenty-five who were members in 1968 remained) and in 1971 there were only four of the original twenty-six members of 1965 left.

Despite this rate of turn-over, the Office of the Economic Planning Board claimed that there had been far more nominations to the Minister than there had been vacancies on the Planning Council in the West Midlands.

Next, there is the question of overlapping membership. The membership of the West Midlands Planning Council has had a multitude of links with organisations in the Region. There have been those links with groups corresponding to the local governmental structures. For example, Mr. Stedeford, an industrial member of the Council, is a member of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, an organisation that has been consulted on nominations. Secondly and more noticeably, links with the organisational sub-divisions of national economic groups, such as the Regional Advisory Committee of the T.U.C. and the Midland Region C.B.I., have existed. Most of the trade union members of the Planning Council have belonged to the former. In 1970, three members of the Regional Council of the Confederation of British Industry sat on the Planning Council. The former acting chairman of the Planning Council, Mr. Bache, was regional chairman of the C.B.I. by 1972.

The prominence of the connections with the T.U.C. and the C.B.I. is to a substantial extent derived from the influential role of these bodies in consultations with Ministers over nominations. It exemplifies how membership of the Planning Council is, in many respects, an indirect extension of the established web of central government, rather than reflecting any distinct regional pressure-group system. The accusation of many group theorists that an "inner circle" of strongly organised is evident in the British political system can, in part, be verified. On the other hand,

such connections afford the Planning Council with a basis for building up contacts in the West Midlands. The above-mentioned organisations themselves make use of such connections. The Regional C.B.I. has raised the question of the effects of the restrictionist Industrial Development Certificate policy, via its members on the Council, although the influence the Planning Council has with the Government on such matters is not over-estimated. Mr. Mathers, a trade union member of the Planning Council, delivered a report on its work to the annual meeting of the Midland Regional Advisory Committee of the T.U.C. in December 1971.¹

In addition to overlapping membership, all the permutations of which have not been stated above, other devices have been used to create an intermeshing between the West Midlands Planning Council and groups in the Region. The most significant has been the meeting of delegations. To enlist two examples, in the early days of its functioning, the Planning Council had a meeting with M.P's of the Region, while in 1968, a delegation from the county organisations of the National Farmers' Union was received. There are numerous other examples of contacts, many of which will be dealt with as this discussion unfolds.

Leadership is another aspect of the internal features of the West Midlands Planning Council. It has had three chairmen, all of whom have been industrialists. Sir Joseph Hunt fulfilled the role from April 1965 to April 1967, Adrian Cadbury from April 1967 to March 1970, and the present Chairman, Quinton Hazell, took up the post in September 1971. As the dates indicate, after the resignation of Mr. Cadbury, there was a long period with an acting-chairman, the only Planning Council in England in that dubious position at the time. A number of people were approached to take on the task, but they all turned down the offer. Eventually Mr. Hazell had to be brought in from outside the Council. The gap of eighteen months had a debilitating effect from the point of view of leadership, a view shared

1 Birmingham Post, December 1st 1971.

by the Council members at the time. As B. Smith has suggested, the chairman is the:-

"natural initiator of a co-ordinated regional effort".¹

Mr. Cadbury had played a vital role in publicising the views and activities of the West Midlands Planning Council, through speaking tours in the Region, the writing of articles in the local press and at press conferences after each monthly Planning Council meeting. The sense of awareness of the existence of the Council and the number of statements emanating from it certainly diminished after his resignation. In the first half of 1971, meetings of the Planning Council took place less frequently than once a month, although the reason was claimed to be the fewer White Papers, for consideration, originating from the new Conservative Administration. There was, however, a revival in its activities in June 1971, following the publication of the "Economic Appraisal" of the West Midlands. This was the study carried out by a Working Party of the Council set up in December 1968, which Mr. Cadbury had agreed to continue to lead after his resignation as Chairman.

The Working Party was, in fact, an example of the sub-committee structure which complements the full Council meetings. There is a sub-committee which considers public expenditure every year, in the form of papers sent down from central government, to which the Planning Board adds additional comments. Other ad hoc sub-committees have included ones on the western sub-division of the West Midlands, the White Paper on local government, the Severnside study of the Central Unit of Environmental Planning and local government finance. Also, shortly after the "Economic Appraisal" had been published, a follow-up committee was appointed to identify the priorities on which action by the Government, local authorities and industry should be encouraged. The committee met several times during the latter part of 1971 and was to meet regularly during 1972. Fourteen

1 "Advising Ministers", Op. Cit., P.57.

people sat on it, including Adrian Cadbury. The full Planning Council can reject any findings of the sub-committees. For example, the recommendations from the one on local government re-organisation, that Coventry should not be included in any central Metropolitan Area authority, was rejected.

The period during which the West Midlands Planning Council was without a chairman did raise the fear that the Government's procrastination in making an appointment reflected the deliberate running down of its work. This was denied. Mr. Walker, the Minister responsible, subsequently stated in Parliament that he could easily have got rid of the Economic Planning Councils, but he had believed:-

"that they could provide a very useful manner of gathering together leading people ... to give a broad view on what they considered were important factors in the future development of their regions".¹

Neither did Mr. Hazell, after his appointment, interpret the long period without a chairman as an indication that the Government did not attach much importance to the Council.²

This is a convenient point at which to briefly mention the kind of policies that the West Midlands Planning Council considers, apart from its contribution in the form of regional studies and strategies. Two examples of Planning Council agendas most aptly illustrate this:

W.M.E.P.C. (71) 3rd Meeting 10 a.m. 4th May

AGENDA:

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of Meeting held on 2nd March.
3. Matters Arising.
4. The Third London Airport.
5. Economic Appraisal - Working Party Report.
6. Local Government Re-organisation.
7. Derelict Land.
8. Conservation Areas.

1 Hansard, April 13th 1972, Vol. 834, Column 1537.
 2 Birmingham Post, October 25th 1971.

9. Papers for Information:
 - (i) Overspill - North Worcestershire.
 - (ii) Council's Work and Membership.
 - (iii) Birmingham I.D.C. Policy.
10. A.O.B.

W.M.E.P.C. (71) 4th Meeting 10 a.m. 6th July

AGENDA:

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Membership of the Council.
3. Minutes of Meeting held on 4th May 1971.
4. Matters Arising: Para 11-13 Local Government Sub-Committee Report.
5. The West Midlands, an Economic Appraisal.
6. The Board's Eighth Periodic Assessment of Overspill Progress.
7. Inter-Urban Highways in the West Midlands.
8. Coventry, Solihull, Warwickshire Sub-Regional Study.
9. A.O.B.

Agendas are devised by the Secretary of the Council, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Planning Council and Board. Any member can request a matter to be raised which he thinks should be discussed.

During 1971, the West Midlands Planning Council made its views known on subjects as diverse as the third London Airport and rural bus services. An important report that it considered during 1972 was that of the Bolton Committee on Small Firms, of great concern to the West Midlands with the prominence of this type of unit in its industrial structure. It also gave its views on the Government's proposed regional re-organisation of water authorities. The Council intended to discover how many buildings and how much land stood idle in the Region, together with how much out-of-date equipment was being used in industry.¹ It generally considers White Papers, national and local reports, and sub-regional studies of interest to the Region. There are also half yearly reports on the progress of overspill. Although much of the advice to Ministers has to remain confidential, the Planning Council has publicised its views on a wide range of matters.

1 Birmingham Post, Review of Industry, January 11th 1972.

Of the weaknesses or strengths originating within the West Midlands Planning Council itself, the following points have therefore been identified as of significance. There are certain weaknesses in the spectrum of interests, for regional economic planning purposes, covered by the membership of the Council, although its composition has been strengthened in terms of links with the local planning authorities. There is considerable overlapping membership between the composition of the Planning Council and that of prominent organisations in the Region. However, the rate of turn-over of membership has been rapid and the long period without a chairman in 1970/71 undermined positive leadership. Since the publication of the "Economic Appraisal" and the appointment of a new Chairman in September 1971, there has been evidence of renewed vigour and activity on the part of the Council. It might also be added that there appears to have been a large degree of consensus reached on the Planning Council, or at least, there is no evidence to the contrary.

2. Relations with the Economic Planning Board.

As the Economic Planning Boards have been an integral part of the regional machinery since 1965, their effectiveness and the relationship of the Planning Councils with them is an important aspect of regional influence. The deficiencies of the Planning Boards, in terms of lack of delegation from Whitehall and the merely persuasive influence of the Chairmen over departmental regional officials, were discussed in Chapter Two.

Such weaknesses have been fully recognised in the evidence of the West Midlands Planning Council to the Crowther Commission on the Constitution, where it called for greater decentralisation within the structure of government and pointed out the need for regional ministers. These views were summarised in its statement that:-

"The Council would like to see regional policy regarded as of equal importance to functional policy".¹

1 Taken from a press notice summarising the evidence of the Council to the Crowther Commission, 18th February 1970, Central Office of Information (Midland Region).

In the "Economic Appraisal" the argument was again taken up:-

"Central government is based on functional divisions that apply across the country, but what is of concern to the West Midlands is the co-ordination of those functions at the regional level".¹

In the White Paper on the re-organisation of central government, of October 1970, the Government had re-affirmed the belief in:-

"the application of the functional principle as the basis for the allocation of responsibilities".²

Nevertheless, there have been a number of recent improvements in the delegation of responsibility to the regions and in the promotion of regional co-ordination. In October 1971, it was announced that civil servants in the regions were to be given more control over the development of the regional environment and some of Whitehall's planning powers handed down to the regional officials of the Department of Environment. Along with this decentralisation of some planning work was to be improved departmental co-ordination in the regions, in the field of physical planning and the environment. In the West Midlands, the Office of the Economic Planning Board's Chairman, the divisional road engineers and the Regional Office of the former Ministry of Housing were amalgamated, to form the D.O.E. Regional Office. Mr. Emanuel became the Regional Director with the rank of Under-Secretary, combined with a continuation of his role as Chairman of the Planning Board.³ "The Times" commented that:-

"Development in the regional Civil Service machine runs parallel with a deliberate policy of strengthening the regional economic planning councils".⁴

Mr. Emanuel was of the opinion that the changes would bring central government closer to the people.⁵

Further changes in regional departmental organisation have come into

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- 1 "The West Midlands - An Economic Appraisal", Op. Cit., P.79.
 - 2 "The Reorganisation of Central Government", Op. Cit., P.4.
 - 3 In April 1972, Mr. P. Jenkins became Regional Director and Chairman of the Planning Board in the West Midlands, on Mr. Emanuel's retirement.
 - 4 October 25th 1971.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, October 26th 1971.

being as a result of the new industrial and regional policies of the Conservative Government, announced in March 1972. A Minister for Industrial Development was appointed, under the broad direction of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, taking charge of an Industrial Development Executive. This Executive assumed responsibility for the Department's Regional Offices and a strong regional organisation was to be an essential part of its machinery with:-

"a new positive role in promoting industrial expansion and modernisation, and in stimulating centres of growth. It will have an important degree of devolved authority".¹

There are to be close relations with the Regional Offices of the Department of Environment. The links between the Economic Planning Councils/Boards and the Regional Offices of the Department of Trade and Industry are also to be improved, to co-ordinate industrial and physical planning. The emphasis of this strengthened organisation, though, is to be in the assisted areas, where Regional Industrial Directors and advisory Regional Industrial Development Boards are to be part of the structure.

The task of the Economic Planning Board and its Chairman in the West Midlands, since 1965, has been to instil into departmental officials the wider regional view, so that it may be transmitted back to the parent Departments in Whitehall. To this end, the Chairman of the Planning Board and Planning Council have worked together closely. Mr. Emanuel stated, in 1968, that:-

"The Chairman of the Council - Mr. Adrian Cadbury - and the Chairman of the Board, myself - work closely together so that the two bodies can fuse official and non-official thinking into a regional amalgam of a kind which neither, working alone ... could hope to have".²

Although the Chairman of the Planning Council has tended not to be present at Board meetings, which take place every week, it is perfectly legitimate for him to do this.³ The Chairman of the Planning Board does attend

1 "Industrial and Regional Development", HMSO Cmd. 4942, P.6.

2 Typescript of a talk to the Walsall Junior Chamber of Commerce, Op.Cit., P.4.

3 Association of Municipal Corporations, 1967 Annual Conference Report: the Paper by C.F. Carter, P.111.

Council meetings. One observer has claimed that, within the last six years, the Planning Boards have become less "Whitehall oriented" and more prepared to present a regional argument.¹

Another major question that has been frequently raised in relation to the Planning Boards, is the danger of their overwhelming the Planning Councils. In the West Midlands, the latter has been serviced only by a small secretariat of two, the members of which belong to the Department of Environment. Also, only two research officers, in the Office of the Planning Board, have been at its disposal. These have carried out their work less inhibited by the policies of the individual Departments on the Planning Board, being outside this departmental structure. Nevertheless, they are still circumscribed by the central Civil Service career structure, and the Office of the Planning Board has now been amalgamated into the D.O.E's Regional Office. The fact that there are only two of them means that the Planning Board normally accepts the views of the individual Departments anyway, views carried forward into the meetings of the Planning Council itself, as those Departments most closely involved in regional planning attend all its meetings.

The West Midlands Planning Council has not advocated having its own independent staff within the present regional institutional structure. It has seen considerable advantage in having the Planning Board and Departments at its disposal, and especially in having the Departments prepare papers for its meetings. The Planning Council has also been reinforced by outside research, including a recent study at Birmingham University into the mobility and location of industry in the West Midlands.² In its "Economic Appraisal" it called widely on the assistance of industry and commerce in the Region, in addition to the research papers contributed by the research section of the Planning Board and the Department of Trade and Industry.

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- 1 Paper presented by M.B. Gahagan at University of Manchester Seminar on Regional Planning, 25th February 1971.
 - 2 Some of the findings of the study can be found in B. Smith's "Industrial Overspill in Theory and Practice" - Urban Studies, June 1970.

Thus, for example, although the Planning Board has constantly fed the Council with statistics suggesting that the West Midlands has secured its fair share of Industrial Development Certificates, the Council has still come out strongly against the workings of the system in the Region.

In relations between the Economic Planning Council and Board, therefore, the picture that emerges is one of the growth of close relations between the two and, by 1972, in the context of a strengthened regional departmental organisation. On the other hand, the Planning Council has not been submerged by the Board and has asserted an independent view where it felt justified in doing so.

3. Repercussions of the Regional Machinery on Decisions.

In looking at the impact on decisions of the regional machinery in the West Midlands, there are two considerations of a general nature that have affected this.

Firstly, the institutional framework of October 1964 in Whitehall, revolving around the Department of Economic Affairs, which was in part based upon the determination to augment the micro-economic content of policy, was gradually superseded after July 1966. The series of economic crises and the acceptance of deflationary measures by the Government meant that the Treasury again assumed the mantle of overriding economic power, returning the emphasis to macro-economic demand management. Economic planning, in the sense of long-term quantitative commitments, was abandoned, although the annual White Papers on public expenditure have since given projections for the public sector. The Labour Government was reduced to pursuing ad hoc interventionism, not co-ordinated and synthesised by a National Plan. It meant that regional economic planning was rendered somewhat anomalous, with confusion over its objectives. This was cushioned by the fact that the West Midlands Planning Council, at that point, was nowhere near producing a regional plan that was related to the figures in the National Plan in an operational form. Even its 1967 document,

"Patterns of Growth", was conceived in terms of analysing problems and developing only a very broad strategic framework for decisions. Yet, there has been no re-definition of the terms of reference of the Planning Councils, or any new formal guidelines from Whitehall to meet the changing circumstances.

Some of the fragments of the D.E.A. micro-economic approach were eventually brought closer together departmentally in October 1969, when Mr. Crosland became responsible for the regions and local government. The process was completed when the Department of Environment was formed in October 1970, unifying, in a single Department, the former Ministries of Housing and Local Government, Public Buildings and Works, and Transport. This brought together the functions dealing with the physical environment, achieving the objective of:-

"matching the field of responsibility of government departments to coherent fields of policy and administration".¹

This physical/environmental emphasis has meant that responsibility for industrial policy in the regions, including the administration of Industrial Development Certificates, has remained elsewhere - in the Ministry of Technology in the closing years of the Labour Administration and now in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It creates difficulties in the inter-relationship of micro-economic regional and industrial policy. Neither does the Department responsible for the Planning Councils and Boards have any integral link with the Treasury, in spite of the latter's responsibility for public expenditure and economic policy.

In relation to the original function prescribed for the Regional Planning Councils, it is therefore arguable that the changed departmental structure, while effecting rationalisation within functional policy areas, weakened communication between the regions and the vital Departments. The regional machinery of 1965 had been created within an institutional

1 "The Reorganisation of Central Government, Op. Cit., P.3.

framework which had cast the D.E.A. in the role of a "super" co-ordinating Ministry within Whitehall, including for regional policy, although George Brown's Department had never functioned in quite the manner in which he had conceived. This central organisational problem in regional matters was recognised when one of the tasks allocated to Lord Rothschild's central policy review staff, after October 1970, was to carry out a special study into regional policy.

The second general factor determining the influence of the West Midlands Planning Council has been that the needs of the Region required the formulation of demands which were contrary to the policy commitments of the former Labour Administration; its commitment of concentrating discriminatory policies and aid towards the needs of the "unemployment" regions. This reflected the desire to "rectify the imbalance" between the regions. Evidence of it was the fact that:-

"The relationship between unemployment rates in the Development Areas and the national rates was in June 1970 as good as it has ever been - and thus a good deal better than in the early 1960's".¹

For the West Midlands, the dichotomy between regional development policy and regional planning, as institutionalised in the Ministry of Technology/ Department of Regional Planning division after 1969, was reinforced by the above policy bias of the Labour Government. The dichotomy could only be overcome in the Development and Intermediate Areas, where the two elements may converge in the interests of co-ordinated endeavour to achieve necessary objectives.² Consequently, the West Midlands Planning Council has found it difficult to influence the inter-regional allocation of resources. This was compounded by the Exchequer's reluctance to increase the total of regional financial concessions, as seen in the fact that when the Intermediate Areas were established, it entailed the diversion of some

1 "The Labour Government's Economic Record 1964-1970", Edited by W. Beckerman, Duckworth 1972, P.241.

2 Even in such regions there is the problem of different boundaries between Development Areas and regional economic planning areas.

resources from the Development Areas. The Planning Council, then, has come into conflict with the principles of the Party in government. The Conservative Administration after June 1970, too, was committed to attacking the problems of regional imbalance and it noted that:-

"The ending of regional imbalance has been an objective of successive Governments in the United Kingdom for nearly four decades".¹

Furthermore, a situation where all the contenders for policy influence are institutionalised; where the same structure exists in each region, is likely to favour those which have more successfully mobilised a regional interest in the past, such as the North-East. In short, it has been difficult for the West Midlands Planning Council to restrict the scope of conflict. The changes in the Department of Trade and Industry's regional organisation in March 1972 have, in fact, now given areas such as the North, North-West and Yorkshire and Humberside a more effective regional structure than exists in the West Midlands.

The above constraints have contributed to the failure of the West Midlands Planning Council to elicit decisions from central government which it has considered to be necessary for the well-being of the Region. The Government rejected the essentials of the strategy embodied in "Patterns of Growth", especially the need for incentives for industry to move to overspill areas if the more effective correlation of industry and population was to be achieved in those areas.² It was a scheme that had been with the Minister from 1965. As the members of the Planning Council recognised in the above-mentioned document:-

"their suggestions are for a substantial adjustment of policy".³ This is just what the Planning Council has not been able to achieve. It was convinced that in the absence of this, the Government was condemning the regional strategy of dispersal from the Birmingham conurbation to failure.⁴

1 "Industrial and Regional Development", HMSO, Op. Cit., P.1.

2 "The West Midlands: Patterns of Growth", Op. Cit., P.27.

3 Ibid., P.27.

4 The Times, "Overspill Towns Plea", April 15th 1970.

The strategy was accordingly modified in the "Economic Appraisal" in 1971, to one where the Conurbation was to play an equal part with overspill areas in housing the growth in population (although the problem has become somewhat less acute with population growth constantly falling below the forecasted figures).¹

The failure of industry to move out of the Conurbation on a sufficient scale has meant a repeat of the search for avenues of peripheral development, under the aegis of the former Ministry of Housing. This was to culminate in a furore over Birmingham's application for commuter settlements in the provisional Green Belt of North Worcestershire. The notion of planned long-term dispersal came under strain in the context of immediate pressures.

The whole episode began in 1966. The Minister of Housing became concerned about Birmingham's short-term land problem. He consulted the Regional Planning Council about solving this difficulty to the south-west of the City, as it appeared to be the only suitable area where land could be found quickly enough. According to the Minister, such development did not appear to be out of line with the evolving strategy of the Planning Council, which was examining a corridor of growth to Severnside as one possible direction of growth in the West Midlands.² The Minister, then, was looking to Worcestershire County Council to alleviate the problem of Birmingham overspill. Ald. Higgs, Chairman of the County authority, retorted that in the light of the years of planning, it was reprehensible that a need should suddenly arise in this manner. He levelled the accusation that those responsible for overall strategy in the Region had been caught unprepared and that the emergency overspill problem had been created by the failure to move sufficient industry out from the Conurbation.³ An indictment of the developments was also forthcoming from the Midlands

1 "The West Midlands: An Economic Appraisal", Op. Cit., P.69.

2 Birmingham Post, December 7th 1966.

3 Birmingham Post, May 2nd 1967.

New Town Society. It referred to the whole situation as manifesting "non-planning", asserting that it was the very problem the evolution of a regional strategy had set out to avert.¹ Meanwhile, Ald. Griffin, of Birmingham Corporation, was claiming that a building scheme in North Worcestershire would be a stop-gap until the new and expanded towns were making more effective provision.

The Government, then, asked Birmingham and Worcestershire to undertake a joint survey to establish the possibilities. It was to be a feasibility study for the location of 15,000 homes. The locations were intended to involve a large amount of extra commuting because of the difficulty of the re-location of industry. The Government realised that in the light of existing policies, enough industry would not move to support all the suggested overspill projects.²

Soon after, Mr. Cadbury, as the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, expressed a fear of commuting towns emerging all over the Region. There was little alternative to finding land in the near future for Birmingham families, but only the short-term emergency was being considered. He was in favour of self-contained overspill towns and not emergency commuter settlements.³ In the light of these unfolding developments, the Midland New Towns Society returned to the attack, asserting that:-

"The Ministry of Housing and Local Government seems bent on tearing up its own regional study and substituting a series of makeshifts for its responsibility to plan the West Midlands as a whole".⁴

The peripheral development in North Worcestershire, that was ultimately negotiated for 11,000 of the 15,000 homes needed, was contrary to the proposals of the West Midlands Study of 1965 and those of the Planning Council's 1967 document. The former had recommended the containment of the Conurbation. It was desirable to avoid peripheral development

1 Birmingham Post, May 26th 1967.
 2 Birmingham Post, January 3rd 1968.
 3 Birmingham Post, April 25th 1968.
 4 Birmingham Post, August 3rd 1968.

and prevent any further, large, peripheral projects comparable to the one previously established at Chelmsley Wood in Warwickshire. The Study continued by suggesting that Birmingham overspill could be dealt with by some close-in development beyond the Green Belt, but it would not be adequate to tackle the Region's fundamental problem of over-concentration. This would necessitate projects further afield which could be completely independent of the influence of the Conurbation. The opening-out of the Region ought, preferably, to assume a westward direction, with expansion in Wellington-Oakengates, complementing the existing planned growth at Dawley New Town in their near proximity, being the main possibility.¹ At least the Minister had reacted by commissioning a study of a new city of 200,000 in Shropshire, to examine the proposal.

The Planning Council's document, "Patterns of Growth", had again suggested there could be small expansions of existing towns and villages in the area outside but around the Green Belt, which would be primarily based on commuting to the Conurbation. A possible long-term strategy put forward by the Planning Council took into account the difficulty of the re-location of industry, by suggesting that dispersal from the Conurbation should be a gradual process along "corridors of growth". These would follow the main communication routes to the Region's outlets to the sea-ports.² But no-where was an expansion of the Conurbation, by means of peripheral development, suggested. The whole strategy was based on its containment.³

The proposed development in North Worcestershire, therefore, was a hasty reaction to the problem of meeting Birmingham's immediate land needs, a problem accentuated by the slow progress of overspill schemes. The very expedients regional planning was initiated to prevent were being reverted to.

To compound the feeling of a lack of a regional framework, immediately

1 "The West Midlands - A Regional Study", Op. Cit., Chapter 6.
 2 "The West Midlands: Patterns of Growth", Op. Cit., Chapter 8.
 3 Ibid., Chapter 9.

prior to the beginning of the public enquiry into the matter in September 1969, the "Griffin document" came to light. This was a document circulated by the Leader of the controlling Conservative Group on Birmingham Corporation. It suggested that Birmingham should adopt as its policy further peripheral development, to that already agreed upon with Worcestershire County Council, to retain its industry and people. At that time, Ald. Griffin envisaged the Maud reform of local government would make available to Birmingham more building land. He considered that development in North Worcestershire would not suffice to meet Birmingham's needs. The time was distant when the new and expanding towns would provide adequate compensatory development.¹ The effect of such views was to throw the agreement between Birmingham and Worcestershire into the melting-pot. It made inevitable further intra-regional conflict over land-use in the West Midlands.

The response of Worcestershire County Council was to issue an ultimatum to Birmingham, calling for assurances that the City Council supported the export of population and industry to new and expanded towns, and that peripheral expansion was not its preferred policy. If these assurances were not obtained, Worcestershire intended to oppose part of Birmingham's application to build in North Worcestershire. The County wanted a categorical rejection of the ideas embodied in the "Griffin document". The reply from Birmingham claimed that the Council actively supported the movement of industry and people. The "Griffin document" was not as yet the policy of the City. Worcestershire did not accept this as giving sufficient assurances.²

The County Council decided to oppose a third of the land involved in Birmingham's application to build 11,000 homes in the north of Worcestershire. This was justified by the claim that only on the basis of Birmingham's continued support for new and expanded towns had commuter

1 Birmingham Post, August 2nd and September 5th 1969.

2 Birmingham Post, September 13th 1969.

proposals been acceptable.¹ Now there was the fear that development in North Worcestershire might be the first of a number of similar developments.²

From the point of view of regional planning, the whole process ultimately indicated the tendency of local authorities to promote their own interests. The failure of the West Midlands Planning Council to secure satisfactory decisions from the Government allowed the centrifugal forces of the local governmental processes in the West Midlands again to assert themselves. The arguments and clashes, discussed above, dominated the public enquiry into the issue between September and November 1969.

Mr. Grove, in putting Birmingham's case, emphasised the gravity of the overspill problem and how:-

"unfortunately attempts to cope with this problem by means of new towns and expanding towns are lagging way behind the demand".³

This meant there would be a critical shortage in the years 1971-5. It was a consequence of the Government's policy that the new towns had not kept up with the needs, because of the direction of mobile industry to the Development Areas. The Government had refused to meet the Regional Planning Council's plea for a change of policy. Birmingham's case was reinforced by Mr. Borg, the City Engineer. According to his figures, the new and expanded towns had provided less than half the estimate for them up to mid-1968. It was this shortcoming that was aggravating Birmingham's overspill problem.⁴ To defend Birmingham's past policies he gave figures indicating a fall of 55,000 in the City's working population in the previous three years, as a result of the policy of exporting to overspill areas. The Corporation had spent £2 million in acquiring industrial property in the City, much of which had then been put to other uses.⁵

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- 1 Birmingham Post, September 16th 1969. Also see "Test Case: Can Green Belts Beat the Cities?", Sunday Times, October 12th 1969.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, September 17th 1969.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, September 24th 1969.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, September 25th 1969.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, October 2nd 1969.

Ald. Higgs, for Worcestershire, was importunate in the demand for concrete assurances from Birmingham on future policy:-

"it is not prepared to say it has not entered an era in which, under the Maud set-up, it would follow a new policy of peripheral development".¹

Here, there appeared to be an inconsistency with the Minister's views on making a success of new and expanded towns.

Objections to the application came from other interested parties. Warwickshire County Council considered that the application should be allowed only if it could be incontrovertibly shown that it was a last resort. The County had previously witnessed incursions into the Green Belt through the development of Chelmsley Wood after 1964.² The Town and Country Planning Association attacked Birmingham's shortcomings in its efforts to disperse employment and industry, dispersal also made difficult by the Government's policy towards new towns and their industrial development. The North Worcestershire development would further delay the date by which the new towns could become viable and would increase the likelihood of future peripheral development.³ Professor Florence spoke on behalf of the Midlands New Town Society. The Society, he said, had been formed in 1956 to support dispersal. If factories had been built as planned in the new towns there would have been no need for the development being contemplated in Worcestershire. The project posed a serious threat to the narrow green belt between Birmingham and Redditch. He continued that, although the City's fear of losing status had only been recently publicised, the attitude had been of long standing. Overall Birmingham had been guilty of adopting a "laissez-faire attitude".⁴

The closing submission to the public enquiry on behalf of Birmingham stated that there were indications of planning principles being re-thought.

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- 1 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, October 8th 1969.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, October 30th 1969.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, November 1st and 5th 1969.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, November 1st 1969.

It was the Minister who had insisted that development be in North Worcestershire and in commuting distance of the Conurbation. A vindication of the North Worcestershire application was claimed to be the lack of party disagreement, for the City's Labour M.P's had supported the plans even though it was a Conservative Council in Birmingham.¹ Mr. Phelps, deputy clerk of Worcestershire County Council, chose, however, to pose the problem in the following manner:-

"In the circumstances which have arisen locally in the last few months, a decision to allow Birmingham to have their way entirely² would introduce a new element of anarchy into the West Midlands".

Complete approval for Birmingham's application would, it was suggested, encourage the views expressed by Ald. Griffin. The Minister's requirement for 15,000 house sites had been made against the overall background of a vigorous dispersal policy and it should be insisted that such a policy was continued by Birmingham.

Many of the arguments ventilated at the public enquiry had reiterated the Regional Economic Planning Council's identification of the need for a change in the Government's policy towards the movement of industry to new and expanded towns, if these overspill schemes were to work and the constant resort to peripheral development averted in the West Midlands. What was amazing, though, was that much of the discussion, particularly the accusations directed towards Birmingham, was a re-enactment of the disagreements of the early 1960's. Then, Birmingham had been accused of preferring peripheral development and of not vigorously pursuing a dispersal policy. Then, too, the conflicting local government interests were seen to be thwarting regional planning and undermining the green belt principle. More than four years with the new regional economic planning institutions in existence had appeared to make very little difference. Successful organised dispersal seemed as remote as ever. P. Heywood has indicated the need for powerful regional planning to prevent large cities

1 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, November 12th/13th 1969.

2 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, November 14th 1969.

from promoting short-term solutions to their problems and seeking to retain their influence by peripheral development.¹ The above events would certainly confirm this.

While the Enquiry was deliberating, it was re-affirmed that the ministerial view, on the basis of exchanges with the Standing Conference of Local Authorities, was that more land for housing commuters needed to be found, however successful the overspill schemes now were. The essentials of the Government's strategy were still claimed to be based on new and expanded towns, but such projects had not proceeded quickly enough.² Mr. Crosland, by this time the Minister responsible for regional planning, did, however, appeal to Midland local authorities to help the development of new and expanded towns, when he visited the Regional Planning Council in November 1969.³

Then, there was yet another twist to the controversies enveloping land-use policy in the West Midlands. A review of the situation by the Principal Planning Officer to the Ministry of Housing, meant to remain confidential, suggested that the expansion of the Conurbation should be accepted. It aroused the fear of a change of emphasis towards peripheral development in the Government's policy. The new town authorities announced steps to establish whether Whitehall was preparing a shift in regional land-use measures. Ald. Price, the Chairman of Telford Development Corporation, suggested that a change of policy would be contrary to everything said previously by the Minister. He invoked the West Midlands Planning Council's concern about peripheral development and its effects on the vitality of the Conurbation and on new town developments.⁴

The Government subsequently cleared up the confusion by giving an

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- 1 "Regional Planning in the Netherlands and England and Wales", Journal of the Town Planning Institute, Vol. 56, No. 10, December 1970.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, October 30th 1969.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, November 25th 1969.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, January 30th 1970.

assurance that there was no change in its policy. Again, though, it was repeated that because the new towns would not provide enough jobs, peripheral development would have to continue for some time:-

"As we said in the Government's reply to 'Patterns of Growth' ... it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the number of jobs likely to become available in planned overspill schemes will be insufficient to enable reliance to be placed only on them".¹

The decision on the North Worcestershire application eventually materialised in March 1971, by which time Mr. Walker was the responsible Minister. Enough land was granted to Birmingham for 6,400 homes, as opposed to the 11,000 asked for. The Minister had excluded that part of the scheme opposed by Worcestershire County Council at the public enquiry. The reason for the rejection of part of the development was stated as being that of limiting the encroachment into the Green Belt as far as possible. Mr. Walker made it clear to Birmingham that in future he would expect the new and expanding towns to make a greater contribution towards meeting the Conurbation's housing problem.² The prevailing view was that he was likely to view the development in North Worcestershire as the "last bite of the cherry". The Minister was opposed to urban sprawl and was seeking to evolve an agreed regional planning strategy.

The machinery of the Planning Council/Board, therefore, had not been able to influence decisions substantially enough to promote a coherent regional strategy. Hence the description in "A Developing Strategy" of the existing overspill commitments in the West Midlands as a number of incremental decisions rather than reflecting any necessary coherence.³ The essence of the terms of reference of the Economic Planning Councils had, after all, been to assist in the formulation of a regional plan and advise on the steps necessary for implementation. Such was the Planning Council's retreat in these circumstances that, at a meeting with Birmingham City

1 Birmingham Post, March 3rd 1970.

2 Birmingham Post, March 11th 1971.

3 "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands", Op. Cit., P.65-6.

Council in March 1972, the Chairman had come round to the view that Birmingham should be expanded by allowing limited peripheral development.¹

Yet, the West Midlands Planning Council has had a recognisable role in decision-making. The relation of available data to strategic thinking, in terms of policy proposals, has been conducive to sensible decision-making. There is a greater understanding of the background against which individual decisions are made. For example, the allocation of road-building funds within the Region can be such that communication priorities can promote regional growth and dispersal policies, in terms of more effective locational and co-ordinative decisions. Telford's success as a new town was threatened by its poor communications with the Birmingham conurbation. The Planning Council played a prominent role in eliciting the decision to link Telford to the M.6 by 1975/6. Such influence, on essentially detailed administrative decisions, follows in a large degree from the Planning Council's authorised perusal of departmental regional resource allocations, within their functional delineations. This enables it to identify inconsistencies. The Council, as previously noted, appoints a sub-committee to review public expenditure in this way every twelve months. Accordingly, the informative role of the West Midlands Planning Council gives it a certain authority, albeit only in securing marginal changes in policy.

Similarly, through this informative role, a small modification in Industrial Development Certificate policy had been obtained in relation to new towns. The policy has become less stringent in this respect, again recording a slight shift in decision-making rather than a change in Development Area policy. Here the advantage of a Department to speak up for regional interests was also visible. In this particular example liaison between Mr. Crosland and Mr. Benn (at the Ministry of Technology), in the last Labour Administration, was effective, and was instrumental in

¹ Birmingham Post, March 1st 1972.

achieving the greater flexibility. Mr. Benn, in relation to the difficulty of overspill areas obtaining industry, stated that:-

"The I.D.C. control will of course continue to be operated so as to give first priorities to the Development Areas and the new Intermediate Areas. But I have already made some limited exceptions, after consultations with the Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, to take account of the needs of the few overspill towns experiencing such difficulties.

For example, save in exceptional circumstances, I.D.C.'s are at present available to all firms moving to Telford New Town from the West Midlands conurbation and to existing firms wishing to expand there, and I am glad to say that the prospects for keeping employment in balance with housing at Telford have improved".¹

In the two cases above, that of communications and the movement of industry, one cannot calculate the exact weight of the Planning Council alongside other pressure-groups (eg. the New Town Corporations). They are issues, though, on which the Council has been active and persistent. But, to reiterate, the effects of the Planning Council on policy, to which one should add generally its ability to give advice at the formative stage of policy-making, have only been of a marginal nature. The Chairman of the Planning Council has direct access to Ministers and there are monthly meetings of the Chairmen of all the Councils, attended by Ministers. Occasionally two or three members of the West Midlands Planning Council go up to Whitehall to discuss a particular topic. After the rejection of incentives for overspill industry, representatives went to see the Minister concerned. There are also periodic visits of Ministers to the West Midlands Planning Council itself. In the period since November 1969, there have been visits from Mr. Crosland, Mr. Walker, Mr. Page and even Mr. Heath, in September 1971. Even so, the limitation on the influence of the West Midlands Planning Council has caused much disquiet. Although there have been no resignations by a Chairman on the basis of an open clash with the Government, Mr. Cadbury, the former Chairman, did constantly complain of the lack of responsiveness of the centre to the Region.² When Mr. Crosland

1 Quoted in The Times Commons Report on "Steering Industry to Overspill Towns", March 11th 1970.

2 "Regional Policy Attacked", The Times, January 15th 1970.

visited the Council in 1969 there were complaints about the lack of action on plans for the West Midlands.¹

4. The West Midlands Planning Council and the Region.

Earlier, an indication of the nature and extent of "overlapping membership" in the composition of the West Midlands Planning Council and that of groups/organisations in the Region was given. This phenomenon has not been the sum total of the relationships and interplay of the Planning Council with other forces in the West Midlands. The degree to which it has developed its roots in the life of the Region is an important measurement of the impact of the Council, along with the implications for its indirect mobilisation of political resources and a regional alignment.

Firstly, there is the consideration of the Planning Council's relations with local authorities. The North Worcestershire case study has revealed how intra-regional conflict over land-use and overspill continued much as before. The position of local government vis-a-vis the Planning Council has also generally been one of conflict, the former fearing the regional machinery would trespass on its planning functions. An example of the hostility manifested itself in 1968, when the controlling Conservative Group on Birmingham City Council refused to nominate one of their members for the Planning Council, although they eventually acceded. This, however, is to place all the emphasis on the negative side of the interaction. The mere existence of the West Midlands Planning Council has begun the process of creating a regional interest in local government, for in this respect the regional machinery has acted as a catalyst. It led to the establishment of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities in 1966, formed by local authorities out of their fear of being superseded. This Standing Conference set to work on the development of a regional strategy in June 1968. It was made possible by the secondment of technical staff from local authorities, even though the exercise was constantly delayed as

1 Birmingham Post, November 25th 1969.

a result of the recall of these officers from time to time.

An initiative by Mr. Crosland in 1970 brought the Planning Council and the Standing Conference into closer accord,¹ agreeing on the need for the closest exchange of information (the Planning Board now makes its research available to the Standing Conference). The strategy of the Standing Conference was to be presented to the Planning Council for comments, before being handed to the Government. The closer collaboration was in line with the D.E.A. memorandum, put out in 1968, explaining the need for this very relationship.²

The Standing Conference strategy appeared in September 1971.³ It recommended locations for the total option population growth that lay mainly in the central urban complex. Two of the three proposed major new developments reflected this, those near Solihull and beyond Sutton Coldfield, being close to the Conurbation and intended to function as part of it. The third major location that was recommended was to be further afield, in the Lichfield/Burton/Tamworth area. These locations were to be complementary to developments already initiated within the Region. Altogether, the new structure for the West Midlands was to be bound together in a number of inter-relationships. As such the strategy was not conceived in terms of specific growth points, but in terms of wider areas of growth, with those locations having inherent advantages functioning as nodal points. The central urban complex, with the Conurbation at its heart, would hold many of the nodal points, within a rational programme of development. The locations of growth reflected the need to maintain the economic buoyance of the Region - attractive sites were sought in the process of re-structuring the fabric of the Conurbation. As part of this re-structuring, new industrial development sites on the rim of the

1 Birmingham Post, March 6th 1970.

2 "Regional Economic Planning Councils and Local Authorities", D.E.A., June 1968.

3 "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands", Op. Cit.

Conurbation were to attract firms that resided within it. The green belt principle was to be regarded as part of a whole complex of policies designed to promote development in accordance with the strategy, rather than as the imposition of purely negative constraints. There should consequently be a series of urban and rural zones, with areas of special control where pressure for development was most intense (eg. between Birmingham and Redditch). Lastly, commuting difficulties would be relieved by the promotion of locations outside the Conurbation, decentralising employment from its inner areas and by an enhanced dependence on public transport.

Overall, within the central urban complex, "A Developing Strategy" did not envisage development of continuous built-up areas, but rather a number of developing urban centres, the identity of which would be preserved. As a developing strategy, it would have the capacity to absorb changing socio-economic processes. Its realisation would require a corporate act of government at all levels - central, regional, and at the level of individual local authorities. It was anticipated that the Standing Conference would particularly guide the process of realisation - ensure that the structure plans of local authorities were consistent with a regional strategy, promote liaison between the different tiers of government, and help carry out a monitoring procedure to keep the strategy in line with a changing situation.¹

A strategic document has, therefore, once again been put forward for consideration in the West Midlands, alongside the growing liaison between the Regional Planning Council and local authorities, via the Standing Conference (the increase in the size of the local authority contingent on the Planning Council has been promoted very much with these closer attachments in mind). In spite of the central role of the Standing Conference in evolving a regional strategy, the work of the Planning

1 Ibid., Chapter 4 and 5.

Council has been a vital stage in the evolution of such regional thinking. It is doubtful whether the L.A. regional process would have advanced this far as quickly without the administrative innovations of 1965.

These developments were such as to prompt the Chairman of the Economic Planning Council, at the beginning of 1972, to say that a very important stage had been reached in regional thinking. This was attributable to the publication of "A Developing Strategy", along with the Council's own "Economic Appraisal" and the Government's plans for the reform of local government. The Planning Council, the Standing Conference and the Government were to sit down together to work out a strategy for the Region based on these reports.¹ Prior to the tripartite discussions, the Planning Council embarked on a series of meetings with individual local authorities. During the first half of 1972 there were meetings with Birmingham City Council, Shropshire County Council, and Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire County Councils.

This closer relationship between the Planning Council and the Standing Conference/local authorities has also been facilitated, it might be noted, by a de facto division of labour. The Planning Council's "Economic Appraisal" signified the development of the economic component in regional planning, for previously its attention had been focused primarily on the physical aspect. It is now fully recognised that economic analysis is a vital part of the consideration of the advantages and practicality of any given physical strategy, especially in the West Midlands where it is felt that the integrated industrial structure of the Conurbation makes it difficult for many industries to alter their location. Thus, the Planning Council has increasingly concentrated on the economic/industrial component, while the Standing Conference's team had been working out a regional physical land-use plan, although, of course, having regard to socio-economic processes.

¹ Birmingham Post, Review of Industry, January 11th 1972.

There are still considerable difficulties involved in the agreement on a binding regional strategy for the West Midlands. The Standing Conference first has to give its blessing to the strategy produced by its technical panel. It is a voluntary organisation and no strategy would be binding unless the local authorities represented agreed to accept it. The obstacles to achieving such unanimity soon became apparent. The strategy was criticised by Ald. Griffin for proposing a solution that took further industry and population away from Birmingham, even if it was only to the rim of the Conurbation.¹

Subsequent actions by Birmingham City Council have made the divisions more insuperable. It decided to take positive steps to keep all its industry and people. A motion to this effect was carried in the Council Chamber.² Ald. Griffin claimed that Birmingham was no longer in a position to make sacrifices, having lost 250,000 people and the associated rateable value and government grants. He evaluated the situation from the perspective of Birmingham's own interests and, in his opinion, "A Developing Strategy" clashed with these interests. In accordance with such views, Birmingham attempted to secure more building land within the boundaries of the proposed Birmingham District under the Conservative Government's imminent local government reform, efforts which were abortive. The final straw came when the City Council decided to pull out of the Standing Conference in March 1972 (although the Labour Party, which gained control of the Council in May 1972, was pledged to rejoin it), regardless of a warning from the Chairman of the Conference that Birmingham's pleas for more land for housing would receive a less sympathetic hearing in this event.³

In securing agreement on a regional strategy, one should also not overlook the differences of emphasis between the latest Planning Council

1 Birmingham Post, September 30th 1971.

2 Birmingham Post, October 6th 1971.

3 Birmingham Post, March 4th 1972.

proposals and those of "A Developing Strategy". While Birmingham was attacking the latter for taking every opportunity to get industry out of the City, it felt that the "Economic Appraisal" embodied ideas which were much more sympathetic to its aims.¹

The preliminaries of the process emanating from the Standing Conference's proposed strategy have not been auspicious. The centrifugal forces of the different interests of the local planning authorities, particularly those of Birmingham, have quickly asserted themselves again. Nevertheless, the Government appears to be relying on "A Developing Strategy" to solve the land-use and population problems of the West Midlands and to avoid meeting Birmingham's needs simply by urban sprawl, despite an attack on the strategy by the Regional Office of the Department of Environment.² In a Parliamentary debate in April 1972, Mr. Walker claimed that the Government intended to pursue a positive regional planning strategy and hoped later in the year to be able to complete a strategy for the Midlands.³ The Standing Conference planned to be in a position to facilitate this by taking all the decisions of principle on the strategy at its annual meeting in July 1972, so that it could be before the Government by October.

The relations and interplay of the West Midlands Planning Council with regional M.P's is also of some importance in terms of its influence, for the projection of a case in Parliament can be of consequence in certain circumstances. Here, there has been a conspicuous weakness. Cross-fertilisation between the regional machinery and regional M.P's has been of a very tenuous nature in the West Midlands for most of the period since 1965. The present Chairman of the West Midland Group of Labour M.P's, Peter Archer, could only recall one meeting of the Group with the Planning Council, although a meeting was arranged after the publication of the

1 Birmingham Post, December 14th 1971.

2 Birmingham Post, April 13th 1972.

3 Hansard, April 27th 1972, Vol. 835, Column 1800.

"Economic Appraisal". This problem, in part, relates to the lack of regional committees in the House of Commons for English regions. It has been suggested that such all-party regional committees should be created, and that their tasks could include the debating of the Economic Planning Council's studies.¹ It is improbable that these can be reconciled with the generally functional committee structure of the House. However, it is right to conclude that there are:-

"insufficient means by which Members of the House of Commons can participate in the formulation of regional policies".²

The present regional sub-committees of the Parliamentary Parties are by no means adequate. The Labour West Midland Group has only a small attendance at its meetings (only seven or eight M.P's on average), indicating the lack of importance Labour M.P's in the Region attach to it. There is the predicament posed by the fact that the British political system is characterised by national parties and politics. Party considerations override regional or sectional considerations, in sharp contrast to the regional blocs in the U.S. Congress. This had made it difficult to develop a high-powered regional lobby for the West Midlands in Parliament, certainly of a cross-bench character.

Aside from the nature of the British political system, this also relates to the absence of any strong regional political configuration in the West Midlands. The lack of basis for unity in the Region and the prominence of intra-regional conflict, mitigated though it has been by the emergence of the Standing Conference and the recent closer collaboration between it and the Planning Council, has been a central point in the discussion so far. In other ways, though, the West Midlands Planning Council's identification of problems, or confirmation of their existence, has produced signs of an emerging regional interest. In this respect its

1 "Regionalism and Parliament", G.H. Jones, B.C. Smith and H.V. Wiseman, Political Quarterly, October-December 1967.

2 Ibid., P. 409.

"Economic Appraisal" has been important for, elsewhere in England the awareness of a unifying economic problem has proved to be crucial in regional mobilisation. There has been a growing fear in the West Midlands that it will become the "Lancashire of the 21st Century"¹ if I.D.C. policy continues to divert technological industry from the Region and to break up its integrated industrial complex. A fuller consideration of the politics of I.D.C.'s is pertinent to an appraisal of the ability of the West Midlands Planning Council to act as a focal point in mobilising interests in the Region around a common viewpoint.

Firstly, however, the next chapter will consider the impact of the regional economic planning machinery after 1965 from a different standpoint - that of a particular locality seeking redress to problems untypical of the West Midlands as a whole.

1 A phrase coined by a local official.

CHAPTER FIVE

REGIONAL ECONOMIC PLANNING AND THE LOCALITY: THE NUNEATON LOBBY

There is always a danger that regional economic planning, because of its level of abstraction, may be viewed as being of negligible value, or even harmful, from the perspective of localised economic interests. Not all the diverse economic interests within a region may be assimilated in proposals at the regional level. There is a tendency for regional economic planning to become a common denominator type exercise, or for it to concentrate on the problems and characteristics of the dominant power within its remit. In the West Midlands it has been pre-occupied with population overspill from the Birmingham conurbation and, at least until the early 1970's, with the problems created by prosperity and affluence, such as a labour shortage.

Not all parts of the West Midlands, however, share similar problems and characteristics. Some areas within the Region contend with diametrically opposed difficulties - those of industrial rundown and unemployment. North-East Warwickshire, centred on Nuneaton, is such an area. Far from the regional economic planning process accommodating such problems, the locality, to a considerable extent, has had to by-pass it. Nuneaton has found itself falling back on its own resources and ingenuity to attract attention and find solutions to its difficulties.

1. The Problem.

Within the planning authority of Warwickshire County Council, Nuneaton is a Municipal Borough, lying to the north-east of Coventry and to the east of the Birmingham conurbation. The remainder of North-East Warwickshire, which can be considered as an entity in terms of the economic problems, consists of the following: the urban district council of Bedworth and the rural district councils of Atherstone and Meriden.

The economic malaise of this area has been adequately summarised in the evidence presented jointly by the above Councils to the Hunt Committee on the Intermediate Areas. It describes how the prosperity of North-East

Warwickshire had depended on its mineral resources, particularly on the mining of coal. Such staple industries were characterised by the decline and rationalisation that typified the coal industry throughout Britain during the 1960's. Nuneaton, at one time, had four collieries within its boundary, but following the closure of Haunchwood colliery in 1967, not one was left functioning. In North-East Warwickshire as a whole, there would be four active collieries remaining by June 1968, out of a former figure of twelve. Whole communities had been centred entirely around the production of coal and this could be no more. The picture depicted was familiar to any coal-mining area.¹

The above evidence drew attention to the fact that, in North-East Warwickshire, the run-down in the coal industry had become more dramatic and immediate in 1967-8. This was a consequence of the rapid and successive closure of pits at Arley, Kingsbury and Haunchwood.² Previously, miners had even been imported into the area from other parts of the country by the National Coal Board, because of the confidence in the viability of the pits in this section of the Warwickshire coalfield. The turning-point was the change in the Government's fuel policy in the 1967 White Paper, which shifted the emphasis to other sources of power, such as North Sea gas. Meanwhile, another source of employment in Nuneaton had suffered a decline - that of the railways, including the closure of commuter lines, such as the one between Nuneaton and Leamington.³ Overall, the Nuneaton area resembled the economies of many Development Areas, albeit on a smaller scale. There was the lack of a diversified industrial structure and a dependence on staple industries

1 Evidence to the Hunt Committee, D.E.A., presented by Nuneaton Borough Council, Bedworth U.D.C., Atherstone R.D.C., 29th March 1968.

2 Ibid., P.3.

3 Ibid., P.2.

that were experiencing a rapid decline. This was a far cry from the economic structure of much of the West Midlands, where growth industries were predominant.

A remedy for the economic problems of North-East Warwickshire had to some extent been found in alternative employment in near-by Coventry, which had flourishing car, aircraft and engineering industries. As many as one in three workers had to travel out of Nuneaton to work. It was as high as two out of every three from the neighbouring Bedworth.¹ The estimate for the number of people leaving Bedworth and Nuneaton each day to work in Coventry was 15,000 in 1968.² This growing dependence on Coventry for employment brought further problems in its wake. Fluctuation in the output of the car industry was frequent, creating a significant pool of temporary unemployed from time to time in the Nuneaton area. More serious was the fact that:-

"The shortage of labour in Coventry" is no longer a truism with unemployment in the City at its highest level for twenty years".³

Coventry was losing its role as a sponge soaking up the unemployed of North-East Warwickshire. This was a repercussion of the run-down of the aircraft industry, the problems of the car industry and of industrial rationalisation in the electrical and motor industries. The employment problem in Coventry had become even more acute by 1971 as a result of the national economic recession and the Rolls-Royce collapse, producing an unemployment rate above the national average.

The overall result of the above factors was that in February 1968, the wholly unemployed figure in Nuneaton was 3.4% and 5.9% in Bedworth. The comparable figure for the West Midlands at the time was 2.2%. This was before the full impact of the closure of Arley and Kingsbury collieries.

- 1 The Guardian, "Affluence Sends These Workers to Coventry", August 15th 1970.
- 2 North-East Warwickshire's Evidence to Hunt, Op. Cit., P.2.
- 3 Ibid., P.3.

By June 1970, Nuneaton's unemployment rate was 4.6%, above the figures for many of the Development Areas. North-East Warwickshire was, as one commentator described it:-

"a pocket of poverty surrounded by affluence."¹

In the light of the disturbing evidence that had accumulated as early as 1968, Nuneaton, Bedworth and Atherstone local authorities had impressed upon the Hunt Committee the lack of opportunity for new sources of employment in the Nuneaton area. They considered that this problem was compounded by the Government's policy of restricting industrial expansion throughout the West Midlands by the Industrial Development Certificate mechanism. There had been some new industrial development in the area as a result of the re-siting of factories out of Coventry as redevelopment within the City proceeded, and also through the establishment of some small concerns by self-employed men. It was asserted that the possibility of attracting further industry was remote without a change in the Government's policy on industrial development in the area.² There had been three cases between 1965 and 1967 of the Board of Trade refusing I.D.C.'s to industry.³ Earlier, when a Nuneaton factory (Clarkson Engineers Ltd.) had been refused an I.D.C. to expand, the firm even considered expanding in Germany as an alternative.⁴

These, then, were the economic problems confronted by North-East Warwickshire. How far was the dilemma recognised in regional studies in the West Midlands and by the Regional Economic Planning Council?

The "West Midlands Study" of 1965, prepared by the D.E.A., associated Nuneaton and Bedworth with Coventry, in the so-called

1 The Guardian, August 15th 1970.

2 North-East Warwickshire's Evidence to Hunt, Op. Cit., P. 2-3.

3 The Guardian, August 15th 1970.

4 Birmingham Post, May 23rd and July 13th 1961.

"Coventry Belt". It described the general feature of this sub-region as being that of even faster population growth than in the Birmingham conurbation. This was combined with conspicuous economic growth and prosperity. In comparison with the Birmingham conurbation, congestion and decay were not serious and the problems of the Coventry Belt were soluble within its own area. The main impediment to the solution of its problems was administrative - that of the relations between Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council. The differences between the two were preventing the formulation of a comprehensive sub-regional plan. It was an example of the recurrent conflict between counties and cities, comparable to that between Birmingham and the adjacent county authorities. The recommendation of the West Midlands Study was that Warwickshire and Coventry should make every effort to co-operate in the interests of sub-regional planning, to cater for the expected substantial growth in population. The sub-regional plan should take in the smaller towns around Coventry, such as Nuneaton. For purposes of industrial location policy, the sub-region should, it was recommended, again be treated as one. The further dispersal of industry within it would be desirable, as would a north-south axial road in the Belt to promote integrated development.¹

Eventually, after the intervention of the Minister, Mr. Crossman, the two planning authorities did agree on the need for a sub-regional study,² although the end product did not see the light until May 1971. The important point to note here is that the West Midlands Study did not differentiate between Coventry and North-East Warwickshire and it made no specific reference to, or proposals for, the problems of the latter. This should be qualified, however, by a realisation that in 1965 the problem of the Nuneaton area was not yet as apparent or pressing as it was a few years later.

1 "The West Midlands: A Regional Study", H.M.S.O. Op. Cit., P. 45 & 69.
 2 Birmingham Post, February 12th 1966.

In its references to the mining and quarrying industry, the West Midlands Study, while recognising the falling employment in such industries, emphasised that only 2% of the Region's labour force was engaged in this sphere of activity. Therefore:-

"Again, as in agriculture, because of the relatively small scale of the industry in this region this decline is not in itself a significant problem for the broad regional economy."¹

The report also pointed out that efforts were being made to transfer trained miners into the Region from declining coalfields elsewhere in the country. Such observations were indicative of the dangers involved in the regional level of abstraction. While extractive industries were insignificant as measured by regional criteria, they were of great importance and significance to a locality such as Nuneaton.

Two years later, the West Midlands Planning Council's document, "Patterns of Growth", did not challenge the conclusions of the West Midlands Study in relation to the Coventry Belt. For the purposes of the former, the possibilities and nature of development in this area, up to 1981, could not be assessed until the recommended sub-regional study had been completed. The Planning Council revealed that it had concurred in the draft of the terms of reference for this study, which had been drawn up by the local planning authorities concerned, and that it intended to maintain close contact with the work.² At this stage, then no suggestion was forthcoming from the Planning Council for any part of the sub-region to take overspill, either from Coventry itself or from the Birmingham conurbation. It held out no early promise for the injection of new development into North-East Warwickshire.

This assessment provoked the M.P. for Nuneaton and Bedworth, Leslie Huckfield, to accuse the Planning Council of doing nothing for the area. He did not advocate overspill of population into Nuneaton, but

1 "The West Midlands: A Regional Study", Op. Cit., P.17.
 2 "The West Midlands: Patterns of Growth" H.M.S.O. Op. Cit., P.36.

claimed that nothing was designated to go to Nuneaton in the way of employment, despite the likelihood of further pit closures and the substantial number of people that had to travel to Coventry, from his constituency, for work. It was time, he continued, that more people who lived in Nuneaton could work there.¹ Early the following year, in a parliamentary debate, Mr. Huckfield complained that the lack of change in industrial development policy towards North-East Warwickshire was in part attributable to the fact that the two regional reports had ignored the problems of the area, their recommendations and analyses being pre-occupied with the question of Birmingham overspill. No attention had been focused on the difficulties in his constituency and while in the West Midlands as a whole only 2% of the population were engaged in mining and quarrying, the figure for the Nuneaton area was nearer 17%.² Similarly, the evidence presented to the Hunt Committee by the local authorities of North-East Warwickshire asserted that the two regional studies had covered in some detail the trends in the Birmingham conurbation, but had made no reference to their area, except to suggest the sub-regional study. They under-lined that the industrial problems of Coventry and those of their district were very different, the one having a wide range of diversified industry and the other not.³

North-East Warwickshire was also disappointed when their problems did not feature in the West Midland Planning Council's evidence to the Hunt Committee. This evidence concentrated on the needs of the overspill and new towns, and on the problems of economic decline in the rural west of the Region, where agricultural employment was declining (the Planning Council's close examination of the problems of the rural west,⁴ in contrast

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- 1 Nuneaton Evening Tribune, March 30th 1967.
 - 2 Hansard, 30th January 1968, Columns 1212-1216.
 - 3 North-East Warwickshire's Evidence to Hunt, Op. Cit., P.2.
 - 4 The Planning Council published a report in 1970 looking at the problems of the rural areas of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire - The Times, July 28th 1970.

to its perfunctory treatment of North-East Warwickshire, became a bone of contention to localities such as Nuneaton). The local authorities in the Nuneaton area insisted that their difficulties were such that they should be a third type of area qualifying for intermediate area status, so that they could cope with the problems of this part of the Warwickshire coalfield.¹

Taking these developments into account, Nuneaton and its environs could see little hope in regional institutions getting across their problems to central government. There has been no one representative of this part of the Region on the West Midlands Planning Council. In terms of the local authority contingent in the membership, those associated with the problems of North-East Warwickshire came from the planning authorities - Coventry and Warwickshire. The views of Nuneaton could only be ventilated indirectly. Even Warwickshire County Council was not initially represented on the Planning Council when it was established in 1965, Ald. Smith-Ryland not being appointed until April 1968. The views of an organisation like Nuneaton Trades Council are also only projected indirectly to the regional level. It sends delegates to the Midland Federation of Trades Councils, which has links with the Regional T.U.C., and it is primarily from this latter source that the nominations for the union members of the West Midlands Planning Council has come.

Nuneaton was able to supplement the indirect contact with the regional level in various ways. Local officials contacted regional officials, particularly making approaches to the Regional Controller of the Board of Trade, although Nuneaton Council has not made any approach to the regional officers of departments. Generally, organised consultation between the departmental regional structure and local authorities has been very tenuous.² There has also been some contact with the

1 North-East Warwickshire's Evidence to Hunt, Op. Cit., P.4.
 2 "Local Government and Central Control", the West Midland Group, Op. Cit., P.208-9. This is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

Chairman of the Planning Council on the part of Nuneaton. Mr. Cadbury (Chairman until 1970) spoke and faced questions at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and Professions in February 1970, a meeting attended by many civic leaders, enabling them to transmit their feelings. The local M.P. had informal and personal contact with Mr. Cadbury, so that the latter was made aware of the local problem and of the fact that sites were available for industrial development on former collieries. One must have reservations about the closeness and continuity of this contact, for the M.P. admitted that he was not even aware of the resignation of Mr. Cadbury from the Planning Council in March 1970. The general impression of the M.P., at least in 1970, was that in any case it was not a particularly active Planning Council. The Leader of the Labour Group on Nuneaton Council, Coun. Waistell, expressed a feeling common to many local councillors, that nominated bodies like the Planning Council do not constitute a desirable approach to the regional level of governmental organisation.¹

There was not any evidence of the contacts with the regional level evoking a response. Nuneaton had to find other means of getting its problems considered, necessitating the mobilisation of a local lobby. The localities in North-East Warwickshire did not see the West Midlands Planning Council as a focal point for the channelling of their grievances and aspirations. This was less to do with the lack of power and influence of the Planning Council, although this was mentioned by Leslie Huckfield and the Nuneaton Labour Group Leader, than with the constant failure to achieve the necessary reaction. The irrelevance of the regional level for this area was different in nature from that of the lobby for the siting of the National Exhibition Centre in the West Midlands. In the latter case

1 This remark was passed during an interview, August 15th 1970, as were the remarks attributed to Leslie Huckfield.

it was more to do with the general pressure-group thesis that lobbies tend to concentrate and mobilise their efforts around institutions which have substantial power, in terms of being able to deliver the required decision. Also, in relation to the one concrete proposal of the regional studies affecting the Nuneaton area, that of a sub-regional study for the Coventry Belt, Nuneaton Council again had no direct representation. Its role was confined to the provision of statistical information. While the sub-regional study was deliberating, Nuneaton did not know the directions along which the thinking of the Study Group was proceeding - there was little feed-back or consultation at the formative stage.

2. The Nuneaton Lobby.

Firstly, the difficulties in the mobilisation of a Nuneaton lobby on the issue of industrial development need to be considered. The overriding problem has derived from the interrelationship between the Borough Council and the main economic pressure-groups in the locality - the Nuneaton Trades Council and the Chamber of Commerce and Professions. In short, it involves the local governmental process, in terms of the interaction between authoritative decision-making structures and pressure-groups.

The nature of the local governmental process has received much attention in local government studies since the late 1960's, exemplifying the tendency to deviate from the previous, very formal, studies on the subject. It is illuminating, first of all, to draw a very broad comparison with the situation in the United States. There, pressure-groups are very prominent at the level of state and local decision-making, a concomitant of the federal, decentralised United States constitution. At the level of the locality, decision-making and power structures are very dispersed, because city government is comprised of a large number of executive authorities, each with their own special competence and clientele. This dispersion of power is often not counteracted by political parties, which are often weakly organised, while the use of a party label is prohibited in many

city elections. Candidates frequently have to rely on organisational and financial help from pressure-groups. Therefore, there is little in the way of unified, hierarchical governmental or party structures in many of the American cities and localities.

The contrast with the British political system could hardly be greater. Here there is a centralised political structure, with the local authorities, in many respects, serving as agents of central government and certainly having little influence on economic policy. Any Nuneaton lobby would have to turn to central government to secure the appropriate decisions in industrial development policy. This centralisation obviously hinders a local governmental process. Furthermore, in the British local governmental structure, although the local authorities manifest dispersed authority in some respects, strong unified control has in many instances been imposed on the system as national disciplined parties have come to dominate local government, at least in the urban areas. G.W. Jones has shown how the two-party system has come to dominate local politics in Wolverhampton since the mid-50's.¹ Nuneaton reflects this development. The Labour Party lost control of the Council in 1967, during the electoral reverses for the Party all over the country. In 1970, when most of this research was carried out, Nuneaton Council was still Tory-controlled, with an active opposition on the Labour side. Then, in 1971, the Council reverted to Labour control. Over this period neither party has completely monopolised control.

Because of this centralised party control in many local authorities in this country, the assumption has often been that interests and pressure-groups are reflected directly through the party system, either by each

1 "Borough Politics", Macmillan 1969, P. 65-67.

party representing a distinct set of interests, or through overlapping membership (e.g. members of a local Trades Council also being Labour councillors). Again, Jones's analysis reveals that each of the two major parties represented a distinct and opposing set of interests in Wolverhampton. This contrasted with the situation before the rise of the two-party system. Then, local councillors tended to promote their own interests, producing a system of shifting alliances and separate coalitions on each issue, rather than the more stable and permanent lines of cleavage exemplified by the two-party system.¹ The closeness of relationships between the major parties and opposing sets of interests is open to doubt in Nuneaton, though, as will be indicated shortly.

The implication of the above line of argument is that the often quoted lack of open pressure-group activity at the local level, and the absence of formal connections between councils and local groups, is directly attributable to the emergence of a disciplined two-party system. D.M. Hill has stressed the extent to which the theory of "undifferentiated public opinion" still exists at local level - the idea that there should be no intermediary pressure-groups between the direct contact of councillor and public. Therefore:-

"the councillors tend to see community dialogue as a single set of contacts between representatives and voter, rather than in terms of many diverse and open channels with different groups."²

The same analysis contends that groups affiliated to national organisations often seek redress by asking these "parent" bodies to take up the matter with national government. Such points hint that the theory that interests at the local level are reflected directly through political parties is deficient in many respects.

1 Ibid., P.323.

2 "Participating in Local Affairs", Penguin Books 1970, P.102.

There is a distinction between the role and function of parties and that of pressure-groups. The former are interest aggregators and broad coalitions, at least in a two-party system. The representation of single and sectional interests must still fall to separate pressure-group activity. At the national level pressure-groups have proliferated to complement the party structure. There is, in fact, some evidence that this is beginning to occur at the local level. W. Hampton has identified the growth of more formal pressure-group activity in Sheffield, invoking a number of case studies depicting the roles of the Chamber of Commerce, the Trades Council and local tenants' associations. He has recorded the fact that Sheffield Council, during the course of the 1960's, was becoming more accessible in this respect and more eager to consult with local organisations.¹

An integral part of Hampton's examination of the role of pressure-groups in Sheffield politics was the compilation of a series of statistics, illustrating the influence of groups on councillors. Each council member was firstly asked if any group had volunteered information which had helped to form his opinion on a particular topic. Nearly two thirds of the council members acknowledged this, the leadership groups of the parties more so than the backbenchers. Less than half the councillors admitted that any organisation was generally taken into account when forming their opinions. Here, the larger proportion of positive answers was forthcoming from the Labour members, specifically mentioning organisations affiliated to the Party, such as the trade unions. Next, over half of the Labour members agreed that the Party group on the council generally took into account the opinions of other organisations, while the comparable Conservative figure was less than a third. Lastly, over 80% of councillors accepted that their Party groups took into account the views of outside groups on specific issues. While some two hundred different combinations of groups and issues were

1 "Democracy and Community", Oxford University Press 1970, P.295.

mentioned by the councillors in the course of expressing such views, the small effect most groups appeared to have on the formation of council members' opinions was evident. Only a few local pressure-groups achieved anything approaching a sustained influence on policy, the most important being industrial organisations, such as the Trades Council and the Chamber of Commerce.¹

This poses the question of the conditions for the access of pressure-groups to the council chamber and of how councillors determine which groups they will afford this access to. Local authorities, like any other authoritative structure, are not merely passive recipients and reflectors of pressures. They impose their own value judgements and actively determine the nature and extent of the accommodation of pressure-groups by local political institutions.

J. Dearlove has analysed the factors determining accessibility of local pressure-groups in relation to Kensington and Chelsea. Here, access depended on the "policy predispositions" of councillors, the style and form in which groups projected their demands and on judgements as to the "helpfulness" of groups. This notion of helpfulness took the form of a dichotomy. Firstly, it could be derived from the provision of information and ideas, termed "input" factors. Secondly, there were those groups providing some form of service, the "output" factor. Committee chairmen, in particular, stressed the value of groups as output structures, while the input value of groups appeared to be confined to a restricted range of groups which were considered to be legitimate representers of opinion. In this legitimising process, the compatibility of demands with the policy and resource pre-dispositions of the councillors was critical.²

1 Ibid., P. 66-76.

2 "Councillors and Interest Groups in Kensington and Chelsea", a Paper presented to the Political Studies Association Conference, 1970.

Many of the above accessibility criteria are analagous to those apparent in the access to the decision-making process at the national level. Mr. Dearlove was also of the opinion that such councillor predispositions helped to simplify the making of decisions, in the light of the impossibility of being able to decide between all theoretically possible alternatives. They fulfilled a "selective perception" function, to invoke a concept central to decision-making theory.

One is now equipped with a general background framework for the consideration of the local governmental process in Nuneaton. Here, there would seem to be the basis for close involvement between the Council and local economic groups, in relation to the problems of local industry and employment. The Trades Council was obviously concerned, because the employment of its members was directly affected. The Chamber of Commerce, at the time of the research in 1970, was high-lighting its concern by carrying out a study of the problems for industry in Nuneaton. It held firm views on the need for new industrial development. The Council, because of the likely political consequences, had to concern itself with unemployment as the closure of pits threatened to reach the point of crisis in 1967-8. Despite this common interest, the reality of the relationships between these bodies was somewhat different.

The Secretary of Nuneaton Trades Council, Mr. Lee, remarked that the Conservative Council did not appear to want to listen to their views. While the previous Labour Council had been more deferential, there had still not been close contact and agreement with the Trades Council. The Leader of the Labour Group accepted that the lack of an official link between the Trades Council and the Borough Labour Party created a gap in providing Labour councillors with close connections in this respect. The Trades Council had not, then, had any formal links with the local authority, nor any co-opted members. There were not even any of its members on the Council by 1970, although two had been on when Labour

had been in control. Because of the poor links and accessibility, the Trades Council had to transmit its views to the Council by lobbying from the outside, if only by means of correspondence. It had been lobbying from such a position of an "outsider" since the 1950's on the matter of industrial development. In all that time the Trades Council had met with very little response. As a consequence, it considered it to be more efficacious to lobby for more industry and employment on the Local Employment Committee of the Department of Employment, on which it had representatives. Another avenue open to the Trades Council was that of the local M.P. Here, relations were much closer than those with the Borough Council. In turn, the M.P. recognised the valuable activity of the Trades Council as a local lobby and the desirability of close relations in such circumstances.

The Nuneaton Chamber of Commerce and Professions was in a somewhat different position, in terms of status, to that of the Trades Council. In 1970 it was still emerging from junior status and consisted of individuals, rather than industrial organisations. It was not very active, confining its energies, in the main, to inviting speakers to dinner parties. It did, on the other hand, carry out studies of local problems, the above-mentioned study on industrial development being an example. It was further weakened by not belonging to a national or "parent" body and as a result was isolated in terms of its effectiveness and influence. With these considerations in mind, the Leader of the Labour Group on Nuneaton Council, Coun. Waistell, expressed the view that the organisation did not have the resources and full-time staff for it to get together fruitfully with the Council in a formal liaison committee. The Chamber of Commerce could not fulfil the role of the prestige organisation that Nuneaton and the Council needed. In other words, Dearlove's "output" factor was not satisfied. There seemed little point in the Council cultivating a close relationship. The Chamber of Commerce had no formal committee relationship with the local

authority, even under the Conservative-controlled Council in 1970. Four of its members did, however, sit on the Council, producing an element of overlapping membership. The Chamber of Commerce kept these members in touch with its views on local issues, but did not use them to forward its interests in any respect.

Neither the Chamber of Commerce nor the Trades Council, then, had regular meetings with Nuneaton Borough Council. Again, the Leader of the Labour Group admitted that there was room for closer contact with local interests, with the reservation that local interests would not be aware of the planning, budgetary and resource problems that the Council had to face and assume responsibility for. Such a reflection was not any compensation for the fact that the Nuneaton lobby was characterised by fragmentation and the lack of a developed local governmental process, even though each of the participants recognised and was concerned with the problem of industrial development in the area.

This fragmentation went even further, for there was a great deal of political disagreement and animosity between the local M.P. and the Nuneaton Borough Council, the latter accusing the former of interfering in its affairs. Such divisions were accentuated in 1970 because of the party difference between the two, the M.P. being Labour while the Council was conservative-controlled. This same tension and suspicion comes out in Hampton's study of Sheffield politics. There the local M.P.'s were not prone to the discussion of local issues with the City Council. Members of the latter were suspicious of any interference in their affairs from the former. Local M.P.'s were generally not expected to participate in the local political process and were not integrated into local institutions. Help from the M.P.'s was mainly required when the Council or local pressure-groups needed assistance in dealing with the Government. For example, Sheffield M.P.'s formed an ad hoc committee to present evidence to the Hunt Committee on the Intermediate Areas, in the light of

a deterioration of redundancy problems in the City in 1967. Its work merged into the concern which the City Council exhibited for the industrial future of Sheffield.¹ This position was duplicated in Nuneaton, for the M.P. took the lead in taking matters to central Departments, including the leading of local deputations to the Ministry. Council leaders recognised this as his most useful role and primary contribution. The M.P., however, interpreted the industrial development problem in Nuneaton as partly a consequence of local failures. It was this which produced Council accusations of interference.

Finally, the fragmentation of the local lobby was apparent in the divisions and lack of agreement between neighbouring councils in North-East Warwickshire. There were political differences between Nuneaton and Bedworth, for example, especially when the Council of the former fell under Conservative control, while that of the latter remained under Labour control.

The reasons for the weakness of the local lobby were therefore three-fold: Nuneaton Council did not work closely with local interests; there were clashes between the Council and the local M.P; and there were divisions between the local authorities of North-East Warwickshire. These divisions were a serious drawback, for one of the more important criterion for the success and influence of lobbies (in relation to industrial development Nuneaton needed to influence central government policy) is the ability to mobilise resources and a power-base, including by means of alliances and coalitions to effect a formidable combination. The divisions between potentially sympathetic interests and institutions was in marked contrast to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre lobby, where a powerful, formal coalition was forged between Birmingham City Council and the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. The latter organisation

1 "Democracy and Community", Op. Cit., Chapter Four.

had a national reputation and status. Its strength was as conspicuous as was the weakness of Nuneaton Chamber of Commerce. The Birmingham lobby did have the power inherent in size though, mobilising forces from the second largest City in the country. Fortunately for the Nuneaton lobby, compensatory strengths developed, vis-a-vis central government, to offset the weakness of local fragmentation. These can be traced via a chronological account of the development of the Nuneaton lobby.

Concern about industrial development in North-East Warwickshire reached its zenith in the years between 1967 and 1970, but there were earlier rumblings. In 1961, in reaction to the refusal of an I.D.C. for a Nuneaton firm, approaches were made to the Board of Trade by Nuneaton Borough Council and the M.P., Frank Bowles at the time.¹ In 1964 Mr. Bowles also joined a deputation led by a Coventry M.P., Maurice Edelman, over the future prospects of the aircraft industry in the City, in the light of the re-assessment being pursued by the incoming Labour Administration.²

From 1967 activity gathered momentum. Soon after his election as M.P. for Nuneaton, Leslie Huckfield asserted that industrial expansion was being retarded by the Board of Trade's I.D.C. policy in his constituency. He was quoted as saying:-

"The expansion of Clarkson's has already been prevented and I should not like to see further expansion of local industry restricted."³

Such aspirations were in conflict with the policy of successive post-war central governments, which aimed to steer industry to the Development Areas and to restrict development in "overheated" areas such as the West Midlands.

In November 1967, Lord Robens met the chairmen of the Regional Economic Planning Councils, at the request of the Prime Minister, and forecast a big reduction in the role of coal, with the implication that jobs

1 Birmingham Post, July 13th 1961.

2 Birmingham Post, November 11th 1964.

3 Nuneaton Evening Tribune, March 30th 1967.

were threatened in the coal-mining areas.¹ This provoked five Labour M.P's from mining areas in the West Midlands to meet leaders of the miners. They called for a slower rate of rundown in the industry, combined with more action to provide alternative jobs for localities outside the Development Areas where hardship was being faced. The Minister of State at the Board of Trade assured them that there would be generous flexibility in I.D.C. policy in relation to such problem areas.² This action on the part of the M.P's implied some feeling of common identity in those districts in the West Midlands where coal-mining was important and threatened by run-down, even though the Nuneaton M.P. maintained that there has generally been little contact between North-East Warwickshire and other areas of extractive industry in the West Midlands. The concern at pit closures showed signs, in fact, of taking on wider significance when twenty West Midland M.P's requested a meeting with the Prime Minister, to discuss the question of unemployment and the fact that little was being done to offset pit closures.³

Then came the news of the closure of Arley pit. To Leslie Huckfield this was devastating. He pledged himself more fully to fight against further closures and to take up the whole problem of the concern about the future of the Warwickshire coalfield. Warwickshire County Council was also being urged to act, to use its influence with the Government and the West Midlands Economic Planning Council to press for additional industry to be allowed to move into North-East Warwickshire, as compensation for the rapid succession of pit closures.⁴

Leslie Huckfield assumed a leadership role in this crisis, particularly in leading a local deputation to the Board of Trade early in 1968,

1 Birmingham Post, November 10th 1967.

2 Birmingham Post, November 14th 1967.

3 Birmingham Post, November 15th 1967.

4 Nuneaton Evening Tribune, January 26th 1968.

fulfilling the role described earlier, that of taking local problems up to central Departments. The Department certainly became aware of the problem. The Minister of State again promised more flexibility in the administration of I.D.C's. Since this deputation, the Nuneaton M.P. has been keen to emphasise that the difficulty of obtaining I.D.C's in North-East Warwickshire has diminished. Three I.D.C's were rejected between 1968 and 1970, but two of these went through after Mr. Huckfield's intervention. Nevertheless, Coun. Hartopp, the Leader of the Conservative Group on Nuneaton Council, expressed the opinion that more could have been hoped for with the M.P's own Party being in power.

Mr. Huckfield did reinforce his endeavours by raising the problems in the Commons at the end of January, 1968. In a debate he not only called for more flexibility in I.D.C. policy outside the Development Areas, but also for a more selective element in regional incentives and industrial grants. He expressed his disagreement with the existing blanket policy towards the regions. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade replied to the effect that the problem of North-East Warwickshire had to be considered in the context of the adjacent areas of low unemployment. Coal-mining did not dominate the industrial structure to the same degree as in some of the Development Areas and North-East Warwickshire was more favourably placed to absorb a rundown in the industry. The Minister concluded that there was no intention of varying investment grants on more selective lines. There would be a flexible policy towards I.D.C's in the Nuneaton area, where applications would be considered more sympathetically than those in the highly congested parts of the West Midlands.¹

In these Parliamentary activities, while Mr. Huckfield collaborated closely with a neighbouring Conservative M.P., Mr. Speed, he was well aware of the difficulty of securing the general support of West Midland M.P's.

1 Hansard, 30th January 1968, Columns 1212-1220.

In many respects, North-East Warwickshire had been an oasis of depression in a generally prosperous region. Wider regional support was only forthcoming when unemployment also occurred in a nearby major centre, such as Coventry. A lack of regional backing was a further potential weakness for the Nuneaton lobby, just as the West Midlands Planning Council had neglected the problems of the area. The overall regional picture seemed inadequate for meeting the difficulties of North-East Warwickshire. The early part of 1968, however, witnessed exactly the development needed to fortify Nuneaton's pressure and to compound the wider Parliamentary activities of West Midland M.P's that had taken place to some extent at the end of 1967. The closure of the Hawker Siddeley Dynamic factory at Coventry aroused the indignation of M.P's in the Region. Circumstances for Nuneaton became fortuitous. West Midland M.P's now freely talked in terms of persuading the Government to issue I.D.C's in those parts of the Region threatened by large-scale unemployment. Nuneaton and Coventry were specifically mentioned. To press for this selective reduction in controls over industrial development in the West Midlands, M.P's from the Region, particularly from Coventry and Birmingham, supported a motion sponsored by Mr. Huckfield. He seized the opportunity to emphasise that unemployment in Nuneaton was higher than in many Development Areas.¹

It was these efforts, when combined with the Nuneaton deputation, that appeared to be successful in producing more flexibility in I.D.C. policy in North-East Warwickshire. It is impossible to assign proportional influence to the various components that contributed to this modification of policy, but Nuneaton clearly became the beneficiary of the widening of the conflict to one between much of the West Midlands and the Government over I.D.C. policy. The emergence of this widespread campaigning in the Region was of more importance than the role of any particular individual in achieving

1 Birmingham Post, February 10th 1968.

the short-term response, a response which had little to do with planning.

The impression of greater selectivity in policy was confirmed when a Warwickshire County Council deputation, accompanied by Mr. Huckfield and Mr. Speed, was re-assured about the promise given to the earlier local deputation, that I.D.C's would be administered on a flexible basis.¹ Now that Mr. Huckfield was convinced that this flexibility was a reality, he began to focus his attention on the other aspects of the industrial development difficulty, such as the shortage of suitable land and sewerage difficulties. With this change of emphasis divisions in the Nuneaton lobby became more conspicuous.

This is not to say that the local M.P. did not maintain his pressure on the Board of Trade in the Commons, for he did. There was also the opportunity presented by the Hunt Report on the Intermediate Areas. Nuneaton Borough Council and its neighbouring councils submitted evidence to Hunt in 1968, the substance of which has been dealt with above (at this time the Town Clerk of Nuneaton also approached the Land Commission regarding development in the area, although unsuccessfully). Mr. Huckfield submitted evidence separately, drawing attention to the fact that some firms were not applying for I.D.C's because of anticipated rejection.

The Hunt Committee eventually reported in April 1969. It came to the following conclusions on the problems of North-East Warwickshire. There was recognition that in the past the area had been heavily dependent on mining and that difficulties were arising from the reduction in the number of collieries. The area was facing a period of sharp adjustment, made worse by the coincidental decline in opportunities in Coventry during 1967 and 1968. There were signs, the Report continued, that the peak of unemployment had been reached by mid-1968 and by the end of that year the major part of the rundown of the coal industry had been completed. In addition, it was

1 Birmingham Post, July 10th 1968.

ill-conceived to consider North-East Warwickshire in isolation, because of its proximity to Coventry and Birmingham, locations which for the most part had been buoyant since the War. Employment prospects in Coventry would again improve given growth in the national economy. Hunt therefore refused to recommend intermediate status for the area, although sympathising with the view that new employment should be allowed in the Nuneaton area. The Committee was aware that the Board of Trade, by this time, concurred in such a view. It felt given improvement in employment in nearby centres, North-East Warwickshire's problems should prove to be short-term. In other words, the conclusions of Hunt were very much in accordance with the prevailing Government policy. It did not suggest any further discrimination in favour of industrial development in the area.¹

Mr. Huckfield now suggested the creation of a North-East Warwickshire Development Association, arguing the need for local authorities in the area to combine to tackle local industrial development and to promote a public relations campaign. A Development Association seemed a means of achieving such unity of action, of fully mobilising the interest of the locality, including for taking the problems up to the regional plane. Nuneaton Borough Council was not enthusiastic. The Leader of the controlling Conservative Group envisaged many impracticalities in the scheme. There would be little in the way of inducements for it to offer to industrialists and the cost of the project to the Council was likely to be prohibitive. Local officials shared the scepticism, particularly in relation to the lack of incentives, while there appeared to be little local industry with enough capital to expand. It was anticipated that a Development Association would merely be a "talking shop". The Leader of the Labour Group, Coun. Waistell, felt that the concept was too narrow in scope, for North-East Warwickshire by itself was on too small a scale to tackle the

1 "The Intermediate Areas", H.M.S.O. April 1969, Cmnd. 3998, P. 70-71.

problem. What was really required was for a private development company to provide cost-rent facilities for industrialists. Therefore, although there was a meeting between Nuneaton and Bedworth Councils in January 1970, no agreement was reached on this question. A meeting between Nuneaton Council, the local Trades Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the local M.P., to discuss matters of common interest, which might have signified a successful step in developing closer and more formal relations between these various interests, also proved to be abortive. It was a fruitless forum of local interests, despite the M.P.'s suggestion for the possibility of taking overspill from Birmingham to inject new development into the area.

Warwickshire County Council, however, set up an Industrial and Employment Panel. This was to be a special committee to investigate ways of attracting industry to the northern part of Warwickshire, on which district councils were to be represented. The fact that the County Council was at last taking action was welcomed in many quarters in North-East Warwickshire, although apprehension remained that the new enterprise might again prove to be nothing more than a "talking shop" rather than an attempt to go out and sell the advantages of the area.¹ In March 1971, Mr. Huckfield complained in the Commons, to the Prime Minister, that the County Council had rejected his proposals for a local development association, while the Panel they had adopted had not produced one extra job.² Nevertheless, the County Council had responded in some way to the pressure from Nuneaton. The Nuneaton Conservative Leader, Coun. Hartopp, considered it advisable for the locality to work within the County Council structure, rather than continue to lobby Departments separately. Nuneaton's interests could best be concerted in this way now and there was the hope that closer consultation with the County Council, on the problems of industrial development, would

1 Nuneaton Evening Tribune, January 28th 1970 and the Birmingham Post, 29th January 1970.

2 Birmingham Post, March 19th 1971.

take place. Therefore, according to the Conservative Leader, the policy of lobbying central government need no longer be central for the Nuneaton lobby. The Labour Leader, Coun. Waistell, also looked to joint action between North-East Warwickshire and the County Council. He was sceptical of the will of the County to pursue concrete achievements, however, and intended to pursue the matter further if there were no tangible results within twelve to eighteen months.

The Nuneaton lobby had assumed a three-dimensional form. There had been the lobbying of central government, with the initiative and leadership provided by the local M.P. Next, there was the County Council level, on which the leaders of Nuneaton Borough Council were mainly depending to attract further industry into North-East Warwickshire by 1970, even though the achievements of the County Industrial Panel were generating much scepticism. Thirdly, there was the more localised dimension. This had been epitomised by Mr. Huckfield's suggestion for a North-East Warwickshire Development Association, which the fragmentation between the various interests in the area, and the practical difficulties entailed, prevented from coming to fruition.

The Nuneaton lobby had achieved tangible gains by 1970. There was evidence of greater flexibility in I.D.C. policy. Between 1967 and 1970 nineteen I.D.C's were granted in Nuneaton, the comparable figure in Bedworth being twenty-two.¹ In July 1971, the Department of Trade and Industry published its guidelines for the issues of I.D.C's. It was specifically stated that the needs of North-East Warwickshire were taken into account.² The lobby was not successful in the attempt to secure special grants and incentives. This would have entailed too radical an alteration in the policy of the Labour Government, which remained in power until June 1970. Neither had this been recommended by the Hunt Committee. As a result, the

1 The Guardian, August 15th 1970.
2 "Trade and Industry", July 8th 1971.

local M.P. still believed that the Development and Intermediate Area policy was being administered in too blanket a fashion in 1970, not being sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of some areas outside the officially assisted areas. There was a feeling by this time, though, that the essential problems were local. Mr. Huckfield, for example, was emphasising the lack of land, facilities and adequate sewerage in the locality. The remedy to the lack of industrial development could rest largely in local hands. The M.P. insisted that there was far too little effort on the part of the County and Nuneaton Councils to make the area attractive, to clean up disused colliery sites and to mount a public relations campaign. The truth of the matter really lay in the inability of local interests and institutions to collaborate and unite their efforts.

Circumstances changed rapidly during the course of 1971 for the West Midlands, with significant repercussions for Nuneaton and North-East Warwickshire. The advent of economic and employment problems on a considerable scale took place throughout the Region. The "Economic Appraisal" of the West Midlands Planning Council, in June 1971, advocated, in such circumstances, new criteria for I.D.C. policy throughout the whole of the Region. Nuneaton's problems became submerged in a general regional problem, which even took in places such as Birmingham.

On the positive side, the sub-regional study for the "Coventry Belt" was completed in May 1971. This recommended that additional population should be accommodated in a corridor stretching from Nuneaton, southwards through Bedworth, Coventry, and eventually to Warwick. However, the vice-chairman of Warwickshire County Council was of the opinion that the Report might already be superfluous, because of the Government's proposed reform of local government. The conclusions of the sub-regional study appeared to conflict with the east-west development that was likely in the new West Midlands Metropolitan County.¹ The proposed boundary for the latter

1 Birmingham Post, May 17th 1971.

was elongated in an eastward direction, taking in Coventry, almost piercing the new, provisional, Warwickshire County Council in two.

Then came "A Developing Strategy" in September 1971, produced for the Standing Conference of Local Authorities in the West Midlands. The projected population growth it anticipated for the Warwickshire sub-region was, it claimed, reinforced by development in the Coventry area, overall resulting in a degree of growth unparalleled in the Region. This was part of the growth phenomenon apparent in the sub-regions flanking the Birmingham conurbation. Its interpretation of developments was sanguine. But in relation to mining in the Region it did state that:-

"As with agriculture, the local effects of a decreasing labour force will be substantial and must be considered in the development of the preferred strategy."¹

Alongside this, it identified the problem of "residual populations" of unskilled and immobile workers emerging in the older mining districts.

The weight of the recommended strategy was a south-west/north-east axis. While the Regional office of the Department of Environment criticised the Report for providing little analysis of the problems of North Warwickshire,² such a strategy might promise to alleviate the problems of the area, for the Coventry Belt was to have an important part to play. Also, of the suggested new employment areas, two were on the eastern rim of the Birmingham conurbation, at Solihull and to the north-east of Chelmsley Wood. The latter was located in Keith Speed's constituency, an M.P. who had worked closely with Leslie Huckfield in tackling the local problem of industrial development.

Local government reform promised to effect a metamorphosis in circumstances as well. The Town Clerk of Nuneaton anticipated that a simplification of the planning authority structure might produce a more comprehensive approach to development, which would take in the needs of

1 "A Developing Strategy for the West Midlands", Op. Cit., P.23.

2 Birmingham Post, April 13th 1972.

Nuneaton - it might perform the role of an overspill town in much the same way as Tamworth did for the Birmingham conurbation. The Government would also be in a position to deal with the individual needs of each local authority because of the fewer numbers involved, enabling exceptions to be made in central government policy if necessary. This was all a matter of conjecture. The radicalism of the reform of local government proposed in the West Midlands, outside the Metropolitan County Authority, is a question for some doubt. Seventy-nine town, urban and rural councils are to be replaced by twenty-five new district authorities at the second tier level. Five of these are to be in the proposed first tier Warwickshire County Council. Nuneaton Municipal Borough is merely to be combined with Bedworth Urban District Council in a new district authority. The rest of North-East Warwickshire is to form a separate district, based on Atherstone and parts of Meriden.

From the perspective of the West Midlands Region and the West Midlands Planning Council, the events in North-East Warwickshire exemplify the inability to transcend intra-regional conflict. Nuneaton developed its own lobby and did not re-orientate its efforts towards the regional level, or accept a wider regional viewpoint. As far as it was concerned, it had been entirely neglected by the Planning Council, even though its problems were very different from those of surrounding areas. As such, the local lobby, in so far as it could organise and mobilise itself, was willing to have industry diverted from other parts of the Midlands and implicitly engage in intra-regional conflict. The regional level did not provide an answer to such conflict over resources, although at the end of 1967 and the beginning of 1968 Nuneaton was able to take advantage of the wider mobilisation of M.P's in the Region over the question of unemployment in parts of the West Midlands. The Planning Council itself had not been an effective device for promoting a consensus among divergent interests within the Region. The Nuneaton lobby was further evidence that distinct entities

within the West Midlands were still tenacious in pursuing separately that which they deemed to be in their necessary interest. Whatever the criticisms of the nature of its efforts, the West Midlands Planning Council faces a complex task in resolving and accommodating differences of interest between Birmingham, the Black Country, the Rural West of the Region, the Potteries of North Staffordshire, the New Towns, and North-East Warwickshire and the Coventry Belt.

Apart from relating local and sub-regional interests, through a particular example, to the regional level, the above considerations have served the purpose of describing the activities over the question of I.D.C's, and the sensitivity of the issue, from one perspective, that of North-East Warwickshire. It constitutes a prelude to a more comprehensive consideration of the lobbies on the question in the West Midlands.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POLITICS OF I.D.C's

The emphasis in the discussion so far has been that of the intra-regional allocation of resources and the conflict within the West Midlands. The full and balanced development of resources within each region also involves the inter-regional aspect - the conflicts and competition between the regions. The two dimensions are, of course, intimately related. An insight into the consequences of the inability of the West Midlands Planning Council to significantly influence the inter-regional allocation of resources in terms of the implications for intra-regional strategy has already been given. Aid to the assisted areas proliferated markedly under the Labour Administration (1964-70). In a statement on the report of the Hunt Committee on the Intermediate Areas in the Commons, in April 1969, Mr. Shore drew attention to the fact that this assistance had grown from £30 millions in 1964 to over £260 millions,¹ particularly as a result of investment grants and regional employment premiums.² Apart from the allocation of financial resources between the regions, there has been the question of physical constraints over the location and distribution of industry. The Labour Government steered industry to the Development Areas through a more sustained and vigorous use of Industrial Development Certificate policy than hitherto. The Town and Country Planning Order 1966 meant that I.D.C's had to be obtained for any development that was not less than 3,000 sq.ft.

These measures raised the question of whether the inter-regional balance after 1964 was tilted too far against the West Midlands, thereby preventing the full and efficient mobilisation of resources in the Region. Mr. Emanuel, the former chairman of the Economic Planning Board, claimed that Development Area policy:-

1 Hansard, April 24th 1969, Column 669.

2 D. Lee, "Regional Planning and Location of Industry"
Op. Cit., P. 38-46.

"could lead, if the sole attention of the Government were fixed on the less prosperous regions, to a neglect of the special problems of other regions."¹

He felt that the existence of the Regional Planning Council/Board in the West Midlands was a safeguard against this. The inter-regional aspect, therefore, involves a consideration of the development of the economic/industrial component of regional planning, in its complementary relationship to the physical (i.e. public investment in infrastructure) side of locational decisions.

The approach to the discussion of this inter-regional question is not intended to be that of an objective assessment of the economic facts, but a study of the perception and reaction of groups within the West Midlands to the problem, along with the nature of the mobilisation of any accompanying lobbying. It is a study of the political forces at work in the Region, including the role and importance of the West Midlands Economic Planning Council in this regional constellation of political forces. In assessing the political reactions in the Region, the analysis will revolve around one of the more controversial aspects of regional policy as administered by central government, that of I.D.C. policy. An analytical appraisal will be combined with a chronological approach, in a three-phase sequence. The first phase will look at the early development of the economic component of regional planning by the West Midlands Planning Council and its attitude on I.D.C. policy, combined with the reaction to the policy on the part of other groups in the Region and their links with the Planning Council. This constitutes the pre-Hunt period.² Secondly, attention will be turned to the culmination of these developments in the attempt to influence the Hunt Committee. The third phase will deal with post-Hunt mobilisation against I.D.C.'s in the West Midlands, along with the significance of the

1 Typescript of talk to Walsall Junior C. of Commerce, Op. Cit., P.5.
 2 "The Intermediate Areas", H.M.S.O. April 1969, Op. Cit.

Planning Council's "Economic Appraisal" in relation to events up until then. The total effect will be to indicate whether the West Midlands Planning Council has interacted with groups in the Region in such a way as to fulfil the role as a focal point for the mobilisation of a regional interest vis-a-vis any conflict with the Government.

1. The Pre-Hunt Period.

The economic component in the "West Midlands Study" strategy of 1965 was most notable for its absence, confined to a recognition of problems whose importance and impact was unresearched. The major problem was considered to be the dispersal and movement of industry from the Conurbation. Accordingly, the Study called for research into the obstacles to the mobility of industry in the West Midlands.¹ There was some implicit recognition that there might be economic factors at work in the Region which impeded industrial dispersal. There was also a recognition of the factor that was to become an increasingly sensitive one politically in the Region - the Government's policy of giving the "unemployment" areas the first claim on any foot-loose industry. This indicated that balanced intra-regional development could not be considered in isolation from the inter-regional policy of the Government. In other respects, though, the Study's presentation of the Region's economy in the image of a prosperous stereotype could only serve to reinforce the Government's belief in the need for a strong inter-regional policy, to steer industrial growth away from the "over-heated" West Midlands.

The West Midland Planning Council's "Patterns of Growth" again discussed economic/industrial issues mainly in terms of reference to the lack of knowledge and the need for further research. A number of factors might hold significance for the growth potential of the West Midlands economy. Examples were the predominance of the motor industry in the

1 "The West Midlands - A Regional Study", H.M.S.O. Op. Cit., P.69.

industrial structure of the Region, the large number of small firms depending on close links with nearby industries, and whether sufficient expansion of advanced technological industry to provide new growth points was in evidence. Research was required to assess the significance of these points in the formulation of regional economic planning policies for the West Midlands.¹ "Patterns of Growth" also took up the problem of the intra-regional location of industry and the movement of industry to overspill towns within the West Midlands. Its proposals for the development of the Region involved an unprecedented movement of industry. It was this which produced the first signs of a significant disagreement with the Government. The clash revolved around the question of steering industry to the Development Areas and the growing financial inducements for industry to move to those parts.²

Up to this point, then, the development of the economic component of regional planning by the West Midlands Planning Council was largely confined to the cautious and uncertain identification of problems, combined with the call for more research. A definite difference of opinion with the Government over I.D.C. policy was developing, motivated by the problems of promoting the balanced intra-regional development of resources in the West Midlands. In effect, the Planning Council was calling for a diminution of the discriminatory differentials between the Development Areas and parts of the West Midlands, embodied in its unsuccessful request for financial incentives for the movement of industry to overspill areas in the Region. This emphasis on the intra-regional problem was based on the assumption that the economic performance of the West Midlands suffered from the congestion in the central conurbation. It was a problem that was increasingly becoming associated with the so-called "Dawley dilemma".

1 "The West Midlands: Patterns of Growth", H.M.S.O. Op. Cit., P.8.

2 Ibid., P. 26-27.

Dawley New Town was flagging because of its failure to attract sufficient industry.

During 1968, Adrian Cadbury, Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, was stressing, more, the importance of developing the economic component in regional planning. With the rate of industrial movement out of the Conurbation still very slow, he felt the economic factor in physical strategies in the Region would have to be looked at more closely, especially the problem of the inter-dependence of firms in the industrial complex of the Conurbation. In addition, the Planning Council became more pre-occupied with the question of the future effectiveness and growth of the economy of the West Midlands. Critical in this respect was the impression that the Government's I.D.C. policy was diverting new science-based industries from the West Midlands. This threatened to prevent the Region from keeping up with the technological changes occurring in the national economy, compounding its over-dependence on a few industries. In October 1968, Geoffrey Lloyd referred in the Commons to the Planning Council's concern that the West Midlands was:-

"being deprived of its characteristic vitality in the attraction of firms."¹

In accordance with these apprehensions, Mr. Cadbury became convinced of the need for an economic appraisal of the West Midlands, to look at its economic prospects,² a central recommendation of a paper he presented to the Planning Council in the Summer of 1968. This led to the creation of the previously mentioned Working Party. It had the following terms of reference:-

1 Hansard, October 14th 1968, Column 30.
 2 Mr. Cadbury describes the development of these views in the Birmingham Post's "Review of Industry", January 16th 1968 and January 21st 1969.

"To examine and report on the prospects and nature of economic growth in the West Midlands in the short and medium term; the practical problems involved and action required within the limits imposed by national considerations to enable the Region to play its part in the economic development of the country and to meet the need for adequate employment opportunities for the growing population of the Region."¹

The significance of this Study will be dealt with subsequently. Before it was published, the West Midlands Planning Council, after the rejection of its recommendation for overspill incentives, for industry by the Government, was looking towards the Hunt Committee on the Intermediate Areas as a further opportunity to get its views across. Firstly, one must consider the reaction of economic and political groups within the West Midlands to the intensification of the I.D.C. policy of steering industry to the Development Areas in the pre-Hunt period. This, along with the extent of the cross-fertilisation with the Planning Council on the matter, can most conveniently be discussed in two parts. One relates to the activities of local authorities and economic groups in the West Midlands, and the other to the activity of the Region's M.P's in Parliament.

The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in its reaction to the "West Midlands Study" in 1965, was expressing doubts about the future of the Region's economy under the prevailing policies of the Government. It was particularly concerned about the inability to attract new growth industries.² Subsequently it came out, along with the Midland Region C.B.I., in support of the West Midlands Planning Council's views on the modification of I.D.C. policy and incentives for overspill industry. The Chamber of Commerce categorically stated that it would support the Planning Council in pressing for an end to I.D.C's. What was ideally wanted by such economic organisations was reliance only on a graduated incentive scheme in regional policy.³ In its first major criticism of

1 "An Economic Appraisal", H.M.S.O. 1971, Op. Cit. P.84.

2 Birmingham Post, July 28th 1965.

3 Birmingham Post, January 3rd 1968.

the Government's policy, then, the Planning Council invoked considerable support from within the West Midlands.

During the course of 1968, Dawley Development Corporation also became active in calling on the Government to modify its I.D.C. policy. This was because of the failure of the New Town to attract industry on a scale commensurate with its needs. In September a deputation was sent to the Minister to high-light this difficulty.¹ Expressed in this case was an element of conflict with Birmingham Corporation's Policy. It was a reflection of the long-standing suspicion that Birmingham's efforts to disperse its industry and population had been half-hearted. The objections to the administration of I.D.C. policy in the West Midlands, therefore, only revealed a superficial regional unanimity. There were under-currents of conflict over what form the modification of policy should take.

This conflict of interests became more apparent with a growing alignment between Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Birmingham Corporation. Their attention was focused on the fear for employment in Birmingham itself, as I.D.C. policy attempted to disperse its industry and prevent new industries from moving in. During November 1968 liaison machinery between the two was established, to protect the City's employment prospects.² It was decided that a deputation should be sent to the Board of Trade. The Government did not agree to any relaxation of the strict controls on Birmingham industry. The new towns were not slow to point out that the attitude of Birmingham interests conflicted with their need to attract new industry.³

About this time, the Standing Conference of Local Authorities entered the arena. It was voicing concern about I.D.C. policy by the end of 1968, although here the emphasis was on the need to allow industry to move to

1 Birmingham Post, September 5th 1968.

2 Birmingham Post, November 6th 1968.

3 Ibid.

the overspill areas in the Region.¹ Even Alderman Griffin, the Leader of Birmingham Corporation, appeared at times to be adopting the wider regional viewpoint, talking in terms of an identity of interests which needed to be defended against the Government's attempts to transfer industry.² It may be that he saw advantages in presenting a united front to the Government and vis-a-vis other regions in terms of success in inter-regional conflict.

The main points that emerge from the above developments are that while the recommendations of the West Midlands Planning Council, over I.D.C. policy and incentives, produced an initial response from economic interests in the Region, the opposition to the Government's regional policy soon achieved a momentum of its own. Ad hoc groupings, such as that of Birmingham Corporation/Chamber of Commerce, developed their perspective beyond that of the interests of the new and expanded towns and the need to create the conditions for balanced intra-regional development in the West Midlands. It was an approach which precipitated a degree of conflict between the interests of Birmingham and those of the new towns, nullifying the occasional indications that a regional unanimity might be developing vis-a-vis the Government's regional policies.

Next, one can turn to the role of M.P's in the Region. The threatened tightening of I.D.C. policy by the incoming Labour Administration, in 1964, provoked an immediate reaction from Conservative M.P's. There was a meeting of the Birmingham Group of Conservative M.P's, called by Geoffrey Lloyd, and of their West Midland Group, with expressions generally of a fear for the future of Midland prosperity.³ In the latter part of 1966, when the consequences of the deflationary measures of July produced a

1 Birmingham Post, November 7th 1968.

2 Birmingham Post, April 11th 1969.

3 Birmingham Post, November 13th 1964.

recession in the car industry in the West Midlands, there were many attempts on the part of the Region's M.P's to persuade the Government to ease the H.P. terms for cars - reaction to the sharp upturn in the unemployment rate in the Region.¹

It was in 1968, however, that the activity of the Region's M.P's became more continuous on the question of I.D.C's. In February they were calling for some modification of the Government's regional development policies, to allow selective expansion of industry in parts of the West Midlands. The accompanying motion, sponsored by Labour M.P's in the Region, concluded that:-

"the time has come for slight modification of these overall policies (i.e. those for the Development Areas) to permit some selective expansion of industry in formerly prospering areas like North Warwickshire and the Coventry sub-region of the West Midlands to replace industries which are declining and to offset the redundancy effects of industrial reorganisation."²

These, in fact, were the events that helped to produce greater flexibility in the administration of I.D.C's in North Warwickshire. In May, West Midland M.P's met Peter Shore at the D.E.A. to put over their concern about economic indicators in the Region. They discussed the problems of I.D.C's, overspill and the rationalisation of industry.³

Again, though, the activity of M.P's was apparent on another level. Birmingham M.P's were conspicuous in their attempts to attract attention to the unemployment problem in the City in 1968. They took up the increasingly familiar complaints about the diversion of new science-based industries away from the City and the effect of I.D.C. policy on the interdependence of firms in the Birmingham conurbation. This was in the context of the reduction of the number of employees in Birmingham between mid-1966 and mid-1967. Mr. Eyre, for example, put the following question

1 Birmingham Post, November 8th 1966.

2 Birmingham Post, February 10th 1968.

3 Birmingham Post, May 21st 1968.

to the Minister of State for Economic Affairs:-

"Is the Minister aware that everyone concerned in industry in Birmingham was very deeply disturbed by the 40,000 fall in the working population to which he referred, and that there is a strong belief that the Government restrictions on new and expanding industries threaten future prosperity in Birmingham? Will the hon. Gentleman bear this very much in mind, because it is the denial of the new science-based industries that concerns everyone in this area?"¹

The Minister, Mr. Urwin, acknowledged that Birmingham had suffered more than any other town of comparable size, outside the Development Areas, as a result of the general economic situation (i.e. post-devaluation deflation). This, he continued, did not remove the necessity of a strict I.D.C. policy to re-locate industry in the Development Areas.

Shropshire M.P's were equally vociferous on the need to divert industry to Dawley New Town (re-designated Telford in 1968 when the original scheme was expanded). Mr. Jasper More, in a Commons debate on the New Town, made the following statement:-

"expectations have not been realised. The industry and factories which were to have come from Birmingham and the West Midlands industrial area have not come in anything like the quantity anticipated and intended."²

These activities are easily comprehensible because the local level, from the point of view of constituents' and electoral interests, is less an abstraction than the regional level.

Many of the forces and groups discussed above came together in December 1968, to create the nearest example up until then of a regional alignment and combination. Midland Conservative M.P's, local authority members and representatives of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce met in the Commons. The aim was deliberately to discuss the question of I.D.C's on a regional basis. The Conservative M.P's promised to continue to pressurise the Government on the matter.³

1 Hansard, October 14th 1968, Columns 29 and 30.

2 Hansard, February 20th 1969, Column 913.

3 Birmingham Post, December 10th 1968.

The above events indicate that, by 1968, there was considerable campaigning in the West Midlands in opposition to the restrictive impact of I.D.C.'s on the Region. This culminated in something approaching a powerful regional alignment in December 1968, although, to reiterate, there were elements of conflict as well as consensus in the campaigns.

The role of the West Midlands Planning Council in the above proceedings was negligible, after the initial favourable reaction to its views on I.D.C. policy and incentives in relation to the problems of overspill towns. It was rather left behind by events, as local and regional groupings reacted generally to the effect of I.D.C.'s on the economy of the West Midlands and the Conurbation, in the context of adverse national economic developments (the deflation and devaluation measures to deal with the balance of payments crises). Here were responses to immediate events and difficulties, reflected in the unemployment indices, a problem contributed to by the rationalisation of industry in the Region. It was within this framework that the effects of I.D.C. policy in the West Midlands seemed particularly harsh.

Conversely, the role of the Planning Council was that of developing a strategy for the long-term development of the Region (to 1981 and beyond), rather than that of reacting to immediate events. Crisis-orientated politics was peculiarly unsuited to long-term planning, whose function it was to identify underlying trends and deal with them before a manifest crisis arrived. Witness again the manner in which short-term pressures undermined the National Plan between 1965 and 1966, indicative of the problems of long-term planning and its vulnerability to the pull of immediate crises. The dilemma of the West Midlands Planning Council was emphasised in a pamphlet by the Birmingham Bow Group, where it referred to the silence of the Council when a recession was affecting the car

industry in the Region in 1966.¹ In short, while it was the function of the Planning Council to act as a pressure-group, it had been ill-attuned to the realities of the decision-making process and the nature of pressure-group politics. As noted previously, even land-use decisions within the West Midlands have been taken primarily on the basis of a response to short-term pressures. Where the Planning Council had initiated comments of its own accord on short-term problems of an economic nature (as it did over the employment problems created by the merger of G.E.C/A.E.I. in the West Midlands in 1967), the advice had been rendered somewhat superfluous by the subsidiary importance granted to it in the formulation of national economic and industrial policies. This was despite the fact that the original terms of reference for the Planning Councils included giving advice on the regional implications of national economic policies. Lastly, some of the problems that had been to the fore-ground in the regional mobilisation in the West Midlands, particularly among M.P's, had hardly been touched upon by the Planning Council, such as the problem of unemployment in North Warwickshire. As the lobby in that particular locality had discovered, the West Midlands Planning Council concentrated principally on the central problem of the Conurbation and the reception areas taking overspill from it.

Earlier in this discussion, it was stated that the West Midlands Planning Council, after its failure to effect a modification in the Government's policies for the Region, was looking towards the findings of the Hunt Committee on the Intermediate Areas. By 1968 many other groups in the West Midlands were focusing their attention in this direction. It is to this next phase in developments that one must turn.

1 "Regional Government", Bow Publications, 1968, P.10.

2. The Hunt Committee.

The Hunt Committee had been appointed in September 1967, with the following terms of reference:-

"To examine in relation to the economic welfare of the country as a whole and the needs of the development areas, the situation in other areas where the rate of economic growth gives cause for concern, and to suggest whether revised policies to influence economic growth in such areas are desirable and, if so, what measures should be adopted."¹

The Regional Economic Planning Councils had played a prominent part in the creation of the Committee. Mr. Shore, in an oral answer to Parliament, stated in 1968 that:-

"studies by the Government and, in respect of particular areas, by regional boards and councils led to the setting up of the Hunt Committee."²

There was a clear reaction, on the part of other regions, to the increasing level of support for the Development Areas given by the Labour Government and the nature of the priorities it had established in its inter-regional policy. Many of the members of the Hunt Committee were, in fact, past or present members of the Economic Planning Councils. The Chairman, Sir Joseph Hunt, had formerly been the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council. There were members from the Planning Councils of the East Anglia, Northern, South-West, Scottish and North-West regions, and a former member of the Yorkshire and Humberside Council. Seven out of the ten members of the Committee had, therefore, some connection with the Planning Councils.³

The West Midlands Planning Council saw the creation of the Committee as an opportunity to achieve official recognition of the need for incentives for industry to move to overspill areas and for a modification of I.D.C. policy.⁴ It had every hope of a sympathetic hearing of the case, with

1 "The Intermediate Areas", H.M.S.O. 1969, Op. Cit., P.1.

2 Hansard, July 11th 1968, Vol. 768, Column 706.

3 The membership of the Hunt Committee is set out in full at the beginning of the Report.

4 Birmingham Post, January 3rd 1968.

Sir Joseph Hunt having been its first Chairman. He was familiar with the problems of the Region and associated with the early recommendations of the Council. With the Hunt Committee taking a wide range of evidence from the regions, the West Midlands Planning Council submitted its views.

Apart from reiterating the need for financial incentives to encourage industry to move within the Region, particularly to Dawley New Town, the planning Council stressed the following points. There was a need for new science-based industries to move into the West Midlands. Doubts were voiced about the future ability of the Conurbation to export jobs. It felt the effects of the "creaming off" of industry entailed in the I.D.C. policy would prove harmful to future growth. Lastly, the Planning Council referred to the problems of economic decline in the Rural West of the Region.¹

This short summary of the views put to Hunt by the West Midlands Planning Council was indicative of how its case against the Government's administration of I.D.C.'s was broadening, beyond that of the mere concentration on the problem of the overspill towns. It was building up a general case for the relaxation of the policy, to allow the full and balanced development of economic resources in the West Midlands. This was in accordance with Adrian Cadbury's expressed desire for the Planning Council to develop the economic component in its thinking. As such, it applied many of the arguments that were conspicuous in the cases of other lobbies in the Region that had been developing at this time. The increasing extent of the overlap in ideas can be ascertained by looking at a cross-section of evidence from organisations in the Region to the Hunt Committee.

Evidence from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was presented in May 1968. Again the emphasis was that the Government's policy would deprive areas such as the West Midlands of their future growth potential.

1 "The Intermediate Areas", Op. Cit., P. 95-102.

It was claimed that I.D.C. controls had diverted about 100,000 jobs from the Region to the Development Areas. The West Midlands was becoming over-dependent on a few industries and being denied new science-based ones. The slow pace of industrial re-location was making planned dispersal of population difficult. The Chamber of Commerce also produced the results of a survey on the experience of manufacturers in relation to I.D.C.'s in the West Midlands. While this survey found that a high proportion of I.D.C. applications were granted by the Board of Trade in the Region, many firms did not even apply, because of the fear of being pressurised to move. The Chamber's evidence concluded that I.D.C. policy should be abolished, or at least should allow expansion for any project below 10,000 sq.ft. Reliance, in regional policy, ought to be on financial incentives, with a system of lesser incentives for movement to new and expanded towns.¹

Similar points were raised in the Midland Region appendix to the Confederation of British Industry's evidence to Hunt. The argument that I.D.C. policy had prevented the establishment of new science-based industries in the Region was used. It was asserted that the same policy overlooked the problem of the inter-dependence of industries in the Conurbation, that it forced industry to use outmoded vacant premises (which were not covered by I.D.C. policy), and prevented sufficient industry moving to overspill areas. There were many recommendations relating to the future growth of the Region in this evidence, but central was the belief that I.D.C. control should be more flexible and that there should be incentives for firms moving out of the Conurbation.²

The arguments, therefore, in all the above sets of evidence coincided to a considerable extent. This indicated the gradual emergence of a common regional economic case for a change in the Government's policy.

1 Written evidence by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the Hunt Committee, May 6th 1968.

2 C.B.I. written evidence to the Hunt Committee, March 1968, Appendix II.

The problems of Dawley New Town were elucidated in the evidence of Dawley Urban District Council to Hunt. It referred to the difficulties in attracting industry because of the policy of the Board of Trade, and the reluctance of Conurbation local authorities to export their industry. The evidence also claimed that the inducements for industry to move to the Development Areas were too great for new towns in the West Midlands to be an attractive alternative proposition. The problem was accentuated because the Dawley area was not in a position to generate its own industrial growth. The conclusion was that if the West Midlands was to solve its overspill problem, it must be permitted to retain a proportion of available mobile industry. This ought to be combined with inducements for industry to move within the Region, reinforced by a tight containment of industry within the Conurbation.¹

While the element of conflict with the interests of the Conurbation was again evident in Dawley's arguments, it fully supported the case of the West Midlands Planning Council in its criticism of the Government's policy in relation to the overspill towns. Dawley was at one with other evidence in asserting that the existing central policy was detrimental to regional objectives in the West Midlands. Stoke-on-Trent County Borough Council, in its evidence to Hunt, claimed that the City was being deprived of new industry by the Board of Trade's policy, even though a widening of the industrial structure in Stoke was imperative.² A pattern of criticism, then, emerged against I.D.C. policy, although the exact emphasis of the criticism obviously varied in different parts of the West Midlands.

In this evaluation of the Government's inter-regional policy from the perspective of the West Midlands, one must not overlook the total context. The Hunt Committee had to weigh the above evidence against that from other

1 Written Memorandum of evidence of Dawley U.D.C. to the Hunt Committee, March 29th 1968.
 2 "The Intermediate Areas", Op. Cit., P. 69-70.

regions and Planning Councils. The Northern Economic Planning Council, for example, emphasised that the Region was likely to lose more than 80,000 jobs, through contraction in employment in the older industries, between 1966 and 1971. To offset these losses and reduce the rate of unemployment the creation of well over 100,000 jobs would be required.¹ The Yorkshire and Humberside Planning Council raised the question of the dominance of coal-mining in some communities on the Yorkshire coalfield and their deficiency in growth industries. A substantial number of new jobs would again have to be created.²

The Hunt Committee established a range of economic and social criteria, such as a slow rate of growth and unemployment, by which to evaluate the evidence it had received. Its aim was to identify where the under-utilisation of resources existed, recognising that national and regional economic policies aimed at their full and efficient use. The recommendations of the Committee also recognised the framework of the limits on public expenditure and the amount of mobile industry that existed, especially as it considered that the existing Development Area measures should remain until the Government had made a thorough study of their total impact.

Within this framework the Hunt Committee had come to the following conclusions, as they affected the West Midlands.³ On the question of the future growth of the West Midlands economy and the "creaming off" effects of the I.D.C. policy, it was felt that continued growth of economic activity in the Region was in evidence. The growth in commercial and industrial floor space was little different from the national average.⁴ In Birmingham

1 Ibid., P.38.

2 Ibid., P.58.

3 Ibid., P. 95-106.

4 The statistics, though, showed that between 1964-67, the West Midlands was seventh in the regional table for the % addition to industrial premises, and that between 1956-67 there was a declining rate of increase in the estimated additional employment provided by I.D.C.'s.

itself, employment between 1961-66 had continued to grow because of the negative attitude of Birmingham Corporation in encouraging industry to move. The Committee was also satisfied that the Board of Trade administration of I.D.C's was flexible and that few I.D.C. applications in congested areas had, in fact, been rejected. It was sceptical about the real wish to expand on the part of those firms which had stated, in the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce survey, that they had not even submitted applications for I.D.C's because of the fear of being pressurised to move. In all, the Hunt Committee doubted whether the inhibiting effect on growth in the "prosperous" regions was significant. The marginal effect was, in many instances, attributable to the lack of knowledge on the flexibility of I.D.C. controls.

In relation to the recommendation of incentives for industry to move to new and expanded towns, the Committee's view was that this would detract from the priority given to the Development Areas. The Conurbation authorities could do more to encourage the movement of industry. It recognised that the difficulties of Dawley/Telford had been more serious than those of other new towns, but industry had started to move there. Hunt rejected, therefore, the idea of financial incentives.

In accordance with the above reasoning, the Hunt Committee rejected many of the central arguments put to it from within the West Midlands, relating to concern about the future vigour of the economy of the Region and the change needed in policies if population and industry were to be successfully dispersed. The Committee felt that the problems of the West Midlands were not such as to justify the diversion of public resources from the Development Areas, with the exception that North Staffordshire ought to receive a higher rate of grant for the clearing of derelict land, comparable to that recommended for the newly defined Intermediate Areas (Lancashire and Yorkshire). Its final recommendations did, however, entail some diversion of mobile industry to the West Midlands as compared with

the previous practice. The Committee was sympathetic towards the problem of small firms and their close industrial links, which could not easily be severed. It was suggested that the I.D.C. limit should be raised to 10,000 sq.ft. This would also allow the development of small new "infant" industries. In addition, firms wishing to move from the Conurbation to overspill areas should be allowed to.¹ The Report stated, in fact, that:-

"I.D.C. policy should be regarded as a tool for the long-term planning of the proper distribution of industry and not merely as a device to steer as much industry as possible to the development areas."²

Finally on I.D.C.'s, the Hunt Committee asked that more publicity be given to the criteria governing the administration of the policy.³

The Committee also felt that Dawley/Telford had been the victim of the lack of co-ordinated development of growth points, especially in the absence of a satisfactory road link with the Conurbation.⁴ It was an example of a major economic component being given insufficient priority (this line of argument indicates that there is no strict line of demarcation between public spending on infrastructure and industrial location and development - they are interdependent in terms of economic growth).

The above Report, then, entailed some realignment of the inter-regional balance, in terms of the location of industry. Most significantly, official recognition of the need for overspill incentives was again not forthcoming.

The Government did not accept many of the recommendations of the Hunt Committee that would have been advantageous to the West Midlands. It considered that not only was it necessary to retain a large financial discrimination in favour of the Development Areas (although the £20 millions needed to help the Intermediate Areas, as ultimately defined by the

- 1 The Hunt Committee admitted that while the total movement of employment originating in the West Midlands was smaller than in the South-East, a larger proportion of its mobile industry went into other regions.
- 2 "The Intermediate Areas", Op. Cit., P.143.
- 3 Ibid., Chapter IX for the recommendations on I.D.C.'s.
- 4 Ibid., P.112.

Government, was diverted from the money allocated to the Development Areas), but also that a strict I.D.C. policy was vital to the maintenance of the priorities of the Government's inter-regional policy. The Government rejected the raising of I.D.C. limits to 10,000 sq.ft. and the removal of all controls on moves to overspill towns. The one proviso was that it was the intention of the Administration that:-

"all approved schemes for new and expanding towns should be properly supported by employment opportunities."¹

These conclusions on the part of the Government meant the watering down of even the modicum of diversion of mobile industry to the West Midlands proposed in Hunt, apart from the promised flexibility for the movement of industry to overspill areas, subsequently operated in the case of Telford and Daventry.² This greater flexibility was all of substance that the West Midlands Planning Council had to show for its efforts to obtain a satisfactory policy towards the economic/industrial considerations in regional planning at this stage.

After the Government statement of April 1969, there was consultation with the Planning Councils. The West Midlands Planning Council made the following points in response to the request for its views. It felt that incentives for overspill industry had been rejected not because there was any assurance that sufficient industry would move to the new and expanded towns, but to preserve the existing priorities for the Development Areas. It was encouraged by the Government statement assuring that it was the policy to provide overspill towns with adequate employment. The test, however, would be the more rapid movement of industry from the Conurbation than had to date been achieved. The Planning Council supported the Hunt Committee's recommendations on I.D.C. policy, and asked that there should

1 Hansard, April 24th 1969, Column 671.

2 Daventry was another town receiving overspill from the Conurbation as the result of an agreement with Birmingham Corporation, although it was outside the West Midlands Region as defined for regional planning purposes.

at least be selective relaxation for approved overspill schemes and for the rural areas. Its main conclusion was that the test for regional measures ought to be their ability to promote the total growth of the economy of the nation. It was not in the national interest to substitute the problems in one area for those in another. Consequently, the Planning Council called for a review of the effects of existing regional policies, as recommended by Hunt. The vitality of the economy of the West Midlands was crucial to the economic interests of the country as a whole, particularly in its traditional role as a "seed-bed" for new industrial development, and:-

"these considerations should be borne in mind in determining the balance of regional policy."¹

Again, while re-emphasising the problems of the overspill towns, the West Midland Planning Council's broadening of its regional economic case was evident, now developing the idea of the "function" of the West Midlands economy in the context of the national interest. It recognised that a condition for the exertion of successful pressure is the ability to appeal to a wider interest, in this case, national economic growth.

After these consultations, the statement of Peter Shore in Parliament, in June 1969, showed no modification of the Government's earlier stance as it applied to the interests of the West Midlands. He only repeated the pledge to keep the growth of industry in overspill towns in phase with their development in other respects.²

3. The Post-Hunt Phase and the "Economic Appraisal".

The Government's refusal to accept the Hunt recommendations on the relaxation of I.D.C. policy caused consternation in the West Midlands. In the light of this the Standing Conference of Local Authorities expressed concern about the future of the Region's economy. The policy of diverting employment elsewhere had been taken too far.³ The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

1 West Midlands Economic Planning Council Press Notice on the Hunt Committee, COI Birmingham, May 31st 1969, P.3.

2 Hansard, June 25th 1969, Columns 1506-17.

3 Birmingham Post, May 1st 1969.

declared its intention to fight the Government rejection, and there was talk from some quarters of Birmingham being "on a knife edge".¹ Conservative M.P's from the West Midlands planned to persuade the Government to reconsider its decision not to allow firms from the Conurbation to move freely to overspill towns.²

The history of the post-Hunt period in the West Midlands, then, was of an even more fervent and vociferous attempt to achieve a relaxation of I.D.C. policy. It reached a crescendo in 1971 as a result of the effects on the Region of the deepening economic recession and the repercussions of the collapse of Rolls-Royce. By May the unemployment rate in the West Midlands had moved above the national average, to 3.5%, while the July figures showed the rate to be 3.8% and 4.2% in Birmingham. After the election of the Conservative Government, in June 1970, there was also hope for a re-appraisal and change of policies. In December 1970, the Conservative Administration had, in fact, raised the I.D.C. limit from 3,000 to 5,000 sq.ft. in the West Midlands, while, in February 1971, the north-west tip of the Region, around Oswestry, was designated an Intermediate Area.

In this renewed activity Birmingham Councillors had taken the lead. Because of this the conflict between interests in the Region again came to the surface. It was about this time that Alderman Griffin's views on Birmingham's need to expand to maintain its strength had come into the open, to culminate in the positive measures taken by the Corporation to retain all its industry, at the end of 1971. Alderman Dark and Councillor Edwards had taken the lead in the fight against I.D.C's during the early part of that year. They claimed that the status quo was making Birmingham a depressed area. Some attempt was made to reconcile the local

1 Birmingham Post, April 25th and 29th 1969.

2 Birmingham Post, May 9th 1969.

interest with that of the overspill towns, through asserting that the interests of the latter would best be served if industry was strong in Birmingham, for this ultimately would generate more overspill industry.¹ In March, these members of Birmingham Council went to see the Minister responsible, Mr. Davies. They presented a dossier of firms which had allegedly been adversely affected by I.D.C. policy. In this, they were accompanied by a group of the City's Conservative M.P's.² Soon after, the Prime Minister, whilst stating that he was aware of the problems of the West Midlands, felt unable to share the view that I.D.C. policy should be abandoned or greatly modified.³ This was, however, qualified in June when Mr. Noble, Minister of Trade, stated that I.D.C's for the West Midlands would be easier to obtain in the prevailing economic climate in the Region.⁴

This post-Hunt campaign, therefore, took on a more localised character, being pre-occupied with the problems of Birmingham, although an attempt was made to reconcile the local interest with the interests of new towns. All the arguments against the established I.D.C. policy, that had become familiar in previous campaigns in the Region, were reiterated.

Up to this point, it has been observed that although the West Midlands Planning Council had been broadening its case against I.D.C's, it served only as another voice in the whole constellation of forces and pressures that arose against the policy in the Region. It had not, in fact, been a very conspicuous voice, because its function and role excluded it from the crisis-orientated pressure-group activities that characterised the opposition. The subsidiary role of the Planning Council was to change with the "Economic Appraisal", when a unique and vital contribution to the development of the Region's economic interest became apparent.

1 Birmingham Post, February 13th 1971.
 2 Birmingham Post, March 24th 1971.
 3 Birmingham Post, April 10th 1971.
 4 Birmingham Post, June 23rd 1971.

This manifested itself in a number of ways.

The Working Party, that had been established in 1968, was, in terms of its composition and membership, a formalisation of relationships between the Planning Council and other prominent groups in the West Midlands. There were formal representatives of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Midland Region C.B.I. and British Leyland on it, while the T.U.C. Midland Regional Advisory Committee was represented via permanent members of the Planning Council. The lobby against I.D.C. policy in the Region had previously taken the form of ad hoc groupings, such as that between Birmingham Corporation and Chamber of Commerce. Such groupings had normally been local in character, but occasionally regional, as, for example, when Conservative Midland M.P's, the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and local authorities in the West Midlands had met in December 1968. But the Working Party of the West Midlands Planning Council provided a firmer institutional framework for links between groups in the Region. It fulfilled a co-ordinative function of a more highly developed nature than mere reliance on the permanent members of the Planning Council to express the views of different interests in the West Midlands, particularly in the case of industrial organisations. In this example, the Planning Council had attempted to mould together economic interests and incorporate them into a regional interest - to envelop the previous sectional claims of such bodies as the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in a well identified wider interest. It was an indication of how the Planning Council had developed its roots in the life of the Region, since its inauguration, in an attempt to promote a regional consensus and serve as a focal point for what had previously been a series of often parallel, but unco-ordinated and fragmented interests. As such, it added a new dimension to regional coalition formation.

At last, there was evidence of realised potential in the Planning Council's ability to utilise indirect political resources in a region such as the West Midlands, for the co-ordinative function was manifested in the

contents of the "Economic Appraisal". The contents clearly cast the Working Party in the role of a synthesiser of ideas. It represented the climax in the overlap of arguments that had, in embryo, developed previously between the case put forward by the Planning Council and that of other groups active in the I.D.C. lobby in the Region. While the details of the problems identified in the "Economic Appraisal" have already been dealt with, it is important to emphasise the three vital features, relating to the condition of the West Midlands economy, taken up in the Report. Firstly, there was the lack of adaptation of the economy. Many industrial sites in the Conurbation were under-utilised and a significant proportion of the industrial plant was outmoded and unsatisfactory. Next, there was the over-dependence on a few industries. The metal manufacturing and vehicle industries in the West Midlands were concentrated there to the extent of two and a half times the national average (i.e. location quotients of 2.5). The third crucial feature related to unemployment. Its level in the West Midlands had risen relative to that of Great Britain as a whole and at times in 1971 had moved above the national average.

The above features reflected structural defects in the regional economy, rather than short-lived defects attributable to a particular economic crisis, problems, it was felt, that had been accentuated by I.D.C. policy. They reflected the familiar arguments, albeit better documented in many respects, that had been emerging in many quarters in the West Midlands. The "Economic Appraisal" was, therefore, trying to get away from a simple and generalised conception of the West Midlands economy which could obscure the realities of actual economic relationships in the Region and any adverse underlying trends. The evidence of the dependence on a few industries was a case in point. The problems of the Development Areas had their origin in such dependence - industries once prosperous and thriving declined in the inter-war years as they were overtaken by technological changes and changes in market tastes. In the absence of the diversification of the West Midlands economy, there

was no reason why its growth industries of today should not become the depressed industries of tomorrow. The example of plastics increasingly becoming a substitute for metals is a case often quoted.

To deal with these underlying problems and to generate the growth and full utilisation of the resources of the West Midlands, the "Economic Appraisal", in calling for a positive economic policy for the Region, had one central recommendation. I.D.C. policy ought to be modified, and it suggested a new set of criteria to establish different priorities. The Appraisal put forward four main criteria in deciding whether a firm should be allowed to expand. The first would be to achieve regional growth at least cost. The objective of the Department of Trade and Industry should be to promote industrial growth, acting in effect as a consultant, giving firms advice to help them find a site which would combine the lowest operating costs with planning acceptability. The second criterion related to the improvement of efficiency and competitive ability. Rationalisation and modernisation should be encouraged to overcome the problem of too many separate manufacturing units. Thirdly, expansion should be allowed to make better use of the Region's existing assets, such as the network of communications and the short supply of skilled labour and management (the latter again related to stretching resources over too many sites). Four examples were given of how to make better use of resources. I.D.C. policy had contributed to the amount of unused industrial land in the Conurbation. Where a major site had been developed for housing, such as Chelmsley Wood, suitable industrial development should be allowed. There were a number of smaller centres within the Region capable of expanding, and a limited number of growth points outside the main industrial area should be built on. The last example was the effect on the competitiveness of the car industry through dispersed manufacturing units. Again rationalisation should take place. The last criterion for a changed I.D.C. policy aimed at bringing about a more balanced industrial structure in the Region. It was also

suggested that the criteria used to judge I.D.C. applications should be published.¹

There was another important aspect of the "Economic Appraisal", relating to the economic assumptions in an intra-regional strategy of location. "Patterns of Growth", in its strategy, had allowed for the problem of the movement of industry, while calling for more research. The West Midlands Planning Council now tried to carry this aspect a little further. The "Economic Appraisal" categorically stated that "corridor growth" had economic advantages over free-standing towns, for the former would fully recognise the importance of lines of communication in industrial location. In the shorter-term it wondered whether the former strategy of containing the Conurbation was still open as an option because of the failure of industry to relocate at the necessary rate. It settled for a larger role from the Conurbation in meeting housing needs, while stating that:-

"We are not in a position to judge whether this is a sensible balance in economic terms."²

The Working Party of the Planning Council was still, therefore, trying to build up economic analysis in the intra-regional location of resources, although it was having to react to events which it had controlled very little, because of the refusal of the Government to grant financial incentives for overspill industry. The Working Party did take advantage of research which had been conducted at Birmingham University, suggesting that the theory of industrial dispersal in the West Midlands did not conform to the practice, with a slow movement of industry attributable both to the structure of the economy in the Conurbation and to the policies of national and local government.³ A strategy relying on less industrial movement did seem a more realistic assumption. The "Economic Appraisal"

1 "Economic Appraisal", Op. Cit., P. 71-3.

2 Ibid., P.69.

3 "Industrial Overspill in Theory and Practice", B. Smith, Urban Studies, June 1970.

did state, however, that these considerations brought it straight back to a modification in the administration of I.D.C. policy, for as the Report remarked:-

"This raises the whole question of the I.D.C. policy which is central to any discussion about the future pattern of housing, employment and industry in the West Midlands."¹

For good measure the case for incentives for overspill industry was repeated, namely to ensure that the infrastructure facilities at the new towns of Telford and Redditch would not be under-utilised.²

In the above respects the "Economic Appraisal" developed ideas that had been widely voiced in the Region, and hence its role as a synthesiser of ideas, as opposed to an initiator. It also served to officialise what might previously have seemed to be the arguments of narrow vested interests (e.g. those of Birmingham Corporation/Chamber of Commerce). It is the contention that there was no other forum for the performance of these functions. To this extent the role of the Planning Council was ultimately unique. The "Economic Appraisal" also admitted that the implication of the suggested revisions in national policy would result in a change towards the distribution of industry. In this respect its recommendations went to the heart of the objections to the degree of discrimination in favour of the "unemployment" regions.³ The Report was explicitly supporting views from other sources in the Region that there needed to be an adjustment in the resource allocation between the regions. The recommended new set of criteria for the granting of I.D.C's in the West Midlands was looking for change in the Government's policy more radical than any small adjustments achieved in the past, although, at the same time, the Appraisal conceded that policies for national growth were the most essential.

1 "Economic Appraisal", Op. Cit., P.69.

2 Ibid., P.70.

3 Ibid., P.78.

The combination of circumstances into which these recommendations and roles were injected were also unique for the West Midlands Planning Council. As described previously, its role has been that of the development of strategies in the medium-and long-term, not of reacting to immediate crises, a factor that had circumscribed its role in regional pressures. But in June 1971, the Planning Council entered a controversy which was reaching a crescendo - instead of projecting a future crisis. Its proposals filtered into a manifest existing one, in just those circumstances where growing pressures sensitise a government towards awareness of, and concern about, problems (i.e. the stage where a problem becomes politically sensitive). The Working Party's Report promised to benefit from the politics of crisis and the associated political reflexes, especially as the terms of reference of the "Economic Appraisal" related to the "short and medium term" rather than the medium and long term. The Report had joined an on-going discussion at a critical time, when the West Midlands economy faced circumstances completely changed from that of most of the post-war period. It was therefore widely acclaimed and supported by many groups that had been participating in lobbies against the policy of the Government.

This was the case with Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Midland Region C.B.I. and the leaders of Birmingham Corporation, Alderman Griffin calling for every effort to ensure that the Government took notice.¹ The West Midland Labour Group of M.P's and Conservative M.P's in the Region arranged to discuss the Report. The intention of the Region's Labour M.P's in arranging a meeting with Adrian Cadbury, who had chaired the Planning Council Working Party one will recall, was to help them form a collective view on the questions raised, which they would then press on the Government and Labour's leaders.² There was also a response from individual M.P's.

1 Birmingham Post, June 9th 1971.

2 Birmingham Post, June 22nd 1971.

The Labour M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme tabled thirty-six questions on the "Economic Appraisal" to Peter Walker.¹ Mr. Chapman, M.P. for Handsworth in Birmingham, put questions to Mr. Grant on the Report, with a plea for the Minister to allow firms to expand in Birmingham if they could show it was economically unsound for them to move.² The Government was urged to make a special study of growing unemployment in the West Midlands in a motion sponsored by Labour Birmingham M.P's and to look at the question of industrial diversification.³ On the trade union side, Mr. Brian Mathers, West Midland regional secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, was quoted as saying that the Report should be a pointer to the Government to take quick action.⁴ At the annual meeting of the Midland Regional Advisory Committee of the T.U.C., at the end of 1971, Mr. Mathers stated that the area could not go on exporting jobs regardless.⁵ There were signs, therefore, that trade unionists were joining the campaign against the Government's I.D.C. policy.

Another significant response to the "Economic Appraisal" was the agreement to a survey on the effects of I.D.C. policy on the industry of the West Midlands by the Midland Regional Group of Chambers of Commerce. It was considered to be the most appropriate way in which to follow up the Planning Council's document and help press for substantial changes in policy.⁶

There was, of course, adverse reaction in other regions. Five regional development associations from the North, Scotland and Wales, immediately urged the Government to reject the recommendations.⁷ Yet, because of the unique combination of factors associated with the "Economic Appraisal" the response of the Government would appear to be a crucial test of the

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- 1 Hansard, June 21st, Vol. 819, Written Answers, Columns 212-18.
 - 2 Hansard, July 5th, Vol. 820, Column 906, and written Answer, Col. 247.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, July 23rd 1971.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, June 10th 1971.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, December 1st 1971.
 - 6 Birmingham Post, August 5th 1971.
 - 7 The Times, "G.L.C. Office Space Plan Contested", June 11th 1971.

potential efficacy of the present regional administrative arrangements in the West Midlands. The Report is still being studied by the Department of Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry. In July 1971, the Department of Trade and Industry had published its guidelines for the granting of I.D.C.'s, as recommended in the "Economic Appraisal". The Department stated that it took into account local ties, modernisation schemes likely to lead to a reduction of labour, projects suited to local needs in the rural parts of the West Midlands, and the needs of North Warwickshire and the new and expanded towns.¹ This development was welcomed by Adrian Cadbury, but the intention to publish these criteria had been announced in October 1970 and the action had been recommended in the Hunt Report. However, already there have been important developments relating to the "Economic Appraisal" and its proposals, not least of which was the Planning Council's creation of the follow-up committee to encourage the implementation of the recommendations.

The first decision that had to be made after the publication of the "Economic Appraisal" was whether to invite the Prime Minister, Mr. Heath, to discuss the proposals with the Planning Council. Mr. Heath did, in fact, agree to this, making the visit in September 1971. At the conference with the Council he was urged to ease I.D.C. policy. The Council was able, therefore, to directly put across the measures, an example of the advantage of its ready access to Ministers. Mr. Heath acknowledged to the Council, and to a meeting of businessmen in Birmingham, that the arguments were very forceful. He promised that the case against I.D.C. policy would be given the fullest consideration. He did emphasise that every I.D.C. application was considered on its individual merits and that the control was operated flexibly. In operating regional policies the Government had in mind the needs of the West Midlands. The economic health of the Region, he agreed, was essential to

1 "Trade and Industry", July 8th 1971.

the health of Britain, recognising problems such as those associated with small firms and over-dependence. He was sure it was right to seek more diversification of industry. Nevertheless, the Government had to work for a better balance of prosperity between the regions. Anyhow, he predicted that the West Midlands would be among the first to benefit from the Government's reflationary policies.¹

Soon after his appointment, the new Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, Quinton Hazell, stated that the first priority was the problem of unemployment. To deal with the situation he was looking for changes in I.D.C. policy, to allow companies to expand which had very good reasons for being Midland-based. He saw his role as that of:-

"continually pressing the claims in the report ("Economic Appraisal") to ensure that the Government takes action."²

Later, in relation to I.D.C. policy, he remarked that:-

"In its economic appraisal, in public statements and in its meeting with the Prime Minister in September, the Council has constantly pressed for a rethink of this dangerous policy which is slowly throttling the heart of British industry."³

Mr. Hazell was determined to sustain the pressure, asserting in March 1972 that there would be a "hell of a row" if the Government did not take notice of the Planning Council's demand for a overhaul of I.D.C. policy. He claimed that the campaign was for new industries to be allowed into the Region and Birmingham, as well as for the expansion of existing industry.⁴ Such statements prompted a correspondent of "The Times" to state that:-

"A new anti-control Messiah has emerged to lead the campaign"⁵

The West Midlands Planning Council had also sent a letter to the Secretary of State for the Environment on the Severnside Study, prepared by the Central Unit for Environmental Planning. This Study had suggested that

- 1 Birmingham Post, October 1st 1972.
- 2 Birmingham Post, October 25th 1971.
- 3 Birmingham Post, December 17th 1971.
- 4 Birmingham Post, March 1st 1972.
- 5 The Times, March 10th 1972.

growth on Severnside would involve reinforcing restraints on growth in the West Midlands. The Planning Council saw no reason why the growth potential of the West Midlands should be diverted to other regions. On the contrary, national strategy needed to allow the growth of the Region.¹

In the midst of this lobby for change in the West Midlands, Mr. Davies, of the Department of Trade and Industry, made a statement, in January 1972, to the annual banquet of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on I.D.C. policy. The policy, to his mind, was not the only way of transferring industry to the less favoured areas, but nothing had been suggested that would allow him to dispense with it. Again he emphasised that the policy was administered flexibly. Fewer than 10% of I.D.C. applications in the West Midlands were refused.²

Significantly, though, a relaxation of I.D.C. policy was announced as part of the Government's new regional and industrial policies in March 1972. Under these proposals, an I.D.C. was no longer required for a project under 15,000 sq.ft. compared with the previous figure of 5,000 sq.ft. There was to be a more flexible approach altogether, particularly where an I.D.C. was required for modernisation,³ a point of emphasis which appeared to reflect very much the arguments put forward by the "Economic Appraisal". As Mr. Davies stated in the Commons:-

"many representations had been made that the control inhibits modernisation."⁴

The new approach to I.D.C's was welcomed by Mr. Hazell, even though the concessions were made in the context of what Mr. Wedgewood-Benn referred to as:-

"the largest subsidies by the taxpayers to the regions that we have ever known."⁵

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- 1 The Times, December 16th 1971.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, January 18th 1972.
 - 3 "Industrial and Regional Development", H.M.S.O. Op. Cit., P. 6-7.
 - 4 Hansard, March 22nd 1972, Vol. 833, Column 1544.
 - 5 Hansard, May 22nd 1972, Vol. 837, Column 1023.

Mr. Beaumont Dark, one of the prominent campaigners against I.D.C. policy for Birmingham Corporation, felt able to say that:-

"we have won a fight for freedom in the Midlands to expand our industry here."¹

The Regional Director of the Department of Trade and Industry in the West Midlands disclosed, at a press conference after the proposals had been announced, that he expected an upsurge in I.D.C. applications. He hoped that the changes would encourage industry to modernise and expand.²

In addition, Mr. Chataway, on being appointed the new Minister for Industrial Development, made it clear that he would be able to offer selective aid to firms in the West Midlands, where there were special problems.³ But the Government were hoping that their new measures to stimulate investment in industry and the relaxation of the I.D.C. policy would have a rapid effect on unemployment in the West Midlands, and the Minister of Environment announced that he was to meet the West Midlands Planning Council to make a fresh assessment of the situation in the light of the Government's new regional proposals.⁴

Apart from the above modifications in I.D.C. policy, there had been definite signs of a relaxation of the policy in other respects. In July 1971, a Birmingham engineering firm had won an I.D.C. for extension, after having two previous requests turned down.⁵ In January 1972, 20,000 sq.ft. of new factory space was granted an I.D.C. in the City.⁶ Further examples were the granting of an I.D.C. to Jaguar cars in Coventry and the go-ahead to an expansion scheme at Tamworth, in March and April respectively.

The West Midlands Planning Council's pressure had, by the middle of 1972, some concrete achievements in relation to I.D.C. policy. Such changes

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- 1 Birmingham Post, March 23rd 1972.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, March 24th 1972.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, April 13th 1972.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, March 28th 1972.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, July 9th 1971.
 - 6 Birmingham Post, January 14th 1972.

had been obtained against a background of male unemployment rates in the West Midlands as high as 7%, compared with 1% for most of the post-war period up to 1965.

Although the "Economic Appraisal" had acted as a rallying point, after June 1971 other lobbies continued their own efforts alongside the Planning Council's lobby. In July members of the Greater Birmingham Employment Committee went to see Ministers to discuss the City's unemployment. Also a joint deputation from Birmingham, consisting of members of the City Council, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Birmingham Trades Council, to Whitehall was arranged, to take up the question of I.D.C.'s. The Minister for Trade and Industry agreed to receive it in October, when he assured them that the Government would give full consideration to the recommendations of the "Economic Appraisal".¹ The Chairman of the Planning Council was, in fact, cultivating closer relations with Birmingham City Council, so that the two bodies could look at future co-operation where their interests coincided.²

In January 1972 a Working Party on unemployment in Birmingham was set up by a conference of City M.P's, industrialists, trade union leaders and councillors. This became known as the "Birmingham Unemployment Action Group". It moved towards the suggestion that I.D.C. policy should be dropped for an experimental period.³ Their proposals were forwarded to the Government for consideration, and the Action Group met Ministers to discuss, along with other matters, their concern for the long-term structure of the Region's industry.⁴ After the change in the Government's policies of March, the Prime Minister did not see the need for more measures to stimulate the Region's industry.⁵

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- 1 Birmingham Post, October 27th 1971.
 - 2 Birmingham Post, December 14th 1971.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, January 25th 1972.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, March 28th 1972.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, April 25th 1972.

Similarly, M.P's in the West Midlands kept up the pressure. There was apprehension at the apparent failure of the Government to fully appreciate that the Region's unemployment might be a long-term problem, as a result of changes in the structure of industry. The West Midland Group of Labour M.P's had meetings with Ministers to point this out.¹ They also impressed the problem on the Chairman of the Labour Party, Mr. Wedgewood-Benn, to ensure that Labour policies would appreciate the fear that the West Midlands might become "another Detroit", highly industrialised with high unemployment.² When the Labour Party's draft manifesto in 1972 showed no acknowledgement of the special problems of the Region, the M.P's arranged another meeting with Mr. Benn.³ To quote one other example of the activity of M.P's during this period, there was a meeting between Birmingham Conservative M.P's and the Department of Trade and Industry. This was arranged specifically to discuss the effects of I.D.C. policy.⁴

In this particular case-study of the relationship between the West Midlands Planning Council and groups within the Region on a question of inter-regional conflict, the following conclusion can be drawn. The Planning Council did assume a central role in the lobby against the effects of I.D.C. policy in the West Midlands through the "Economic Appraisal". The composition of the Working Party that produced the document meant that the Council provided an institutional forum for consensus-building among prominent groups in the West Midlands in relation to certain economic/ industrial aspects of regional planning, just as, in serving as a catalyst for the creation of the Standing Conference, the Planning Council had contributed towards the provision of a forum for possible agreement on a physical strategy for the Region by local authorities. The "Economic

1 Birmingham Post, December 6th 1971.

2 Birmingham Post, March 10th 1972.

3 Birmingham Post, May 22nd 1972.

4 Birmingham Post, February 17th 1972.

Appraisal" was published at a point when there was a crisis for the Region's economy and employment position, so that it invoked a widespread and favourable reaction in the West Midlands. As such, the Planning Council was ultimately able to provide leadership in broadly challenging the inter-regional policy of the Government, claiming in effect that this was preventing the full and balanced development of economic resources in the West Midlands. Dr. Eversley had claimed that the Council had been undermined by having to work in the context of an unpopular restrictionist policy,¹ but, in fact, it became a focal point for an attack on this restrictionist policy, especially in relation to I.D.C.'s. As one observer mildly recorded:-

"The West Midlands Economic Planning Council went some way towards restoring some of the diminished interest in its work with its recent outspoken comments."²

In these respects the Council has developed, in a nascent form, the attributes of a stronger form of regionalism than is usually associated with its advisory role, particularly in the mobilisation of support at regional level.³ The results of this are, perhaps, best exemplified in the remarks of Mr. Anthony Grant, junior Minister responsible for industrial development, when he met leading businessmen at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in June 1972. He stated that there had been concern about the restrictive effects of the Government's I.D.C. policy, but now that the restrictions had been relaxed for the West Midlands he noted a lack of criticism.⁴

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- 1 D. Eversley, "The Trouble With Regional Planning", New Society, August 10th 1967.
 - 2 The Times, "Life Has Been Good To Us Here ... But", July 29th 1971.
 - 3 The attributes of elected regional authorities are discussed in such terms in P. Heywood's "Regional Planning in the Netherlands and England and Wales", Journal of the Town Planning Institute, December 1970.
 - 4 Birmingham Post, June 2nd 1972.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE LOBBY

One is now approaching the point at which a balance sheet, in relation to the criteria for the influence of pressure-groups, can be drawn up for the West Midlands Regional Economic Planning Council. It has laboured under considerable handicaps as an advisory committee. Before presenting the principal conclusions of this study, therefore, it will be revealing to invoke a comparative assessment of pressure-group influence from within the West Midlands. The Planning Council's influence can be compared with that of the lobby of Birmingham Corporation/Chamber of Commerce to secure a location near to the City for the National Exhibition Centre. The success of the latter clearly exemplifies the prerequisites of effective influence. It will also illustrate the extent to which an ad hoc lobby involved the Planning Council in its attempt to secure a national project which promised to bring immense advantages for the economy and status of the West Midlands. Accordingly, a chronology and analysis of the influence and tactics of the National Exhibition Centre lobby is called for.

1. The Course of Events.

During 1968 the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was engaged in discussions with Birmingham City Council on the matter of a modern municipal exhibition hall.¹ The catalyst for formal liaison between the two bodies, however, was the concern that the effect of the Government's I.D.C. policy on Birmingham's employment prospects was harmful. This generated the setting up of the formal joint committee at the end of 1968, as opposed to the previous irregular contact.² The committee met with very little success in terms of its original objective. But it was out of this formal institutional contact that the N.E.C. lobby emerged, for attention was subsequently switched to the possibility of the project being located near to Birmingham.

1 Birmingham Post, August 27th 1968.

2 Birmingham Post, November 6th 1968.

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce had previously given evidence, in a memorandum to a sub-committee of the Estimates Committee of the House of Commons, propounding reasons why there should be a Birmingham site for the National Exhibition Centre. The advantages that could be offered included lower site costs than could be obtained in London, and being at the centre of the Country's communications and industry. The further point had been made that major European exhibition centres were not necessarily located in the capitals, citing such examples as those at Hanover, Cologne and Milan.¹

October 1969 was the first occasion on which the activities of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Birmingham Corporation, in lobbying the Government, were publicised.² In this joint effort, the leaders of the two bodies had made several visits to the Board of Trade in London, to negotiate the merits of their fully worked out plan. The proposals they were suggesting included a contribution to the financial cost of the project from the Corporation, and they were offering to manage the development of the Centre. The previous lack of publicity for the lobby was a deliberate consequence of the desire for confidentiality in the proceedings, so that the negotiations would be well advanced by the time the plans became public. The calculation was that success was more probable if exposure was avoided, for otherwise counter-lobbies might well have mobilised opposition at an early stage, opposition which did, in fact, materialise subsequently.

The Birmingham lobby was manifestly successful in evoking a response from the Government, which was impressed by the enthusiasm displayed for the project and by the readiness of the lobby to participate in the financing and running of the National Exhibition Centre. This was against the background of the Government's long-standing awareness of the inadequacy of the existing London exhibition facilities.³

1 Birmingham Post, October 24th 1969.
 2 Birmingham Post, October 23rd 1969.
 3 Birmingham Post, November 3rd 1969.

To help press its case, the Birmingham lobby also carefully prepared the ground in other respects. The most likely site for the Centre was one in the provisional green belt between Birmingham and Coventry, in order that it might be in the vicinity of Birmingham Airport. The planning authority directly affected in such circumstances would be Warwickshire County Council. Confidential discussions were consequently initiated by Birmingham to agree on a site which would be mutually acceptable. The efficacious nature of these consultations was revealed later when Warwickshire did not oppose Birmingham's planning application for the National Exhibition Centre. Alderman Griffin, Leader of Birmingham Corporation, revealed that, in addition, the City's M.P's were approached by the lobby before the Government's decision was announced in the Commons.¹ The M.P's were strongly in favour and helped to maintain pressure on the President of the Board of Trade to reach a decision as quickly as possible, by asking questions in the Commons. From this one should not deduce that their role was formidable, for they had difficulty in eliciting sufficient information as a result of the confidentiality of the proceedings. But the overall picture of the lobby's activities was of a carefully manipulated favourable combination of factors.

In November 1969 it became clear, from an announcement by the President of the Board of Trade in the Commons, that the only proposal receiving urgent attention for the National Exhibition Centre was the Birmingham one. This was partly a result of the lobby's head-start because of the secrecy surrounding the early negotiations. All the while the Board of Trade was becoming more aware of the advantages of utilising the Corporation/Chamber of Commerce coalition as a medium for the project. The Corporation had a site ready and a developer willing to co-operate. As such it would take care of the land-use and planning considerations. The Chamber

1 This was stated in an interview with Ald. Griffin, February 18th 1970.

of Commerce supplied considerable commercial expertise and had a high reputation with the Board of Trade. The Deputy Secretary of the Chamber was adamant that the status of the organisation was a very important factor in the Government's calculations.¹ The promised financial contribution from Birmingham Corporation also compared favourably with the Greater London Council's repeated reluctance to commit itself to any comparable financial contribution to an exhibition project.² Birmingham Council leaders had, in fact, even approached neighbouring local authorities to ask them to consider a financial contribution, in view of the economic stimulus the Centre promised to provide for the Region, albeit a request that met with little tangible response. Meanwhile, the desire of the Minister to decide quickly on a practical scheme for the National Exhibition Centre was evident from his following comment in the Commons:-

"It had been hanging fire since 1958, and I intend to deal with it urgently."³

Amidst this unfolding situation, a counter-lobby at last began to emerge. The Confederation of British Industry and a number of major exhibition and trade associations came out strongly against a Birmingham site for the Centre, a natural reaction because of the London-orientation of such national organisations. Even the Midland Region C.B.I. was in a somewhat analagous position. In December, the Chairman of the Regional Council announced that a Birmingham site was only acceptable given the impossibility of a comparable site in London, although acknowledging that little progress had been achieved in respect of the latter.⁴ It was stressed that this preference was a result of the views of the members and that there had only been two objections to the stance.⁵ Considerable opposition to Birmingham's

1 A comment made during an interview, February 12th 1970.

2 Birmingham Post, November 27th 1969.

3 Hansard, November 26th 1969, Vol. 792, Column 415.

4 Birmingham Post and The Times, December 12th 1969.

5 This was stated at an interview with Mr. Gregory-Meakin, Midland Regional Secretary of the C.B.I. May 7th 1970.

plans, therefore, was gaining momentum by the end of 1969. Although the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce put its views to the Exhibition Committee of the C.B.I. in London, this did little to reverse or assuage the opposition.

The Birmingham lobby retained its tenacity in the face of this growing opposition. Leaders of Birmingham Corporation discussed the issue with the Minister for Regional Planning and Local Government, Mr. Crosland.¹ The same month it was reported that Mr. Mason, President of the Board of Trade, had won Cabinet approval for the Birmingham choice, despite the determined rear guard lobby from London interests. Mr. Mason was now taking practical action on his belief in the advantages of the Birmingham scheme.² In addition, the President of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce endeavoured to reinforce the City's case in claiming that a London location would contravene sensible national and regional planning.³ But immediately prior to the expected decision, the opponents also joined in this crescendo of activity. Leaders of the C.B.I. met Mr. Mason to warn that industry could not guarantee support for the National Exhibition Centre on a site outside London - all to no avail for, as the above events indicate, Mr. Mason had become a firm advocate of the Birmingham location.⁴

The formal Government decision was announced on January 28th 1970. Birmingham was given the go-ahead to build the National Exhibition Centre at an estimated cost of £11 millions (the estimated cost subsequently rose to £14.5 millions). Birmingham Corporation was to contribute £3 millions towards the initial capital cost and the Government £1.5 millions. In the Commons Mr. Mason expressed the view that the proposal offered:-

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- 1 Birmingham Post, January 9th 1970.
 - 2 Sunday Times, January 18th 1970.
 - 3 Birmingham Post, January 21st 1970.
 - 4 The Times, January 21st 1970.

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"the best possibility of a viable development within a reasonable time scale, giving at the same time substantial and continuing interest by the representatives of both industry and commerce and local interests."¹

Discussions with London had been protracted for more than ten years and the Government considered that it could not wait any longer. As such, the Birmingham proposal was the only practical one at this stage, while a site in London would confront planning difficulties and merely result in more congestion there. The decision had been concluded with the approval of the Minister of Technology and the Minister for Regional Planning. The full economic and planning implications for the country had therefore been taken into account. Birmingham had won its case. Only the detailed financial arrangements and plans needed approval to ensure the final materialisation of the project.

The leaders of the Birmingham lobby interpreted the decision as "a victory for the regions". In their estimation it was:-

"the first time that a major national project of this kind had been taken from the capital and put in the regions."²

Similarly, the journal of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce subsequently commented that:-

"everyone concerned with the country's balanced and logical development must also recognise in the President of the Board of Trade's bold decision a determination to see that the interests of the regions are set in balance against the increasing problem of congestion in the metropolis."³

According to Ald. Griffin, the lesson to be learnt was that:-

"While London had been messing about for many years we set about making real plans."⁴

As soon as the Birmingham plans had been publicised the opposition had gathered momentum. But by that juncture the plans had been well on the way to finalisation with the Government Departments involved - the

1 Hansa rd, January 28th 1970, Vol. 794, Column 1534.

2 Birmingham Post, January 29th 1970.

3 "Midlands Industry and Commerce", Viewpoint, P.79, February 1970.

4 Birmingham Post, January 29th 1970.

(197)

confidentiality had paid dividends.¹ The scheme undoubtedly promised to prove advantageous to the West Midlands, both in the generation of vital service industry employment and in the whole economic development of the Region, through the injection of a large number of British and foreign visitors that the holding of large-scale exhibitions would bring.

The opposition, though, did not show signs of receding. Keith Joseph, the shadow spokesman, wanted a feasibility study to look at the alternative sites in London, although when he spoke in the Commons it was as an individual and not on behalf of the Conservative Party. Subsequently, Conservative M.P's from the Birmingham area lobbied the Conservative Leadership in the background, to ensure that there would be no reversal of the decision if the Party assumed Office.² A meeting of the West Midland group of Conservative M.P's also put down a motion asking the Commons to welcome the decision.³ But there were other dissenters from the decision, including powerful industrial interests such as the C.B.I. and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. They still favoured a London siting. Birmingham did, however, receive support from Warwickshire County Council and the British Chamber of Commerce Association.

Further support for the Birmingham scheme came from another quarter. The West Midlands Economic Planning Council asserted that the word "national" did not mean that the N.E.C. should be located in London, and it expected a Birmingham project to be fully utilised.⁴ Yet, the Planning Council had not been consulted over the decision. Ald. Griffin made no secret of his opinion that it was a "tool" of central government, implicitly not an institution to appeal to for support for regional lobbies and

1 Ibid.

2 This was disclosed in an interview with Keith Speed, M.P. for Meriden, in February 1970.

3 Birmingham Post, February 4th 1970.

4 The Times, February 4th 1970.

interests. He was suspicious of ministerial nominees as opposed to elected representatives. The confidentiality of the proceedings of the Planning Council meant that there was a limit to what the representatives to it from Birmingham Corporation could disclose even to their own City Council.¹ The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was of the opinion that it was the Government's responsibility to inform the Planning Council on matters connected with the National Exhibition Centre. If the local lobby had invoked the Council's help there would have been a distinct danger of exposure at an earlier stage in the negotiations with the Government.² All this did not deter the Planning Council from giving further support to the project after more careful consideration of its implications. In its "Economic Appraisal" in 1971, it was stated that the:-

"National Exhibition Centre could provide the stimulus that the Region requires for the growth of a range of services not so directly related to industry."³

It continued to the effect that:-

"The N.E.C. could be a development of the greatest importance, providing employment and encouraging business in itself, but above all acting as the growth point for a range of activities which are at present under-represented in the Region."⁴

With the favourable Government decision behind it, the task of the Birmingham lobby was to get on with the task - acquiring the land, preparing the formal application for planning permission, and setting up a company to run the Centre. This company was established in May 1970, with eight directors, four nominated by Birmingham Corporation and four by the Chamber of Commerce, all of them representatives of non-profit distributing organisations.⁵

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- 1 These feelings were expressed in the interview with Ald. Griffin, February 18th 1970.
 - 2 This was stated at the interview with the Deputy Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, February 12th 1970.
 - 3 Department of Environment, H.M.S.O. Op. Cit. P.75.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 Birmingham Post, May 14th 1970.

Meanwhile, the Greater London Council continued its campaign for the Centre. It completed a feasibility study for a site at Northolt. New uncertainty was created by the change of Government in June 1970, with the G.L.C. hoping to achieve its aims with the new Administration. By this time the Birmingham lobby had entered into a number of firm commitments. Ald. Griffin was talking in terms of "the point of no return". More important, it exemplified the rapidity with which the Birmingham scheme would become operative. In addition, a reversal of the original decision might have dealt a psychological blow to the Government's professed aim of developing a successful regional policy. Mr. Noble, at the Board of Trade, was partly responsible for such a policy.¹

In these circumstances, the Birmingham lobby renewed its pressure, determined not to take any chances. Ald. Griffin forwarded a letter to the Prime Minister, asking him to receive a deputation. Communications were also sent to the concerned Ministers - the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Trade, and the Minister of Housing. Because so many Ministers were involved it was likely that the final decision would be that of the Cabinet.² Mr. Noble was judicial in his approach, receiving deputations from both the Birmingham lobby and from the G.L.C. He was arriving, however, at the same conclusion as had his predecessor in the Labour Government - that decision should be honoured, especially as the Birmingham site appeared to have inherent advantages.³ The G.L.C. made a last bid to reinforce its case by announcing a plan to contribute £10 millions if the Government agreed to a Northolt site, out of a total cost of £30 millions. This compared very unfavourably with the cost of the Birmingham site.⁴ The weight of the argument did not move substantially

1 Birmingham Post, June 23rd 1970.
 2 Birmingham Post, June 24th 1970.
 3 Birmingham Post, July 1st and 4th 1970.
 4 Birmingham Post, July 9th 1970.

in Birmingham's disfavour, so that Mr. Noble confirmed Government backing in July 1970, a decision that had, in fact, eventually been taken at Cabinet level. The Birmingham plan had gone too far to be reversed, apart from its cost advantages over the London alternative.¹

In relation to the Birmingham site for the National Exhibition Centre, it was observed in one quarter, on this confirmatory decision of the Government's, that:-

"It just seemed the best place at the time when a Minister, left with a much reduced department concerned with export promotion, decided a long-mooted project ought to get under way."²

The responsibilities of the Board of Trade had been greatly diminished as a result of departmental re-structuring over the previous twelve months. There was some surprise that a proper feasibility study into all possible alternatives had still not been carried out. Mr. Noble subsequently justified the decision, in the Commons, by explaining that it was the speed with which the Birmingham project would become operational that was a crucial factor.³ The Minister also resorted to exhortations, calling upon industrialists to support the Centre, for he was convinced that Birmingham's efforts would succeed.⁴

The next hurdle for the Birmingham lobby was to secure planning permission for the detailed plans. There was opposition in this respect from some affected parties. Meriden Rural Council opposed the development of the proposed site because it would constitute a major incursion into the green belt between Birmingham and Coventry. The planning authority was Warwickshire County Council, though, and Birmingham had worked closely with the County. As a result, Warwickshire recommended approval when the planning application was sent in to the Minister, suggesting that green belt

1 Birmingham Post, July 14th 1970.
2 The Times, Editorial, July 14th 1970.
3 Hansard, July 22nd 1970, Vol. 804, Column 514.
4 Birmingham Post, October 14th 1970.

considerations should be waived in this exceptional case because the project was of such national importance.¹ The Chairman of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities, Ald. Higgs, also expressed his approval of the way the plans were developing so well, on the receipt of a report from Ald. Griffin.²

The public enquiry was eventually held in June 1971, following a delay resulting from the Ministry of Environment asking for revised plans to alter the road access points. At the enquiry, those opposed to the National Exhibition Centre, because of its effect on the green belt, had an opportunity to argue their case. The Birmingham representation asked for the project to be treated as a special case because of its national importance. There was, it was claimed, no other site which offered equal accessibility in terms of the quality of the communications links. The project would provide employment for the overspill community of Chelmsley Wood on the fringe of Birmingham. Apart from the unique advantages of the site, Mr. Parkinson, continuing the evidence for Birmingham, explained that the Government had been impressed by the powerful combination of the Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce, an amalgam of experience and knowledge that had been incorporated into the private limited company established to manage the Centre.³ These arguments carried the day. In November, planning consent was granted because it was considered to be in the national interest. A different location might present worse problems in terms of the green belt and in other respects.⁴

The West Midlands Planning Council was one of the first to welcome the decision. It claimed that a clear advantage of the N.E.C. would be the greater investment in hotel projects in the Region accompanying the development.⁵ This advantage in respect of jobs and investment was

1 Birmingham Post, July 29th and August 8th 1970.

2 Birmingham Post, July 30th 1970.

3 Birmingham Post, Public Enquiry Report, June 3rd 1971.

4 Birmingham Post, November 13th 1971.

5 Birmingham Post, November 13th and December 8th 1971.

underlined by the Chamber of Commerce when it met Birmingham Labour M.P's a few months later.¹ But the subsequent efforts of Birmingham Corporation to achieve a boundary extension of the Birmingham District, under the proposed local government re-organisation, to take in the National Exhibition Centre site failed, although discussions were held with Solihull over equitable financial arrangements (for Solihull would get the benefit of the rateable value) and with the other authorities who would constitute part of the proposed Metropolitan County Council.² The efforts of Birmingham to achieve this boundary extension did indicate that the Birmingham lobby had been thinking in terms of the aggrandisement and benefit of the locality to a considerable extent, with, perhaps, a lesser premium on the general regional interest. The Government said as much when it expressed the feeling that the City was guilty of parochialism.³

2. An Analysis of Influence.

For analytic purposes the prominent feature of the Birmingham lobby was the degree to which it was able to utilise the deference of a government towards a pressure-group that can meet its needs. In this case the Labour Government wanted to effect a decision on the National Exhibition Centre, after more than ten years stalling from the London interests. As the above chronology revealed, one component of the lobby, Birmingham Corporation, being an executive tier of government, was able to deal with planning considerations and willing to contribute to the financial cost, while the Chamber of Commerce offered the necessary business expertise. This unofficial ad hoc grouping, therefore, presented the Government with the means of effecting a desired decision, in much the same way as government needs to rely to a large extent on the trade unions to enforce an incomes policy for example. The Birmingham lobby fulfilled the criterion

1 Birmingham Post, January 29th 1972.

2 Birmingham Post, December 29th 1971 and January 21st 1972.

3 Birmingham Post, December 29th 1971.

of influence associated with the usefulness of a pressure-group to government. There was a clear commitment from powerful interests who were willing to deliver the goods. It was possible because of the natural alignment of interests, able to be mobilised, involved in the local governmental process. In other words, initiative was provided by a big City with a definite^{identity} and local government organisation (a City with a traditional resentment of London dominance), reinforced by the local-orientation of the Chambers of Commerce.

These very strengths are in turn indicative of some of the fundamental weaknesses of the West Midlands Planning Council. It has no executive power to give effect to any proposals. It has also faced the considerable difficulty of effecting a regional alignment of interests comparable to that at local level, a dilemma that only showed signs of being resolved through the events associated with the "Economic Appraisal" in the unfamiliar conditions of economic malaise in the West Midlands. Even then it was a question of the Planning Council, as an advisory committee, mobilising indirect political resources, whereas the Birmingham lobby had direct political resources at its command. Furthermore, the members of the West Midlands Planning Council have not sat as delegates and consequently have been unable to commit interests to any particular action. Again, the existence of executive power and responsibility behind the Birmingham lobby enabled a concrete, well planned and costed project to be presented to the Government, whereas the Planning Council, without such power, has tended not to cost its plans in terms of practical implementation. The air of unreality about the latter's proposals is not helpful to government which has to think in terms of definite financial commitments. As admitted in the "Economic Appraisal":-

"The WMEPC carries out a valuable task in advising on government expenditure in the Region, but there is no point at which the effects of transferring differing amounts of resources between competing uses is weighed up."¹

Another factor facilitating the success of the Birmingham lobby was its clearly defined and limited objective of achieving a location near Birmingham for the National Exhibition Centre, entailing no reversal of any Government policy.² This again is in contrast to the West Midlands Planning Council, whose objectives have been unclear since the demise of the National Plan, while the implementation of any strategy for a region requires decisions on a wide range of policies, many of which involve a reversal or change of government policies. The Labour Government, as pointed out previously, had a regional development policy which was felt to be detrimental to the West Midlands, but many pressure-group studies have described the failure of lobbies to effect fundamental policy changes (an important example under Mr. Heath's Conservative Administration was the failure of the trade unions to effect changes in the basic principles of the Industrial Relations Act). Where the Planning Council's advice has been more limited, as in its views on the implications for a region of individual ministerial decisions, it has often been unable to secure any regional backing, for much of this advice has to remain confidential to its members, falling within the screen of the Official Secrets Act.

The Birmingham lobby was also helped by the creation of the Department for Regional Planning and Local Government in October 1969, for it was able to win the support of Mr. Crosland. Yet, there was no question of it being in competition with the Development Areas for resources, the only competition coming from the London lobby. In terms of this comparison the West Midlands had superiority from the point of view of regional planning, while initially

1 Department of Environment, H.M.S.O. Op. Cit. P.77.

2 The failure of the Joint Committee in its original task of securing from the Government relaxation of I.D.C. policy indicates the importance of the factor of a clash with government policy.

even the competition from the Greater London Council was excluded by the confidentiality of the negotiations. The restriction of the scope of conflict was an important factor of influence in this instance. This compares with the earlier allusion to the fact that the regional structure of the Planning Councils/Boards is in effect an institutionalisation of conflict, with the West Midlands, in not traditionally being an "unemployment" region, having been unfavourably placed in such conflict. Once again, it illustrates the contrast between the advantages of the Birmingham lobby and the disadvantages of the West Midlands Planning Council.

The Birmingham lobby, in putting its case directly to the Government Departments where the power to make the decision resided, won vital strategic support in the decision-making structure through Mr. Mason and Mr. Noble, both of whom played major roles in effecting departmental co-ordination and Cabinet approval for a Birmingham location for the Exhibition Centre. As Ald. Griffin exclaimed:-

"We wore out the MI going to see various Ministers and Government officials in connection with our plans."¹

The lobby clearly understood the nature of the British political system in concentrating primarily on gaining access to the executive and to the Departments. The increasingly vociferous London lobby had also mobilised something of a West Midlands regional lobby to back the Birmingham scheme, the West Midland Group of Conservative M.P's being conspicuous in its support for example. Birmingham Corporation had, in addition, made careful preparations in its relationship with Warwickshire County Council, in much the same way as the West Midlands Planning Council realised the importance of preparing the ground within the Region after its "Economic Appraisal", as seen in its series of meetings with local authorities in 1972. A local coalition, then, presented an issue which created a regional interest, even though it later became apparent that the Birmingham lobby was as much, if not more, concerned

1 Birmingham Post, January 29th 1970.

with the local as the regional interest. Yet ironically, on this matter the West Midlands Planning Council had not been approached by the lobby, nor was it consulted by the Board of Trade although regional policy considerations entered into the decision. The project was first discussed in the Planning Council after the decision. A pressure-group in the Region had completely by-passed this intermediary regional body in trying to secure a favourable decision from central government.

Hence, in relation to this important lobby in the Region, the Planning Council certainly did not act as a focal point in the projection of a regional consensus or interest. In a sense the N.E.C. decision was the Stansted of the West Midlands Planning Council because of the lack of consultation with it.¹ Admittedly it did not raise any objections and subsequently, in the "Economic Appraisal", came out strongly in favour of the scheme's potential for generating vital service industries. But its non-participation in this decision may also be seen as a reflection of other groups' perception of its influence. It was not seen as being able to, in D.B. Truman's terms, affect appreciably the objective that the Birmingham lobby sought to achieve.²

1 Here the South East Planning Council was not consulted over the proposed plan of the Government to site London's third airport at Stansted.

2 "The Governmental Process", Op. Cit.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The object of this study has been to apply a pressure-group methodology, reinforced by decision-making theories, to a regional advisory committee. This is not because the West Midlands Planning Council is a pressure-group according to any strict definition of the term, but principally to provide tools of analysis through which one can examine a wider set of relationships/repercussions emanating from the activities of such an advisory committee. It also takes account of the imperceptible change in the role of advisory committees that often develops after their inauguration - the distinction between manifest and latent functions.

The Planning Councils were conceived by the Labour Government responsible for setting them up very much in terms of aiding the Government to make "much better-informed decisions".¹ An information input from people with an intimate knowledge of each of the regions would help the central government to effectively pursue its policies and objectives. The West Midlands Planning Council has fulfilled such a role. But it has gone beyond it. An advisory committee may provide a mechanism for articulating a particular point of view and act as a focal point for the application of pressure on the decision-makers. Here it goes beyond the mere provision of expert information and recommendations, to an attempt to actually pressurise a government into an acceptance of the recommendations. How otherwise can one interpret Mr Hazell's threat, in his capacity as Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, that there would be a "hell of a row" unless the Government took notice of the Planning Council's demand for a change in I.D.C. policy?²

The West Midlands Planning Council, therefore, is not only a

1 Refer to Chapter 2, P. 54-5.

2 Refer to Chapter 6, P. 185.

potential pressurising body vis-a-vis executive centres of government, but over some issues has actively sought to realise that potential. Thus a pressure-group conceptual framework can add a dimension to the study of the influence and impact of an advisory committee that a more formalistic view of advisory committees lacks.

The adoption of such an approach does not render one susceptible to the charge of "reductionism" for it preserves the fundamental distinction between executive government and non-executive bodies that merely seek to influence the former. The salient feature of the regional level in Great Britain has been the absence of elected executive government and concomitant regional governmental processes. Regionalism, so far as economic planning is concerned, has consisted in the West Midlands of regional officials of the Whitehall Departments, grouped on an inter-departmental Planning Board, complemented by an advisory Planning Council comprised of some regional notables.

This study has concentrated on the Planning Council because it is more able and ready than the Planning Board to adopt an independent stand, particularly vis-a-vis the policies of central government, and actively campaign on behalf of its recommendations and views. The members of the Planning Board are part of a central civil service career structure, with a primary allegiance to their functional departmental headquarters rather than to the region. Although the Chairmen of the Planning Board and Planning Council have worked closely together in the West Midlands to promote the wider regional view amongst the departmental officials located in the region (for transmission back to the parent Departments in Whitehall), the Planning Council has taken an independent stand where the Planning Board has appeared to be upholding a central

policy with which the Council fundamentally disagreed. The main example that has been quoted is where the Council came out strongly against the workings of central government's I.D.C. policy in the West Midlands, even though the Board had constantly fed it with statistics suggesting that the area had secured its fair share of I.D.C's.¹

In accordance with the pressure-group methodology, a number of criteria for assessing the influence of the West Midlands Planning Council have been identified and extracted from general pressure-group studies. The evaluation of "influence" essentially involves relating the views of the Planning Council to changes or modifications in government policy to reveal any correlation, with the proviso that the complexity of the governmental process makes it difficult to precisely determine the influence of each pressure or input. It is a matter of informed judgement, based on the available evidence on the relevant relationships. One is not necessarily aspiring to the construction of a precise chain of cause and effect.

To recapitulate, the criteria identified for assessing the influence of the Planning Council were as follows:

1. The accessibility of the Council to central government in the context of a changing departmental structure and the degree of inter-departmental co-ordination. A parliamentary channel of access for the Planning Council might also be of importance in certain circumstances, via the West Midlands Regional Groups of M.P's.
2. In so far as the recommendations of the Planning Council have been in conflict with the fundamental policies of the Labour and Conservative Governments between 1965 and 1972, the principles and commitments of those Parties are pertinent.

¹ See Chapter 4, P.101.

3. There are strengths and weaknesses internal to the Planning Council, derived from such factors as the rate of turnover in its membership, the extent and nature of overlapping membership and the role of the Chairman in the capacity as leader.

4. A government's perception of the usefulness of the Council is important, particularly the value of its informative role and its advice.

5. Another criterion is the scope of conflict. Here one is assessing the Council's ability to limit and overcome the conflict between the regions where this would be advantageous, together with its strength vis-a-vis other regions in such conflict.

6. The success of a pressure-group is often related to its ability to associate itself with the "public interest". One is concerned, therefore, with the extent to which the Planning Council has tried to reconcile its recommendations with a wider interest than that of the West Midlands.

7. A vital pre-requisite of the potential influence of the Planning Council is its interaction with other groups and forces in the West Midlands and the extent to which the interaction has been consensus- or conflict-oriented. As such it raises the associated phenomenon of intra-regional conflict. This consideration is the essence of the ability of the Planning Council to mobilise a power-base since, as an advisory committee, it cannot mobilise significant resources of its own. It must rely on a form of indirect mobilisation. Here one is examining the degree to which other groups and organisations within the region have seen the Planning Council as a focal point for effecting decisions they want from central government. Such an alignment is particularly conceivable where a common view exists between the Council and other interests which brings them all into conflict with a government's inter-regional priorities. In such a

context the Planning Council may use its initiative to serve as a focal point in mobilising interests in the region around a common cause. This last criterion of influence, the form and nature of the interaction with other groups, is the most important. The above factors of influence are analytically useful, if interwoven in reality.

The conclusions in relation to each of these factors of influence can now be summarised. Finally a balance sheet of the factors that have in turn worked to the disadvantage and advantage of the West Midlands Planning Council will be drawn up.

1. Firstly a consideration of access to government. The institutional framework to which the West Midlands Planning Council was initially related, centred on the Department of Economic Affairs, had a very short existence. The D.E.A. as a "super" co-ordinating ministry was supposed to take a synoptic view in relation to planning, including the relationship between national and regional planning. Decision-making theories of the kind outlined in Chapter One¹ indicate that political decisions in a pluralistic political system are typically a reaction to short-term pressures. Consequently long-term planning and the associated institutional framework tend to succumb to the traditional decision-making process of responding to short-term crises. This is precisely what happened to the D.E.A. and the National Plan as the Treasury pulled in an opposite direction to meet immediate economic crises. The collapse of national planning undermined the role of regional economic planning. The confusion has not been resolved by any new terms of reference for the Planning Councils. By 1972 there were difficulties in resolving the impact on the regions of the Department of the Environment, the Department of Trade and Industry

¹ P. 8-13.

and the Treasury. Without an overall co-ordinating planning department, dealings with the government for the West Midlands Planning Council are potentially fragmented and complex, mitigated only through inter-departmental committees.

The Chairman of the Planning Council has had direct access to ministers though, supplemented by delegations from the Council to Whitehall on some important issues. There have also been visits by ministers to the Council. Such a visit was that of the Prime Minister, Mr. Heath, in September 1971.

The relationship between the West Midlands Planning Council and regional M.P's has been of a very tenuous nature. The West Midlands Group of Labour M.P's, for example, had only had two meetings with the Council. In any case in the British political system party considerations override regional parliamentary alignments. A high-powered regional lobby for the West Midlands in Parliament has proved difficult to develop, although from the late 1960's the Region's M.P's became increasingly restless over the policies of central government towards the West Midlands.

2. When it comes to the commitments and principles of parties, one finds that the needs of the West Midlands, as conceived by the Planning Council, required the formulation of demands which were contrary to the major commitment of the pre-1970 Labour Administration to channel resources to the "underdeveloped" regions of northern England, Scotland and Wales. As such the Council was unsuccessful in the attempt to persuade the Government to provide incentives for the intra-regional movement of industry in the West Midlands (ie. from the central conurbation to the new towns). The overriding objective of the Government was the inter-regional redistribution of resources not intra-regional redistribution. The succeeding Conservative Government was also committed to tackling

the problem of imbalance between the regions.

3. Next there are internal strengths and weaknesses of the Planning Council. Its composition, as it has developed, has reflected a growth in the size of the local authority contingent. This is important in terms of developing a closer relationship with local government. But the poor representation of certain interests, important to the field of planning, has been obvious - the agricultural interest and the nationalised industries in particular, although the latter are represented through the relevant Departments on the Regional Board.

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the extent to which the membership of the Planning Council has provided links with various organisations in the region, through overlapping membership. To quote some examples, the membership has provided links with the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Regional Advisory Committee of the T.U.C. and the Midland Region C.B.I., some of the more important economic and industrial interests in the region.

The disturbing feature about the membership of the Planning Council has been the rate of turnover. The proportion of members leaving has been well above the national average for all Planning Councils. Finally, in relation to leadership, the West Midlands Planning Council had only an acting chairman for much of 1970/71. But this was in contrast to the vigorous leadership provided beforehand by Adrian Cadbury (even after his resignation in March 1970 he continued to play a role as chairman of the Working Party of the Council that produced the "Economic Appraisal" in June 1971) and by Quinton Hazell since September 1971.

4. Usefulness to government is the next factor. The West Midlands Planning Council has been useful to government, in terms of sensible decision-making, through promoting a greater understanding of the

background against which individual decisions are made. It can promote consistent and strategic thinking leading to the more efficient allocation of resources. The classic example of this in the West Midlands is the case of Telford New Town. Its success was constantly threatened by the fact that the Departments responsible for physical infrastructure, industrial location and transport were often pulling in different directions. Telford lacked first-class communication links with the central conurbation. The Planning Council played a prominent role in securing the decision to link Telford to the M.6 by motorway by 1975/6. The New Town was also threatened by the shortage of incoming industry to support an expanding population. The Planning Council, through its informative role, again helped to secure a relaxation in I.D.C. policy towards Telford by 1970. Without such decisions and modifications of policy the public resources spent on the physical infrastructure of Telford would have been under-utilised and wasted. Such is the value to a government of information fed in from people with an intimate knowledge of the problems of a region.

5. A consideration of the scope of conflict reveals that in effect there has been an institutionalisation of conflict between the regions, because the same structure has existed in each of the English regions. Such institutionalised conflict is more likely to favour those regions which have successfully mobilised a regional interest in the past. In such a comparison the West Midlands comes out very unfavourably vis-a-vis a region like the North East. For a long time the former was conspicuous for its inability to develop a distinct regional political alignment and pressure-group, although such an observation is subject to certain qualification regarding developments in the early 1970's mentioned below. In addition, the changes in the regional organisation of the Department of Trade and

Industry, announced in March 1972, gave the "assisted" areas a more effective regional structure than exists in the West Midlands.

6. On the question of the "public interest", the West Midlands Planning Council has not neglected the need to take account of a wider interest than that of a single region. This came across strongly in its "Economic Appraisal". There the idea of the function of the West Midlands in relation to the national economy was developed, that of a generator of industry for the rest of the country. The national economy would not expand if the West Midlands stagnated. Sufficient industry would not be generated in the region to alleviate the problems of other areas. Here was a method of reconciling the well-being of the West Midlands with the objectives of national policy.

7. Lastly one comes to the major factor of influence, the ability of the Planning Council to mobilise a power-base. To begin with the Council had little success in mobilising a regional interest or in overcoming intra-regional conflict. This flowed in part from the Government's rejection of the essentials embodied in the Council's first strategic document, "Patterns of Growth", thus nullifying the attempt to establish a regional strategy based on dispersal from the central conurbation. Once again the West Midlands was faced with the spectacle of conflict between local authorities over Birmingham's desire for peripheral development, in this case Birmingham's application for commuter settlements in the provisional green belt of north Worcestershire. Birmingham and Worcestershire battled it out at the public enquiry in 1969, producing in the end a compromise decision by the Minister.

From another perspective, the events in north east Warwickshire indicated the inability of the Planning Council to overcome intra-regional conflict. This distinct entity, centred on Nuneaton, with

long-standing problems of unemployment and industrial rundown (in this respect providing a contrast with most of the West Midlands), developed its own lobby vis-a-vis central government on such matters as I.D.C. policy. It was not willing to be encompassed in a wider regional viewpoint, particularly as the Planning Council had neglected its problems and adopted a stance of suspended animation whilst awaiting the conclusions of a sub-regional study that took in north east Warwickshire (the study did not appear until 1971). The neglect was also a result of the Planning Council's pre-occupation with the problems of the central conurbation overspill. Nevertheless, the Council has had an unenviable task in resolving the differences of interest within the West Midlands, whether broken down into single local authorities or the distinct sub-regions. The Council is, of course, in no position to arbitrate on the intra-regional allocation of resources.

Initially, in fact, local government was extremely suspicious of the regional machinery. The latter was seen as a possible intruder in relation to the planning functions and responsibilities of local authorities. This, however, produced a positive defensive reaction in the setting up of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities in 1966, a move on the part of local authorities to create their own regional forum and machinery. The Planning Council thus played a vital role in precipitating local government to think in regional terms, although this was essentially a negative achievement on the part of the Council. By 1970 the Planning Council and Standing Conference were working in closer harmony. The work of the latter culminated in the publication of a strategy in September 1971, followed by tripartite discussions between the Planning Council, Standing Conference and the Government to finally work out an agreed strategy, an objective to which the Government had become committed.

There has, therefore, developed a closer co-operation between the Planning Council and local government, added to which was the Council's passive contribution towards encouraging a local authority regional process. One should not overlook, however, that the real power in the Standing Conference remains with the constituent local authorities, whose diverse demands are still more conspicuous than any common ground, as seen in the north Worcestershire example.

The real breakthrough for the Planning Council, in terms of mobilising a regional interest and creating a power-base, came in relation to its "Economic Appraisal". This document provided evidence which substantiated (as long suspected in some quarters) the existence of a regional economic problem. I.D.C. policy had diverted new technological industry from the West Midlands, so that a glaring structural defect was the over-concentration on a few industries in the region. Accordingly, the document recommended a new set of criteria for the granting of I.D.C's in the West Midlands, looking towards changes in central government policy more substantial than any small modifications achieved in the past.

The Working Party of the Planning Council responsible for the document had institutionalised relations with economic/industrial interests in the region, through the inclusion of formal representatives from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, the Midland Region C.B.I. and British Leyland. Hence, the Planning Council was acting as a forum for incorporating such major economic interests into a regional interest - building up a common case and front. Fortuitously, the report appeared during a period when regional unemployment had moved above the national average. In such a context the "Economic Appraisal" evoked widespread support in the West Midlands. The close interaction with powerful economic interests and the support from other quarters, together with follow-up campaigns,

was sufficient to persuade the Government to significantly relax I.D.C. policy in the West Midlands. An I.D.C. was now only required for a project over 15,000 sq. ft. compared with the previous figure of 5,000 sq. ft. Industrial development involving modernisation was to be treated with much greater flexibility. This amounted to a more relaxed approach to the West Midlands than towards the region whose needs had previously been considered analagous - the South East. Such was the extent of the change that the Minister for Industrial Development, Christopher Chataway, was reported as saying in November 1972 that "no industrialist should be afraid of expanding in the West Midlands for fear he would be refused an I.D.C."¹

There is, however, one further point on the debit side arising from the special case of the National Exhibition Centre lobby, led by Birmingham Corporation and Birmingham Chamber of Commerce. This local coalition tried to secure a project of considerable importance to the economy of the West Midlands. As such it became an issue of great regional interest and activity. The Birmingham lobby did not seek the support of the Planning Council in its endeavours. On one of the more important lobbies emanating from the region to influence central government the Planning Council did not, therefore, act as a focal point in its projection. On the contrary, its role was confined to subsequent endorsement of the value of the project. Its non-participation might be interpreted as a reflection of the perception on the part of other interests within the West Midlands of the Council's influence and importance - not very great!

Presented in terms of a balance sheet, the disadvantages and advantages of the West Midlands Planning Council as a source of influence may be summarised as follows. Additional points arising from the decision-making theories discussed previously are included.

¹ Birmingham Post, November 13th 1972.

Firstly, there are those factors that have worked to its disadvantage. In terms of the Council's access to government, the initial Whitehall institutional and decision-making framework for the regional structure rapidly collapsed. The demise of the idea of a "super" co-ordinating department, in the form of the D.E.A., re-emphasised the problem of inter-departmental co-ordination of the various strands of regional policy. In addition, the Planning Council has had weak links with the Region's M.P's. There has been difficulty in developing a high-powered regional lobby in Parliament, although this is primarily a reflection of the nature of the British political and party system. Next, the West Midlands Planning Council has tended to come into conflict with the fundamental policies of governments, namely, the degree of discrimination in favour of the "unemployment" areas in regional policy. Yet, pressure-groups normally realise their strengths in terms of influence on the detailed administration of policies, rather than in effecting fundamental changes.

Further factors adversely affecting the influence of the Planning Council include its inability to confine the scope of conflict, with a similar regional structure having existed in all the English regions. Within the context of this institutionalised conflict, the Council has had to contend with the traditional absence of a regional consciousness and distinct regional political alignment to direct and mobilise. Furthermore, the task of developing a medium and long-term strategy for the region has created problems for the effectiveness of the Planning Council in relation to short-term crisis-orientated situations. As such, it has been generally ill-adapted to the realities of the decision-making process, which is very susceptible to short-term pressures. Lastly, there have been weaknesses originating from within the West Midlands

Planning Council itself. Examples are the rapid rate of turnover in its membership, the poor representation of certain important interests, and the effects on leadership of the long period without a chairman during 1970/71.

Such weaknesses have undermined the attempts of the Planning Council to effect a modification of any great substance in the inter-regional allocation of resources, secure decisions to enable the development of a coherent regional strategy, and contain and transcend intra-regional conflict. Planned long-term dispersal within the West Midlands continued to come under strain, as exemplified by the north Worcestershire case study, with the intra-regional conflict between local authorities assuming all the old dimensions. The inability of the Planning Council to transcend intra-regional conflict was also apparent in the events in north east Warwickshire, the latter developing its own lobby to meet its industrial and employment problems.

Alongside the negative features of the influence of the West Midlands Planning Council, however, are many positive features. There are a number of factors which have worked to its advantage. The informative role of the Council has been useful to governments in terms of sensible decision-making. This role has been effective in securing marginal adjustments in policy. It has been partly facilitated by the ready access to ministers, along with the periodic visits from ministers to meetings of the Planning Council. Adrian Cadbury, when chairman of the Council, provided vigorous leadership, as has Mr. Hazell since his appointment to the position. Relations between the Council and the Planning Board have also been close, although the former has not failed to assert an independent viewpoint where necessary.

More fundamentally, the West Midlands Planning Council has

fulfilled the role of a catalyst in terms of organisation at the regional level, leading to the formation of the Standing Conference of Local Authorities, the Conference producing a strategy by 1971 which it hoped could form the basis for an agreed regional plan. Apart from the closer relationship with local authorities via the Standing Conference, there has been considerable overlapping membership between the Planning Council and prominent groups within the region. This intermeshing achieved more significant proportions through the events associated with the Council's "Economic Appraisal". The Working Party that produced the report had formal representatives of major industrial and economic organisations in its membership, co-ordinating efforts in relation to the growing apprehensions about the health of the economy in the West Midlands. The demand for a more positive policy for the region was placed in the context of the national interest, claiming that the health of the economy of the West Midlands was vital to national economic growth. The proposals put forward in the "Economic Appraisal" were also published at a time when there was a crisis for the region in terms of unemployment. Far from the recommendations emanating from the Planning Council being rendered superfluous by the politics of crisis, in this instance it promised to capitalise on such a situation.

In the above example, therefore, the Planning Council was able to mobilise a power-base in a situation where a common viewpoint existed between it and many groups within the West Midlands, a common view that brought all such bodies into conflict with the Government, in economic circumstances changed from those of most of the post-war period. This resulted in significant modifications in I.D.C. policy as it affected the West Midlands.

To be set aside this is the fact that the Birmingham lobby for the National Exhibition Centre did not approach the Planning Council

in the attempt to secure a favourable decision from central government in relation to a project which promised to be of immense importance to the region. But this was prior to the important developments in connection with the "Economic Appraisal".

The final pressure-group proposition applied in this study is whether the composition of the Planning Council confirms the often-made assertion that pluralism merely results in the institutionalisation of the big battalions within the structure of government - the notion of an "inner circle" of strongly organised groups. An advisory council is a useful testing-ground because many of them are formalised instruments for consultation between ministers and outside groups.

There is a sense in which this is not true of the West Midlands Planning Council, for the members are supposed to sit as individuals rather than as delegates of interests. Nevertheless, many of the nominations have come from groups. As pointed out in Chapter Two, the distinction between being a delegate of a corporate interest on the one hand and an individual with corporate connections on the other is tenuous. The composition of the West Midlands Planning Council is an illustration of the correlation between growing interventionism on the part of central government (ie. it was established in the context of national planning) and the increased institutionalised role of the nominees of groups in the policy-making process. The only link with the democratic process, conceived in electoral terms, has been via those members nominated from local government. The links of many of the industrial members with the organisational sub-divisions of national economic groups (Regional Advisory Committee of the T.U.C. and the Midland Region C.B.I.) have been a result of the prominent role of these bodies in consultations with ministers over nominations. To this extent, some

members of the Planning Council indirectly duplicate interests which are very much a part of the established web of central government. The same "inner circle" of strongly organised interests are in evidence at regional and national level.

The main conclusion of this study is that, for all the weaknesses of the regional administrative innovations of 1965, the repercussions have not been inconsiderable in the widest context, in spite of some of the pessimistic assumptions about the impact of this machinery after the first bout of optimism subsided. The West Midlands Planning Council has had a significant role in the modification of central government industrial policy towards the region, its effectiveness being enhanced by its interaction with other groups in the West Midlands to present something of a common front to the centre over dissatisfaction with the emphasis of inter-regional policy. It has directly (through its pioneering development of strategic thinking in the second half of the 1960's) and indirectly (through its role as a catalyst for the creation of a regional dimension in local government) played a part in the development of a strategy for the intra-regional allocation of resources in the West Midlands, more recently through the increased co-operation with the Standing Conference. In the West Midlands there are now certain dynamic forces at work, in large degree attributable to the setting up of the Planning Council/Board, forces such as the mobilisation of a regional interest and a measure of regional organisation hitherto missing from local government. The changes of 1965 may yet prove to have been a vital stage in the evolution of thinking and institutional organisation at the regional level.

In an article written not long after the administrative innovations that created the new regional machinery in 1965, A.W.

Peterson suggested that the experience of the present system would provide an indication of the need for more radical structural change.¹ The West Midlands Planning Council has, in fact, called for this more radical structure. In its remarks on the Maud Commission it called for a powerful provincial authority to give the region more executive power. This body, in the opinion of the Planning Council, ought to be responsible for regional planning and strategy, with powers to raise money and initiate its own developments. The Council agreed with the Maud Commission's suggestion that the Provincial Council should consist of members from the unitary local authorities and a proportion of appointed independent members, but:-

"Though the E.P.C. does not greatly differ from Redcliffe-Maud regarding the structure of the Provincial Council, its proposals envisage a somewhat stronger body with more effective powers than those set out in the Commission's report."²

Support for the idea of a Provincial Council was reiterated in the Planning Council's evidence to the Commission on the Constitution:-

"regionalism means an increasing focusing of government within the regions and a greater capacity for a region to look after its own affairs, subject only to the over-riding sovereignty of Parliament and the national interests."³

The structure of government was again taken up in the Planning Council's "Economic Appraisal". It stated that there was a need for more power to be devolved from the centre to a body in the region, where it was more sensible to decide regional priorities. Investment plans should be reviewed in the region, including the determination of priorities between functions. The requirement was for:-

"A body which was in a position to review the total funds available for development in the Region whatever their source

¹ "Machinery for Economic Planning: Regional Economic Planning Councils and Boards", Op. Cit.

² W.M.E.P.C. Press Notice, Redcliffe-Maud Report, September 9th 1969, COI Birmingham.

³ W.M.E.P.C. Press Notice, Summary of Evidence to the Commission on the Constitution, February 1970, COI Birmingham.

and advise on their allocation according to regionally established priorities."¹

It may well be that the developments beginning to unfold (in terms of influence on policy and the emergence of regional interests) need regional executive government and greater decentralisation of the present central government structure to increase the momentum of the growth of the regional dimension in decision-making. This will enable more decisions to be taken in the regions and by creating a regional governmental process will encourage the growth of stronger regional interests and a strengthened regional alignment for a more effective exertion of influence on those decisions that must remain at the centre. The strength of bargaining power is important in a pluralistic political system, for an "incremental" influence is not a static or fixed quantity, but refers to the fact that there are a large number of components involved in the governmental process which have to mutually modify their claims in order to come to agreement. Hence the theory of "mutual adjustment" as expounded by Lindblom and others.² The stronger an individual component is, the more able it is to ensure that its claims are not modified to the extent of being emasculated. It is widely agreed that the regional component in decision-making must be strengthened to overcome the problems of the increasing demand on economic and physical resources.

Regional government would also restore direct democratic control over the numerous ad hoc and administrative bodies that exist at this level, in addition to rationalising control in what is, at present, an extremely diverse system. It would also curb the tendency to institutionalise the nominees of groups within the structure of government, by means of advisory committees, as a substitute for elected democratic government.

¹ "Economic Appraisal", Op. Cit. P.77.

² Refer to Chapter One P.9.

The one experiment in the U.K. of regional government, in Northern Ireland, has been little short of a disaster. The border issue and the consequent inflexible political divisions in the Province did, however, mean that there were peculiar and in many ways unique circumstances. The possibilities of regional devolution throughout the whole of the U.K. in the near future are by no means as remote as is often assumed. The Commission on the Constitution still has to report. In its proposals for local government reform, in February 1971, the Government's conclusion on the provincial level was stated in the following terms:-

"It would be unrealistic to take long-term decisions on any machinery needed for the provinces before the Crowther Commission have completed their work. When the Commission's report is available, decisions can be taken on the constitution of any regional bodies and on the range of functions they might carry out in relation both to central and local government. In the meantime, the Government will continue to pursue the preparation of regional strategies by the creation of teams comprising the Standing Conferences of Local Planning Authorities, the Regional Economic Planning Councils and Central Government."¹

But in a debate on the question of democratically-elected regional government in the Commons in April 1972, in connection with the Local Government Bill, Peter Walker as Secretary of State for the Environment stressed the importance attached to the development of regional policies and regional land-use strategies. As such policies evolved he did envisage the possibility of elected regional bodies and greater delegation of decision-making from the centre to the regions.²

Anthony Crosland, as Opposition spokesman, has stated that a future Labour government would give serious consideration to setting up a new level of provincial government. Mr. Wilson, Leader of the Opposition, stated in February 1973 that there was a need to create democratic regional authorities. They would be responsible for

1 "Local Government in England", Cmnd. 4534, H.C.S.O. P.11.

2 Hansard, April 13th 1972, Columns 454-44.

strategic planning and the management of state-owned development land, transport, water and the regional health authorities proposed under the Conservative Government's re-organisation of the National Health Service.¹

The demand, then, of the West Midlands Planning Council for a powerful provincial authority and for more power to be devolved from the centre may yet be met. For the moment the regional dimension, in the phrase of W.A. Robson, is still very much "the missing dimension of government."²

1 Reported in the "Sunday Times", February 11th 1973.

2 "The Missing Dimension of Government", Op. Cit.

APPENDIX I

MEMBERSHIP OF THE WEST MIDLANDS PLANNING COUNCIL

Set out below is the membership of the Planning Council in 1965, 1968 and July 1971, indicating the primary connection of each member.

(i) 1965

Sir Joseph Hunt (Chairman)	Chloride Electric Storage Co Ltd.
R.P.S. Bache	George Salter & Co Ltd.
L. Hargreaves Beare	Needles Industries Group Ltd.
A.E. Bennett	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
R.H. Bennett	Herefordshire Rural Community Council
W.J. Brimley	National Federation of Building Trade Operatives
	University of Warwick
J.B. Butterworth	Birmingham Post and Mail Ltd.
Sir E.M. Clayson	Amalgamated Engineering Union
S.R. Cresswell	Birmingham University
D.E.C. Eversley	Shropshire County Council
G.C. Godber	Worcestershire County Council
J.M.C. Higgs	University of Nottingham/Warwick
A.G. Ling	F.H. Lloyd & Co Ltd.
F.N. Lloyd	Willenhall Urban District Council
F.V. Magness	Rugby and District Council of Social Service
Earl of March and Kinrara	Staffordshire County Council
	Dudley Town Council
G.W. Newman	National Union of General and Municipal Workers
G.B. Norton	Birmingham City Council
W. Perrins	Midland Motor Omnibus Co Ltd.
	Transport and General Workers Union
F.L. Price	College of Advanced Technology, Birmingham
D.M. Sinclair	Massey-Ferguson Holdings Ltd.
C.H. Urwin	Birmingham City Council
Sir P.F.R. Venables	Coventry City Council
I.J. Wallace	
H. Watton	
A.J. Waugh	

(ii) 1968

Adrian Cadbury (Chairman)	Cadbury-Schweppes Group Ltd.
R.P.S. Bache	George Salter & Co Ltd.
L. Hargreaves Beare	Needles Industries Group Ltd.
R.H. Bennett	Herefordshire Rural Community Council
Mrs W.E. Cavenagh	Birmingham University
S.R. Cresswell	Amalgamated Engineering Union
Prof. J.B. Cullingworth	Birmingham University
Ald. Mrs W.O. Easey	Birmingham City Council
Prof. I.F. Gibson	University of Aston
J.M.C. Higgs	Worcestershire County Council
G.E. Hill	Solihull County Borough Council
W.N.P. Jones	Shropshire County Council
F.V. Magness	Willenhall Urban District Council
J.C. Mason	General and Municipal Workers Union
J.H.W. Melvin	National Association of Local Government Officers

D.A. Perris
 F.L. Price

 L.K. Robinson
 C.M.T. Smith-Ryland
 R.P. Stedeford
 Prof. W.A.C. Stewart
 C.H. Urwin
 I.J. Wallace
 J.W. Wardle
 H. Watton

Birmingham Trades Council
 Birmingham City Council/Telford
 Development Corporation
 Stoke-on-Trent City Council
 Warwickshire County Council
 Tube Investments Ltd.
 Keele University
 Transport and General Workers Union
 Massey-Ferguson Holdings Ltd.
 Kidderminster R.D.C./British Rail
 Birmingham City Council

(iii) July 1971

R.J. Allcock
 R.P.S. Bache (Acting
 Chairman)

D. Beavis
 R.M.C. Capper
 Mrs J.E. Carter
 J.H.G. Cotterell
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 N.A. Dudley
 W. Dugdale
 Prof. I.F. Gibson
 J.M.C. Higgs
 Professor Hinton
 H. Hood
 W.N.P. Jones
 D.C. Justham
 J.T. Lally
 J.C. Mason
 B. Mathers
 J.H.W. Melvin

J. Oxford
 L.K. Robinson
 C.V.G. Simpson
 R.P. Stedeford
 I.J. Wallace
 H. Watton
 D. Woodward
 D.G. Wright

Dudley County Borough Council
 George Saltar & Co Ltd.

 West Midlands Gas Board
 Worcestershire County Council
 Herefordshire County Council
 Herefordshire County Council
 Douglas Construction Ltd.
 Birmingham University
 Warwickshire County Council
 University of Aston
 Worcestershire County Council
 University of Aston
 Leek Urban District Council
 Shropshire County Council
 I.M.I. Ltd.
 National Union of Mineworkers
 General and Municipal Workers Union
 Transport and General Workers Union
 National Association of Local Government
 Officers
 Staffordshire County Council
 Stoke-on-Trent City Council
 Birmingham City Council
 Tube Investments Ltd.
 Charles Martin Associates Ltd.
 Birmingham City Council
 Brintons Ltd.
 Solicitor

APPENDIX II

MEMBERS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS PLANNING BOARD: JULY 1971

Emanuel	Chairman (Assistant Under Secretary of State)	
Amos	Ministry of Agriculture	Regional Manager
Barclay	Department of Education	Divisional Inspector
Boyd	Central Office of Information	Chief Regional Officer
Brain	Department of Environment	Divisional Road Engineer
Broughton	Department of Trade (Civil Aviation)	Divisional Controller
Cowie	Department of Employment	Regional Controller
Jardine	Department of Trade	Regional Director
Shoebridge	Department of Environment (Regional Housing and Planning Office)	Principal Regional Officer
Stuart	Department of Health and Social Security	Principal Regional Officer
Walsh	Department of Environment (Regional Works H.Q.)	Regional Director
Pike	Secretary E.P.B.	Principal

APPENDIX III

THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY TO THE "ECONOMIC APPRAISAL"

On June 19th 1972 the Government formally set out its response to the "Economic Appraisal", in the form of a letter to the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council from Peter Walker, Minister of Environment. The following are extracts from the text of this letter:

"Now that the White Paper "Regional and Industrial Development" (Cmd. 4942) has been published I am sure you would not expect us to comment at length on each of the Appraisal's recommendations. The initiative as regards many of these rests primarily with individual firms and authorities throughout the region...Your Council will no doubt pursue these aspects accordingly both through the sub-committees which have been set up to review and maintain progress and in their discussions with individual local authorities. I do not think that we can improve on your existing channels of communication for these purposes.

I am therefore confining the remarks in this letter to the main themes of the Appraisal. In this context I hope we have already shown on various occasions, not least the Prime Minister's visit last September, our agreement with the view that there should be a positive policy of economic growth in the region based on the maintenance of its competitive ability, the development of its economic potential, and its capacity for innovation. We also agree that the region occupies a good position in the national industrial context and that its economic well being is an essential factor in strengthening the national economy including that of less favoured regions... I might mention particularly the provision of free depreciation countrywide for all investment in plant and machinery and the initial allowance of 40 per cent now available in respect of all industrial buildings and structures. This will materially assist both the manufacturing and service industries in the West Midlands. With the comparative proximity of our entry into the European Economic Community we regard it as important that West Midlands industry should now be taking robust and positive steps to penetrate this vast market. We have no doubt that the Council will concern itself closely with this challenging new dimension. With the experience of management in the West Midlands and the exceptional skills of its labour force there can be little doubt of the future improvement in the economic position of the region and its capability to remain competitive in this new sphere. The region is also ideally placed to make the best use of the developments I recently announced in both motorway and trunk roads. You have already welcomed the relaxations in industrial development certificate control announced in the White Paper. The increase in the exemption limit to 15,000 sq. ft. in itself will be of great benefit to industry in the West Midlands without prejudicing the interests of the assisted areas which must remain our first priority. Additionally the raising of the limit to a higher level than will obtain in the South East recognises the difference between conditions in the West Midlands and conditions in the South East. The

statement in the White Paper that industrial development certificates will be more readily granted than hitherto for schemes of factory modernisation which may involve some increase in the number of employees, complements the other measures announced in the Budget speech to encourage modernisation and re-equipment. The Council will no doubt be contemplating how industry can now be encouraged to take advantage of the situation.

The Government have already acted to meet the Working Party's recommendations that more information should be given about the operation of industrial development certificate control... In addition Ministers of the Department of Trade and Industry frequently explain the working of the control. For example the Secretary of State in his speech at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce dinner in January made the workings of the control one of his main themes and he explained what was meant by operating the policy flexibly and how in general no modernisation scheme would be refused which did "not involve a definable new project or a new dimension of an existing one". Regional Office officials are always ready to explain and discuss at length the way the control is operated not only to individual industrialists but also at meetings, for example of businessmen, local authority members and officials and educational bodies, and they often have the opportunity to do so. The Government would, however, welcome more detailed suggestions about how such local links might be developed in ways which would bring practical benefits to industry.

The Working Party made a recommendation that office development should be encouraged in overspill areas...we think it is more likely that any substantial office development will arise in the more established areas. Studies are in progress for the movement of Government offices to areas outside London and the South East. The West Midlands has some distinct attractions as a receiving area in this context. We think that your Council might well pursue this point further perhaps by making a detailed study...

You are already aware that the Government is looking forward to the evolution of an acceptable strategy for development within the region. We understand that steps have already been taken to arrange discussions, initially at official level between Government Departments and technical officers of the planning authorities, and subsequently between the Economic Planning Council and the Planning Authorities Conference on the next steps following the West Midlands Regional Strategy Report sponsored by the Conference.

The Government have also invited all the local authorities in the region to prepare structure plans. This work...should provide a sound basis for planning after Local Government reform when the new more powerful authorities will be more effective instruments for the planning of the region.

The Working Party recognised that it would be premature to consider whether any formal constitutional machinery should be introduced at regional level in advance of the report of the Commission on the Constitution. However, the Government are already considering how the administrative processes can best be decentralised by arranging for work at present undertaken centrally to be transferred to the regions whenever this is feasible and economic. The first move covering land use planning and development control case work will take place this summer. The Government are also urgently examining all forms of

central government control over local government responsibilities with a view to reducing these wherever possible.

Overall we believe there are few of the Government measures so far announced which will not be of benefit to the West Midlands ...your region will be the first to avail itself of these measures and change the present rather negative situation to a more positive one. The Government believe that the budget measures taken as a whole will provide a major stimulus to industry and the economy...The Economic Appraisal represents a vigorous forward look...We are sure that your Council will now study and recommend means of transforming this economic analysis into practical achievement."¹

The reply largely, therefore, took the form of a resume of measures adopted in the previous twelve months by the Government, particularly the considerable changes in the administration of I.D.C. policy. The possibility of transferring Government offices to the West Midlands was significant, in view of the repeated call for a diversification of the economic structure of the region. Equally significant was the distinction now drawn between the West Midlands and the South East. During the 1960's the problems of the two regions had been closely equated.

The Government's reply was welcomed by the Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, Mr. Hazell, particularly the Government's recognition of the need for a positive policy for growth in the region. He also welcomed the relaxation and greater flexibility in I.D.C. policy, urging companies in the West Midlands now to apply for I.D.C.'s. The Planning Council intended to discuss the Minister's letter at its July meeting.²

¹ Hansard, 20th June 1972, Written Answers, Columns 81-85.

² Birmingham Post, June 21st 1972, and "The Times", June 23rd 1972.

APPENDIX IV

THE NATIONAL EXHIBITION CENTRE LOBBY: EVENTS OF JUNE 1972

In June 1972 Mr. Noble, Minister for Trade, wrote to the Labour Leader of Birmingham City Council, Stanley Yapp, to give notice that the Cabinet intended to re-examine the plan for the National Exhibition Centre on Birmingham's eastern boundary (the Labour Party, which gained control of Birmingham City Council in May 1972, was pledged to continue support for the N.E.C.). In the original agreement, the balance of capital, after the Government and Birmingham contributions to the scheme, was to be raised from private commercial sources. Because of the high rates of interest, the City Council subsequently proposed that the remainder of the money should be raised publicly, by borrowing from the Public Loans Fund or floating new Corporation stock. The balance needed was, in fact, now £13 millions, the cost of the scheme having risen from an estimated £14.5 millions to over £17 millions. The change in the proposed financial arrangements had implications for the Government's public spending programme.¹ This prompted the following statement to be made in the letter from Mr. Noble:-

"To accede to the corporation's proposal, would have the effect of bringing the project into the realm of public sector finance provision. It would thus become a very different proposition from the one that had originally come before the Government. The issues raised by this proposed change have made it necessary for the Government to re-examine very carefully the whole question of support for the Bickenhill project. In view of the considerable sum of public money involved there must be in particular assurance that there is no other possibility of a scheme for a national exhibition centre in a location that would better meet the country's needs bearing in mind that the end of the decade would see the third London airport in operation and possibly also the Channel Tunnel. An intensive study of the whole matter is now being undertaken!"²

A deputation was immediately arranged by N.E.C. directors to the Minister, reflecting the fear that the Government was becoming

¹ Birmingham Post, June 23rd 1972.

² The correspondence was quoted in the Birmingham Post, June 24th 1972

susceptible to pressure from the London lobby, particularly from the C.B.I. and the Greater London Council. A public enquiry into a national exhibition centre at Northolt, Middlesex, had just been completed, although a decision on the application was not expected until November 1972. One of the arguments the Birmingham delegation intended to use was confidential details of privately-committed bookings, indicating that the National Exhibition Centre was already guaranteed a net profit in its early years, with the financial viability of the scheme having, consequently, been previously accepted by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury. Prior to the delegation, Stanley Yapp was quoted as saying that:-

"It is not just the N.E.C. which is at stake...but all the Government's regional policies, and the well-being of the conurbation as a whole."¹

There was strong opposition to the Government's equivocation from other quarters. This was particularly evident among Birmingham M.P's. The Birmingham Conservative Group, for example, asked for a meeting with the Minister of Environment and the Minister for Trade and Industry.² Altogether, there was a great amount of activity behind the scenes on the part of West Midland M.P's, anticipating that a change over the N.E.C. would be damaging to the region. In addition, there was a widespread reaction from West Midland local authorities. Of the meeting arranged with Mr. Noble, Councillor Yapp was, therefore, also quoted as saying that:-

"We are going there to speak for Birmingham and the Midlands... Our case will be helped by the very welcome support from all the neighbouring authorities."³

The Chairman of the West Midlands Planning Council, Mr. Hazell, added his voice to the shock at the Government's position, recognising that the N.E.C. was a major part of the economic development of the region.

1 Birmingham Post, June 29th 1972.

2 Birmingham Post, June 27th 1972.

3 Birmingham Post, June 28th 1972.

As Peter Walker had recently acknowledged the need to develop service industries in the Midlands, Mr. Hazell remarked that:-

"It doesn't seem to add up and we have got to press for a satisfactory answer."¹

Peter Walker, in fact, apparently supported the continuation of the project, battling against the doubts that had arisen in the Department of Trade and Industry.² Nevertheless, it was apparent that the threatened reversal of the N.E.C. decision by the Government provoked an intense regional reaction in the West Midlands.

In the light of these events, the Birmingham delegation to the Minister was informed that the project once again had the Government's full approval. Permission was granted to raise the whole of the outstanding capital in the public sector. It seemed reasonable to interpret the decision as a response to the intensity of the outcry in Birmingham and the Region.³ These events, therefore, reinforce the comments made in Chapter Seven on the ability of this scheme to mobilise something of a West Midlands regional lobby.

1 Birmingham Post, June 24th 1972.

2 Birmingham Post, June 30th 1972.

3 Ibid.

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