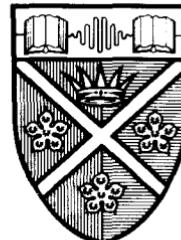


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# STRATHCLYDE PAPERS ON GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS



## *LABOUR ELITES IN GLASGOW*

*by*

*Michael Keating, Roger Levy,  
Jack Geekie and Jack Brand*

**No. 61**

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**LABOUR ELITES IN GLASGOW**

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## **Introduction**

Two themes have featured prominently in debate about the Labour Party in recent years; its electoral decline, and the changing class composition of its leadership elite. The two have been linked in the argument about the 'decline of working class politics.' Observers have tended to argue that Labour has lost touch with its working class base and that this is at the root of its electoral decline; or else that social change has undermined Labour's position by reducing the numbers of the traditional working class, so that Labour needs to recast its message to appeal to an increasingly affluent and middle class society; or that local parties have been taken over by unrepresentative minorities whose activities drive away uncommitted voters. Since the national electoral defeats of the 1980s, these issues are being examined more intensively within the Labour Party itself. Yet some elements in the party have begun to examine the experience of the central belt of Scotland, where Labour has been doing well electorally to see whether it might yield lessons of wider application.

This paper is part of a two-part study of Labour elites in Glasgow, based largely on a survey of regional and district councillors, conducted in 1986 and 1987. This first part examines the backgrounds of Labour councillors in Glasgow and compares them with their counterparts in other British cities and in Glasgow itself in the past. It also considers the career patterns of Glasgow politicians as they proceed from council to Westminster. A second paper will examine the values and attitudes of Glasgow Labour councillors and the relationship between these and social background.

## **The Electoral Background**

It is of some significance that our survey took place against a background of increasing Labour support in the city of Glasgow, at a time when Labour was, nationally, doing very poorly. Indeed, by the late 1980s, there was very little political competition in the city. Glasgow, of course, has a reputation as a solidly Labour city and, indeed, Labour has been in the lead at every parliamentary election but two since 1922 (Table 1). On the other hand, Conservative support was considerable until the 1960s, reaching over 48 per cent in 1951 and 1955. At municipal level, similarly, Labour led but did not dominate elections between the war and the reorganisation of local government in 1974-5. Labour did not gain control of the council until 1933, considerably later than in all the major cities of Britain except for Birmingham and Liverpool, and Progressive or Conservative administrations were formed in the late 1940s and the late 1960s. Table 2 gives the results of municipal elections between 1949 and 1973. Because elections were staggered, with one third of the seats up for election every year, changes in political control could take some time to effect, so they cannot be read from the table.

The general election of 1959 marked the beginning of a long fall in support for the Conservatives in Glasgow, which was to bring them to a derisory 12.5 per cent in 1987. In the later 1960s, they made an entry into local government, displacing the Progressive coalition which had carried the anti-Labour standard until then, but this was to be short lived. Elections to the reorganised Strathclyde region and Glasgow district

**Table 1. Party % of Total Vote at Parliamentary Elections, Glasgow**

	<b>Conservative &amp; allies</b>	<b>Labour &amp; ILP</b>	<b>Liberals &amp; Social Dem.</b>	<b>SNP</b>	<b>Other</b>
1918	62.7	31.8	6.1	-	-
1922	30.4	42.9	25.3	-	-
1923	34.0	48.1	14.8	-	2.8
1924	48.5	48.5	2.7	-	-
1929	43.4	52.9	3.2	-	-
1931	56.2	41.2	-	-	2.4
1935	45.9	53.8	0.2	-	-
1945	42.5	55.8	1.0	-	0.5
1950	44.2	51.9	3.0	-	0.4
1951	48.8	51.2	-	-	-
1955	48.1	51.6	-	-	-
1959	45.1	52.5	0.5	-	1.6
1964	38.6	58.7	1.5	0.8	1.0
1966	34.6	60.3	-	3.2	1.5
1970	35.8	55.5	-	7.6	1.1
1974F	30.6	47.6	0.4	20.6	0.7
1974Oc	20.2	49.0	4.2	26.3	0.3
1979	26.7	57.4	4.1	11.1	0.7
1983	18.8	52.0	21.0	7.6	0.6
1987	12.5	62.5	15.0	10.0	0.3

**Table 2. Seats Won, Glasgow City Council, 1949-73.**

	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Progressive Conservative</b>	<b>SNP</b>	<b>Other</b>
1949	19	18	-	-
1950	18	19	-	-
1951	17	20	-	-
1952	27	10	-	-
1953	23	14	-	-
1954	23	14	-	-
1955	22	15	-	-
1956	23	14	-	-
1957	23	14	-	-
1958	23	14	-	-
1959	23	14	-	-
1960	21	16	-	-
1961	23	14	-	-
1962	25	12	-	-
1963	22	15	-	1
1964	23	14	-	-
1965	18	19	-	-
1966	18	19	-	-
1967	19	17	1	-
1968	6	16	2	12
1969	14	15	7	1
1970	22	8	7	-
1971	29	4	4	-
1972	28	-	9	-
1973	26	-	11	-

*Source:* Miller (1985); Craig (1984).

councils in 1974 confirmed the long-term decline in their support and even at the depths of the unpopularity of the Labour government it was the Scottish Nationalists who benefitted from the temporary slump in the Labour vote. With the fall in SNP support in the late 1970s, Labour was left virtually unchallenged. In 1987, it made a clear sweep of the city's parliamentary constituencies with 62 per cent of the vote, a figure closely approached in the district council elections of 1984 and 1988.

**Table 3. % Share of Vote, Strathclyde Region**

	<b>1974</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1986</b>
Labour	44.0	43.0	45.8	54.6
Conservative	28.4	30.0	22.5	12.0
Liberal/Alliance	4.5	1.8	18.1	14.4
SNP	15.1	22.6	12.5	17.1
Independent	4.9	0.7	1.6	-
Other	3.1	1.8	0.5	1.8

*Source:* Bochel and Denver (1974; 1983); Glasgow Herald

**Table 4. Seats Won by Parties, Strathclyde Region**

	<b>1974</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1986</b>
Labour	71	72	79	87
Conservative	20	25	15	6
Liberal/Alliance	2	2	4	5
SNP	5	2	3	1
Independent	5	1	2	1
Other	0	0	0	0

*Source:* Bochel and Denver (1974; 1983);

**Table 5. % of Vote, Glasgow District**

	<b>1974</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>
Labour	47.7	35.1	54.3	60.8	58.0
Conservative	28.8	28.7	22.0	17.2	14.3
Liberal/Alliance	2.2	1.9	5.5	11.7	6.5
SNP	19.2	32.7	16.0	9.7	21.0
Independent	0.7	-	-	-	-
Other	2.4	1.7	2.2	0.6	0.3

*Source:* Bochel and Denver (1977); Scotsman.

**Table 6. Seats Won by Parties, Glasgow District**

	<b>1974</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1988</b>
Labour	55	30	58	58	60
Conservative	17	25	11	5	4
Liberal/Alliance	0	1	3	3	2
SNP	0	16	0	0	0
Independent	0	-	-	-	-
Other	0	0	0	0	0

1. In 1984 the number of seats was reduced.

*Source:* Glasgow Herald.

**Table 7. Party % of Vote, General Election of 1987**

	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Alliance</b>	<b>Other</b>
Glasgow	61.8	12.6	14.9	10.8
Edinburgh	37.5	32.3	22.8	7.3
Birmingham	43.4	39.4	16.5	0.7
Leeds	39.6	33.6	26.3	0.5
Manchester	54.4	27.5	17.7	0.4
Liverpool	56.8	17.4	25.6	0.3
Sheffield	50.4	24.9	24.3	0.4
Newcastle	47.3	29.9	22.2	0.6

To some extent, the phenomenon of Labour dominance in the 1980s is paralleled in the other large cities in Britain, but not to anything like the same degree, as Table 7 shows. Labour's electoral success in Glasgow, despite the presence of a competitor, the SNP, which is absent in the English cities, thus gives the study of its elites particular interest. Indeed, it is sometimes suggested that the Scottish urban experience has much to teach the Labour party in England.

The survey covered a sample of 54 Labour councillors, serving at regional and district level, in the City of Glasgow. It was conducted in 1986. It has been possible to compare data from this study with that of a comparable survey conducted at the University of Strathclyde in 1966. Comparisons are also made with surveys conducted for Widdicombe (1986) on British councillors; and by Martlew and Buchanan (1986) on Scottish councillors; Gordon and Whiteley (1979) on British Labour councillors; and the background study by McLean (1978) on Glasgow councillors between 1922 and 1974.

### **The Decline of Working Class Politics**

There has been considerable debate in recent years about the changing composition of the Labour Party. In particular, a number of observers have charted the 'decline of working class politics; a process by which Labour has supposedly been taken over by middle class activists, replacing the manual working class of its traditional base (Hindess, 1971). Of course, the role of the middle classes in the Labour Party is not new. From its earliest days, the party contained a significant middle-class element, Fabian intellectuals, pacifists, and others. In addition, in many

parts of the country, it took over much of the support base of late nineteenth century radical liberalism and appealed to Catholic Irish of all classes. Since the early 1970s, however, a series of works have charted an increase in the proportions of Labour MPs and activist party members coming from middle class occupations and a corresponding decline in those from the manual working class (Hindess, 1971; Mellors, 1977; Kavanagh, 1982; Whiteley, 1982). Evidence on changes in the class composition of Labour local councillors is more sparse and fragmentary, but there is a widespread assumption that the trend is the same there (Gordon and Whiteley, 1979).

Considerable controversy surrounds the question of what effect a change in the class composition of Labour elites might have. Some observers suggest that, as Labour becomes more middle class, so it will tend to move to the right politically. Others suggest that, given the sorts of middle class radicals who are found in the party, the effect might be to move the party towards the position of the 'new left' (Gyford, 1985). Others again suggest that the changes reflect the rise of a 'new class' of individuals brought into being by the expansion of the welfare state in the postwar years who have a vested interest in the further extension of the sphere of government (Walker, 1983). Yet others suggest that the effects may be more complex (Gordon and Whiteley, 1979).

### **Social Class of Labour Councillors**

There are several problems in analysing the social background of Labour councillors and comparing our results to those of other surveys. The first involves the designation of occupations and the fact that different surveys

use different categories and differ in their assignment of particular occupations to each. Following the 1966 Glasgow survey, we have used the census classification of occupations with its six occupational groups, though in practice we have not had to use them all. In the coding of the survey, we broke down the sixth group, to allow us to distinguish unemployed people, retired people and housewives.

**Table 8. Occupational Groups**

1. Professional and managerial
2. Intermediate
- 3i. Skilled non-manual
- 3ii. Skilled manual
4. Partly skilled
5. Unskilled
6. Armed forces, inadequately described, unemployed, retired.

This allows a comparison with the results of the 1986 Glasgow survey. Comparison with the McLean (1978) survey, on the other hand, is complicated in that he uses his own categories to distinguish among the various intermediate groups, chosen for the purposes of a specific research project. His professional, managerial, business and manual working class categories, on the other hand, are based on the standard definitions. The problem of categorisation is particularly acute in class 2, the 'intermediate' occupations which are neither professional nor working class.

The second major problem concerns the use of occupational categories themselves as an indicator of class affiliation. Trade union officials, for example, are classified as middle class, white collar workers, yet they tend to be working class in origin and can hardly be said to have abandoned their class affiliation by involvement in the trade union

movement. Upward mobility comprises the third problem. We can generate very different findings depending on whether we use a councillor's first occupation or current occupation. In the 1986 survey, we gathered data on both. Finally, there is the problem of people not currently in employment. These may be housewives, retired people or councillors who have given up paid employment to devote themselves full-time to politics and their class background may be varied.

Bearing these problems in mind, we have analysed the occupational background of the 1986 councillors and compared them with the previous Glasgow surveys and, where possible, comparable results from other surveys. The comparison with 1966 (Table 9) shows a marked growth in the presence of white-collar service occupations in social class 2. Their growth has been at the expense both of the business/professional class 1 and the non-manual working class. This result should be interpreted carefully, in view of the difficulties of distinguishing these occupational categories, but there does appear to have been a decline in the number of middle class professionals such as lawyers in private practice as well as of managers and self-employed businessmen. McLean's survey of the period 1922-74 shows some 20 per cent of Labour councillors in this category, almost exactly the same proportion as in 1966. Their virtual disappearance has thus been a fairly recent phenomenon.

The decline in working class representation has been less dramatic. Skilled non-manual workers were halved, though this may be a reflection of the coding used in the two surveys, since members of this category are occasionally difficult to distinguish from those of the intermediate one. (If we add these classes together, the percentages are similar - we discuss these

groups below). Manual workers (classes 3.ii and 4), on the other hand, maintained their position at 18 per cent. This is not radically different from the results of McLean's survey of councillors between 1922 and 1974, which showed over the whole period only 15.4 per cent of councillors were from manual occupations. This at first suggests a consistently low level of manual working class participation in council politics, with a slight increase over the period from the 1920s to the 1960s and no change since then. McLean, however, found that working class representation among Glasgow Labour councillors increased over the period of this study, with a dramatic rise after the second world war. Indeed, representation of manual workers was, according to McLean, twice as high after the war as before it. It seems that, by the mid-1960s, the proportion had already fallen again, though it was still higher than in Labour's early years. The general pattern which emerges is consistent with Forester's (1976) finding that there had been no historic decline in working class politics since middle class involvement in the Labour Party was considerable from the beginning but that, if Labour had a Golden Age of working class activism it was in the 1950s. Jones' (1969) study of Wolverhampton shows a similar trend.

The late 1940s and early 1950s was the time of Labour's greatest electoral support nationally (though not in Glasgow) and one in which party membership and activism is generally agreed to have been at its peak. This increase in activism seems to have drawn in large numbers of people from working class occupations, in Glasgow and elsewhere.

**Table 9. Occupational Class of Glasgow Labour Councillors**

	1966	1986
	%	%
1	19	2
2	23	43
3.i	28	15
3.ii	16	13.0
4	2	6
5	-	-
6	12	22

The intermediate class 2, comprising over 40 per cent of our sample, presents considerable problems of comparison with other surveys. McLean (1983) points to a decline in the numbers of councillors who were shopkeepers, publicans and insurance agents, occupations which were formerly among the mainstays of Labour municipal politics. Other observers have noted the rise of a new service class of public sector professionals, the products of the expansion of government itself and who are dependent on the state for employment. The survey shows that over half of Glasgow Labour councillors who work are indeed employed in the public sector. Comparative data from the Widdicombe (1986) survey shows that this is a characteristic which Glasgow shares in some degree with the large English cities (Table 10). While, for Britain as a whole, the proportion of councillors employed in the public sector is similar to that in the population as a whole, it rises markedly in the case of the former metropolitan counties where, at 55 per cent, it is slightly higher than in Glasgow. For the metropolitan districts, the proportion is distinctly lower. This no doubt reflects the division of functions between county and district in the pre-abolition metropolitan system, with the districts controlling education and social services, so that people in these

occupations would have to seek election to the upper-tier authority, unless they could find employment in neighbouring districts. In the case of Glasgow, teachers and social workers would have to seek election at district level, where there is a larger number of seats available. With the 1986 abolition of the metropolitan counties, the opportunities for local government professionals to serve as councillors in the large English cities have obviously diminished markedly. Walker (1983) claims to find large numbers of public sector professionals serving as councillors in the old GLC and in the London boroughs, including 36 per cent in Camden, 42 per cent in the GLC, 38 per cent in Islington, 27 per cent in Lambeth, 40 per cent in Lewisham and 29 per cent in Southwark, but these are substantially lower than outside the capital. Glasgow and the other Scottish cities may thus stand out in the future as maintaining this pattern.

**Table 10. Employment Sector, Currently Employed Councillors.**

	Britain	Metro counties	Metro districts	Glasgow	Pop. Britain
	%	%	%	%	%
Public	36	55	35	52	37
Private	61	43	65	48	63

Source: Glasgow figures from survey. Others from Widdicombe (1986).

The other significant group in the category of white collar service workers are those working for trade unions and voluntary organisations, 11 per cent of the total. It is not surprising to find large numbers of such people serving as Labour councillors, since the same motivation that brought them into such work could be expected to stimulate an interest in local politics. In the case of the trade unions, there is a direct link with Labour Party political activity and the unions still play an important role in

the recruitment of Labour local politicians. McLean's (1978) survey of Glasgow councillors found that 14.5 per cent of all councillors between 1922 and 1974 were trade union or party officials. This compares with 11 per cent working for trade unions in 1986, indicating that trade union involvement in local politics has diminished little over the years. So, even if we include trade union officials in the working class category, the thesis about a decline of working class politics is not sustained.

Our survey did confirm one finding both of the 1966 survey and the work of Gordon and Whiteley (1979), that is the tendency of Labour councillors to describe themselves as working class even when their occupational status was clearly middle class. Fully 78 per cent of the sample described themselves as working class, a proportion greatly in excess of that which could be justified on any objective criterion. This is no new factor, as Table 8 shows. In the 1966 survey, a comparable proportion, 81 per cent described themselves as working class, including large numbers of people in middle class occupations. There was a little more frankness in 1986, however, in that 20 per cent were prepared to acknowledge their middle class status. In 1966, just 5 per cent admitted to being middle class, with a significant number taking refuge in a denial of class identity altogether.

**Table 11. Self-Assigned Social Class, Glasgow Labour Councillors**

	<b>1966</b>	<b>1986</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Upper	0	0
Middle	5	20
Working	81	78
No Class	12	0

The claim to be working class in defiance of occupational status may in some cases be no more than 'workerist' posturing, a claim to embody the traditional Labour virtues. It might also be an attempt by white collar workers to justify promotion of their occupational interest and wage claims as part of the socialist project. 63 per cent of respondents defined 'working class' as anyone who works for a living. Only 16.7 per cent distinguished between manual and non-manual work while a further 9.3 per cent drew on marxist definitions of class. On the other hand, the claim to be working class may reflect the class origins of the respondents. There is dramatic evidence of upward mobility on the part of Labour councillors, with fully 76 per cent of them coming from manual working class families. Indeed, fully 63 per cent of the councillors started their own careers in manual occupations. A major instrument of upward mobility has been education. 48.1 per cent of Glasgow Labour councillors have had experience of further or higher education. This is a marked contrast with 1966 when just 17 per cent of all Glasgow councillors were so qualified (we do not have the Labour figures separately but it is unlikely to have been higher than the average). It is difficult to compare Glasgow with other cities because of differences in classification of educational qualifications, but Widdicombe (1986) found 31 per cent of councillors in Britain as a whole to have a degree or equivalent. Glasgow councillors at least seem to be as well educated as those elsewhere and a large number of them obtained their higher education as mature students, reflecting a strong tradition in the city's educational institutions.

The data, therefore, do not show a simple decline of working class politics in Glasgow. Rather, they show that the proportions of councillors

in manual working class occupations have remained constant over twenty years, though probably less than in the short heyday of class politics in the 1950s. The manual working class continues to be the major source of recruitment of Labour councillors but the channels of upward mobility and entry into politics have changed over time. Before the second world war, the upwardly mobile politicians were more likely to be self-employed, shopkeepers, publicans or insurance agents; occupations involving contact with the public and facilitating a political career. McLean (1983) found that the heyday of involvement in Glasgow council politics by people concurrently employed in manual work occurred in the 1950s, with the decline of the preponderance of shopkeepers, publicans and insurance agents. These occupations had previously allowed people of working class origin to rise socially while providing them with the work flexibility and social contacts to make careers in politics. In the 1980s, those directly employed in manual work have again been displaced by a new type of person of working class origins - the upwardly mobile public sector worker. Nowadays, education is a crucial element in raising ambitious working class individuals and permitting entry into white collar employment in the public sector, voluntary organisations or trade unions. The professions chosen by the new upwardly mobile also lend themselves to politics. 72 per cent of the sample had initially worked in the private sector but, making their career change, often after a period in higher education, most chose not to move into private sector management but to go into public employment. Serving as a councillors is an integral part of this progression in interests and activism.

Certainly, the councillors do tend to be activists. Most were members of other organisations and two thirds had held some sort of office

in their trade unions, mainly at local level.

### **Age, Gender and Religion**

A significant number of Glasgow councillors, 22 per cent, were classified as unemployed or retired. Few of these had reached the statutory retirement age, in contrast to the findings of Widdicombe (1986) which showed 22 per cent of councillors over the age of 65 (Table 12). Rather, the Glasgow finding seems to reflect the phenomenon of the full-time councillor, who may have given up work or taken early retirement in order to concentrate on politics. We do not have comparable data for other cities but it is generally known that the demands of service in the large local authorities have produced a considerable number of full-time councillors elsewhere, particularly those serving in leadership positions. At the same time, Glasgow councillors tend to be younger than those in Scotland as a whole or Britain generally, as Table 12 shows. It is difficult to explain this figure. It is likely that the rapidly increasing number of Labour seats in the city in successive elections since the rout of 1977 has drawn in younger candidates who elsewhere might have had to wait longer to find a winnable seat.

One respect in which Glasgow has changed little is in the proportion of women serving in local government. As Table 13 shows, the proportion of women councillors in England and Wales has increased modestly from 12 per cent in 1964 to 19 per cent in 1985 and has presumably increased further since then since they were under-represented on the metropolitan counties. In Glasgow, however, the proportion is a mere 12 per cent. This reflects conditions in Scotland

**Table 12. Age Distribution of Councillors**

	England and Wales	Scotland	Glasgow
	%	%	%
21-34	7	8.8	13.0
35-44	19	19.4	16.6
45-54	25	26.6	33.3
55-64	27	27.2	33.3
65-74	19	16.4	3.7
over 74	3	1.6	-

Source: Figures for England and Wales from Widdicombe (1986), figures for Scotland from Martlew and Buchanan (1986), figures for Glasgow from survey.

**Table 13. Gender. All Councillors**

	E. & W. Scotland 1964	E. & W. Scotland 1965	E. & W. Scotland 1977	E. & W. Scotland 1983	E. & W. Glasgow 1985	E. & W. Glasgow 1986
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men	88	90	83	87	81	88
Women	12	10	17	13	19	12

Source: Survey, 1966 Glasgow Survey. Widdicombe for England and Wales (E. & W.) 1964, 1985. Robinson for E. & W. 1977. Martlew for Scotland 1983. France (1969) for Scotland 1965.

	SRC Glasgow wards	GCD	Scottish regions/ islands	Metro counties	Metro district	Welsh counties
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Men	88	88	87	87	77	95
Women	12	12	13	13	23	5

Source: Survey. Widdicombe (1986)

generally, where just 13 per cent of women councillors were found in 1983 by Martlew and Buchanan (1986) and in the Widdicombe survey of regional and islands councils. So the low percentage is a feature of both levels in Scotland, a finding reflected in Glasgow where the 12 per cent proportion was found at both district and regional level. Only the Welsh counties have a worse record, with just 5 per cent of women members.

One striking finding was the high proportion of Glasgow Labour councillors who were Catholics. Half the respondents described their religion as Catholic and an additional 11 per cent had been brought up as Catholics. 18.5 per cent described themselves as Protestant and another 11 per cent as having been brought up as Protestants. 30 per cent claimed no religion at all, though 98.1 per cent of the sample had had a religious upbringing of some sort. 35 per cent of the sample claimed to attend Church at least once a week. Unfortunately, we have no comparative data on religion from other cities, though it has been an important element historically in Glasgow and, as we shall show in our second paper, it continues to influence attitudes among councillors. The presence of substantial numbers of Catholics among Labour councillors in Glasgow is not surprising, given the historic support for Labour in the Catholic community, but the degree of their predominance is. It also contrasts with the results of McLean's work, which showed that in the 1920-74 period only 16 per cent of councillors were Catholics, with no tendency for the number to increase towards the end of the period. The Catholic preponderance is thus a relatively recent phenomenon.

## **From Council to Westminster**

There is a longstanding tradition in Glasgow of selecting parliamentary candidates from the ranks of municipal councillors. Mellors (1977) has shown that, nationally, the Labour Party selected between 40 per cent and 55 per cent of its new MPs from the ranks of sitting councillors in elections between 1945 and 1974. Keating (1975) showed that this tendency was even stronger in Scotland with 53 per cent of Labour MPs serving between 1945 and 1970 being former councillors, against 43.4 per cent in England and Wales. Scottish Labour MPs also tended to be older on first election, perhaps reflecting the need for a local government apprenticeship before proceeding to Westminster. The tendency is even more pronounced in the case of Glasgow MPs. Taking the 1945-70 period for comparison with the other findings, 83 per cent (24 out of 29) of Glasgow Labour MPs (including ILP) were former councillors.

Extending the analysis to the whole period between 1945 and 1987, we find that 76 per cent of MPs were former councillors, suggesting that the pattern may be beginning to change. In 1987, seven out of the eleven Glasgow Labour MPs were former councillors, just 63 per cent. On the other hand, of the most recent recruits, those elected for the first time in 1987, four out of five were councillors. The reason for this trend seems to be the great difficulty of non-councillors in gaining nomination for safe seats in Glasgow. Of the non-councillors elected to Parliament since 1959, three (Bruce Millan, John Maxton and George Galloway) won the seats from other parties, one (Donald Dewar) was selected at a time when no seat in Scotland appeared safe from the Nationalists and the other, the widow of the former MP, served briefly after a by-election (and subsequently went

into local government, reversing the conventional progress). The safe seats selecting candidates for the last thirty years have always chosen local councillors. So non-councillors have been able to come in only when seats have changed party control. By 1987, there was only one non-Labour seat in the city and its candidate was the only non-incumbent, non-councillor to stand.

The presence of former councillors as MPs is a marked feature of the major British cities but, as Table 14 shows, the tendency is particularly marked in Glasgow.

**Table 14. Labour MPs in major British cities, 1987**

	Number	Former councillors
Glasgow	11	7
Birmingham	6	3
Edinburgh	4	3
Leeds	4	2
Liverpool	5	4
Manchester	5	3
Newcastle	3	2
Sheffield	5	2
All English metro cities	32	17

The councillors who have proceeded to Westminster have not generally been the leading figures in municipal politics. No leader of Glasgow corporation, Strathclyde region or Glasgow district has gone to Westminster since the war, though one Lord Provost was elected to Parliament. Few major committee convenors, either, have gone on to national politics. Nor have the former councillors among Glasgow MPs

tended to make a major impact at Westminster. In the three Labour governments since the war, just 6 Glasgow MPs served as ministers, two in the Scottish Office only and four in UK departments (two of these also served in the Scottish Office as well). This is a proportion of 20 per cent of MPs elected 1945-74, compared with 30 per cent for Scottish MPs as a whole. Only one Glasgow Labour MP out of 30 made it to the Cabinet (Bruce Millan, Secretary of State for Scotland, 1976-9). Neither Millan nor the only other Glasgow MP who has made it to Labour's shadow cabinet (Donald Dewar, Shadow Secretary of State) was a former councillor.

## **Conclusion**

The Glasgow political elite thus shows elements both of stability and of change over the years. We can reject a simplistic 'decline of working class politics' model, since most councillors do come from working class backgrounds. On the other hand, this is part of a process of upward mobility, which has a long history in the Labour movement but which has changed in nature over the years. The main channels of upward mobility now are higher education and employment in public service. The upwardly mobile councillors are thus beneficiaries of the expansion of welfare and the public sector which was part of the post-war settlement and with which the Labour Party has been strongly identified. It is just this settlement which has been under attack by the Thatcher government since 1979. Developments since 1987 indicate that the strategy of privatisation and cutting back state employment and state services is now to be pursued more vigorously in Scotland. The potential for a major confrontation is thus present. Whether their background in public service provision has

any more direct influence on councillors' attitudes is an issue which we address in our second paper.

The traditional political career route, through local political activism, to the council, to Westminster, is quite strictly maintained. The result is a political elite which shares many of the formative background characteristics of its base electorate. At the same time, there is a serious under-representation of the city in national politics. A city the size of Glasgow could be expected regularly to produce politicians of the front rank in the Labour Party. Glasgow does, thus, provide an avenue for ambitious working class people to rise in politics - but only so far.

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