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Eric Shuttleworth, B.A. (Dunelm)

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**POLICY MAKING: DARLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL 1962-1965**

**with special reference to the efficiency of  
elected members and chief officers in making  
planning and education department decisions**

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M.A. Thesis, 1969

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## CHAPTER 1

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Darlington has a long history. The graves of Anglo-Saxons of the post-Roman period have been found in Darlington. The body of St. Cuthbert who died at Lindisfarne in 687 A.D. and which many years afterwards was carried from there by monks fleeing the Danes is said to have rested on a spot where an early Saxon church was built in Darlington. Part of the present church of St. Cuthbert dates from the twelfth century.

In the 11th century a Danish chieftain handed over the Burgh of Darlington to the Bishop of the Diocese of Durham who became Lord of the Manor of Darlington. Norman Bishops controlled the town after the conquest and appointed officers, including a Chief Bailiff - or governor - of Darlington who conducted manorial courts. This system existed for several centuries. A carved oak chest belonging to Ralph Eurye, the Chief Bailiff in 1561, is in Darlington's town hall to-day. The Chief Bailiff was assisted by other officers including a constable. There is a theory that Darlington was granted borough status by one of the early Bishops of Durham but this has been subject to controversy and if ever there was an episcopal charter it has been lost. The last Chief Bailiff, Francis Mewburn, died in 1867 but by this time the palatinate jurisdiction had waned.

In 1788 the overseers petitioned without success to have a more comprehensive arrangement for dealing with the poor, and for

lighting the town, which at this time was split into four constabularies with varying ratings. But in 1823, when the population was less than 7000, a Town Commission, free from ecclesiastical control, was set up by Act of Parliament, The Commission consisted of more than one hundred citizens each of whom had to own real or personal property to the yearly value of £800. Five members were a quorum. The Commission met four times a year and for twenty-seven years provided town government other than poor relief. The commissioners provided oil lamps, and later gas lamps; they cleared the dunghills; they provided police, and a fire engine.

But ratepayers considered the powers of the commissioners too limited and in 1849 a government inspector held an inquiry to decide whether it was desirable to implement the 1848 Public Health Act in Darlington. As a result the Commission was replaced by a Local Board of Health which was first elected in 1850. One hundred and seventy-four nominations were made and eighteen persons were chosen. The Board of Health held monthly meetings. In 1854 the Board acquired the Gas and Water Companies for £54,000. In 1856 the Board bought for £7,800, from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the ancient market rights and the highways in the town. The Board ended street tolls and began to make by-laws. The Board built a covered market, town hall and clock tower, at a cost of £18,000; the future of these buildings has been subject to debate at Council meetings in the period covered by this study. However there was plural voting and power was largely in the hands of a few.

The householders of Darlington petitioned for status as a municipal borough and achieved this when Queen Victoria gave the royal assent to an Act of Parliament on 13th September 1867, giving Darlington a charter of incorporation. In December 1867 the first

eighteen councillors (representing six wards) were elected at a time when open voting was still in operation. In addition six aldermen were elected and the first mayor. The first M.P. for Darlington was elected in 1868.

A county court and a new police station (demolished in 1965) were built in the 1860s. A new grammar school was built in 1878 although the original charter goes back to 1563 and a grammar school existed as early as the 13th century. In 1869 the "Northern Echo", the first halfpenny daily newspaper was founded in Darlington. It is from issues of the "Northern Echo" during the 1962-1965 period, and more extensively from its stable companion the "Northern Despatch", that much of the material for this thesis has been assembled.

In 1912 a woman reading in bed by candlelight was burnt to death in the Harrowgate Hill area of the town as it is to-day. The fire brigade hesitated at Darlington's boundary until the captain decided to proceed beyond his territorial limits. But there was a public outcry led by a young railway clerk Alfred Best who collected the signatures of 156 - out of a possible 160 - people beyond the boundary who wanted to be inside. This started moves towards the enlargement of the borough. On the previous day Alfred Best had been elected to serve as councillor on the enlarged Council and he continued to serve as councillor and alderman until shortly before his death more than fifty years later.

It was the industrial revolution that gave a stimulus to industry and commerce which in turn led to pressure for representative local government in Darlington. In the 18th century it was considered necessary to provide better transport for carrying coal from west Durham for export, by way of Stockton on the river Tees, and for towns in Yorkshire. In 1768 a canal twenty-seven miles long was proposed from Winston to Stockton. Some work was done on

this and the cost was to have been £64,000 but the plan was abandoned.

Early in the 19th century local business men, mainly Darlington Quakers and including Edward Pease, the "father of the railways", considered the feasibility of building a railway. There was some opposition but in 1821 a Parliamentary bill authorised the building of what became known as the Stockton and Darlington Railway - twenty-five miles long, costing £150,000 and owned by sixty shareholders.

Darlington pioneered another form of transport in England. In 1862 a private company, promoted by an American George Train, operated two horse trams over 1170 yards of track through the town, a journey of four minutes. The local citizens put obstructions on the lines and when a prize greyhound was run over the company had to pay heavy damages. In 1864 the Local Board of Health required the company to take up the track and restore the road.

The motto of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company, the first passenger carrying railway in the world, was: "A private venture for the public good." Those who created the railway brought an entrepreneurial quality to the management of Darlington in the 19th century. Darlington's first town Council included seven members with the surname Pease:

Ald. Henry Pease, the mayor. Youngest son of Edward Pease. Became a railway promoter; developer of Saltburn, industrialist and philanthropist; member of Quaker delegation to Czar on eve of Crimean War 1854; M.P. South Durham 1857-1865.

Ald. Joseph Pease. Edward's second son; colliery owner and Treasurer of S&DR; laid foundations of Middlesborough, 1829; Britain's first Quaker M.P. South Durham 1832-1841.

Ald. John Beaumont Pease. Cousin of Henry and Joseph. Public work included chairman of Board of Guardians.



Coun. Arthur Pease. Third son of Joseph; proprietor Normanby Iron Works; Director of Pease's Mill, S&DR, etc. Mayor 1873; M.P. for Whitby 1880-1885, for Darlington 1895-1898; also served on Durham County Council.

Coun. Gurney Pease. Fourth son of Joseph; industrialist.

Coun. Henry Fell Pease. Henry's eldest son. Entered woollen mill at fifteen, later Director of various Pease interests. Mayor 1875 and 1894; first M.P. for Cleveland, 1886-1896.

Coun. Edwin Lucas Pease. Third son of J. B. Pease. Mayor 1876. Adventurous, visited Tennessee 1884; died 1889 after hunting accident.

Other members of the first Council included - a bank director; the son of an iron founder who established a railway plant in the locality; a colliery owner and newspaper proprietor; the Secretary of the S&DR, an authority of metallurgy; a civil engineer who assisted the S&DR survey; a partner in the engineering firm Whessoe, who helped establish Rise Carr (district of Darlington) Rolling Mills. In addition there was an auctioneer, a wine merchant, a draper, a grocer, a manufacturing tobacconist, a saddler, a contractor and builder, a hairdresser, a tanner and a doctor.

The aim of this study is to determine if the quality of the elected membership is very relevant to-day now that local government is carried out by professionals who have to meet obligations imposed by the central government. The detailed organisation of a multitude of welfare state amenities is the business of officialdom. Local democracy may be a burden which hard-pressed administrators have to cope with by manipulating the policy makers so that what needs to be done is actually accomplished. The case for a limited number of most-purpose authorities has been argued. Large-area authorities diminish the number, and perhaps the role, of elected members. In Darlington the Council has recently divided on moves to reduce the membership of committees and increase the powers of the administrators.

It is valuable to know if the role of the elected representative, in the traditional scheme of things, is vital.

The (Maud) Report of the Committee on the Management of Local Government advocates revolutionary but overdue reforms, highlights present inefficiency, aims to give more power to the administrators and favours counterbalancing this with an inner cabinet of elected members. It argues that policy cannot and should not be defined but distinguishes between policy and administration and tells us that in shaping administrative decisions officers may be formulating a policy. In this thesis it is contended that a situation is possible in which the administrators are so dominant that even the wider interpretation of democracy acceptable to the Maud committee would not apply.

In the context of this thesis it will not serve any purpose to outline the central checks and financial limitations which restrict the scope of local government activity nationally but it is not entirely frivolous to note, in passing, that if there proved to be no other purpose served by the elected member at least he can be the scapegoat when public sensitivity is outraged by a sudden manifestation of public squalor. This provides a kind of stability. Whether or not it is a good thing, dramatic political changes may sometimes purge the public conscience or enable voters' aggravations to be assuaged without revolutionising local administration and without revising national economic priorities.

A little temporary esteem is the most that many men and women can hope for who genuinely consider they are making a contribution to the public good as elected members. However some priorities do have to be decided at local rather than national level. There are matters which require a local decision making process of some sort. In the end, it is the elected members who raise their arms to be

counted but who really makes the decisions? Who are the policy makers?

This study examines local government in the County Borough of Darlington during a period of approximately three years, May 1962 - May 1965. It does not attempt to illustrate a national situation although in some ways it may be typical.

The particular period chosen for study embraces a time of industrial change, when major planning and educational decisions were taken. The town has a population of less than 85,000, which is smaller than the 100,000 formerly quoted as a desirable minimum for a county borough. But Darlington is a compact community. The town is three miles north of the river Tees and twenty-two miles inland in County Durham. It is a rail stopping place for the new County Borough of Teesside on the main line north from King's Cross to Edinburgh and it is only in recent years that its position on the main trunk road has been by-passed by a new motorway.

This examination of policy making in modern Darlington begins with a consideration of some of the tabulated information at the end of this thesis. The data provided enables a rough comparison to be made of the local government experience of the elected members with that of the chief officers. Thus a background is provided to the remainder of the study in which an attempt is made to describe - from press reports, Council minutes and other papers, and from consultations with some of those directly involved - the policies and activities of those responsible for managing municipal affairs in Darlington, with particular regard to industrial and town planning matters and educational reorganisation because these areas of

responsibility, rather than the provision of welfare and similar services, could reasonably be expected to reveal elected member influence.

The functioning of the Council is described and interpreted in the light of such considerations as whether the departments were under-staffed; whether the officers gave good advice; the information flow to councillors and its effect on decisions, and whether or not policy was consistent; and the influence of political affiliations, of the local press, of particular personalities and the general public, on policy making.

C H A P T E R 2

EXPERIENCE OF ELECTED MEMBERS AND CHIEF OFFICERS COMPARED

The composition of Darlington Council during the relevant period has been analysed to ascertain how long the elected members had served and thus to discover how much opportunity they had had to accumulate the kind of knowledge they would need, in order to participate in an informed way in committee discussions and Council debates. Without such experience it can be argued that councillors must rely to a great extent on their paid advisers.

. . .

Darlington is divided into eleven wards, each represented by three councillors serving three years - one-third seeking re-election each year. Some councillors and aldermen are elected mid-term as a result of resignations and deaths. For each ward there is one alderman, serving six years and elected by the councillors in a published ballot, and traditionally in Darlington the aldermanic bench is filled by promoting the next senior councillor. Occasionally an outsider is nominated by an individualistic councillor - usually such a nominee would be a person on the local political scene but not on the council, however on one occasion there was a vote for Nikita Krushev. At least one senior councillor in recent years refused promotion, preferring to remain a councillor, only to be defeated at the polls when next he came up for election. There are thirty-three councillors and eleven aldermen - making a Council of forty-four.

The political divisions in the Council chamber have led to an agreement whereby Conservatives and Independents on the one hand,

and Labour members on the other hand, are represented on the aldermanic bench in proportion to their numbers on the floor of the chamber. The changes between the three-yearly aldermanic elections (six and five retiring alternately) caused by the annual Council elections result in disproportionate aldermanic representation from time to time but in principle the system is fair. Political control does not affect the election of the mayor who is always the next senior councillor or alderman who has not yet been first citizen. The courtesy could be of benefit to the mayor's party in a Council tie for he has an extra casting vote in addition to his own vote. The mayor chooses his own deputy; the mayor acts as chairman of the General Purposes Committee as well as presiding over the monthly Council meeting (since 1966 full Council meetings are less frequent: 1968-1969, nine including the Annual Meeting). In Darlington there is no councillor or alderman filling the position Leader of the Council, which is sometimes found in local government, but the main political factions each elect a group leader.

In the early post-war period there seems to have existed a traditional feeling that a person could not be of much use on the Council until he had been three years in office. One councillor who was elected in May 1962 expressed the same view that this was a sensible waiting time for a newcomer before trying to make a mark. In general however, to judge from the participation of new members as described in the full reports of each monthly meeting in the "Northern Despatch", the strength of this attitude had lost ground by 1961-1962. Indeed in 1967 the Conservative-Independent alliance won control and appointed an Education Committee chairman who had only been on the Council nine months. Yet it is easy to believe that

within certain limits, which would for example exclude senility, the longer a councillor serves the more valuable the contribution he is likely to be able to make.

Table No. 1 has been compiled to enable some conclusions to be arrived at about the length of service of aldermen serving during the 1962-1965 period. Table No. 2 provides a similar basis for arriving at conclusions about the service of councillors. Letters of the alphabet have been substituted for the actual names of the aldermen and councillors in order to save space.

This thesis is mainly concerned with the three municipal years 1962-1963, 1963-1964, 1964-1965. There is of course an overlap between a municipal year and a calendar year. A dramatic change in the composition of the Council is more readily observable by comparing the municipal year 1961-1962 with the municipal year 1965-1966. In effect the Council membership on the day before the main events of this study is compared with the membership on the day after the events had ended.

. . .

Table No. 1 shows that five out of eleven of the 1961-1962 aldermen had gone by the beginning of the municipal year 1965-1966. If the table is projected forward to the end of calendar year 1966, seven out of the original eleven had gone. It will be noticed that one alderman had a quite untypical service record of fifty years until 1965 (replaced by a councillor in that year with ten years to his credit). This could sufficiently distort (by increasing) the average service to make it worthwhile leaving this alderman out of the aldermanic average service calculations. If this alderman is omitted the following figures emerge:

Average service of aldermen in office 1961-1962

192 ÷ 10 = 19.2 years

Average service of aldermen in office 1965-1966

173 ÷ 10 = 17.3 years

It is evident, even with the omission, that the aldermanic bench was composed throughout the period of persons whose experience in terms of length of service was extensive. The practice of promoting senior councillors ensures that aldermen have lengthy service behind them. It should be noted however that a trend towards aldermen with less service began in the 1960s. One councillor who was elected in 1962 at a by-election to replace a promoted councillor, four years later was sufficiently senior to be promoted himself to alderman in 1966 in accordance with the party nomination agreement. Two persons first elected as councillors in 1965 became aldermen in 1967 when the Conservatives regained control. Nevertheless the aldermanic bench continued to have a preponderance of members senior by service.

Table No. 2. shows that of the thirty-three councillors of 1961-1962 only thirteen remained as councillors or aldermen in 1965-1966. In addition there was a variety of intermediate short changes:

One councillor served 1 year (resigned).

One councillor served 2 years (resigned).

Three councillors served 3 years (one retired; two defeated).

As a result of two election defeats, six retirements and one promotion to alderman in 1965, there were nine councillors with no experience of council work at all at the beginning of the 1965-1966 municipal year. If the table is projected forward to the end of



calendar year 1966; it is necessary to take into account the death of another established councillor in 1966 and an additional resignation in West Ward. By this time about 66% of elected members had disappeared in just over five years and this does not include the five intermediate representatives. There were several other defeats and retirements and three aldermanic changes by July 1967. In July 1968 of the forty-four members of the Council only ten had been in office in May 1961 and seven of these were aldermen (over-representing the minority party by two who, on present form, would disappear in 1970); sixteen members had been elected during the previous two years.

Average service of councillors in office 1961-1962

210 ÷ 33 = 6.36 years

Average service of councillors in office 1965-1966

99 ÷ 33 = 3 years

The 1961-1962 average service of just over six years is an adequate time for a councillor to build up his confidence. This does however amount to only two terms on the Council. The average for 1965-1966 of one term is astonishingly small and seems likely to have given some committee meetings a rubber stamp role in that period. A good attendance by councillors would be less significant in these circumstances. The number of 1961-1962 councillors who had been elected mid-term at some time in the past, together with the continuing changes after 1965-1966, indicates that the turnover problem was not simply a feature of the three year period with which we are principally concerned here.

The considerable changes in representation which took place during the 1962-1965 period is the most important fact to emerge

in this section. These changes took place at a time when important decisions were made. It is clear that many members were new to local government at this time - at the stage of learning the procedures for carrying out business, making their first halting and tentative contributions to committee discussions, asking their first hesitant questions and hoping that they were not seeming too foolish. Others who had a grasp of the essentials of procedure would by their own decision know that the end of their service was near; they no longer needed to get their names in the local newspapers by raising ward problems in full Council for electioneering purposes; they could yield to the pressures of private business without worrying too much about how a bad attendance record would look at the next election.

The turnover of councillors requires the chief officers to have considerable patience - a quality not reflected in paper qualifications. The paid advisers have constantly to remind the committee of its duties and to "spell out" what function has to be carried out in recurring cases. As representation changes the officials must repeatedly explain why the solution to a long-term problem has been delayed and assure the latest councillor that he has not discovered a new injustice but merely hit upon something which his predecessors found insoluble. On the other hand the solution to a long-term problem may be less easily achieved if few elected members are conscious of the period it has been under consideration.

Tables No. 1 and No. 2 include an attempt to ascertain the reasons for the high turnover in the calendar years from 1961-1966. Newspaper explanations may not always be reliable and the analysis below includes an element of authoritative speculation. The data which follows is intended to be an indication of the proportions in each category rather than a summary of exact totals in a fixed

period.

The "Reason for Leaving" columns in tables No. 1 and No. 2, together with eight subsequent changes referred to in those tables, explain thirty-five changes which may be summarised as follows.

Reason	Table No. 1 (aldermen)	Table No. 2 (councillors)	Total
Resigned by PR agreement	3	7 )	10
Defeated in election			
Poor health or death	3	5	8
Age/weariness etc	2	3	5
Business commitments/ domestic problems		6	6
Moved from town		6	6
			<hr/> 35

The newer councillors who left the Council voluntarily usually did so for business reasons or because they were moving from the town, and not because they were particularly disillusioned with local government or politics. For example, one of the councillors who was made redundant by railway closures in the town moved away to become a political agent in the Midlands, and another short-term councillor became a trade union organiser in Lancashire.

On the other hand, several of the older members clearly felt they had done their bit, that they were no longer getting any satisfaction out of their role because their Council work was simply a chore. Most of the voluntary retirements in this category concerned older men above the business men's normal retiring age.

The decision about which of the aldermen should retire, because of changes in the party representation among councillors, is theoretically the choice of the controlling party. In fact the Labour Party group when in the minority has been known to hold a secret ballot in order to decide which of its own reluctant-to-leave aldermen it would not support so that its agreement with the other group would be manifestly honoured. Similarly the non-Labour aldermen who left office in 1964 actually resigned immediately before the aldermanic elections; it seems to have been their choice that this gesture was made - one of them had been in ill health anyway.

However the main point to emerge is that the length of service factor is relevant when considering the effectiveness of elected members in Darlington at this time. The value of their participation in local government decisions must have been limited by lack of experience. A similar conclusion seems to follow from a comparison of the occupational background of the elected members with the professional qualifications of the chief officers.

Table No. 3 shows the occupations of the elected members on Darlington Council during the municipal year 1961-1962. Table No. 4 sets out the chief officers and their qualifications. Table No. 5 is a list of the committees of the Council which both the elected members and chief officers served during this period. It should be noted that more recently the setting up of a Trading Undertakings Committee, a Cultural and Recreational Committee and a Public Protection Committee has reorganised some of the work on a more logical basis but the total number of major committees, including the General Purposes Committee, and Special Committee, is still thirteen (as opposed to fifteen on the present list which includes a Horticultural Committee that was never very demanding).

A subsequent proposal to re-allocate to other committees the work of the Public Protection Committee was defeated. However, at the time of writing, the position is still fluid because a report on committee structure, by the Borough Treasurer of the 1962-1965 period, now retired but acting as a special consultant, has proposed a system of four main committees, a new administration committee and a series of sub-committees.

The tabulated information shows that most of the elected members do not have an occupational background corresponding to that of the departments which they have to manage. The officials, of course, are all properly qualified. In any case each of the elected members has to serve on three or four committees and the work of the separate departments which each member serves is likely to be quite diverse. Indeed the extent of councillors' public commitments illustrated by table No. 5 - coupled with other public, political and trade union activities - must be a limiting factor on the keen councillor whose ordinary occupation leaves little time for private reading. Perhaps this conclusion about the position in the 1962-1965 period should be modified to-day by the later re-arrangement of committee work. The fact that the changes have been made confirms that it was felt desirable to try and reduce the burden on the elected members. But the changes have not been so radical as to invalidate the assessment arrived at on the basis of data from the period two or three years earlier.

On the face of it, both in length of service and expertise, the permanent officers had such a significant advantage over the nominal policy makers that it is hard to arrive at any other conclusion than that these factors must have diminished the role of the elected member.

It is possible to ask what expertise a woodworking machinist (chairman 1963-1967) could bring to the Development Committee that would outmatch the combined talents of the Borough Surveyor, Borough Architect, Borough Treasurer and Town Clerk. Similarly a woodcutting machinist became chairman of the Education Committee in 1963 for four years, and again, although this particular member had a wood science qualification, it is hard to see how his occupational background would be of any help, except possibly in the field of Further Education. The role of particular personalities is discussed separately later in this study.

It is true that the Council contained a solicitor but he served on neither the Watch Committee nor the Development Committee, which were perhaps the committees where legal questions were most likely to be raised, and when he was mayor 1964-1965 this member evidently consulted the Town Clerk over legal procedural points (see Town Clerk and Northern Economic Planning Council, chapter four). A retired headmaster served on the Education Committee and had been chairman prior to 1963 but then he was defeated at the polls. Another former headmaster retired undefeated giving all the appearances of disillusionment, after only one term as a councillor, although in his case there is little doubt that he would have been re-elected if he had chosen to stand again.

Throughout the 1962-1965 period only one co-opted member served on the Education Committee, the principal of the local independent College of Education, but subsequent to the period with which this study is specifically concerned three non-voting teacher representatives were added. Steps to reduce eventually the number (seventeen) of elected members on this committee were taken in summer 1968 in order, it was argued, to meet Maud recommendations

and with the immediate effect of giving the ruling party an eight-to-four majority. In addition, one co-opted member with voting rights is to be retained together with the three non-voting teacher representatives. In November 1968 the Council resisted a move to give the teachers the power to vote, in spite of a Ministry letter expressing concern on this point.

Certain non-executive sub-committees of the Education Committee - Youth Employment, Youth Advisory (i.e. youth service) - were largely made up of representatives of local organisations such as trade unions etc. Some of the school governors and managers were chosen by the Education Committee from nominations made in response to newspaper advertisements. The Horticultural Committee, since abolished as a separate committee, included three co-opted persons but merely dealt with Council-owned allotments. Two co-opted persons were members of the Health Committee, but it seems they were not voting members.

Builders among the elected members would have technical "know how" but it is the permanent staff which deals with practical problems as distinct from the "Shall we or shall we not?" work of the committees. The business-man element was popularly believed to have brought to the Council a "canny" attitude to rate levels but it was a Conservative Development Committee chairman who first proposed the purchase and municipalisation of Faverdale Wagon Works ( a bit of local socialism) closed by British Railways, and it was the Labour membership which nearly caused a crisis by voting against, or abstaining, on a proposal to increase the rates shortly afterwards in 1963.

Thus it is hard to ascribe to the business men as such a particular policy making role and no evidence was uncovered to show that any elected member's occupational expertise was specially valuable to a committee's work.

The work of the committees called for health and welfare expertise, the care of young and old. There were few women members and no doctors and no social scientists among the elected members. It called for administration of such essential services as cemeteries, baths, sewage works, buses and fire brigade. By the nature of the services which local government provides it is difficult to see where the elected members could come from who would have first hand knowledge. It is not possible for a Council employee, even a teacher, to be elected to his employeering authority and the appropriate experience is often not available outside local government. For example, in the municipal year 1964-1965 Darlington adopted a Sixth Form College system of comprehensive education. Certain well understood principles may have guided the Council to come to the correct decision. But it is evident that the elected layman was unlikely to have a ready awareness of some of the subtler problems. Informed debate required for example a knowledge of recent writings about social selection, for this was clearly relevant when it was proposed to rely on neighbourhood secondary schools. It is reasonable to wonder if - when a matter of this sort came up - the majority of the committee understood what it was all about.

Lack of expertise does not prevent a shopkeeper or a housewife from competently deciding whether the rates can afford the burden of painting a Children's Home but they may prevent, for example, such councillors from conceiving ideas about the respective merits of a large single sex institution in the care of two housemothers, and smaller homes run on a "family" basis; or, if reforms are conceived, the willing amateurs may relegate them to a position of priority that a more informed and more forceful committee would have considered inadequate. This aspect is particularly relevant when combined with the uncertainties of inexperienced short term councillors, and it has already been demonstrated that for many councillors one or two terms in office is enough.



## CHAPTER 3

## STAFF SHORTAGES

So far the evidence points to a situation in which considerable reliance would have to be placed on the expertise of permanent officials. But although man-for-man the administrators were more than a match, in knowledge and experience, for the decision makers, the permanent staff had their limitations too. One problem was that there simply were not enough staff to do the job properly. There is plenty of evidence that the officials were under pressure.

On 16th March 1962 the Borough Architect circulated a memorandum entitled, "Review of Borough Architect's Department". The Borough Architect was responsible for the visual aspects of planning, the design of the civic centre and its environs, but he had to work in close liaison with the Borough Surveyor whose department was more directly responsible for town planning. The Review consisted entirely of a plea for more staff because of increased work and it suggested re-grading posts to hold those who were in process of leaving. About two years later, in an effort to carry out the many problems which the moves for central area re-development and the drive for new industry brought to the planning department, a new Special Committee (dubbed the Supremo Committee by the local press) was set up to organise priorities. This was a small committee of members of the controlling Labour group, rather similar to the inner cabinet "Management Board" subsequently advocated by the Maud Report. One of the Supremo Committee's first recommendations, arising out of a meeting on 9th July 1964, was that engineering technical staff in

the Borough Surveyor's department should be increased from seventeen to twenty-seven.

Darlington established an industrial estate at Faverdale in 1963 and needed someone to act as manager, temporarily, until the various firms had taken over their buildings, mainly for the purpose of conducting potential manufacturers around the site. It was found necessary in May 1963 to re-engage a retired Corporation engineer for one year because the existing staff could not cope.

In February 1964 the Borough Librarian felt compelled to bring to the attention of her committee the serious staff shortage in her department. Her circular to committee members (undated but in fact issued prior to a meeting on 11th February 1964) stated that twenty-three members of the permanent staff had resigned since January 1960. She explained that to comply with the standards of a Working Party report (1962), following the Roberts Committee (1957), she needed to raise the staff from twenty-two to thirty-four and she described at length how a chronic shortage of employees was impeding the work of the library and causing the high turnover.

When Darlington proposed to celebrate fifty years as a county borough in 1965 the appropriate official from the Town Clerk's department explained that thinking up ideas for such an event was normally quite within the department's capabilities but pressure of work, for example dealing with the electoral register for the coming general election, made it necessary to urge that consultants should be brought in. So the committee sought approval (minute A28 14th July 1964) to spend not more than £100 hiring a firm of civic publicists (minute A55 18th September 1964). The combined brains of all concerned came up with the following proposals which were adopted: the issue of special bookmarks, press articles, a civic

church service, a civic dinner, a series of receptions and two exhibitions.

When the Sport and Recreation Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee sought to make it possible for football club secretaries to revert to a former system of paying letting fees for football pitches on a weekly basis (minute Pc7 18th September 1964) the Parks Superintendent agreed rather sadly, pointing out that he would again be approached by people at awkward times when technically he was off duty.

The members of the Children's Committee were sent a copy of Home Office Circular No. 204/1963 announcing that Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 would come into operation on 1st October 1963. With the circular a report by officers of various committees expressed the view that the existing arrangements were adequate. Significantly the one positive recommendation that was made consisted of a suggestion that there was a need for more welfare workers and similar staff.

The above examples show that it was not merely the elected member, combining a full-time job with his unpaid voluntary work, who was hard-pressed. The paid officials were also very busy. It seems certain that the fullness of the daily round modified their total effectiveness.

## CHAPTER 4

## COMPETENCE OF OFFICERS

It has been suggested that the capabilities of the permanent staff were under strain because there were simply not enough people to do all the work that was required to be done. Other evidence is available which might be interpreted as demonstrating some lack of competence on the part of the officers. In fact the officers were probably the saviours of the Council having regard to what things would have been like if they had relied on the knowledge and initiative of the elected members. However some events are worth describing in detail.

For example the Town Clerk's advice was occasionally subject to question. In September 1960 an opponent of Civil Defence, thought by some members to be speaking too long, found his friends putting a motion that he should be heard. The proposition was defeated and the councillor had to stop. But at the meeting on 6th October 1960, in response to a private motion condemning the silencer vote, the Town Clerk confessed that if a similar vote was proposed in future he would advise the mayor that it was out of order.

At the Council meeting on 24th June 1962, a councillor complained about "the bureaucratic machine" because a letter he sent to the Town Clerk had been submitted to two committees both of which referred the letter to another committee. In offering his explanation the Town Clerk concluded, amid laughter, "It may be that I am wrong and that in my tiny bureaucratic way I have done something that is offensive in which case I am sorry".

In January 1965 the Town Clerk received a letter asking for a nomination for the Northern Economic Planning Council which the Minister would consider before making his appointments. The letter was private and confidential and was not to go before any committee which kept minutes. The Town Clerk referred the letter to the leader of the Labour group, which was the majority party. The letter required a quick reply so the Labour group decided on their nominee and asked the mayor to call an informal meeting of the Council which confirmed Labour's choice. But on reflection many members felt that the nomination was not legal. At the Council meeting on 4th February 1965 a Conservative councillor slipped in a crafty question to the mayor who blandly announced that the nomination was invalid. The Labour group was stunned ("I have never seen such dirty, filthy, underhand methods as the opposition party have used tonight," announced the shocked nominee) and a temporary adjournment led to the holding of a special General Purposes Committee meeting immediately after the ordinary Council meeting was finished.

At this meeting the mayor said he had acted on the Town Clerk's advice that the nomination meeting was illegal. Clearly the Town Clerk had been as surprised as everybody else by the turn of events but one cannot avoid the conclusion that he had been less than precise in the guidance he had passed on. He now explained that the informal meeting was legal as an informal meeting but illegal as a formal meeting. The Labour councillors carried a motion confirming that the previous decision was legal and thus snubbed the mayor and upset public opinion.

The professional advisers to the Development Committee included the Borough Surveyor, Borough Architect, Borough Treasurer and Town Clerk. The Development Committee was carrying out two principal

functions - town planning and industrial development. The basis for town planning activity was the Town and Country Planning Act 1947.

A principal feature of Darlington's statutory Development Plan - a flat map and written statement, approved and reviewed from time to time by the Minister of Housing and Local Government - is a proposed inner ring road. A part of one-half of this scheme was completed in 1968. The town map also indicates those areas allocated to industrial, residential and other types of development to which day to day applications can be related.

Darlington's initial plan foresaw a rise in population from 83,400 on 31st December 1947 to about 96,000 in 1971. At the time of writing, with only three years to go, the population has so far increased by about 1000 over the 1947 level.

First priority was given to housing, schools and a new bus station. It was intimated that work would ultimately commence on the erection of new municipal buildings but what could be achieved in the first twenty years would in any case depend on economic circumstances and emerging priorities. In the main the allocation of areas to various kinds of development simply followed the existing pattern.

In March 1955 the Borough Surveyor issued a circular letter to elected members marked, "Private and Confidential Copyright Reserved," summing up the subsequent thought which had gone into central area re-development. In essence a special sub-committee had asked the Borough Surveyor and Borough Architect to prepare a scheme which foresaw extended slum clearance, a continuation of the shopping area pattern and, to judge by an accompanying coloured

chart, the continued use of the town hall/covered market site for civic purposes. However the Markets Committee had apparently tentatively contemplated the removal of the covered market to a nearby area. The conclusion at this time was that the bus station, market and civic buildings, and certain slum clearance areas (King Street and Union Street) required active participation by the Council whereas everything else could be left mainly to individual owners.

In a preliminary draft marked, "Confidential Not For Publication", for the five year review of the Development Plan the Borough Surveyor explained that the population target ought to be reduced to 91,700 because the rate of natural increase (births over deaths) was less than expected and Darlington had been losing population. The first section of the inner ring road due to start in the first five years had not been begun though land had been acquired. In fact few major developments had taken place. The town map "Amendment No. 1" approved by the Minister 11th December 1957 showed no alterations to the purposes designated in the central area but the revised population target was adopted.

The second review of the Development Plan was due to be completed by the end of 1964 and the Borough Surveyor issued on 17th January 1964 a confidential "Interim Report on Land Use" attempting to assess future requirements up to 1981 for housing, industry and open space in the light of the government White Paper on the North East (Cmd 2206, the Hailsham Report). The Development Committee had previously had before it on 18th December 1963 an "Interim Report on Population" which, notwithstanding a movement away from the town of 4% of the population - mainly younger people - during the period 1951-1961, had suggested the effect of introducing new industry would be to make the Registrar General's prediction of a

natural increase of 6000 acceptable, and suggested a 1981 population of 89,300. Providing a shopping area free from the dangers of traffic was one of the improvement factors which might help to retain the younger Darlingtonians. A scheme for pedestrian and vehicular segregation in the town centre was presented in November 1964. But "Amendment No. 2 (1963)" to the Development Plan had ignored the central area and was mainly concerned to tidy up the definition of railway property and designate it with the more general term "Industrial".

This sketch of progress towards the post-war development of Darlington suggests a cautious willingness to contemplate civic projects in the central area but it was only as part of a national movement towards shopping centre development that any detailed moves began. It was the impact of pending railway closures fortified eventually by being declared a Development District which injected a real sense of urgency into the work of the Development Committee. Now all kinds of proposals were seen as a contribution to make Darlington a desirable place to live. A publicity brochure was posted around the country and to places abroad. There were moves to preserve the local Civic Theatre. There was unanimous disapproval of the Durham County Council's idea that Darlington should lose its county borough status. But some of the earlier post-war years may have been a time of lost opportunity.

It might be argued that the experts should have had more detailed ideas worked out well in advance of the kind of development that ought to be encouraged. The impression one gets from considering Darlington's Development Plan and subsequent amendments, and from the way that applications were handled by the Development Committee, is that the town map had been produced more as an indication of how the town is, than how it ought to be.



The "Review of the Borough Architect's Department", issued on 16th March, 1962, contained this significant paragraphs

"Private development in the town generally, and in the Town Centre in particular, is increasing and it is my opinion that insufficient thought is being given to ensure that the re-development is on the right lines. Unless more control is exercised and more direction given, there is a risk of buildings being erected which we will regret. They may neither unite nor harmonize to form a better town and it may well be that opportunities will be lost if, indeed, real mistakes are not made."

An example of lack of control can be seen in the centre of Darlington where the front of a large Co-operative department store has an incongruous public house in the middle. The Darlington Co-operative Society Ltd. had been prepared to buy the public house. The Council might have obtained possession by compulsory purchase and then re-sold the site. Much of the adjoining area has subsequently been brought into united ownership for a private development scheme. But to-day the Co-operative store is marred by the inset public house.

Of course, if an industrial site or a warehouse site near the town centre is not the ideal type of building one wants, it might nevertheless be hard to contemplate a time when it will be possible to free the locality of these features even if they stick out like a sore thumb. Certainly the expense of buying out such undertakings would daunt braver hearts than rates-conscious town councillors. The coming of a bowling alley to Darlington is explained in some detail in the next section. It is sufficient to notice here that in August 1963 the Council was surprised to find half the local woollen mill, in the town centre, was available for re-development as a bowling alley. A more comprehensive scheme might have been obtained if the initiative had come from the Council.

In the same way the following events surrounding an application for re-development of a warehouse near the central area could be interpreted as a criticism of poor imagination by the planners.

Four Riggs is an area shown on the Development Plan as primarily for industrial use. It is a diamond shaped area adjacent on two sides to land marked primarily for residential use and on the other two sides it forms the outer north-west edge of the proposed inner ring road. In April 1962 an application to carry out a re-development of an existing warehouse was deferred for the committee to inspect the site. Minute D 188 (3), 9th May 1962, records the result of the visit - "That planning permission be refused on the ground that such proposal would prejudice the satisfactory re-development of the area for housing purposes." The subsequent minutes tell the rest of the story.

- 6th June 1962      D 11 (21) APPEALS - The Town Clerk reported that appeals to the Minister had been lodged in the following cases
- (i) .....
  - (ii) Four Riggs - Proposed Warehouse etc  
(Minute D 188 (3) May/62
- 17th October 1962      D 98 FOUR RIGGS - PROPOSED WAREHOUSE EXTENSIONS  
- The Town Clerk referred to Minutes D 188 (3) May 62 and D 11 (21)(ii) June 62 and submitted a letter from the applicant's solicitors requesting the Council to reconsider the position in relation to the proposed development in Four Riggs in the light of the industrial situation that had arisen consequent upon the decision of the British Transport Commission to close the railway workshops in the town; it was stated that if planning permission was granted for the proposed extensions the applicant would be able to extend his business and thereby provide additional employment of a permanent nature in the town.

At their request the Committee received the applicant and his solicitor who put forward submissions in support of their case, and it was -

RESOLVED (a) That the Council adhere to their previous decision refusing the application and  
(b) That the plan now submitted showing in principle the Council's proposals for the re-development of Archer Street/King Street area be approved.

Here it should be noted that the Development Committee had the delegated power to deal with the application for the Council; also that since the warehouse owners had made their first proposal the Borough Architect had reacted by producing an attractive alternative scheme embracing a designated associated slum clearance site, which was dealt with under the same minute as the applicant's interview. The story continues:

6th February 1963 D 169: FOUR RIGGS - PROPOSED WAREHOUSE EXTENSIONS  
- The Town Clerk reported that the Minister of Housing and Local Government had allowed the applicant's appeal against the Council's decision refusing permission for the development of the warehouse premises at Four Riggs.

The Committee then reviewed the proposals for the re-development of the Archer Street/King Street area and considered reports from the officers on the courses of action which may be open to the Council consequent upon the Minister's decision.

RESOLVED - That in the first instance the question be referred to the Housing Committee for re-consideration of their proposals.

The Minister's rebuff was scarcely surprising since the Development Plan still showed Four Riggs for industrial use. A little foresight when the plan was first prepared, or at some

intermediate stage, might have facilitated the Borough Architect's proposed improvement for that area. It would have been possible to label the plan more widely with the symbols for shopping or residential use, because the term "primarily for" could have temporarily embraced the odd piece of existing non-conformity. Alternatively a more detailed master plan could have been commissioned.

Proposals to re-develop Darlington's town centre were reaching a point of decision in November 1961. The General Purposes Committee (full Council in committee) had before it a recommendation from its Property Sub-Committee that this sub-committee be authorised to investigate and report on the method of obtaining re-development which would produce the most favourable financial return.

The Council was specifically concerned with the site of the existing town hall and covered market. The Borough Architect had prepared a scheme for a new civic centre on Council land nearby. The existing site was regarded as a very valuable asset - perhaps the key area in any wider scheme of re-development. It was thought that the site might be leased or sold to finance the new building and it was because the proposal seemed to be a move in this direction that the General Purposes Committee in secret session rejected it.

The Town Clerk explained that an amendment had been carried that the Corporation retain the town hall and covered market site and re-develop it. He added that the re-development might cost in the region of £250,000 to £500,000. "It depends on what you want. The General Purposes Committee has decided the site needs development and that the Corporation should do it." It is safe to assume that most of those who opposed the sub-committee proposal did not know what they wanted.

The General Purposes Committee minute had to be confirmed by the full Council. Here an amendment was moved by a Conservative councillor which would have empowered the Property Sub-Committee on the lines previously suggested and arguments were presented which clearly showed a desire to turn the site over to private developers. In fact an alternative amendment was passed, evidently intended to reaffirm that the Council itself would develop the site, but calling for a report from a consultant on the full potentialities of the site.

In March 1962 Darlington was given the go-ahead, in principle, by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, for the new block of civic buildings designed by the Borough Architect, leaving the way clear for the existing site to be re-developed. Three prospective consultants were asked to send representatives to be interviewed by the Development Committee. Those short-listed seem to have been selected at random from advertisements in the "Municipal Journal" and from brochures sent to the Town Clerk's office. One of these, according to minute D 42, July 1962, withdrew. Minute D 93 October 1962 indicates that the other representatives were interviewed but no decision was made. In fact the committee had been largely satisfied with one of the firms but as a sop to a minority expression of discontent ("He was like a man trying to sell a vacuum cleaner") the Town Clerk was instructed to check up on this firm's background by writing to various towns with which it had been associated previously. By minute D 121 November 1962 the firm was finally appointed, "as consultant to advise the Council on the development of alternative projects in connection with the Town Hall and Covered Market site, and its commitments for a term of three years at a fee of 500 gns per annum, and that the Town Clerk be instructed to negotiate with .... on the question of agency fees." (A month later the 500 gns became 1200 gns because the lesser commitment would have involved giving the firm sole agency status and even

the supporters of the appointment found this too hard to accept).

The minute appointing the firm came up for confirmation in full Council. Suddenly half the councillors seemed to think they were moving back to square one and the proposal was only narrowly agreed. Labour members argued that it had been settled that the Council would retain and re-develop the site. This question of agency fees clearly involved a return to the "sell or lease the site" school of thought. But the consultant firm was hired. The Borough Treasurer looked forward to an "economic appraisal" of the town's potential. On 8th February 1963 the chairman of the Development Committee promised: "Master plan it would be." Nevertheless there does not seem to have been any general stop on development applications while the consultant's recommendations were being formulated.

In the event the plan consisted of a summary of some current ideas about pedestrian precincts and like matters, showing little indication of original research, together with some suggestions about how alternative deals with developers could be arranged. Only one planning innovation was adopted by the Council - a proposal that the new town hall should be on a different site to that previously intended. This suggestion was adopted with surprising lack of debate at any point. The technical reason for the alteration was that the revised position of the civic buildings would present less of an interruption of the pedestrian shoppers' flow from the bus station and the railway station. The change was virtually a matter of putting the buildings at one side of the road rather than the other. The change probably got the blessing of the Council because the Borough Architect at first advised the Development Committee that the plans could easily be adapted but in fact

they had to be scrapped. As the original plans for a new town hall had reached an advanced stage the revised siting set back Darlington's civic centre scheme considerably; soon the government was holding up such projects as part of the economic squeeze. Construction of the new town hall did not begin until 1967.

The publication of the plan brought the consultant firm under fire. With more than two years of the agreement still to run and a Council commitment of 1200 gns per year, some members were nevertheless demanding that the consultant should be sacked forthwith. If the Council did need help to develop the site there was a case for going direct to some interested company rather than to a middle-man. What conclusions are to be drawn from this episode about the competence of councillors and the expertise of officials?

What had the policy decision to retain and re-develop the town hall site meant to the elected members? Some wanted to re-build the covered market on the same spot. There seems to have been a feeling among left-wingers that it would be immoral to turn over the town's heritage to greedy private speculators, and others less radically minded were apprehensive for different reasons. The initial reaction to the Property Sub-Committee's proposal had been negative rather than constructive.

Where did the officers stand in all this? If they did not comprehend the philosophy of those who opposed private development they were politically naive. If they understood but thought it impractical and therefore encouraged the entry of private developers by the back door, then they were helping to reverse a policy decision for what they considered to be the good of the authority. But the most likely explanation of events, so far as the official's attitude was concerned, is that they genuinely needed help. In short, when

the local government administrators had to become involved in the business world they were no longer on their own ground and no longer experts. An architectural planning consultant working for a fee, rather than for profits to be gleaned as an agent, may have been too expensive for little Darlington. In any case the officers believed in their own capacity to handle the situation - the Borough Architect, for example, had made a three-dimensional model of his proposed central area development scheme in his own time. The planning department had devised the fore-mentioned inner ring road and other schemes. Surely it would be a simple matter, the officials argued, for the Council to select, from any advice the consultant firm gave, those parts which the town could usefully act upon and ignore those parts they did not want to know about.

Unfortunately the consultant's report was in the kind of generalities that seemed to make the expenditure on it a poor bargain. But no one was entitled to complain. The consultant had specifically described the proffered services in a letter dated 18th June 1962 circulated to members of the Development Committee on 14th November 1962 which included for example: "With most local authorities we have an agreement .... for us to have the sole agency in disposing of sites for re-development ...." A letter from the consultant dated 4th January 1963 explains: "Our earning capacity is limited to site disposal ...." ".... architectural services .... would of course be outside the terms of the agreement."

The town did not act on the consultant's subsequent verbal advice to auction off the town hall to any company which would pay the highest ground rent. Darlington's approach to central area re-development contained an amount of bewilderment and uncertainty. Whatever interpretation one puts upon the course of events nobody really emerges in a very good light. Expertise was lacking.



Borough Architect's Dept.,  
Central Buildings,  
Darlington.

16th March, 1962.

Gentlemen,

Review of Borough Architect's Department.

(1) In the past year or two the running of this department has caused some concern because it has not been fully equal to the increasing demands made upon it. Every year there are more buildings to maintain and small duties have grown into large jobs, both technically and administratively. Private development in the town generally, and in the Town Centre in particular, is increasing and it is my opinion that insufficient thought is being given to ensure that the re-development is on the right lines. Unless more control is exercised and more direction given, there is a risk of buildings being erected which we will regret. They may neither unite nor harmonize to form a better town and it may well be that opportunities will be lost if, indeed, real mistakes are not made.

Extract from Borough Architect's report in March 1962 pointing out that the Council was not exercising sufficient control.

Extract from consultant's letter, June 1962. Despite a decision that the Council would develop the town hall site itself the Council hired a consultant firm which relied mainly on disposal fees.

With most Local Authorities we have an agreement which in the case of your town would involve an annual retainer fee of 500 guineas. This agreement may be for an initial term of three or five years and terminable thereafter by six months' notice on either side. It provides for us to have the sole agency in disposing of sites for redevelopment or for the letting of shops if your Council does its own redevelopment. It is nevertheless subject to the understanding that certain scale fees chargeable shall be reduced by specific amounts.

In March 1968 a Council committee began to draw up a list of reputable property development companies who might be interested in taking shops on the existing town hall site. The "Northern Despatch" for Friday 6th December 1968 reports: " A massive plan to develop Corporation-owned sites - including the Town Hall and covered market in the centre of Darlington will be the outcome of discussions which are to be opened with the .... Construction Group. Tentative schemes .... will now be in the melting pot .... a completely fresh outlook .... the final scheme will not be settled until every aspect has been fully considered."

It is interesting to notice that Darlington's original consultant firm was engaged by another railway town Doncaster, which did adopt the auction method and then found many shops remaining unlet. An article by Harvey Cole ("Observer" 11th June 1967) concludes:

"At present the valuer is proposing to rate the shops in the scheme at a concessionary level, in order to recognise what is called pioneer status. Consultants' fees for the scheme have amounted to some £27,000. Three-quarters of this is the scale-fees to .... (the consultant firm) for auctioning the ground rent that is not being received."

In October 1959 the Local Government Commission for England, following the procedure laid down by the Local Government Act 1958, and the Local Government Commission Regulations 1958, gave notice that it would begin to deal with the North Eastern General Review Area on 15th December 1959. Local Authorities concerned, including Darlington County Borough, were asked for their views. In spring 1960 meetings began to be held with these local authorities. Draft

proposals were published in 1962 and interested bodies were able to make representations up to 12th June 1962. Conferences were held in October and November to discuss the draft proposals. The North Eastern General Review Area report and final proposals were presented to the Minister of Housing and Local Government in October 1963. The Commission was largely unmoved from its earlier position by later representations. The Commission recommended some agreed adjustments to the boundary of Darlington together with the adding of small parts to adjacent parishes.

In the later stages Durham County Council at the inquiry into objections to the report, for the Minister to consider, wanted Darlington to cease to be a county borough, contending that the town could not efficiently provide its own services. The inquiry at Darlington town hall was the first to be held in connection with the Commission's proposals for the North Eastern General Review Area. Durham County Council's case was mainly that a larger authority was better able to provide more staff, skilled organisers and specialists and that Darlington ought to make a contribution to county finances to offset proposals for diminishing the county elsewhere.

Darlington replied that its population was more likely to increase than decline and that its services compared favourably with those in the county. Where it was better to share services this was done (i.e. police).

22nd January 1964 D 157 LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION -  
NORTH EAST GENERAL REVIEW AREA -  
The Borough Surveyor reported upon the estimated population trends .... and on land requirements .... in the light of the Command Paper on the North-East.

RESOLVED - That the General Purposes Committee be recommended to make representations to the Minister of Housing and Local Government with a

view to the Borough boundary being extended eastward, up to and including the site of the proposed link road ....

At every stage the planners have seemed ready to contemplate a rise in Darlington's population without any reference to what was actually happening. Critics of the White Paper on the North East (Cmd 2206, the Hailsham Report) were sceptical about how its proposals would be paid for, arguing that many of the solutions had been recommended in the past.

A Darlington County Borough document dated 26th February 1964 sets out further representations to the Minister of Housing and Local Government on the report and proposals of the Commission. The county borough now argued that since the Commission's report in October 1963 there had been published this White Paper. Whereas the Commission had felt justified in saying, "Darlington is not a growing area," the White Paper had made it clear that the population of what it called the "Darlington/Aycliffe area" could increase substantially and rapidly to a figure between 150,000 and 200,000. The existing population of the county borough (= 84,187 June 1964) plus the whole of the Darlington Rural District, including Newton Aycliffe, was 110,000.

The development of new factories overlapping the county borough boundary on the east of the town, and a county borough scheme for a new road to skirt the town in that area just outside the boundary, led the Council to ask the Minister to extend the boundary.

The "Northern Despatch" reported the proceedings of the inquiry in July 1964 into these proposals to extend the boundaries of the town.

On Tuesday 21st July 1964 the public inquiry was told that a map sent to Durham County Council and to the Minister was different to one approved by Darlington County Borough. The large map at the inquiry was again a different map. The Borough Surveyor had admitted there was a 25% error in the number of acres the Council had said they were claiming. Overnight the officials were left to sort it out.

On Wednesday 22nd July 1964 the "Northern Despatch" reported:

"Darlington withdrew its claim to include Great Burdon in the County Borough at to-day's hearing of the inquiry .... after scathing criticism by .... for Durham County Councils: 'A vague and more unhappy set of representations I have never found.'"

It is clear that Darlington's planners were at fault in this instance.

Map-making brought forth a criticism about the exact location of a road inside Darlington at the beginning of 1965. An owner-occupier claimed that he could not sell his house privately because of the Council's future plans for the area. In accordance with a provision made by Parliament he required the Council to buy his house. The Council replied that nothing in the Council's plans affected the house, and refused to buy it, but it was pointed out that if somebody wanted a mortgage the Council would normally be willing to lend. The householder took the view that no potential buyer would take a mortgage from the Council if there was any doubt about future development intentions.

23rd December 1964 B 127 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT, 1962

Section 139 ....

Submitted - Notice on behalf of the owner of the house .... pursuant to Section 139 of the .... Act requiring the Council to purchase .... the property.

# Northern

No. 15,285

DARLINGTON, WEDNESDAY,

Town's "vague" representation

## DARLINGTON

*Inquiry onslaught by QC*

*on 'bizarre' planning*

**DARLINGTON** withdrew its claim to include Great Burdon in the county borough at today's hearing of the inquiry into the Council's application for boundary revision after scathing criticism by Mr. F. H. B. Layfield, Q.C., for Durham County Council.

"A vague and more unhappy set of representations I have never found," was how Mr. Layfield described the proposals.

Summing up the evidence put forward by the town Mr. Layfield said the representations and a map had been sent to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, but he himself after reading the representations several times still had difficulty understanding them.

He said the documents were received by people going about their ordinary business and any representations made should be understandable and make clear what any authority was claiming. As far as he could make out everyone connected with the Corporation had a different meaning of what they were doing.

Link road

Extract from news report, July 1964, on failure of Darlington's planners to make their case for extending the boundaries of the town.

RESOLVED (a) That .... the property does not fall within the provision of Section 138 (1)  
 (b) That the owner be informed that the Corporation .... make advances in suitable cases ....

MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 7th January 1965

L I ....

L II ....

L III MINUTES OF COMMITTEES ....

The confirmation .... was agreed except ....  
 Development Committee of .... 23rd December 1964  
 Minute 127 .... an amendment that the following paragraph be added to the resolution "(c) That the owner be informed that the Corporation might be prepared to consider purchasing the property on grounds of hardship."

Amendment carried.

The "Northern Despatch" Friday 8th January 1965 explains why the amendment was carried. The Council was not obliged to buy the house but a traffic flyover had been mooted in the area and the Borough Surveyor had very honestly thought it fair to point this out to enquirers. It also appeared that the Borough Surveyor in committee had spoken of vagueness of draughtmanship and had used the expression, "too broad a nib," implying that one might be led to suppose that a new road would go through the house.

The examples chosen show that there are no magicians. The amazing thing is that so much does get done efficiently despite the staff shortages and the assorted persons and procedures which have an influence on the management of local affairs. The eventual approach to the town hall re-development was inevitable. But the delays and mistakes seem to reflect more than a mere lack of understanding by elected members. Perhaps the principal shortcoming was

the lack of staff and the elected members ought to have attended to this. But there is a point of view that the professional planners should have been prepared to think big, and that they were not sufficiently imaginative, although this criticism could scarcely apply to their population projections.

On the credit side a massive amount of administration was continually being carried out effectively. In addition some spectacular large scale achievements which were far from being simply routine, have to be chalked up to Darlington's officials in coping with a shrinkage of industry by carrying out successful measures to encourage newcomers. For instance, Darlington met the challenge of workshop closures by purchasing a railway wagon works and turning it into a thriving industrial estate in a matter of months. These activities are discussed later in the context of the influence of political parties on policy making. Similarly the Borough Surveyor's proposal for an inner ring road first conceived in the town's Development Plan (approved 30th May 1952 by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, arising out of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947), survived the changing ideas of a series of local and national traffic investigations so that when eventually the final stages were given clearance, on the day of the local elections 11th May 1967, it was possible to say the original scheme had been the right answer.

Because of their successes and their personal industry and the degree of dedication they brought to their duties it is quite possible that these officers were superior to that of run-of-the-mill officials in many other towns despite the criticism implied by recording certain events here.



## CHAPTER 5

## FLOW OF INFORMATION

The relationship of the press to the Council and to the general public, and to certain Council personalities, is an important topic in itself and is dealt with separately. However control over the flow of information within the committee system is largely in the hands of the permanent officials. Its presentation (or non-presentation) must affect the making of policy. One kind of information of which use is constantly made, is that which tells what has been done already, how the situation has developed so far, or - when some new case arises - how a similar case was handled on a previous occasion. In committee this kind of information will be available from the minutes but usually the chief officer will be able to say, "Members of the committee will remember that ...." or one of the councillors will say, "In cases like this we usually ...." But if an officer does not want to follow precedent, or if there is no exact case to refer back to, a debate may ensue.

A busy committee, when confronted with taking the next step in some course of events, may not remember exactly what it had in mind several months earlier. It is conceivable that a policy decision may be buried in the minutes - for future action - and then completely forgotten; or it may be overtaken by larger events; or it may prove impractical on financial grounds; or the local government clerks and workers may be too overloaded to cope.

When implementing a previous decision the committee may drift away from carrying through an intended policy although the action had been previously hotly debated and some members had clearly felt strongly what they wanted to do. For example, a planning decision may be reversed, if the committee takes a second look at the application, simply because some of the original objections are not properly recalled and no longer generate the same concern. Indeed over a period of time the committee membership may change. This may occur in the long term because of retirements and electoral defeats but a committee consisting of fifteen members could in theory have eight people attending one meeting and seven different councillors at the next. Clearly the permanent officials have a major role to play in ensuring consistent policy. It is possible to imagine that a loosely worded minute could leave the way open for an alteration of policy.

Also a committee which is imprecise in its approach and which leaves the wording of the minute - as the members often are only too glad to do - to the chief officer, is inviting the official to make that inflection of terminology that corresponds most closely to the outcome he had hoped for, or which is most administratively convenient. Minutes upon which future action may be based in theory could be contrived by officials.

The flow of information can clearly influence policy. Members will debate statements put before them by their officials for the committee's consideration. They cannot debate statements that are never made. All kinds of extraordinary things may go on in the schools of a borough in the name of the Education Committee which the elected members know nothing about. The councillors may be well informed about those things for which the officials seek action and wholly

uninformed about the things the administrators do not want to have debated. The border-line between administrative and policy decisions is a fine one.

It should be noted that in committee the speed and conduct of business depends very much on the nature of the matters discussed and on the personality of the chairman, rather than on formal rules of debate. Frequently the decisions are of the concensus of opinion type. Often the chairman will say, "Agreed?", and two faltering hands will be raised while the rest of the members sit nibbling biscuits; it will be in this unspectacular way that a batch of anxious Council house hopefuls will have their aspirations fulfilled. More often that not the officer recording the minutes will be required to sum up a committee decision even when a vote has been taken - for the motion will be, "That we proceed on the lines suggested by Councillor Smith and Councillor Jones," or something that is equally inadequate for the permanent record until it is interpreted by the officer.

The Education Committee's procedure is exceptional but particularly noteworthy. The chairman and vice-chairman in advance of each meeting of this committee receive a copy of the agenda, an explanation of the background to each item, and the suggested wording of a minute summing up the likely decision. Frequently the chairman simply refers to his brief and moves the proposal "from the chair" as written up for him beforehand by the chief officer. When controversy is inevitable the draft minute may have the key words unwritten (e.g. "approved" or "not approved"). Nevertheless the education department is highly efficient. Documentary statements to be discussed are circulated to all members beforehand. The members of this committee have the opportunity to be well informed about

the matters on the agenda. Where manipulation might seem most possible, muddle is least evident.

The amount of business open for discussion at any meeting of the full Council is extensive. This reinforces the argument that because of the variety of Council functions (illustrated by table No. 5) the part-time councillor can have a detailed knowledge of only a fraction of the business which he is required to vote upon. Three-quarters of the members at the full Council meeting would have no means of knowing how accurate a particular minute is, and very little idea of the arguments which led to its formulation. The minutes themselves are not necessarily informative. For example, the expectations which Darlington had for the coming of particular firms to the town were not spelt out, on the grounds that firms liked to negotiate in secret for business reasons. The Development Committee itself had little real notion what its Industrial Development Sub-Committee was doing in the early 1960s. Evidently the Council as a whole knew even less. On 7th June 1963 the "Northern Despatch" reported on the full Council meeting of the previous days:

"Ald .... hoped that the Development Committee would not be the 'secret society' it had been. Recently, he said, it had been difficult to really find out what went on in the committee."

But councillors are not merely expected to have views on the minuted business before them. An individual councillor is able to give notice of a question he wants to ask about business not mentioned in the minutes; he is also able to notify the Town Clerk of any private motion he wants to move. It was fairly common for full scale debates to be staged on a private motion. To participate effectively councillors would need to have informed themselves about the pros and cons for such diverse propositions as the abolition of

charges in public toilets or the creation of honorary aldermen. However as far as normal committee business is concerned decisions are made by councillors who may be new to office, largely unaware of the history of events, and not conscious of the administrative stages in the "progressing" of projects (e.g. the provision of a new school). In short, decisions are usually based on little parcels of immediate information with some unjustified but inevitable assumption by the officers that councillors know what they are determining. If it can be shown that decisions were inconsistent this would seem to suggest poor linkage between meetings which is essentially a problem of supplying information.

Reference has already been made to the coming to Darlington of a bowling alley. A more detailed synopsis of the events leading to this particular piece of re-development is relevant when considering whether the committee's attitude from one meeting to the next was consistent.

Although there were exceptions there seems to have been something about the face-to-face communication situation that quite often made Darlington's councillors change their minds after granting an interview to hear an appeal. In the bowling alley proceedings there was an abrupt turnabout between 17th February 1965 and 3rd March 1965. This example does not really tell us who makes policy - rather does it tend to reinforce the impression that may be gained elsewhere in this thesis that in "planning" matters there was scarcely any firm line of policy.

This was a central area site occupied by a woollen mill, not the kind of building which any long term plan ideally would have permanently endorsed in a position a few hundred yards from the main shopping street. But no-one foresaw that the mill - or at least

part of it - might be more valuable to the owners as a development site. The Council merely reacted to an unexpected application. The Development Committee was particularly excited at the prospect of having a multi-storey car park - hitherto regarded as a very desirable but uneconomic civic proposition - provided by a private developer. This prospect smoothed the way for the demolition of the mill building.

27th August 1963

D 43 (8) LAND IN PRIESTGATE - Submitted - Outline application 472/2 for permission to re-develop the land between Priestgate and East Street adjoining the River Skerne by the erection of buildings including a bowling alley, dance hall, multi-storey car park, motor showrooms, repair shops and petrol filling station.

RESOLVED - That outline planning permission be granted .... subject to .... (a variety of siting, design and vehicular access conditions) and subject to the following further conditions

- (i) The bowling alley and dance hall shall not be used until the multi-storey car park has been constructed and has been brought into use.
- (ii) ....

16th September 1964

D 67 LAND BETWEEN PRIESTGATE .... etc.

(a) ....

- (b) That the views of the Watch and Library Committee be sought on a suggestion that new library buildings be erected on the existing site as part of the re-development of the adjoining land.

21st October 1964

D 81 (3) LAND BETWEEN PRIESTGATE .... etc.

The Borough Surveyor .... submitted for approval .... proposed bowling alley and multi-storey car park; he pointed out that the .... River Board required the latter building .... to be set back 15 feet from

the river bank .... and that further details would be submitted in due course. The Borough Surveyor also .... reported developers were considering .... that new public library buildings might be included ....

**RESOLVED** - That the plans be approved for the purposes of outline planning permission, in respect of the bowling centre only.

18th November 1964

**D 102 (4) PRIESTGATE - EAST STREET  
RE-DEVELOPMENT - PROPOSED BOWLING CENTRE**  
The Borough Surveyor .... submitted a revised plan for the Priestgate elevation ....  
**RESOLVED** - That the Borough Architect discuss the matter further with the developers and report in due course.

23rd December 1964

**D 124 (13) PRIESTGATE/EAST STREET -  
PROPOSED BOWLING CENTRE ETC.**  
The Town Clerk .... submitted a letter dated 17th December 1964 from the Clerk of the .... River Board in which it was stated that the Board wished to discuss the proposed development .... and had appointed representatives.  
**RESOLVED** - That .... be appointed to meet the Board's representatives and report in due course.

5th February 1965

**D 149 (15) PRIESTGATE/EAST STREET -  
PROPOSED BOWLING CENTRE ETC.**  
The Sub-Committee .... had met representatives of the River Board .... the developers had submitted .... an application .... for a cantilever construction .... between the car park and the river bank.  
**RESOLVED** - That the Board be informed that the Council would not object on planning grounds to the erection of a building of the type of construction proposed by the developers.

17th February 1965

**D 158 (12) PRIESTGATE/EAST STREET -  
PROPOSED BOWLING CENTRE**

The Borough Surveyor .... submitted a letter from the applicant's agents .... requesting the Council to vary condition (i) attached to the Outline permission .... to enable them to erect and use the bowling centre building in advance of the multi-storey car park.

**RESOLVED - That the Council are not prepared to vary the condition in question.**

3rd March 1965

**D 170 (1) PRIESTGATE/EAST STREET -  
PROPOSED BOWLING CENTRE; ETC.**

The Town Clerk .... reported that with the authority of the Chairman he had invited a representative of the developers and their architect to appear at that meeting in response to their request for an interview .... The developers explained .... why it was necessary .... that they be permitted to proceed with the erection of the bowling centre in advance of the multi-storey car park building ....

**RESOLVED - That .... on submission of a fresh application the Council would be prepared to grant Permission .... with the substitution of .... the proposed multi-storey car park shall be completed and brought into use within 6 months after the opening of the proposed bowling centre, or within such longer period as the Council may at any time in their absolute discretion allow.**

After protracted discussions, by which time the committee was keyed up to the coming of this new amenity, the developer now wanted to vary the initial conditions. At the interview the developer had argued that he needed some latitude to get financial support for his project. He was indignant at the suggestion of one



councillor that once the bowling alley was open the multi-storey car park - a part of the scheme which it seems may have been a sprat to catch a mackerel - might never in fact materialise. The bowling alley was opened in 1965; there was still no sign of the multi-storey car park while this material was being compiled three years later.

A number of points arise. The Council had never contemplated the possibility that the factory building might be removed from the town centre where it was out of place in modern conditions. The Council had no master plan to fall back on, to show what would be ideal in this situation. There was a sudden realisation that the adjacent public library could be merged with the factory site to get a comprehensive development which would provide a better civic amenity at the developer's expense, but the disinterest of the developer seems to have induced the idea that it was not worth the bother of insisting on a more imaginative scheme. The bowling alley was undoubtedly a useful additional amenity for a town which hoped to grow but several alternative outline plans for bowling alleys elsewhere in the borough had been approved; an element of competition was present; there was probably only sufficient demand to justify one such establishment and the first to get Council support would be the lucky one - the committee was in a position to bargain.

The prospect of having a multi-storey car park in the town centre influenced one or two prominent councillors who had long had a yearning to see the coming of such a development. It was evident that in the early stages the committee was alive to the need to attach strings to the profitable building by insisting that the multi-storey car park should be built at the same time. But in the

course of events it seems that these councillors came to attach less importance to the stipulated condition.

The formulation of the minute was, as usual, left to the Town Clerk and the words, "or in such longer period .... etc" seem to have crept in without the committee's specific authority - for legalistic administrative convenience perhaps. However the minute was not challenged in full Council or at any subsequent Development Committee meeting.

The possibility of mill workers becoming redundant scarcely influenced the committee's discussions although it is clear enough from press reports that mill employees were concerned about the expected effects of the re-development scheme. It was suggested that a new site could be provided at the North Road works shut down by British Railways, but in any case the whole of the mill was not going to be closed.

Did the officers and councillors give the development sufficient thought? The change of mind may be considered as an example of gullible local government experts, out of their depths in the world of development speculators, being put off balance by the apparent sincerity of the defaulting developer at the interview.

Over time the committee had altered its views about the importance of an original condition. The officials were not responsible for this. However it does seem likely that the force with which the officers reminded the committee of its original thoughts on this matter would be a significant factor in encouraging the change of mind.

The Development Committee because of the nature of its work

is a likely source of examples of committee decisions being reversed. In many cases a plan is rejected because the committee is required to give a decision one way or the other. Proposals are rejected in the expectation that when certain suggested amendments are communicated semi-officially to the applicant a new acceptable proposal will be submitted and passed.

But procedural considerations apart the Development Committee frequently changed its decision. For example, throughout the period, the committee quite often reversed decisions when dealing with planning applications for the opening of betting offices. So much so that a circular issued by the Town Clerk, 2nd March 1963, attempts to clarify the duties of the committee in this respect. The document explains that betting offices are perfectly legal and advises the committee that neither the magistrates nor the planning authority are able to take into account moral or ethical considerations. It seems that there were a few councillors who objected to betting offices on any grounds and virtually left it to the Town Clerk to contrive some objection relating to pedestrian or vehicular congestion, etc. At the other extreme were one or two members who took the attitude that if every application was allowed the number of these establishments would adjust itself on the basis of supply and demand, that is, they would put each other out of business.

At the Council meeting on 3rd January 1963 a councillor (it is reported) made an appeal to the Development Committee to be more consistent and his speech made the following points.

In a certain case where permission was turned down on grounds of congestion and lack of parking facilities there was no justification for rejection because it was an offence to congregate outside a betting office. When the same applicant had applied for premises in

two other streets he had been rejected on the grounds that, in one instance, shop frontages would be spoiled and, in the other, that it was a residential area, yet the committee subsequently gave permission for the first of these. A different applicant had been turned down in a location said to be near a school but permission had previously been given for another betting office near another school in the same area.

Replying to that particular speech the chairman pointed out that two recent appeals against betting office decisions by his committee had been upheld by the Ministry. But equally intriguing is the minute recorded as follows.

6th February 1963 D 168 Town and Country Planning (1)  
 PROPOSED BETTING OFFICES - 118 VICTORIA ROAD  
 AND PREMISES IN DUKE STREET - Pursuant to  
 Minute D 161/Jan/63 the Committee received  
 the applicant and his manager who referred  
 to the Committee's refusal of applications  
 for planning permission to use Nos. 118  
 Victoria Road, 43 Duke Street, 39 Duke Street  
 and certain other premises as betting offices  
 and put forward grounds on which they requested  
 the Committee to reconsider their decision in  
 the cases of the first two properties named.  
 The applicant and his manager having withdrawn,  
 it was -  
 RESOLVED - That the applicant be informed that  
 the Committee would be willing to give favourable  
 consideration to a fresh application for  
 the use of No. 118 Victoria Road as a betting  
 office.

Deeper investigation reveals that over a period of time this applicant from out of town had been trying to get a foothold in Darlington. He had made half-a-dozen unsuccessful applications for various locations and now wondered if the committee was waging a vendetta against him. In fact the committee members had no means

of knowing that a succession of applications had been from the same person. The committee felt rather guilty when they heard that the applicant had spent money renting some of the premises pending a decision. Accordingly they looked again at the various addresses he had submitted and promised a favourable reconsideration of a new application for one of the sites previously rejected (it was across the street from an existing betting office).

An interesting case which came close to being an example of the committee changing its mind is particularly worth recording because it made use of an unusual device to enable a minority of Development Committee members to seek a wider opinion. The "Northern Despatch" of Wednesday 24th April 1963 reports on the previous day's General Purposes Committee meeting when there was some discussion about a plan for converting an old cinema into a supermarket. The report indicates that the Development Committee had given outline permission but was unhappy about the plans in detail because unloading facilities were inadequate. The appropriate minutes are as follows.

6th February 1963 D 168 (12) EMPIRE CINEMA - PROPOSED SUPERMARKET - Submitted - Outline application 4490/3 for the conversion of the former Empire Cinema premises .... for use as a supermarket.

RESOLVED - That planning permission be granted subject to the subsequent approval of the authority with respect to matters relating to the design and external appearance of the building and the means of access thereto, and to the condition that provision shall be made to the satisfaction of the authority for the loading and unloading of motor vehicles within the curtilage of the premises.

6th March 1963 D 188 (5) EMPIRE CINEMA - PROPOSED SUPERMARKET - Submitted - Plans and details of the designs elevation and means of access of the proposed supermarket at the former Empire Cinema premises at the junction of Quebec Street and East Street,

following outline permission ....

**RESOLVED** - That the officers be instructed to discuss the matter with the applicants with a view to improving the provision to be made for the loading and unloading of motor vehicles within the curtilage of the premises.

3rd April 1963

**D 206 (3) EMPIRE CINEMA** The Borough Surveyor .... reported upon discussions which had taken place with the developers' architect .... a double loading bay .... would .... make it uneconomical ....

Three of the members (being not less than one-third of the members present and voting) having so demanded, the matter thereupon stood referred to the General Purposes Committee in accordance with Minute P48/Oct/54.

23rd April 1963  
G.P.

**P 96 Town and Country Planning - Empire Cinema - Submitted - Minute D 206 (3)** .... with regard to the application for approval of alterations to the Empire Cinema building for use as a super-market, pursuant to outline planning permission granted .... which, pursuant to Standing Order No. 74(2)(ii) stands referred to this Committee for determination.

**RESOLVED** - That the application be referred back to the Development Committee for further consideration.

8th May 1963

**D 240 EMPIRE CINEMA** .... Further consideration was given to the question of loading facilities

....  
**RESOLVED** - That it be a recommendation to the General Purposes Committee that the plan be not approved.

28th May 1963

**P 113 Town and Country Planning - Empire Cinema** .... with regard to loading facilities ....

**RESOLVED** - That the recommendation of the Development Committee be approved.

At the meeting on 6th March 1963 the committee had been quite sure the unloading facilities were inadequate - twelve members were present, the chairman presiding. At the meeting on 3rd April, 1963 the committee was evidently divided; but only eight members were present, six of the original twelve, plus two members who were not present at the 6th March meeting one of whom, the vice chairman, presided at the reduced meeting. The role of the officers is crucial in determining the extent to which the committee is consistent in these circumstances. It is interesting that once the matter was passed to the General Purposes Committee it became that committee's business to confirm or alter the decision as it chose.

Another important change-of-mind case concerned the construction of a petrol filling station. There was a delayed reaction to the cancellation of earlier permission to build but eventually the case became subject to considerable publicity, pronouncements by local politicians, correspondence in the press, and it became a minor election issue which may have contributed to the Labour chairman of the Development Committee losing his seat at the 1967 election and to Labour losing control of the Council. However the circumstances which led to the eventual rejection of this particular planning application have hitherto not been properly explained. Although at the time several councillors were concerned about the changed decision in this case, the only press report consisted of three inches at the bottom of a page in the "Northern Despatch" on 5th June 1964. In this report the chairman of the Development Committee was said to have assured a councillor that a decision to allow a petrol filling station was going to be reconsidered. Two years later the event was more newsworthy. A four column headline in the

"Northern Echo", 25th June 1966, announced: "Angry Tory presses for £13,000 'bungle' probe"; and on 28th June 1966, the reported reply was headed, "Rugby bungle? 'Don't talk rubbish'".

The angry Tory had announced that he was sending a letter to the District Auditor to ask for an investigation of a compensation payment of nearly £13,000 to Darlington Rugby Club by the Corporation, and to ask if a surcharge should be made on the members of the Council responsible. The councillor had already tried to put an amendment to the "payment" minute in the Council. He explained the history of the events as they appeared to him, in roughly these terms:

"After outline planning permission was given, the club accepted stringent conditions about landscaping, fencing and advertising which were imposed to protect the Corporation.

"The next we heard was that it had been put on the agenda for the Development Committee meeting by the chairman, who never explained why. Between the dates of the Development Committee meetings the Rugby Club had sold the land. When planning permission was revoked the sale was off."

The actual minutes give the bare facts.

22nd April 1964 D 215 Town and Country Planning (6) (ii)  
 PROPOSED PETROL FILLING STATION - Submitted -  
 Outline application .... for permission to  
 use a certain piece of land .... forming part  
 of the Rugby Football Ground for the erection  
 of a petrol filling station.  
 RESOLVED - That permission be refused on the  
 grounds that  
 (i) the proposal does not accord with the  
 provisions of the Development Plan in which  
 the site is shown as part of a private open  
 space; and  
 (ii) the proposal would be injurious to the  
 visual amenities of the area in that it would



## BETTING OFFICES

Betting offices were legalised by the Betting and Gaming Act, 1960 as from 1st August, 1961, so that neither the magistrates nor the planning authority are entitled to take into account moral or ethical considerations when dealing with applications for betting office licences or planning permission to use premises for that purpose.

Extract from a circular issued in March 1963 advising Development Committee members about their powers in relation to betting shops. The policy makers had been making some strange decisions in this connection.

In June 1964 a decision by the Development Committee concerning the location of a petrol filling station on a rugby field had important consequences when it became headline news in 1966.

THE NORTHERN ECHO, Saturday, June 25, 1966

# Angry Tory presses for £13,000 'bungle' probe

THE NORTHERN ECHO, Tuesday, June 28, 1966

# Rugby bungle? 'Don't talk rubbish'—

detract from the appearance of the proposed ornamental lay-out of the forecourts of the factories in course of erection on each side of Yarm Road.

6th May 1964

D 233 (25) RUGBY FOOTBALL GROUND, McMULLEN ROAD - PROPOSED PETROL FILLING STATION - Submitted - Outline application for permission to erect a petrol filling station ....

RESOLVED - That outline planning permission be granted subject to the subsequent approval of the authority with regard to the siting, design and external appearance of the proposed buildings and the means of access thereto, to the number, design and siting of the pumps, and the following conditions ....

(there followed a list of particular points the Committee particularly wished to have safeguarded).

3rd June 1964

D 11 RUGBY FOOTBALL GROUND, McMULLEN ROAD - PROPOSED PETROL FILLING STATION

RESOLVED - (a) That an Order on the form now submitted be and the same is hereby made under Section 27 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962, revoking the conditional outline planning permission ....

(b) That the Order be submitted to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for confirmation.

(c) That the proposed developers and their agents be notified forthwith.

The final decision cost the Corporation £13,000. The muddle is partly explained by the membership and attendance at the above three meetings. At the meeting on 22nd April 1964 twelve members were present. The chairman and one or two other councillors had some detailed knowledge of the area concerned and were strongly opposed to the proposal apparently because of the proximity of the site to a traffic roundabout but also because the committee had lately insisted on a lawn type lay-out for a nearby new factory and the petrol filling station was a possible blot on the carefully

controlled landscape. The Borough Surveyor (Planning Officer) appeared to be on the side of those opposing the scheme. The "injurious to amenities" objection was written into the minute.

At the meeting on 6th May 1964, ten of the original twelve attended plus another member not present at the earlier meeting. But the Town Clerk and Borough Surveyor were absent and several opposing members credited with attendance either left early or were busy on some other matter connected with the work of the committee. Representatives of the Borough Surveyor and Borough Architect produced a lay-out of the petrol station which met most of the requirements with regard to the visual aspects; and in response to a question, from a neutral councillor who was anxious to have expert guidance, one of these deputising officers expressed the view that the Borough Surveyor would be satisfied with the revised scheme. This assurance swayed sufficient members and the plan was agreed.

At the next meeting of the Labour group the chairman of the Development Committee made scathing comments about the reversal of policy because Labour councillors had been among those who had accepted the revised scheme. One factor in favour of the proposal was a previous decision by the committee which implied that petrol stations were better sited on the outskirts of the town than on busy roads in the middle. Those who supported the second application were entitled to feel that this was not necessarily a reversal of policy for, as has already been explained, fresh applications were frequently allowed when certain amendments had been made.

However the chairman of the committee had no difficulty in obtaining a group decision to revoke permission. Of course there were no professional experts present at the meeting of the political

group; on the other hand there were additional elected members in attendance who had an interest in that part of the town but who did not serve on the Development Committee. The possible financial consequences were under-estimated or not comprehended. The Labour councillors dutifully complied with the group decision at the next meeting of the Development Committee, when the chairman put the matter on the agenda again and the Planning Officer supported the chairman's view. At this meeting seven of the nine members present were Labour. The main supporter of the scheme was absent.

According to the record eight elected members attended all three meetings but in fact two or three of these were not present at that part of the "middle" meeting when the controversial decision was made. The committee members with the strongest views were not continuously present. The others showed some over-reliance on the guidance of the administration which on this occasion was as unsure as the elected members. It would be logical to conclude that if an officer wanted to sway the committee deliberately circumstances might frequently enable him to exercise real power in this way.

In addition, theoretically, officers could affect policy because they often phrase the minute upon which action is based. An attack was made on officials, reported in the "Northern Despatch" 5th July 1963, where a headline appears: "Unauthorised approach by officials." The councillor had argued that the officers were organising their priorities wrongly by submitting sketch plans for a grammar school swimming pool to the Ministry of Education as this conflicted with understood policy, but the minute upon which the councillor was commenting was clear enough:

24th June 1963 Q 49 Queen Elizabeth Grammar School - Swimming Pool - Submitted - Sketch plans of the proposed scheme for a Swimming Bath and ancillary plant .... with recommendation of the Governors.  
**RESOLVED** - That the recommendation of the Governors be adopted and that the sketch plans be approved and forwarded to the Ministry of Education.

It has been impossible to find any conclusive evidence that minutes, as an information record, were slanted for the convenience of officials but one incident is recalled. In April 1963 the Development Committee discussed for a second time the problem of abandoned motor cars which were being broken up for scrap metal on clearance sites. The Town Clerk expressed the view that it would be extremely difficult to catch and deal with offenders. In the middle of a discussion about what other towns were doing about the problem the concensus of opinion on the committee hardened in favour of taking some firm action locally to deal with offenders. But perhaps the problems involved in taking such firm action daunted the officials. The Town Clerk was left to draft the minute.

17th April 1963 D 229 Land in Clearance Areas - UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT .... The Town Clerk .... submitted a letter from the .... Association of Municipal Corporations .... that there was little prospect of general legislation .... The Town Clerk reported that he proposed to communicate with the other towns named in the letter as having had experience of the problem, and would report further in due course.  
**RESOLVED** - That the position be noted.

To eliminate all risk of being misunderstood the onus is really on councillors to frame their own resolutions. At the beginning of 1965 the Special Committee acquiesced in a proposal to set up a new sub-committee of the Finance Committee to deal with

certain aspects of proposals for building the new town hall. The sub-committee would have effectively taken out of the Supremo's hands practically all its powers with regard to the new town hall.

26th January 1965 M 7 NEW MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS - The Committee  
Special Committee considered whether it was possible in view of the staffing position, particularly in the Borough Architect's Department, to devise any method of securing a start on the erection of the new Municipal Buildings before April 1966, which had been the earliest date hitherto contemplated.

The Borough Architect outlined different procedures that might be adopted ....

After a full discussion it was -

RESOLVED - That it be a recommendation to the Finance Committee that a special Sub-Committee be set up to consider ways and means of achieving an early start on the site and with power to settle all matters in connection with the design, internal planning, fittings, finish and all other matters in connection with the buildings.

Elsewhere in the same book of minutes it is recorded that the Finance Committee had acted on the recommendation and set up the new sub-committee but this was still-born, partly because its membership had the minority party in the majority. In the debate that occurred in full Council on 4th February 1965 one alderman explained that he had been led to believe that the sub-committee would only deal with relatively unimportant matters of interior design. When he saw the wording of the minute it seemed to be an entirely different matter altogether that he had agreed to. Some suggestion has been made that the officers were anxious to see the function transferred because of the unpopularity, with them, of the chairman of the Supremo but this was impossible to verify; it was also suggested that a rival in the power game, the chairman

of the Finance Committee, may have been sympathetic to the transfer. At all events the minute of the Special Committee was amended on 4th February at the full Council meeting to require the Special Committee itself to investigate ways and means of making an early start on the site, which was after all one of the main reasons for creating the Special Committee in the first place.

One of the top three problems for the Council in this period was the move towards a Sixth Form College type of comprehensive education. The basis of the change was a scheme devised by the Chief Education Officer, Mr. D. Peter, M.A., M.Ed., dubbed by the local press - the "Peter plan."

The significance of the written record looms large when the basis for devising Darlington's plan for reorganisation is examined. When it is realised that this is a scheme for a fundamental reconstruction of the system of secondary education the chief officer's interpretation of the committee's instructions is a key factor. The initial plan arose out of three decisions of the Education Committee in July 1963, as follows:

- Q 77 To consider the feasibility of introducing the teaching of modern languages into the curriculum of secondary modern schools.
- Q 98 To approve the preparation of plans for the second secondary school at Haughton following the inclusion of this project by the Minister of Education in the 1964-1965 building programme.
- Q 117 To consider the present methods of selection for, and the organisation of, secondary education in the town.

On the basis of those decisions the Chief Education Officer felt he was entitled to advance a scheme which abolished eleven-plus selection, created neighbourhood secondary schools for all children until the age sixteen, meant the disappearance entirely of a girls' high school, entailed the conversion of the grammar school - the original foundation of which goes back to before Queen Elizabeth I

- into a Sixth Form College (i.e. no pupils under the age sixteen), and anticipated a pattern of mixed schools throughout the town. An opponent of the scheme said in the Council debate which gave the green light to the Peter plans:

"This plan came as a complete surprise to me although I am a member of the Education Committee. Things started off very quickly as a request, unanimously backed, for a report considering the abolition of the eleven-plus. Suddenly it had turned into a full scale revolutionary plan for education." ("Northern Despatch" 7th February 1964).

The Councillor concerned might have been less surprised by the scheme if his attendance record in the past months at Education Committee meetings had been greater than one, but the point he makes is clear enough.

The original report was considered by the Education Committee, the teachers' organisations in the town, and the governors of the secondary schools. The governors of the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and the Girls' High School offered their comments at a meeting where the clerk to the governors was the Chief Education Officer, author of the plan. This was a special meeting held on 12th November 1963. There were ten of a possible twelve members present and because of a division of opinion a list of points was submitted for the Education Committee to consider, rather than a single resolution - procedure which could be interpreted as a manipulation to avoid a flat rejection by a majority vote. When the minutes of this special meeting came up for confirmation at the next governors' meeting on 20th January 1964 some governors seemed to feel that the record of their previous discussion was insufficiently indicative of the amount of opposition to the Peter plan. The minutes were not approved as a correct record until a compromise phrase was inserted. The original minute offered by the clerk to the governors for their



approval read,

"The particular points to which the Governors directed their attention and to which they felt that the Education Committee should give special consideration before attempting to revise the pattern of secondary school organisation in the town are as follows -"

The alteration consisted of the insertion between the third and fourth words above,

"of objection to the plan."

A revised scheme was produced in January 1964 in the light of comments received from all sources. The main change consisted of a recognition that the secondary schools, in the long term, would grow to a larger size than first envisaged. The scheme was approved in principle by the Education Committee at its meeting on 27th January 1964, subject to further consultations with teachers' organisations about the revised plan. This was to be accomplished by setting up an Ad Hoc Joint Committee of headteachers, teachers and five members of the Education Committee. The minute was confirmed by the full Council on 6th February 1964.

Under minute Q 459 of a meeting of the Education Committee in March 1964 five members were appointed to attend the Department of Education and Science to explain and discuss the proposals. The delegation went to London on Friday 5th June 1964. No definite pronouncement was made by the Department at this time but the councillors felt that their reception had been sympathetic. Soon afterwards permission was received for the unification of a boys' secondary school with a girls' secondary school, on an existing site, and this was seen as an indication that the reorganisation would take place.

The first meeting of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee took place in

the town hall on Monday 20th July 1964. The eighth and last meeting was held on Monday 12th April 1965 by which time the Joint Committee was in a position to finalise a report to the Education Committee on such points as the zoning of schools, whether they should be mixed, etc. The plan emerged more or less unscathed. In 1967 an incredible attempt was made by the Conservatives, on regaining control, to stop the scheme but such was the state of their own unpreparedness and almost universal hostility from the rest of the community that Conservatives had to give way and restate the plan.

The relevance of the wording and interpretation of minutes, in the early stages of the scheme, has been explained. Two other communication aspects are noteworthy. In a letter to members of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee dated 23rd July, 1964, the Chief Education Officer made this suggestion:

"You will recall that it was decided to discuss at the next meeting the first topic listed in Minute 3. It would be of help to me in preparing a report on this for circulation to the Committee in advance of the meeting, if members who have any views on it could let me have these in writing by not later than Friday 11th September."

Forewarned is forearmed?

The recording of views at meetings of the Ad Hoc Joint Committee may have also been managed either very fairly or very cleverly, according to how the procedure is interpreted. All objections and favourable arguments were comprehensively noted so that it was impossible for anyone to say that the report to the Education Committee did not contain their views. This procedure also meant that any accidental victories for opponents of the scheme, arising out of unlikely alliances between pro-grammar school (the minority of the committee) and pro-comprehensive

this report has been accepted as a true record by all those present at the meeting (including the Headmaster of the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School and the Headmistress of the High School).

The particular points <sup>of objection to the plan</sup> to which the Governors directed their attention and to which they felt that the Education Committee should give special consideration before attempting to revise the pattern of secondary school organisation in the town are as follows :-

### Extracts from Peter plan documents.

Following a meeting at which the Peter plan had been debated, the grammar school and girls' high school governors insisted, January 1964, on amending the minutes (prepared by the author of the scheme himself) to emphasise opposition to the reorganisation.

When Ad Hoc Committee meetings were to be held to discuss the scheme the author sought to be advised in advance of possible comments and criticisms.

EDUCATION OFFICE  
NORTH LODGE  
DARLINGTON

PLEASE ADDRESS  
LETTERS TO  
THE CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

23rd July, 1964.

Dear Councillor,

### Secondary Reorganisation

Attached you will find a copy of the Minutes of

It would be of help to me in preparing a report on this for circulation to the Committee in advance of the meeting, if members who have any views on it which they would like to express could let me have these in writing by not later than Friday, 11th September.

school supporters, on a particular issue (e.g. Should schools be mixed?), was likely to be averted, by avoiding counting heads except in respect of fairly innocuous decisions on single points within some larger context. Even the pro-grammar school representatives had to concede many minor advantages of the proposed changes. Thus when interpreting the Ad Hoc Joint Committee's report each member of the Education Committee could read into it what he wanted.

As a scheme its main defect may have been to rely on too many school units, in order to utilise existing buildings, rather than on a small number of large schools which would maximise the variety of teaching specialists and equipment in any one school. The scheme contemplated a rising intake into each school but this was an afterthought based on doubtful Hailsham predictions. The suggestion that existing secondary modern teachers could not adapt to a G.C.E. curriculum was effectively scotched by describing it as a slur on the profession - which teacher on the Ad Hoc Committee was going to contradict the Chief Education Officer and argue that he or his colleagues could not cope?

The final decision was determined by pre-conceived ideas perhaps based on party doctrine but one cannot avoid the feeling that it was the elected members who were being used by the administration, rather than the other way around. There is a sense in which the Labour Council got what it wanted, without knowing what it wanted, or how it got it.

## CHAPTER 6

## INFLUENCE OF PARTY SYSTEM ON POLICY MAKING

The Labour Party took control of Darlington town Council in May 1956. They lost control four years later but regained it again in May 1963, that is half-way through the period studied for the purposes of this thesis. Subsequently Labour lost control again in May 1967. When Labour has not been in office there has been a combination of Conservatives and Independents in control of the Council.

Non-committed independents declined from eleven in number during 1961-1962 to three in 1965-1966. The same three were still on the Council in 1968 - two of them aldermen presiding over committees although by this time the Conservatives had a majority over all others. A straight Conservative v. Independent clash at the polls has usually been avoided. One Liberal lasted for two years (retired before his term was up in order to move from the town) and another for three years (defeated) - both in non-Labour wards.

Two Labour councillors went into the wilderness. One resigned from the Labour Party in May 1960, found he could not get back in again and was defeated by the official Labour candidate when next he came up for election. The other rebel lost the Labour whip, for defying group decisions, in 1962, and was later expelled from the party for assisting the first rebel against an official party candidate. Both claimed to be supporters of the Labour Party in principle but they have been listed as "others" in the summarising

list at the end of table No. 6. This table shows the political allegiance of aldermen and councillors during the period covered by this study. Formal meetings of the Conservative and Labour groups of councillors took place regularly. The Independents have been observed going into a huddle before some particular decisions which must have seemed to them to have called for co-ordinated effort. The two Liberals who were in office for a short period belonged to a rudimentary organisation and it is hard to see who could have disciplined them. Their candidates were reputed to have been chosen on the basis of a casual meeting on High Row, a shopping street in Darlington.

In the present context the object is to consider the extent to which the political organisation of the councillors actually influences the policies pursued by the Corporation. The controlling group normally takes all the chairmanships but in the period up to 1963, before Labour regained the Council, a Labour councillor (later alderman) was allowed by both sides to remain as chairman of the Civil Defence Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee, a service in which he had a long-standing interest.

An effort is made to maintain something like proportional political distribution of the councillors to the various committees. The political majority can be cancelled out, of course, at any particular committee meeting, by absences. The membership of the committees in the early 1960s was negotiated by a sub-committee of the General Purposes Committee usually elected in February; it was referred to as the "Cloak and Dagger" Committee for it consisted of key political representatives who ascertained at political group meetings the committee preferences of members and then slotted them into vacancies, usually giving first choice to senior members. The

appointments were formally agreed by the General Purposes Committee at the beginning of each municipal year, based on the Cloak and Dagger proposals. Now-a-days the sub-committee is listed as "Constitution of Committees etc" and is elected along with the major committees at the beginning of the municipal year. Thus the Cloak and Dagger image of faceless men making recommendations may have been removed. The significance of the "etc" may be to have a sub-committee to handle unusual business, for example, to avoid a repetition of the Northern Economic Planning Council nomination incident (see Chapter Four).

One way to assess the effectiveness of official party policies on decisions of the Council is to consider policy statements issued by the two major parties at local government election time. Some policy points from various election addresses can scarcely be reconciled with subsequent performance. In their address of May 1960, an election which led to their winning back control of the Council, the Conservatives gave pride of place to this statement:

"We intend to restrict expenditure and thereby reduce the rates. By our prudent policies progress and improvements in local services will be made."

In their three following years in office the rates rose every year - in the second year by 3/- in the £.

All the Labour candidates in elections between May 1961 and May 1962 (i.e. including by-elections) issued an election address which included this:

"Labour candidates believe that a separate Housing Management Department, and an efficient maintenance service, based on directly employed labour, are essential to the proper use of existing Council property."

The statement was re-printed and delivered to voters during a by-

election campaign on behalf of a Labour candidate in February 1962. A debate took place in the Council chamber on 1st February 1962, on a notice of motion. The "Northern Despatch" reported the next days:

"The town Council has rejected a suggestion that the set-up should be reorganised to create a new and separate housing management department. Ald .... (leader of the Labour group) poured cold water on the idea .... 'I think it would be a great extravagance,' he said.

"Coun .... said he spoke on behalf of the Labour group and that Labour representatives gave no support at all to the suggestion."

The explanation of the contradiction is that the motion had been put forward by the Labour councillor who had just lost the Labour whip. Nevertheless one is driven to the conclusion that policy statements put out by the party machine can easily be disregarded by those in a position where they might try to implement them.

The Conservative election address was usually drafted quite expertly by the local Conservative agent. The Labour Party had a Policy Committee (sometimes called the Propaganda Committee - nobody seemed to know which title was correct) on which Labour councillors were represented but did not necessarily attend. The usual practice was for one member of the committee to submit a draft statement which the others amended as they felt necessary. An author of one of these statements explains that the Policy Committee could be diverted from looking too closely at the "meat" of the draft by being asked to decide between alternative sub-headings, for example - "Jobs" or "Employment", to settle spelling mistakes, or choose the right slogan for the front page. But this casual method of preparing such statements does not seem to have been abused as all the election addresses of the period are



characteristic of the respective party lines and often ultra-cautious.

One wonders if anyone was really influenced by such promises as:

"We shall continue to manage the town's affairs so that extra calls will only be made on ratepayers so far as it is necessary to maintain services and meet the new needs of a progressive authority."  
(Labour Party in 1964, on Finance).

"To be 'Go Ahead' and 'Balance the Budget' is based on good planning." (Conservative candidate in 1965).

Some of the promises were nothing short of base cunning:

"We will seek to lift expenditure per head on books bought by the Public Library."  
(Labour Party 1964).

It seems the estimate for expenditure on library books was automatically raised every year in any case to allow for increased prices.

Both parties regarded rate rises as a major influence on the electorate and found themselves alternately repeating each other's complaints and excuses. The Labour Party made a group decision which could have had a significant policy effect when it decided to vote against the rate that was to be recommended by the Conservative controlled Council in April 1963, as a protest against broken promises. But the Conservative-Independent alliance was not fully represented at the Council meeting when the vote was taken - the minority group actually had a majority in the chamber. If all the Labour councillors had obeyed the group decision the recommendation would not have been carried and some degree of administrative chaos would have ensued. But a number of Labour members broke the group decision and abstained so the proposal was carried - probably to everyone's relief. There was no disciplinary action taken against the abstainers.

There were two committees in which party policy decisions might have really mattered during this period - the Development Committee and the Education Committee. In order to assess if the elected members, through their political affiliations, were indeed important it is necessary to examine in detail the key issues dealt with by these committees. There were three of these - factory closures and industrial development, town centre development and the reorganisation of secondary education.

So far as the factory closures were concerned the Labour Party certainly had a clear enough attitude but there was no discernible difference between the policies pursued by the different parties in committee. The Labour Party publicised the factory closure problems outside the Council chamber, and postured about it at meetings of the full town Council, for the very good reason that several members of the Labour group and many Labour voters were affected. The members of the local Labour Party also had an eye on converting a Conservative Parliamentary seat to Labour in the 1964 general election (which they did). The Labour candidate attached himself to the front of a protest march by railway workshop men shortly before the election.

Darlington's railway heritage is now mainly of historical interest. Apart from pioneering locomotive drawn railways the town had come to be extensively based on railway engineering. The Darlington Railway Locomotive Works was opened at North Road on New Year's Day 1863. A separate Boilershop was built at Stooperdale in 1911. The Faverdale Wagon Works was opened in 1923.

Between 1963-1965 2,500 or about 8% of all Darlington's employed males were affected by closure of these three British

Railways establishments. Certain Darlington suppliers of the North Road Works were also affected by the closures although a number of engineering firms with a long history continue in business in Darlington, including some minor companies which provide tracks, switches and crossings and other railway plant and foundry products. Two other engineering firms of consequence also closed down in the early 1960s. One of these was Robert Stephenson and Hawthorn's Ltd (latterly part of the English Electric Co Ltd) diesel locomotive manufacturers - a firm that could be traced back to a company formed by George and Robert Stephenson and Edward Pease. Its closure affected several hundred extra workers. The Darlington Forge Ltd, founded 1845, associated with the marine, electrical and engineering industries of the north-east closed down in 1967 affecting about 650 workers. This was the main extent of the factory closure problem.

In the summer of 1962 the town was awaiting an announcement from Dr. Beeching about the effect of his plans for reorganising the railways on Darlington's workshops. The N.U.R. was discussing an announcement of ninety redundancies to occur in August. The Director of the North East Development Council was awaiting a reply from Mr. Marples, Minister of Transport, on the future plans for Darlington's workshops. The future of the workshops had been uncertain throughout the post-war period. In 1960 a special sub-committee of the Development Committee had been formed to promote the coming of new industry but there is no evidence that it had achieved anything so far.

On 23rd June 1962 the Conservative chairman of the Development Committee told the "Northern Despatch" industrial reporter: "... Things have reached a delicate stage, I cannot say what we have in mind."

Whatever he had in mind, the chairman promised the full

Council on 6th July 1962, "to move heaven and earth and make every move possible" to obtain information on the future of North Road railway workshops. He admitted that earlier information that perhaps two hundred people would become redundant was unsatisfactory because more than this number had been affected already.

A railway alderman alleged that top people in the railway trade unions knew that railway workshops would be closed. A councillor declared that any day he might receive a slip in his wage packet advising him that his services were no longer required. Another councillor explained that he was a railway trade union official - Darlington had been told that owing to changes in the north-east region there would be two hundred or more redundancies but already the figure was over three hundred.

The minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 24th July 1962 indicate what the chairman of the Development Committee had been planning.

P 16 NORTH ROAD and FAVERDALE WORKSHOPS - The Chairman of the Development Committee reported upon the discussions which the deputation had had with Dr. Beeching regarding the future of North Road and Faverdale Workshops.

The report was circulated as a confidential document but the whole statement was in fact published by the local newspapers, an action which subsequently led to a complaint to the Press Council.

Dr. Beeching had explained that recent redundancies did not arise out of any long term plan. Sir Steuart Mitchell (member of the B.T.C. responsible for workshops) had told the deputation that the position was still fluid and that the deputation had called at just the right time!

Perhaps just in time to convince the B.T.C. that they could

get away with a wholesale slashing of railway jobs in Darlington - for the deputation had stressed, "the impossibility of making any plans for the industries of Darlington until the B.T.C. gave an indication of the level of employment that could be expected at North Road and Faverdale." The deputation learned nothing.

The Development Committee met for its regular meeting on 19th September 1962 and the minutes include the following items:

19th September 1962 D 84 RAILWAY WORKSHOPS - The Chairman and the Town Clerk reported on the statement which had been issued by the British Transport Commission at noon that day of the decision to close the Faverdale Workshops by June 1963 and the North Road Workshops by 1965.

RESOLVED - (a) That this Council deplore the decision of the British Transport Commission to close the railway workshops and express their determination to press forward by all means in their power to attract new industry to Darlington.

(b) That the Town Clerk be authorised to issue a statement to the Press immediately.

D 85 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT - In the light of .... the decision of the British Transport Commission to close the railway workshops, consideration was given to the constitution of the Industrial Development Sub-Committee. The Town Clerk reported that he understood the Board of Trade intended to declare Darlington to be a development district for the purposes of Part I of the Local Employment Act, 1960, so that all the facilities available under that Act would be available for projects in the town.

RESOLVED (a) That the Sub-Committee be re-appointed as originally constituted with the addition of two members .... (Two Labour members of the Development Committee employed in the workshops)

(b) That the Chairman convene meetings of the Sub-Committee on short notice when occasion may arise.

During the fortnight after the sub-committee had been re-constituted five sub-committee meetings were held. For Darlington this was a crucial time. If the policy making function of political parties has any significance there would surely be some evidence of it now. The next full meeting of the town Council was on 4th October 1962. The Labour Party was in opposition. One prominent Labour Party spokesman attacked the Conservative chairman and vice-chairman as hypocrites and called for their resignations for supporting the government, which was closing the workshops, while at the same time claiming to be trying to stop the closures. "There was nothing done about this until recently," he claimed.

The chairman reported that the Board of Trade and the North East Development Council had been consulted; proposals to make land available to new firms were afoot; publicity material was in preparation. The committee had been hampered before the announcement of the closures because free negotiation with one or two potential new firms might have encouraged the B.T.C. to close their workshops in Darlington. Potential customers were awaiting moves by the Board of Trade.

Labour councillors were now in the majority on the re-constituted Industrial Development Sub-Committee although the Conservatives were in control. One Labour member of the sub-committee explained that his workmates had abused him for trying to get new industry to come to the town when the fate of the railway workshops was still undecided.

The truth is that the happenings on the industrial front were out of the control of both local political parties. It is inconceivable that either would have failed to seek alternative industry in the new circumstances after the closures were announced.

The important thing for Darlington was that new firms did come. The attraction for industry was the government's system of grants, the expected pool of labour, and Darlington's suitable growth zone location. The economic advantages had already been demonstrated in the post-1945 period when, for example, a site in Lingfield Lane had been transformed into the largest knitting yarn plant in the world because six Paton and Baldwin factories in other towns were centralised in Darlington. In 1967 this firm was employing 3,500 people, mainly females, at its Darlington factory and new establishments had been built in other parts of the north-east because of the shortage of female labour in the town. Alexandre Ltd opened a pilot factory in 1946 and by the 1960s were employeeding 600 people, also mainly female labour, to make men's clothing.

In the 1960s there was a renewed influx of industry. Faverdale Wagon Works had not been under quite the same cloud as the North Road Works and the closure decision in September 1962 surprised many people. On 1st February 1963 the chairman of the Development Committee told the town Council that a joint agreement had been reached with the British Railways Board by which Darlington was to pay £125,000 for the works, and then split any profit from rents 50-50 with British Railways over twenty years. The factory was due to close in June 1963 with 360 men facing redundancy.

On 15th March 1963 Conder (Northern) Ltd., structural engineers, announced they would be taking over part of the site. Next, a small Darlington firm moved to the site to enable it to expand. The Canopy Construction Co. of Leeds announced they would be moving in with fifty jobs becoming immediately available. A brewery equipment and engineering firm followed (but note, four-and-a-half years later its 120 employees were made redundant). A

fifth firm announced it was taking up a site in October 1963. A year after the first moves to create the new estate the site was providing more jobs than the old Wagon Works had done.

Meanwhile the Council had made available for industrial development certain land which had previously been designated for a municipal airport. Negotiations were afoot for the coming of industry to this site. On 7th August 1963 the "Northern Echo" announced that Chrysler Motors Ltd and the Cummins Engine Co. of Indiana were to launch a new company, Chrysler Cummins Ltd., to make diesel engines in Britain. Their £5½m factory was formally opened on 13th July 1965 by the President of the Board of Trade. In November 1963 the Cummins Engine Co. decided to take an adjacent site to make parts for Chrysler Cummins diesel engines. In the same month the Torrington Co. Ltd announced they were to build a £750,000 factory on a nearby site in Darlington to make precision roller bearings.

The way was smoothed for the new arrivals by the action of the Council. For example there had been the important decision to buy up the Faverdale Wagon Works. However this useful idea emanated not from socialist HQ, as one might have thought likely, but from a semi-official suggestion from a Board of Trade officer, passed on to the Development Committee by its Conservative Party chairman. The important financial agreement was worked out by the Borough Treasurer and British Railways and owed nothing more than their endorsement to the elected members. The scheme was agreed by the whole Council with only a few temporary doubts being expressed by a sprinkling of Conservatives. The Development Committee could claim to have expedited the planning routine for making available



land and passing factory plans, but the credit for the speed and effectiveness of the Faverdale estate conversion and for the swift completion of the planning routine, must go to the permanent officials.

The party machines were glad to take whatever credit they could for the advances the Council made in establishing new industry. The new chairman of the Development Committee, after the Labour Party regained control in 1963, was given a press build-up for the progress at this time but it would be absurd to believe that the coming of new industry in the 1960s was due to anything other than the economic advantages of the Darlington location. There were complaints in the Labour group that no one knew what was going on, which further suggests that the controlling party did little to direct what was happening.

Both officers and elected members were carried along by events but the balance of importance must weigh towards the practical activities of the permanent officials rather than the political organisation of the elected members.

It should be noticed that, apart from Faverdale Wagon Works, the closed plants were left to private negotiation for new occupation. Efforts to sell the North Road railway workshops came to nothing as late as March 1967. Part of the workshops were occupied for light engineering work. In January 1968 the "Northern Echo" printed rumours, later strongly denied, of the purchase of the workshops by Leylands, the commercial vehicle builders. Subsequently Oxenhall Properties Ltd., of Reading, bought the 27-acre site to let it in lots as an industrial estate.

The former Stephenson and Hawthorn factory was taken, in 1966, by Tubeman's, stainless steel tube manufacturers, a firm which

moved from Hatfield. In May 1968 a doubling of the labour force from 200 to 400 was being planned. But later in 1968 two other firms in the same premises and under the same chairman as Tubeman's, were subject to a "takeover" and there were fears for the liquidation of Tubeman's.

The Darlington Forge factory was put up for sale, by the English Steel Corporation, a year after its closure but, like the North Road railway workshops, it suffered from its large size and the heavy nature of its machinery. No sale is reported at the time of writing this.

The Development Committee had its problems on another front. It has been explained previously how the Council set about re-developing its town centre. It is now relevant to describe the role of the Labour Party in the decisions that were made. At the end of 1961 the members of the Labour group decided that they would oppose any proposal that might lead to the existing town hall site getting into the hands of a private developer. Labour's former chairman of the Markets Committee did not want the covered market on the town hall site to be moved and in any case there was a general suspicion that projected changes would mean selling the town's heritage. In fact nobody seems to have had a very clear idea of any alternative method of development and a decision to invite a consultant to advise the Council went through without anyone really understanding what kind of advice they were seeking.

However the Labour group, at the suggestion of some members who had heard him before, had invited Councillor T. Dan Smith, Leader of Newcastle-on-Tyne Labour Council and chairman of that town's Planning Committee, to give them a private talk. His ideas

caught the imagination of one or two of Darlington's Labour councillors. The comment of one pioneer alderman, "We don't need Newcastle to tell us how to run our affairs," was a less enthusiastic viewpoint and there were others who were suspicious of outside advice.

It has already been related how in the event the Conservative controlled Development Committee eventually recommended the appointment of a consultant firm. In practice the function of this consultation, if carried to its logical end, would have been to negotiate the private development of the town hall site. The minority Labour Party had already convinced the Council as a whole that the Property Sub-Committee should not do this. Yet most of the Labour members on the Development Committee were actually satisfied with the proposed appointment when they emerged from the selection meeting which chose the consultant.

Nevertheless when the minute reached full Council the appointment split the members on party lines and it was agreed only by the casting vote of the mayor. Between the Development Committee meeting and the Council confirmation the Labour Party machine had sorted out its attitude. One Labour member of the Development Committee had been convinced that this consultant firm was merely a glorified estate agent business - efficient enough for most of the purposes its literature mentioned but essentially a property-selling concern whose best interest might not coincide with that of the county borough.

Opposition to the appointment, within the Labour group, spread as others were reminded of the alternative ideas that had been advanced by the visitor from Newcastle. Sufficient apprehension was cultivated, perhaps for the wrong reasons, for a group decision

to be made to oppose the appointment and to support an amendment to seek advice from the Civic Trust. A second proposal that an independent architect-consultant (T. Dan Smith's recommended procedure) should be engaged was also to be supported, but only if the first proposal failed. In the event both Labour suggestions were defeated, together with a third amendment from the Council's Labour rebel.

The Labour Party's last minute coherence in this instance may have influenced public opinion, through the press, and contributed to their winning control in May 1963. What is more interesting however is the limited extent to which Labour's policy decision influenced events after Labour won control. The chief spokesman for the group, who had put the Civic Trust amendment, became chairman of the Development Committee. The consultant had already been hired but there was a feeling that an alternative policy should nevertheless be considered.

One of the Labour councillors invited a few friends to discuss the possibilities in the company of T. Dan Smith and it was agreed that certain objectives should be pursued inside the group. It was planned that a number of architect consultant developers of some repute should be asked to submit comprehensive schemes for the whole town centre on a competitive basis. The chairman actually had a written proposal in his hand at one committee meeting but did not put it forward for consideration. The consultant firm previously hired had produced its comments on the Borough Architect's original outline plan for the central area and a representative advised the Development Committee to give authority to auction off the town hall site. This, at least, was not done. It was now up to the town's own departments again, which were already under-staffed, to make

the next moves, and the basis for action that the consultation had yielded probably disappointed the officers concerned. They could provide central area plans, but some means was wanted of arranging for the valuable portions of the town centre to be profitably leased to chain stores etc., to offset costs of public buildings. However the economic assessment upon which eminently fair decisions could be made were not part of the consultant's report.

The setting up of the Supremo Committee to establish priorities for the town's development was a policy decision by the Labour group arising out of a recommendation from O. & M. advisers in the Borough Surveyor's department. This also corresponded with the chief officers approach to the problem. In 1968 a revised town centre scheme was published but, at the time of writing, it is still not clear who will occupy the old town hall site.

It is true that political group decisions were made in Darlington and that, as in the case of the petrol filling station decision outlined in the previous chapter, they influenced policy. But it would be easy to exaggerate this sort of pressure. A group decision usually meant that there was virtual unanimity already. On the whole, party pressure had only a marginal impact on vital questions in the Development Committee to do with factory closures and town centre development. The other major field in which party decision making on behalf of the Council can usefully be assessed concerns the Education Committee's reorganisation policy previously examined from the flow of information standpoint.

When the Labour Party was hoping to regain power in 1963 there was an awareness that comprehensive education might not be an election winner. The party's election address advocated:

"An end to the difference between the facilities provided for Grammar School pupils and the inferior conditions in Modern Schools."

The Conservative Party had clearly indicated where they stood when they were winning votes two years earlier:

"We intend to provide better secondary education with smaller classes and no comprehensive schools."

The cautious mood of the Labour Party on this issue is accounted for by the fact that they were smarting under a rebuff from the electorate after attempting to have a new secondary school built on comprehensive lines a few years earlier. At that time the proposal had been frustrated by the Conservative Minister of Education who had insisted that eleven-plus successes would have to be allowed to opt for the local grammar school if they preferred, which would have effectively creamed off the cleverer pupils and destroyed the concept of an all-in education. The Labour Party itself had been split on the comprehensive education issue. Two of the father figures in the Labour group had been opposed to anything that would change the position of the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School.

However the possibility of a popular change emerged in 1963 when Labour regained control. The new chairman of the Education Committee found that the Chief Education Officer and himself were generally in sympathy with the need to get rid of selection, perhaps because of the growing number of parents who were dissatisfied when their children had to accept second best.

It has been explained, elsewhere, how three minutes of the Education Committee came to be the basis of a report on secondary school reorganisation which proposed non-selection, neighbourhood

secondary schools and a grammar school Sixth Form College. This was not the traditional notion of comprehensive education but it is doubtful if many Labour councillors were able to evaluate the alternatives. It did mean the end of the eleven-plus.

Discussion about the plan went ahead with local headteachers and teacher representatives. A list of pros and cons were presented to the Education Committee and a majority of members agreed to adopt the scheme. The Labour councillors made a group decision that they would support the plan in Council when the Education Committee's minute came up for confirmation. It was agreed that only the chairman of the committee was to speak to the proposal in the Council chamber.

The visitor's gallery was full. The debate was only saved from being a one-sided farce by the additional support given to the proposal by the Labour rebel, not subject to the whip, and by a lone Conservative councillor. The rest of the speakers were all against the plan but of course it was a foregone conclusion that, silent though they might be, the Labour group would fall dutifully into line. On a "named" vote they did so and the Peter plan was adopted. The Labour Party sought to create the impression that this was a non-political matter. Their posture was given credence by the abstention of a single Labour alderman (father figure in revolt), who thereby broke a group decision but no disciplinary action was taken against him subsequently; and by the lone Conservative vote in favour. The Conservatives had not made a group decision on the plan but the renegade Tory was highly unpopular with his colleagues, and eventually left the Council because of resentment about party discipline.

As a postscript to these events it is worth noticing that

the Conservatives made an election issue of the plan in May 1967, regained control, attempted to introduce an amended scheme which proved to have no popular support and had to withdraw it in favour of the original proposal. The Council vote in favour of the plan when Labour was in control was a real reflection of the feeling among Labour councillors so the group decision did not affect the outcome.

This was in any case essentially a chief officer scheme, skilfully guided through various negotiations and in the end impervious to a new set of policy makers irrespective of what group decisions had been made. On balance it seems that the influence of both Labour and Conservative Party machines was really less important than the influence of the chief professional administrator once he felt committed to his scheme for reorganising secondary education in Darlington.

Ironically in December 1968 the Conservatives were preparing a deputation to the Labour controlled Department of Education and Science to oppose building programme cuts that seemed to threaten the conversion of the Grammar School to a Sixth Form College.



## CHAPTER 7

INFLUENCE OF THE PRESS, COUNCIL PERSONALITIES  
AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, ON POLICY MAKING

The "Northern Echo" and the "Northern Despatch" are both daily newspapers printed in Darlington. The "Northern Echo", a morning paper, serves the whole region but one edition carries news about Council affairs of special interest only in Darlington.

The "Northern Despatch" is an evening paper, again it serves a wider area than Darlington but it has a smaller circulation and contains a great deal more material about local politics. There is usually a full page report of each Council meeting in the "Northern Despatch" and most speakers get a mention. The report includes a list of the councillors who attended and a "Man in the Gallery" comment. In addition on most days there are reports about committee meetings, photographs of the mayor, news about candidates and speculation about future decisions. Editorial comment is often about local government matters. Letters to the editor are regularly on the same theme.

The Darlington edition of the "Northern Echo" covers much the same area of activity but tends to be confined to hard news reported more sparingly.

While the "Northern Despatch" presumably benefits from the activities of local politicians, as a source of material, the councillors themselves use this newspaper as a platform, especially at election time. The local authority as a corporate body also

uses the press sometimes to tell the people of Darlington its plans. Residents who have a grievance will attempt to arouse the authorities to action by writing to the local newspapers and sometimes the press will give problems searching news coverage in a crusading vein.

Councillors and candidates try to catch the public's eye through the press by championing a cause, by speaking in Council, by writing letters to the press, and by having their names linked with efforts to solve a town problem when a reporter gives it his attention. In debates councillors will try to reinforce their case by pointing out, for example, the "intelligent approach of the 'Northern Despatch'" to the matter in hand - this kind of reference is likely to be noted in the news report of the speech.

In the Council chamber the elected members have been known to play the game of guessing the headline, that is, spotting the remark that will be most conspicuous in the following day's editions. More often than not it will be the impromptu comment that steals the big print but sometimes prominence can be contrived. However the leading report is as likely to be about some short crisp debate as about some long drawn out affair. Many a speaker is disappointed at the extract that appears but others owe their reputations to the "tidying up" job done in the press gallery (which is not a gallery but a table at one end of the chamber). At the same time it is fair to say that speeches were sometimes attributed to the wrong person, and similar technical errors occurred. In addition, and more seriously, for reasons that will be shortly indicated, there was an element in the reporting of the period which led to the distorted presentation of certain Labour Party affairs.

The town Council was obliged to admit the press to the full meeting, and to the General Purposes Committee (all members); in addition the press always attended the Education Committee although

the latter part of the meeting was usually conducted after a motion had been passed requiring the press and public to leave. Attempts were made, without success, to have most of the other committee meetings opened to the press. There was a debate about this in March 1961 and another when a new Liberal councillor, ex-reporter, made a speech, to a private motion on this topic, which was extensively covered on 6th March 1964 with a four column headline and a photograph of the councillor. On this second occasion the motion had the support of only eleven members and the quote which was given opening paragraph treatment was from an opponent who used the words:

"They could make us look ridiculous .... they would pick out the juicy bits .... Only mention the word 'fiddle' and it would make the headlines ...."

There was some contradiction in the policy of the Council as a corporate body in its attitude to the local press. Although the Town Clerk's department would issue statements on those committee meetings which the press did not attend something like a crisis was reached in September 1962. The attempt to discover Lord Beeching's plans for the railway workshops in the town led to the issue on 2nd August 1962 of a confidential report which included this explanation of the positions:

"The Commission were about to discuss their plans with the Trade Unions; when these discussions had taken place the plans would be announced but it was not possible to anticipate the announcement."

In other words the deputation brought back no secret information. However the concluding paragraph of the report explains that this undramatic news is only for members of the Council to read:

"It is confidential and any publication of it would be a breach of faith with the British Transport Commission who agreed to make a joint statement for the press."

Confidential Report to the Members of the Council on  
the visit of a deputation to British Transport Commission  
Headquarters.

had referred to long-term proposals. The present redundancies were not part of the Commission's long-term policy but were imposed on them by a serious reduction in mileage of locomotives and waggons. As for the long-term policy, the Commission were about to discuss their plans with the Trade Unions; when these discussions had taken place the plans would be announced but it was not possible to anticipate the announcement. Sir Steuart Mitchell told the deputation that the Commission's thoughts were still fluid and that the deputation had called on the Commission at just the right time.

The deputation went on to discuss the arrangements that

This report is circulated to the members of the Council of the County Borough of Darlington only, and at their request. It is confidential and any publication of it would be a breach of faith with the British Transport Commission who agreed to make a joint statement for the press.

Extracts from two 1962 reports reflecting the relationship between the town Council and the press. When local newspapers published a confidential report the case was referred to the Press Council which eventually found in favour of the editors concerned.

COPY

NOT TO BE PUBLISHED BEFORE 00.30 HOURS WEDNESDAY 28 NOV 62.

GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE PRESS

The Press Council adjudication, issued to-day, was: "The fact that the Council had decided to treat the report as confidential did not preclude the editors concerned making their own decisions on whether, in light of circumstances, the report should be printed in the public interest."

A councillor handed the confidential report to the two local newspapers and it was published in full. The Development Committee persuaded the Council to refer the matter to the General Council of the Press which on 28th November 1962 adjudicated as follows:

"The fact that the (town) Council had decided to treat the report as confidential did not preclude the editors concerned making their own decisions ...."

The adjudication was passed to Darlington councillors on 24th November 1962 and it was noted that the Press Council had itself headed its own document: "Not to be published before 00.30 hours Wednesday 28 Nov 1962 Confidential until released for publication."

Some subsequent documents from Darlington Council were marked, "Copyright Reserved." But thereafter efforts were made to collaborate with the press. For example the consultant report on town centre re-development was passed to the press in good time to provide a prepared layout and full coverage on the appointed day in 1963. But clearly local newspapers did not lightly defer to the wishes of the local Council.

Certainly the "Northern Despatch" was not afraid of expressing views of its own. Man in the Gallery would acknowledge a coherent speech when he thought it reasonable to do so but was also capable of this:

"As an example of the kind of waffle which tends to inhibit local government in an age of growing awareness by the younger generation the performance by the (Labour Party)<sup>x</sup> Streets Committee chairman on the question of pedestrian crossings would be hard to beat."

The Viewpoint editorial in the "Northern Despatch" is ready to name and support a councillor who seems to be on the right lines

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<sup>x</sup> The explanation in brackets is mine - ES

but is also capable of: "There are some strange bed-fellows" "He missed the point." For the best example of commitment the "Northern Despatch" has to be quoted in a relatively recent case where the proposals for educational reorganisation had come up for re-appraisal by the Conservatives after a change in control:

"This is not really a matter of political theory; it is a question of administrative incompetence, mixed with ignorance and arrogance. First the Council officers were not consulted about the new proposals .... then they were slighted and abused .... They (the newly elected Conservatives)<sup>x</sup> are shaming Darlington ...."

.... And much more in the same vein. In the end, as indicated elsewhere, the new policy makers climbed down and the Chief Education Officer's scheme went ahead as originally devised.

In the 1962-1965 period the press treatment of local affairs was bound up with certain personalities on the local Council. The public image of the chairman of a committee is unlikely to be closely related to his full-time occupation or his professional qualifications. Labour's chairman of the Education Committee, 1963-1967, Coun. CX, was dignified rather than colourful and his close liaison with his chief officer, and dedication to the projected changes, adequately compensated for his manual occupation. But such a personality is less newsworthy than the one who seems to be seeking the limelight deliberately.

Practically all the reports about particular individuals arose out of the activities of left-wingers. The public image the Labour Party was presenting seemed to indicate it was bent on self-destruction. One or two individualists on the Council were largely responsible for Labour's worsening image.

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x The explanation in brackets is mine - ES

Northern Despatch, Friday, April 7, 1967

## Get on with it

AS an example of the kind of waffle which tends to inhibit local government in an age of growing awareness by the younger generation the performance by the Streets Committee chairman on the question of pedestrian crossings would be hard to beat.

The particular road under discussion was

Extracts from press attacks on both parties.

"Get on with it" - criticism of a Labour chairman just before Labour lost control.

"The Tories have failed on the 11-plus" - strong condemnation of the new policy makers when in 1967 they tried to reverse a scheme for secondary school reorganisation that had been devised 1963-1965. But at subsequent elections the Conservatives consolidated their gains in keeping with a national trend.

Northern Despatch, Tuesday, September 26, 1967

### VIEWPOINT

## THE TORIES HAVE FAILED ON THE 11-PLUS

This is not really a matter of political theory: it is a question of administrative incompetence, mixed with ignorance and arrogance. First the council officers were not consulted about the new proposals; then, as near as makes no matter, they were slighted and abused. When the teachers were asked for their opinions and came up with the wrong ones (as far as the Tories were concerned) they were abused. This abuse did not come from street-corner tub-thumpers, but from Tory leaders.

It is incredible that when the overwhelming weight of informed opinion has been warning the Tories about the short-comings of their proposals, of their hotch-potch of suggestions for selection in the coming year, of their lack of expertise and often their lack of common courtesy, they have taken no notice. They are shaming Darlington.

Anyone who does not play by the rules risks being thought a publicity seeker. Meetings of the full Council, unlike committee meetings, are quite formal. The effective conduct of business, questioning the chairman of a committee about items in the minutes, etc., is subject to Standing Orders. Even experienced councillors try to make inadmissible speeches contrary to the rules by gaining the floor on an imaginary point of order. In full Council each member can speak only once (twice in General Purposes Committee) to a particular minute, or motion, except when exercising a right to reply to a debate on ones own motion. Comment on a minute by a councillor receives a reply from the chairman but it is impossible for the councillor to return to the matter once the chairman has replied - however inadequate the chairman's response. A councillor can ask for a minute to be referred back to the committee, or for it to be amended, and in order to do this he announces that he wishes it to be "excepted." This simply means that when all the other minutes of that committee have been approved the chairman moves the excepted minute separately and has the last word in the debate which follows. However these procedural opportunities give the determined councillor plenty of chances to get his views before the Council, in the press and thus in front of the public. At the same time the mayor, presiding, follows a rigid order of business.

In the chapter of this thesis on the party influence some brief reference was made to two Labour rebels. Shortly before the municipal elections in 1960 Counc. CG (Labour) tried to raise a problem about his brother's employment as a bus conductor but he was not quick enough off the mark and the (Labour) mayor ruled that business had proceeded further than the relevant minute and discussion on this point was out of order.



In anger Coun. CG left the chamber declaring that he would resign. One or two councillors present at this time had the impression that he meant he was going to resign from the Council. In fact Coun. CG only left the Labour Party and he continued to sit in the Council chamber for two years as an "independent Independent." Meanwhile at the election, in inclement weather a few days after the headlined incident, the Labour Party (having convinced some potential supporters they were falling out among themselves) did badly.

At this time an alliance between the rebel and another individualist, Coun. CC (Labour), emerged. The latter was press officer for the Labour Party. Perhaps this initial connection with local newspapers gave him a taste for having his name in print. A friend of Coun. CC has commented: "He would commit suicide for a front page obituary." The press officer certainly kept the Labour Party's activities before the public eye but usually in terms of divisions among members. In the Council chamber the two friends seem to have been regarded as a nuisance. Said one elected member: "Coun. CC has been criticised for talking too much, and rightly so." At another time the most senior alderman condemned, "irresponsible blathering."

On one occasion Coun. CG found himself in difficulties when proposing to speak on a matter about Council houses because he was himself a Council tenant. The Town Clerk's advice was that the councillor should not take part but he said it was up to the members:

"He serves the period in prison - I don't."

"Sometimes," retorted Coun. CG, "I would rather be in prison than in this Council chamber."

"I second that, Mr. Mayor," called out someone else.

But the situation became acute in December 1961. The monthly meeting was abandoned after Coun. CC and Coun. CG had brushed with the mayor and one of them had finally refused to submit unconditionally to the mayor's ruling. The incident led eventually to a change in Standing Orders to enable the mayor to authorise ejection, in similar circumstances, "by no more force than is necessary."

At the same Council meeting Coun. CC had broken a Labour group decision on an agreement to support the allocation of a Council house to a Children's Committee housemother. The "Northern Echo" on 1st February 1962 reports that the Executive Committee of the local Labour Party had voted nine to six to withdraw the Labour whip from Coun. CC. This was not as severe as expulsion from the party. But in March the same newspaper tells us that the councillor had walked into the Labour Party office and declared, "I resign." This news report was ambiguous and probably supplied by the individual himself. The ambiguity arises because the councillor, it was reported, was preparing to contest his next election as independent Labour while remaining a Labour Party Ward Secretary. Although this was reported as a fact the journalist must have known that in the Labour Party, such a situation is constitutionally impossible. This type of publicity angered many Labour Party members and some of the irritation no doubt carried over when councillors were debating the admission of the press to committee meetings.

Losing the whip for not supporting one group decision would have been harsh but there was a Labour Party principle, frequently ignored, that unless a councillor got permission he was not supposed to oppose minutes his party had supported in committee. Coun. CC got on his feet whenever he felt like it and finally did so once too often. Most other Labour councillors broke the principle and

were able to get away with it because the group as a whole were conscious of the philosophy, "people who live in glass houses ...." Also sometimes it suited the party image to have a decision broken (e.g. a single abstention over secondary education reorganisation). But this councillor had aggravated too many people and in particular the set-to with the mayor was considered a disgraceful exhibition.

In the meantime the independent Independent failed to gain re-admission to the Labour Party and was defeated in a four-cornered fight by an official Labour candidate in May 1962. During the campaign Coun. CC supported his rebellious friend. This was the last straw. The Labour Party finally expelled their second rebel on 20th June 1962 and the decision was subsequently upheld after an inquiry by the National Executive Committee. However Coun. CC was luckier than his friend because he was re-elected to the Council as an independent, defeating his Labour opponent. More recently both have been re-admitted to the party and Coun. CC continues in office (mayor 1968-1969). It was this councillor who supplied the press with the confidential B.T.C. delegation report. His image as a person of independent mind was fostered by the press to the detriment of the Labour Party which now seemed to be cast in the role of suppressor of freedom of expression. When the 1964 general election was imminent both rebels announced that they would be Parliamentary candidates but ultimately withdrew.

If the activities of these personalities harmed the fortunes of the Labour Party the role of the press was crucial. Yet it is doubtful if the people who were getting public attention were actually affecting policy decisions. Coun. CC was one of the champions of the proposal to open all committee meetings to the press but the Council stuck to its policy of not doing this.

Resentment against Coun. CC left him isolated on issues where he might have hoped to make an impact. It was almost enough for him to sponsor something to ensure its defeat. It was his motion, referred to in the section on party policy influence, which sought unsuccessfully to implement a Labour Party statement on the need to reorganise housing management.

Coun. CU was another Labour councillor who had in earlier times resigned from the party and then re-joined. He has had fluctuating loyalty from the electors and was one of those ready to use the press. He became chairman of the Development Committee and has been depicted by the "Northern Echo" and "Northern Despatch" as an important force in the coming of new industry to Darlington. Perhaps because of his physical stature and commanding voice, though not always controlled speech, and the deference of newer members, the press cast him in the role of a newsworthy spokesman particularly as he was often a controversial figure. He lost office in 1959 for two years, and was defeated again in 1967 by four votes, but was clearly a man of principle because he chose the risks of election to the safety of elevation to the aldermanic bench. He held important office in his trade union. In one year, October 1966 - October 1967, he was promoted from the shop floor to Production Controller, Works Manager and then company Director. He was the councillor whose influence determined the petrol filling station change of policy as previously described. He was the centre of the controversy about the alleged illegal nomination to the Northern Economic Planning Council which has also been explained elsewhere in this thesis. Between the Labour rebel and himself there was a frequent clash of personalities. For example, on 5th July 1963, the rebel unsuccessfully moved the reference back of a minute giving the chairman of the Development Committee authority

to issue statements to the public about incoming firms. He argued, says the news report, that - "It had always been the practice for the Town Clerk or the appropriate official to be the contact with the people .... One man .... the chairman, was going to be the voice of the Committee." It was scarcely unusual for a chairman to be the voice of a committee but perhaps there was some resentment that another personality was establishing himself through the medium of the press. The issue also suggests some sense of rivalry between the chairman and the Town Clerk.

For the sake of completeness the case can be quoted of a Tory rebel who achieved in more recent time something like personality status. The single Tory rebel of the 1962-1965 period was a councillor who supported the Chief Education Officer's plan for reorganising secondary education. At the time of the main debate he seems to have been allowed to go his own way. Perhaps his party saw the plight of the divided Labour group and its effect on public opinion. In any case he fought an election as a Conservative candidate in May 1964 on the education issue in a Conservative Ward, against a Liberal candidate, and returned triumphant. He did not really need to be championed by the press until his own party took control. After eleven years of service he found it necessary to state: "I am sorry to give it up but I will not be pushed around by anyone." ("Northern Echo" 3rd November 1967). There had been an unsuccessful attempt to expel him from the Conservative group. In the election address of his successor the Conservatives included a panel devoted to "the malicious anti-Conservative propaganda which has been practised by the press for some time past." Like the Labour Party, at other times, the Conservatives came to resent the spotlight of publicity.

It has been explained that there is one way in which an

individual councillor can obtain a policy decision on his own initiatives: notice of a motion can be given and the proposal, if seconded, will be debated by the full Council. It is interesting to analyse the sponsorship of such motions. The most intensive period for private motions during 1962-1965 was from August 1964 to May 1965 when there were eight private proposals brought before the Council.

1. To close a residential street to vehicles.  
- Coun. CC (failed)
2. To abolish charges in public toilets, and generally to promote public hygiene - Coun. CU (successful)
3. To reverse a street parking decision - Coun. CHH (failed)
4. To commemorate an athletic achievement - Coun. CC  
(withdrawn on the understanding that the appropriate committee would give sympathetic consideration)
5. To demand adherence to Standing Orders - Coun. CC  
(arising out of alleged illegal nomination of Coun. CU to Northern Economic Planning Council; simpler amendment successful)
6. To create honorary aldermen - Coun. CX (successful)
7. To support fluoridation of public water supply  
- Coun. CC (failed)
8. To allow children to play on a piece of Corporation land - Coun. CC (failed)

The above motions were all sponsored by members who could claim some personality status. Coun. CC (the rebel) strove to maximise the public awareness of his existence, often raising matters about which the Labour controlled Council had previously made a decision in committee with the chief officers participating. Coun. CU and Coun. CX were chairmen of committees. Coun. CHH was destined to become leader of the Conservative group.

It is noteworthy that Coun. CC could only be successful if

it suited the Labour majority. Motions No. 2 and No. 6 had the sort of backing that two prominent members of the controlling party could expect and these decisions do show the elected members in a true policy making role.

Although councillors come and go quickly in Darlington there are a handful of elected members whose faces and names, on and off the Council, are familiar to a proportion of the general public. They owe their local fame largely to the fact that Darlington is well served by daily newspapers.

Every councillor is likely to have some contact with individual voters who, during a canvass, and less frequently by seeking out the councillor, ask him to deal with their personal problems. It is only if a lot of people have the same grumble, or if some pressure group emerges, that a policy decision may be needed to provide collective satisfaction. It is at this point that a certain type of councillor will take the opportunity to assume the role of spokesman for the complainants in order to convince voters that he is active in their interests. Perhaps the backing of a group of citizens may help his reputation by making it more likely that he will have some success in the Council chamber or behind the scenes in the chief officer's office.

In practice, the issues to which some part of the voting population have given an unusual amount of attention rarely showed the administrators in anything other than a commanding position. Exceptionally, several attempts by councillors to support the Medical Officer of Health who favoured fluoridation of the water supply failed. In this case letters to councillors from voters, and correspondence in the press may have had some part in stopping this proposal. On the other hand it is doubtful if councillors

really feared public opinion. The changing composition of the Council suggests that successive waves of elected members were really voting according to their own conscience. Still, there is clearly elected member influence at work here. It could also be argued that the survival of the Peter plan owed something not only to the press but to the influence of the general public. But unlike the recurring fluoridation issue this was essentially a triumph for the chief officer, who had devised a popular scheme, and a sign of politicians' inability to change it.

In December 1963 the "Northern Echo" carried editorial comment and reports about the decision of a new headmaster of a secondary modern school not to allow a girl to attend class because she was wearing black stockings. The mother would not accept this ruling. The chairman of the Education Committee enquired by telephone what it was all about and was told by the headmaster, in effect, to mind his own business. Although the press and general public did not know of that particular incident the black stockings issue received gathering publicity including radio interviews, questions in the Council, letters to the press and assurances that school uniforms (which the black stockings were not) did not have to be worn compulsorily.

If public opinion was divided on the matter it is fair to say that most people regarded the headmaster's action as high-handed. Ultimately the girl's mother climbed down. At the Education Committee meeting, after the press and public had been excluded, a discussion was minuted as follows:

12th December 1963 Q 327 BRANKSOME SECONDARY SCHOOL - Submitted -  
Report by the Chief Education Officer on his  
discussion with the Head Teacher on School  
Uniform and a letter from the Darlington Head  
Teachers' Association on the same subject.



**RESOLVED - That the report by the Chief Education Officer and the letter from the Head Teachers' Association be received and that the Committee expresses its confidence in the Headmaster.**

The committee had been told that the girl had come to school wearing jewellery and that her attitude generally was making her difficult to handle. One would have thought this was more properly a matter for normal disciplinary procedure rather than exclusion from class on bogus grounds. The administration rallied around. Perhaps it was unreasonable to expect anything else but the inference is that amateur policy makers were ready to fall over backwards to protect their employees notwithstanding adverse comment in the responsible editorial column of the "Northern Echo," if nowhere else. Presumably something less than a vote of confidence would have been possible.

In August 1963 the threatened extinction of an amateur football team in the Darlington and District League led to pressure for better playing field facilities. The "Northern Despatch" ran a series of articles surveying what other towns had to provide. There was an unsatisfactory division of responsibility between the Parks Committee and the Education Committee. The pressure from elected members led to the creation of a special Sport and Recreation Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee on 5th September 1963, as a result of a private motion. Clearly the elected members meant business. The sub-committee was set up as a response to a fairly strong non-political desire to encourage recreational facilities expressed widely inside and outside the Council and so there was a limited achievement by the elected members. Four years later in a small amalgamation within the committee system the sub-committee disappeared.

The local press, individual councillors and the general public had a part in influencing the climate in which both large and small issues were discussed and decided. Because many towns much greater in population than Darlington are only served by a weekly newspaper carefully treading the path of political neutrality it would be easy to believe that here the press succeeds in arousing an unusual amount of political interest.

Nationally the percentages voting in English county borough local elections throughout this period has been about 40% (Registrar-General's Statistical Reviews).

In 1962 the election campaigns in Darlington got as much publicity as at any time during the period. A Labour rebel was defending his seat as an independent. Labour made successful efforts to win back two other seats, finally regaining control of the Council the following year. The Liberals were enjoying a revival nationally and making a bid in two of the eight wards contested. Calculations based on the turn-out on this occasion show the following voting percentages in the wards concerned (three wards were not contested).

Harrowgate Hill	44.8	
Cockerton	47.8	(Labour rebel in contest with three others)
Northgate	36.1	
Central	36.0	(Labour gained seat)
Haughton	47.9	
Eastbourne	44.7	(Liberal fighting in safe Labour ward)
West	58.1	(Liberal fighting in safe Conservative ward)
Lingfield	42.9	(Labour gained seat)

It would be exaggerating the influence of the press to deduce from these figures, even where the national average was exceeded, that the local newspapers have a really significant effect on election turn-outs. There is no general high level of proportions

voting. Only one ward exceeded 50%. The upswing of Labour in 1962 and 1963 seems to have been linked with national politics as much as with coverage of the Darlington Council by the local press. This point is supported by the Darlington trend when the Labour government had come to power and then lost popularity soon afterwards. Although the editorial comment on Conservative incompetence locally was expressed in the strongest terms imaginable in September, 1967, the Conservatives continued to win seats in subsequent local elections in Darlington. In May 1968 only 35% of the electorate used their vote and two retiring Labour councillors lost their seats.

Important matters like planning the town of the future, seeking industrial development, reorganising the educational system, were thoroughly reported on and discussed by the press, nevertheless they remained essentially within the domain of the permanent administration.

## CHAPTER 8

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Changes of representation in Darlington are so frequent that most councillors are making decisions with an inadequate experience of the departments they manage. In the main the occupational qualifications of elected members seem to have little relevance to their work for the town. Because elected members come and go frequently, and as there is no overwhelming demand for office by talented people (or even by people to continue their service), the general public have no real sanction against the administration. Successful candidates who go out of their way to identify themselves with the voters are just as likely to be swept away, or to give up local government, as those who make no useful contribution; it follows therefore that inadequate nonentities may survive when abler people disappear.
2. About one in two thousand of Darlington's citizens is on the Council. The high turnover means that a greater number than this have had experience in local government and this could be seen as an advantage to democracy. The town's population is not particularly large and perhaps for this reason the number of councillors is not really excessive. The Maud committee gave the average number of members on county borough councils as 57 (Darlington 44); and the average number of committees of county boroughs as 21 (Darlington 15 originally, now reduced to 13, including General Purposes Committee). The Maud report suggests that six committees, apart from the Management Board, should be

enough and committee membership of not more than fifteen, including co-opted persons. Perhaps these standards are an ideal but Darlington's structure cannot be regarded as excessively cumbersome.

3. The chief officers provide both the expertise and continuity in the management of the town. There is a shortage of staff and a pragmatic approach to town development which has not always been for the best and has held back progress. Nevertheless the town made the most of its economic advantages during a difficult period of industrial change largely because the chief officers rose to the challenge.
4. Elected members' ability to make the right decisions is almost entirely dependent on the guidance they receive from the chief officers. Faulty communication of advice or information has caused inconsistent and wrong policy decisions.
5. The elected members are organised on a party basis and one or two councillors have been disciplined for getting out of line but in practice a group decision merely formalises general agreement. How the parties posture in public may not reflect any real differences in committee. Events tend to generate solutions. Real policy differences between the parties have occurred but, irrespective of who is in control, the administrators tend to get their own way on important matters (e.g. hiring town centre consultant, reorganising secondary education). The administration is supreme partly because of the absence of planned and co-ordinated political action; it follows therefore that the Council is not dominated by faceless men making secret group decisions.
6. Darlington's politicians and also citizens' problems get plenty

of press coverage. What restrictions exist are amply compensated for by those who "use" the press. Reports on local affairs are often linked with particular personalities. Able, informed and experienced councillors could exercise real power but such individualists as there are have sometimes undermined their own position. The press is prepared to take sides in public controversies. Some councillors have reason to be grateful for press support, and some decisions may be related to column inches and citizens' interest, but it would be a mistake to exaggerate these factors. There is very little real evidence that the extra dimension given to local affairs in Darlington by the press results in more participation by the public (i.e. election turn-outs are only average, quality of candidates not remarkable).

## CHAPTER 9

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Darlington's development would be easier to achieve if the town could utilise the expertise that might be available from some superior unit of local government - e.g. an elected regional authority able to employ planners and negotiate priorities against the demands of better off regions.
2. Darlington's councillors would be better able to exercise control if they were able to undergo a "training session" comprising lectures from chief officers about past policies, overall plans and the procedures which have to be followed to "progress" projects. If such a course was carried out on neutral ground (e.g. in the College of Technology), intending candidates might also be admitted. The need is for particular information about the local situation rather than generalities about the management of local government.
3. Elected members may not be very efficient or effective but as we live in a democracy there seems no good reason to reduce the numbers participating in committee work in Darlington below the 1962-1965 level. Chief officers ought to be accountable. The Maud report recognises an elected member responsibility in the domiciliary work, in carrying out routine controls, and in the work for individuals, which characterises most local government to-day. It is even more important to reserve for elected

members the formulation of the principal objectives of the authority. However it does seem possible that in Darlington even a Management Board would have to rely on the administrators to define the area of high policy. In any case, it would seem to be sensible to recognise the reality of the present situation that inexperienced elected members, serving several committees, cannot without compunction interfere in matters of smaller detail when the administrators have a clear idea of what they want to do. Many decisions should be regarded more overtly as the sphere of the administrators. Nevertheless the Council should promote the image of the Special Committee as a power house of able men with genuine control over strategy. The effect might be to increase competition for the privilege of helping to manage Darlington. There is scope for reorientating some functions (i.e. family welfare services).

4. The party system is here to stay and ought to be used to strengthen the influence of elected members. Permanent specialist study groups within each party should assess local needs and prepare policy programmes in the light of such literature and government reports as may be available. While non-councillors with appropriate knowledge and experience should take part in such policy making discussions it is essential that the politicians who have been elected to public office should be both involved and committed. Where necessary the local government administrators ought to be asked to provide such extra information as may be needed by the controlling party to formulate its policies; as this would be done through the committee system the opposition would also have access to the same material. The opposition should formally appoint



shadow chairmen and vice-chairmen to advance the minority view in full Council. In this way the parties' aims would be clarified at election time and measures promised by the successful party would have the maximum possibility of being quickly achieved.

5. A vote of confidence in the press, by allowing the reporters to attend all committees, might ensure that the contribution of particular elected members is better assessed by the electorate. It would lessen the need for reporters to encourage private contacts that do not necessarily result in accurate reporting. It could be a step towards overcoming apathy.

## CHAPTER 10

## SOURCES OF MATERIAL

The sources of the material included in this thesis have been indicated throughout the text whenever necessary. However they can be summarised as follows:

1. Copies of "Northern Echo" and "Northern Despatch" have been scrutinised for the whole of the period 1961-1968. Certain news cuttings and election addresses have been separately made available by councillors and ex-councillors.
2. Minutes of committees and other relevant circulars issued to councillors by various chief officers have been examined and quoted. Early copies of the town's Development Plan were kindly supplied by a long-serving alderman who has ceased to be a member of the Development Committee.
3. Councillors' handbooks for the period, and certain data provided specifically for this thesis by the Town Clerk, were the basis of the description of committee structure and of the background of elected members and officers.
4. Consultations with town councillors yielded much useful information. They preferred to remain anonymous although inevitably some of the personalities involved are identifiable. An ex-chairman of the Education Committee was particularly helpful in answering certain specific points of fact both in correspondence and by participating in enlightening conversations

over a protracted period. Sadly, two elected members who were consulted in the early stages died during the preparation of this study.

Length of service of aldermen in office during municipal years  
1961-1962 and 1965-1966

Code Let- ers	Date entered Council (year only for normal annual elctn, otherwise full date shown)	Year el'ted ald	NET total service by 1962 (in years)	Reason for leaving & date left Council	Replaced by	NET total service of ald in office 1965-1966 (in years)
AA	31 March 1915	1930	47	Resigned and died 1965	CX	(AA 50 yrs) CX 10
AB	1922	1946	40	Resigned 1963 (ill health)	CV	CV 19
AC	29 July 1937	1949	25			AC 28
AD	8 Feb 1939	1952	13	Died 1962	(1962) CP - Retired by PR agree- ment 1964 (1964) CW	CW 18
AE	5 June 1941	1953	21	Retired by PR ag 1964	CB	CB 11
AF	1945	1955	17			AF 20
AG <sup>x</sup>	5 Nov 1942	1956	17	Resigned 1962 (age)	CDD	CDD 15
AH	1945	1958	17			AH 20
AI	1 Mar 1945	1960	17	Retired by PR ag 1964	CF	CF 11
AJ	2 July 1952	1961	10			AJ 13
AK <sup>z</sup>	1947	1961	15	(Resigned 1966 - age)	(NB: CHH - 1962 coun 1966 ald)	AK 18

<sup>x</sup> unseated twice 1945 (for 2 years)  
1954 (for 1 year)

<sup>z</sup> unseated for 6 months in 1954

Table No. 2.

**Length of service of councillors in office during municipal years  
1961-1962 and 1965-1966**

Codes	Date entered	NET	Reason for	Other changes	NET total
Let-ers	Council	total	leaving &	after	service of
ers	(year only	services	date left	1961-1962	couns in office
	for normal	by 1962:	Council		1965-1966 (in
	annual elctn,	(in	(see definitions		years)
	otherwise	years)	at foot of table)		
	full date				
	shown)				
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)

**Harrowgate Hill Ward 4661 voters**

CA(Mrs)	1956	6	(died 1966)		9
CB	8 Dec 1954	8		Promoted 1964 New coun 1964	1
CC	12 Sep 1956	6			9

**North Road Ward 5278 voters**

CD	3 Apr 1957	5	Resigned 1963 (moved from town)	Successor resigned 1964 (moved from town) New coun 1964	1
CE	1960	2			5
CF	15 Sep 1954	8		Promoted 1964 New coun 1964	1

**Cockerton Ward 5178 voters**

CG	1956	6	Defeated 1962	Successor retired 1965 (moved from town) New coun 1965	NIL
CH	1960	2	Defeated 1963	New coun 1963	2
CI	2 Oct 1957	5			8

**Northgate Ward 5321 voters**

CJ	1959	3	Retired 1965 (health)	New coun 1965	NIL
CK	1947	14	Died 1961	New coun 1961	4
CL	26 June 1958	4			7

(continued)

Table No. 2 continued

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
<b>Pierremont Ward 5848 voters</b>					
CM	1956	6	Retired 1965 (business)	New coun 1965	NIL
CN	1955	7			10
CO <sup>x</sup>	4 July 1961 ( <sup>x</sup> Vacant May 1961)	1	Defeated 1963	New coun 1963	2
<b>Central Ward 4557 voters</b>					
CP	1950	12	Retired 1962 (age)	Successor defeated 1965 New coun 1965	NIL
CQ	1960	2	Retired 1963 (moved from town)	New coun 1963	2
CR	3 Aug 1960	2	Retired 1964 (health)	New coun 1964	1
<b>Haughton Ward 4561 voters</b>					
CS(Mrs) <sup>x</sup>	1945 ( <sup>x</sup> Unseated for one year in 1949)	15	Resigned 1961 (health)	New coun 1961	4
CT(Mrs)	1960	2	Retired 1963 (domestic problems)	New coun 1963	2
CU <sup>x</sup>	1953 ( <sup>x</sup> Unseated for two years in 1959)	7			10
<b>Eastbourne Ward 6496 voters</b>					
CV	1946	16		Promoted 1963 New coun 1963	2
CW	1947	15		Promoted 1964 New coun 1964	1
CX	6 July 1955	7		Promoted 1965 New coun 1965	NIL
<b>West Ward 4707 voters</b>					
CY	1959	3	Retired 1962 (domestic problems)	(Successor resigned 1966 - business commitments)	3
CZ	7 Nov 1956	6			9
CAA <sup>x</sup>	4 July 1961 ( <sup>x</sup> Vacant May 1961)	1	Retired 1965 (business)	New coun 1965	NIL

(continued)

Table No. 2 continued

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
<b>South Ward 6905 voters</b>					
CBB	1956	6	Retired 1965 (age)	New coun 1965	NIL
CCC	1 July 1953	9	Defeated 1963	Successor resigned 1965 (moved from town)	
CDD	1950	12		New coun 1965 Promoted 1962 New coun CHH 1962; later promoted himself (1966)	NIL  3
<b>Lingfield Ward 5869 voters</b>					
CEE	1959	3	Retired 1962 (moved from town)	Successor had 6 yrs previous service, but was defeated again in 1965	
CFF	1960	2	Retired 1963 (probably unhappy with state of loc govt)	New coun 1965 New coun 1963	NIL 2.
CGG	1955	7	Retired 1964 (conflict with pro- fessional plans)	New coun 1964	1

**DEFINITIONS**

**Resigned:** gave up office before term expired

**Retired:** did not seek re-election

**Defeated:** sought re-election but defeated by an opponent

Table No. 3.

**Professional and occupational background of aldermen and councillors  
in office 1961-1962**

Code Letters

Profession

**ALDERMEN**

AA	Retired railway clerk
AB	Retired railway clerk
AC	Accountant
AD	Builder
AE	Builder
AF	Engine driver
AG	Grocer
AH	Engine driver
AI	Garage and showroom proprietor
AJ	Solicitor
AK	Leather business owner

**COUNCILLORS**

CA	Housewife
CB	Inspector with Heating Engineers
CC	Labourer
CD	Crane Driver with British Railways
CE	Railway workshop craftsman
CF	Railway workshop craftsman
CG	Van driver, vegetable lorry etc.
CH	Director and manager of small engineering works
CI	Railway Signals Inspector
CJ	Senior Checker with British Railways

(continued)



Table No. 3 continued

Code Letters	Profession
CK	Agricultural Welder (self-employed Blacksmith)
CL	British Rail Crane and Chain Examiner
CM	Engineering clerk/later Milk Merchant's manager
CN	Tobacco and Confectioner business owner
CO	Electric supplies shop owner
CP	Butcher
CQ	Boarding House proprietor
CR	Licensee of Public House
CS	Housewife
CT	Housewife
CU	Woodworking machinist
CV	Retired constructional engineer (small builder)
CW	Railway clerk
CX	Woodcutting machinist
CY	Milk Merchant
CZ	Furniture shop Director
CAA	Area and Branch Manager of electrical wholesalers and manufacturers
CBB	Retired employee of Electricity Board
CCC	Retired Headmaster
CDD	Builder
CEE	Area representative
CFF	Retired Headmaster
CGG	Baptist Minister

Table No. 4.

## Chief Officers 1961-1962

Official	Qualifications	Date appointed
Town Clerk	Ll.B.	7 July 1959
Borough Treasurer & Rating and Valuation Officer	F.I.M.T.A., F.C.W.A.	7 June 1945
Medical Officer of Health and School Medical Officer	M.D., Ch.B., M.R.C.P., D.P.H.	28 June 1948
Borough Surveyor and Water Engineer	M.A., Ll.B., A.M.I.C.E., A.R.I.C.S., M.I.Mun.E.	3 Jan 1947
Borough Architect	A.R.I.B.A., A.M.T.P.I.	6 Feb 1947
Chief Education Officer	M.A., M.Ed.	6 Dec 1951
Chief Welfare Officer	D.P.A., A.I.S.W.	1 Mar 1958
Transport Manager	M. Inst. T.	20 July 1950
Librarian & Curator	F.L.A.	3 Feb 1949
Deputy Town Clerk	D.P.A.	1 July 1959
Deputy Borough Treasurer	A.I.M.T.A.	18 Sep 1961
Deputy MoH	B.Sc., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Lond), D.C.H., D.P.H.	23 July 1959
Assistant MoH	M.B., Ch.B., C.P.H.	18 Dec 1946
Deputy Borough Surveyor	B.Sc., A.M.I.C.E., A.M.T.P.I.	6 Mar 1947
Chief Public Health Inspector	M.P.H.I.A., A.R.S.H.	9 Nov 1948

(continued)

Table No. 4 continued

Official	Qualifications	Date appointed
Chief Inspector of Weights & Measures & Shops	D.P.A., M.I.W.M.A., D.S.A.A.	17 Aug 1955
Parks & Cemeteries Superintendent.	L.Inst.P.A.	1 June 1950
Baths Supt	M.N.A.B.S., A.R.S.H.	9 Nov 1948
Children's Officer	----	3 Feb 1949

**OTHER OFFICERS serving under chief officers above:**

Senior School Dental Surgeon; Youth Employment Officer; Public Analyst; Works Superintendent; Waterworks and Pumping Station Superintendent; Sewage Works Manager; Chief Water Inspector; Building Inspectors; Superintendents of Old People's Homes; Welfare Officers (various); Civil Defence Officer; Veterinary Surgeon.

Table No. 5.

Committees of the Council served by elected members and chief officers during the period 1962-1965

Committee	Total Membership	After- noons per Month
General Purposes	Full Council	1
Civil Defence Sub-	9	
Property Sub-	5	
Sport & Recreation Sub- (1963-1967 only)	5	
Finance	17 (incl. all chairmen of major committees and representatives of "opposition")	1
Valuation Sub-	5	
Establishment Sub- and Employers' Side of D'ton Joint Committee	8	
Joint Finance and Magistrates' Court Sub-	6	
Development	15	2
Licensed Premises Joint Sub-	4 (with another)	
Industrial Development Sub-	7	
Housing	11	1
Sub-	5	
Streets	13	1
General Sub-	7	
Sewage Disposal Works Sub-	5	
Parking Places Sub-	4	
Joint Consultative Sub-	4	
Road Safety Sub-	4 (with others)	
Transport and Water	11	1
Standing & Joint Consultative	4	
Children's	10 (1963 1 co-opted)	1
12 Visiting Rota Sub-Comms	(ea)3/4	

(continued)

Table No. 5 continued

Committee	Total Membership	After- noons per Month
Health	13 (+ 2 co-opted)	1
Mental Welfare Sub-	6	
Markets & Fire Brigade	12	1
Sub-	6	
Parks, Cemeteries and Baths	12	1
Welfare	11	1
Horticultural	7 (+ 4 co-opted)	
Watch & Library	12	1
	(Mayor, Finance Committee chairman and Watch & Library Committee chairman representatives on Durham County Police Authority which covers Darlington)	
Education	17 (+ 1 co-opted)	2
3 Accounts Rota Minor Sub-Comms (ea)	6/7	1
Welfare & Special Services		1
Minor Sub-	9	
Awards to Students Minor Sub-	6 (+ 2 co-opted)	
Youth Employment	4 (+ 17 others)	
4 Groups of School Managers		
(ea Grp appr)	8 (+ others)	
4 Groups of Sec School Govnrs		
(ea Grp appr)	8 (+ others)	
Governors of Coll of Furth Educ	10 (+ others)	
LEA Governors & Managers of		
12 Voluntary Schools (ea school)	3/4 (+ others)	
15 Other Bodies (ea Body)	2/3/4	
Special	(from 1964)	
	5 (7 from 1967)	

IN ADDITION the Council was represented by one or more elected members on each of 23 other permanent bodies. The once-monthly (until 1966) full Council meeting was held in the evening.

Table No. 6.

Political affiliation of elected members in office during municipal years 1961-1962 and 1965-1966 (NB Where the party holding the seat did not change there might nevertheless be a different person in office - see tables No. 1 and No. 2)

Code	Political party	Political party	Political party
Letters	1961-1962	represented	1965-1966
(only	L=Labour	in equivalent	
ald'manic	C=Conservative	seats after	
changes	I=Independent	changed control	
indicated)		May 1963	
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
AA/CX	L	L	L
AB/CV	L	L	L
AC	C	C	C
AD/CP/CW	I	x (from 1964 by PR ag.) L	L
AE/CB	C	x (from 1964 by PR ag.) L	L
AF	L	L	L
AG/CDD	C	(from 1962) I	I
AH	L	L	L
AI/CF	I	x (from 1964 by PR ag.) L	L
AJ	C	C	C
AK	C	C	C
	x Time lag before Proportional Representation agreement took effect - aldermanic elections not due until year following Labour's win at the polls.		
CA	L	L	L
CB	L	L	L
CC	L	deprived of whip 1962; re-elected as I-L 1964 NB whip subsequently restored during municipal year 1966-1967	I-L
CD	L	L	L
CE	L	L	L
CF	L	L	L
CG	I-L	resigned Labour Party 1960; request for re- admission not granted until 1967; defeated by L candidate 1962	L

(continued)

Table No. 6 continued

(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
CH	C	L	L
CI	L	L	L
CJ	I	I	C
CK	I	I	I
CL	L	L	L
CM	C	C	C
CN	I	I	I
CO	C	Liberal	C
CP	I	(from 1962) L	C
CQ	C	C	C
CR	C	C	(from 1964) L
CS	L	L	L
CT	C	L	L
CU	L	L	L
CV	L	L	L
CW	L	L	L
CX	L	L	L May 1965 followed by early by-election C.
CY	C	C	C
CZ	C	C	C
CAA	C	C	C
CBB	I	I	C
CCC	I	Liberal	C
CDD	I	(from 1962) C	C
CEE	C	(from 1962) L	C
CFF	I	L	L
CGG	I	I	(from 1964) L
	Lab. Others	Lab. Others	Lab. Others
Total ald.	4 7	7 4	7 4
Total coun.	13 20	18 15	17 16
	x 44	" 44 (incl 2 Lib)	' 44

## SUCCESSION OF MAYORS DURING THE PERIOD

x 1961-1962	L	(C - I control)
1962-1963	C	(ditto)
1963-1964	I	(L control)
" 1964-1965	C	(ditto)
' 1965-1966	L	(ditto)
1966-1967	I	(ditto)
1967-1968	L	(C - I control)
1968-1969	L	(ditto)

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