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THE POLITICS OF PLANNING

ABSTRACT

This is a study of various groups in an English city and their contribution to policy making for city centre redevelopment. The study concentrates on the period 1958 to 1967 when the Labour Party controlled the City Council and the most important policy decisions were taken.

After a brief historical introduction, the membership and the contribution of the elected representatives are analysed and shown to be minimal. Secondly the ideas and contribution of the City Planning Officer are explained and his crucial role revealed. Thirdly the role of the City Labour Party and the decisive contribution of the Group Leader are discussed. It is suggested that the main external group, the Central Government, made a negligible contribution to the decision process. It is also shown that interest groups such as the business community, the local university and amenity group had little or no influence.

The study argues that the Labour Group Leader and the City Planning Officer were the key decision makers with few restraints placed upon them in policy making for city centre redevelopment. The decision making system tended to be closed and to support and concentrate authority in the hands of one or two leaders.

THE POLITICS OF PLANNING

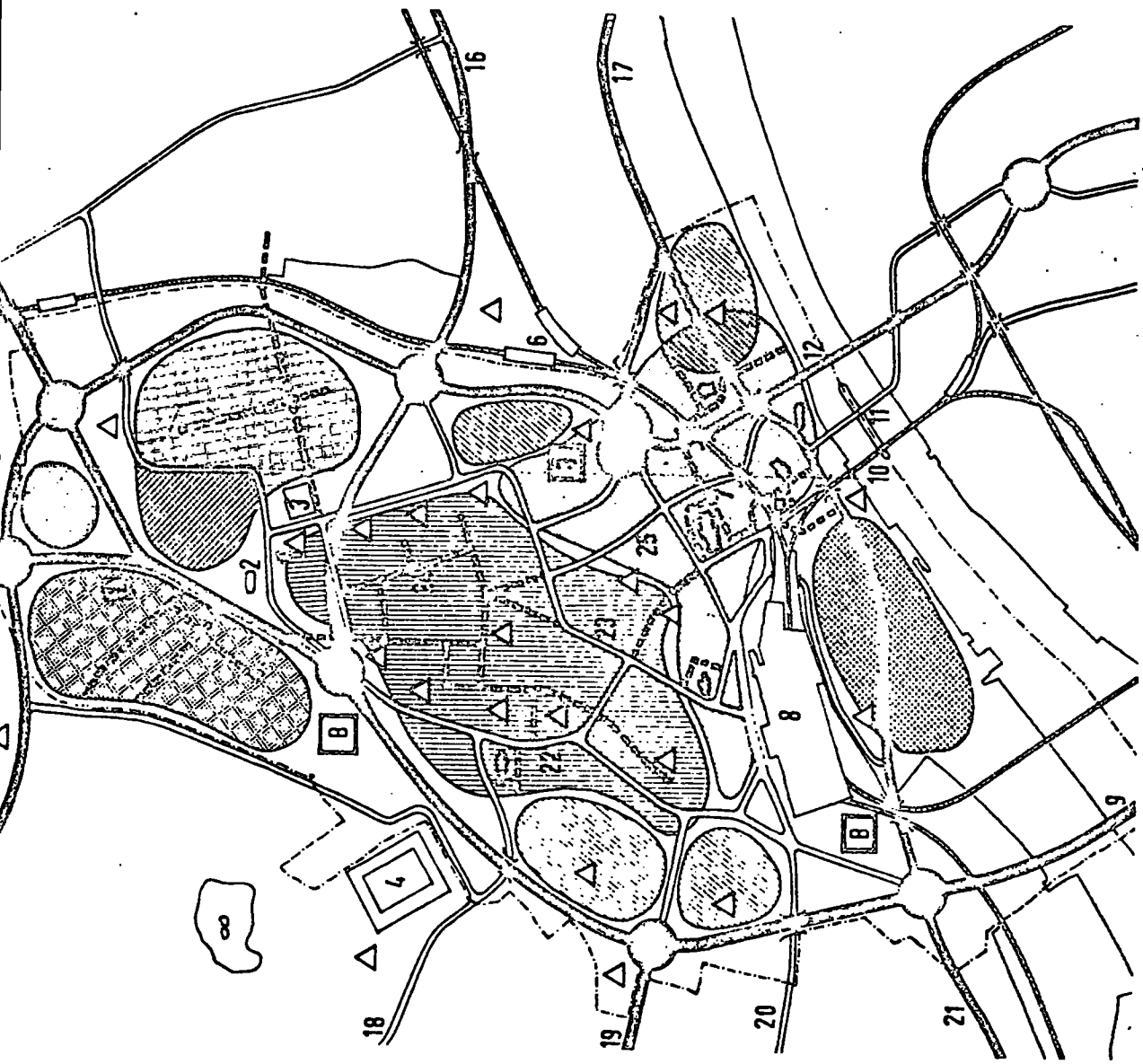A political study of the redevelopment of the city centre
in Newcastle upon Tyne.

James Elliott, B.A., M.Sc.(Econ.)

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of
Letters in the University of Durham,
England, 1973.

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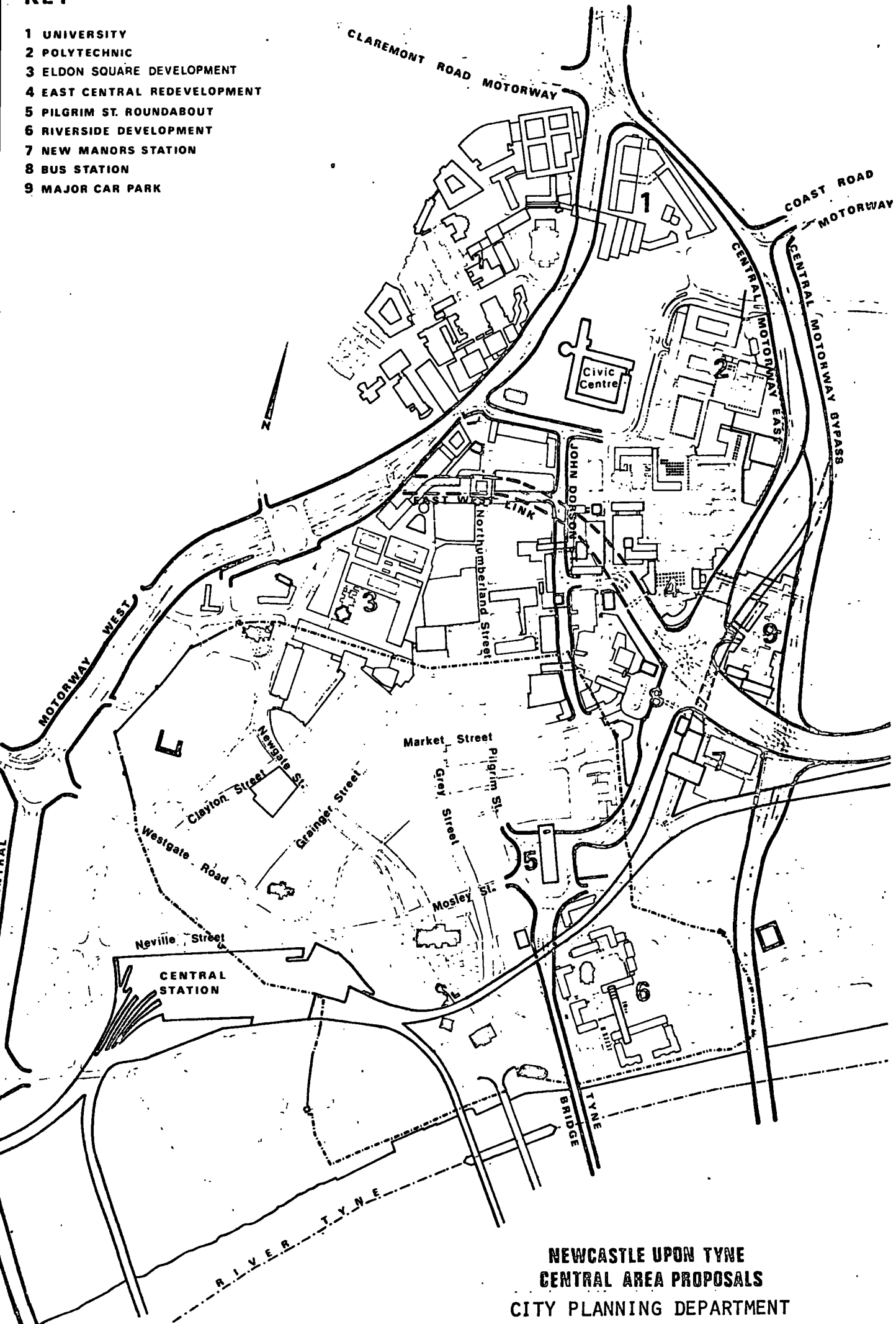
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CHRONOLOGY OF PLANNING IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

1947   Town and Country Planning Act.

1950   T.D. Smith elected to the City Council.

1953   City Development Plan approved by Minister.

1958   Labour Party gained control of the City Council.

1959   City Council accepted Report on an independent City Planning
           Officer and Department.

1960   W. Burns appointed as City Planning Officer.

1961   First Report on Central Redevelopment approved by City Council.

1963   Development Plan Review approved by City Council.

1966   T.D. Smith resigned from City Council.

1967   Conservative Party gained control of the City Council.

1968   W. Burns resigned as City Planning Officer.

INTRODUCTION

During the early 1960's Newcastle upon Tyne, a large industrial city in the North of England, decided to engage in a radical scheme of massive city centre redevelopment.

This study attempts to analyse the various groups involved and their influence on the policy decisions of redevelopment. It is difficult to evaluate or quantify decisions and influence in any precise way. The controversy over the 'community power' studies in the United States is a reflection of this difficulty. Another difficulty is that policy making is often a continuous process and this is recognised in the thesis by examining the policy process over several years. Attention however is concentrated on the various imputs which were involved in ensuring that the First Report on Central Redevelopment in 1961 and the Development Plan Review in 1963 became 'Council policy'.

The thesis mainly covers the period 1958 to 1967 when the City Council was controlled by the Labour Party. The main groups involved in the decision process were: the elected representatives of the City Council and particularly the members of the Planning Committee, the City Planning Department, the City Labour Party, the Central Government and various interest groups.

After a brief historical outline of the period before 1958 the study examines the characteristics and the contribution of the Town Planning Committee. An assessment is attempted by analysing the members contribution to policy, priorities, control, evaluation, decision taking and representation. Consideration is also given to the role of the political parties. It is shown how difficult it is for the members to make a meaningful contribution to a complex policy area like redevelopment. The City Planning Department is examined and particularly the role of the City Planning Officer. He was a

key figure in the process with his definite planning philosophy, strong

personality and successful utilisation of the system. Some dangers in the

planning process are noted. It is suggested that the contribution of the

City Labour Party was insignificant but the contribution of the Group Leader

was fundamental. The importance of the Party was in the essential support it

gave to the proposals to enable them to become policy. The contribution of

the Central Government was minimal mainly because of the strength of the

City Planning Department. An analysis is made of the influence of various

interest groups including the business community, local amenity groups and

the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Material for this study was collected from various sources as

included in the Bibliography. Many interviews were conducted especially

with members of the Town Planning Committee. Among those interviewed were

senior officers of the City Planning Department, other officers of the City

Council, Labour Party officials and members, Central Government officials,

officers and others concerned with interest groups and newspaper correspondents.

Several meetings were attended by the author, including Council meetings,

party and group meetings and public inquiries. Individuals were interviewed

because of the positions they held and also because of the reputation given to

them by others. Interview statements were cross-checked where possible with

other sources. The author had difficulty in gaining access to Council committee

minutes and this reluctance to give information was also reflected in some

officials but not in planners.

This study is not an attempt to evaluate the city centre redevelopment

plans, or to pass judgement on the professional competence of the planners.

The future will ultimately make that kind of verdict. The thesis is concerned

with identifying and evaluating the forces which were operating in the planning

process. The implementation of the plans lies outside the ambit of this study

and therefore no consideration is given to the important role of property development companies. Little attention is given to the Conservative Party except as their members participate in the decision making system. They supported the proposals and continued to implement them when they gained power in 1967.

The thesis covers all the groups involved in planning policy making in contrast to some other studies.[1] It is also a study in depth for it tries to consider attitudes and informal roles as well as official roles. Not only are the activities of the groups discussed but also the limits placed upon them internally and externally. The study throws light upon political and official leadership which has been little studied in Britain. It reveals how it is possible for the system to be closed and for one or two leaders to dominate the decision making process.

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1. D.M. Fox, 'Whither Community Studies', _Polity_, Vol. III, No. 4, (Summer 1971).

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

Newcastle upon Tyne is a city which traces its origins back to

Roman times. Its present name dates from the 'newcastle' of the Norman

period. The modern city of today dates mainly from the nineteenth century,

a period of great prosperity and economic growth for the North East of England.

It has been claimed that between 1824 and 1839 Newcastle was transformed from

a decaying mediaeval slum into a dignified and above all, a planned city.

Three men mainly were responsible for this transformation Richard Grainger,

John Dobson and John Clayton. Grainger, who was born the son of a local

Quayside porter, became a wealthy builder who was responsible for several new

buildings in the town. It was he who laid proposals before the Town

Corporation for various improvements in May 1834. These were for comprehensive

development of a large area of twelve acres, laying out several new streets to

connect the lower older town based on the river with development to the north.

The Council were persuaded to accept these radical, expensive and controversial

plans partly through the efforts of John Clayton, the Town Clerk. Clayton was

Town Clerk of Newcastle for forty-five years and was a man of leadership with

considerable influence and wealth. His support was a key factor in Grainger's

success with the Council and in raising money for the development. The third

member of the trio was John Dobson the architect who is credited with the idea

of developing the grounds of Anderson Place, a large mansion, as part of the

city centre. Dobson designed the scheme and the fine streets and buildings

especially Grey Street, ".. one of the best streets in England .."[1] Dobson

provided the expertise and artistic imagination while Grainger provided the

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1. Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Northumberland, p.249.

drive and commercial ability for the schemes.

> "The acceptance of his plans, radical as they were, depended
> it seems on their abrupt appearance before the public, and
> indeed a large part of Grainger's success during his career
> was the result of long and careful preparation of plans prior
> to their spectacular revelation and rapid implementation."[1]

There was some opposition to the proposals from the residents of the old

town but these did not cause any major difficulties. The protests of the

owners of the Theatre Royal and market were overcome by providing them with

new premises. There had been other planned towns before this date such as

Edinburgh by Adam and Bath by Wood but they were wholly domestic and residential

and in the suburbs; Newcastle was central and mainly commercial, shopping

and offices. "Grainger's major work in Newcastle was its centre redevelopment

scheme, the construction of a planned city centre - the first one in Britain."[2]

The main building activity of the Council after the Grainger and

Dobson period was the building of a new town hall which was opened in 1858.

Not all members of the Council agreed with this and ten dissentient members

went so far as to petition the Lords of H.M. Treasury on eight different counts

to reject the proposals for the building. Whitehall control appears to have

been fairly strict for permission had to be gained from the Treasury to raise

£150,000 extra finance for the building by mortgage. It reflects the financial

and social position of the Council that the six mortgagees were all Council

members. In 1908 the Council still contained some of the wealthiest men

of the area. Five of the 19 aldermen were knights. There were changes

however, and the Council included four Labour members one who was also the

Labour M.P. for Dundee. Thirty years later in 1938 the social composition had

not changed a great deal the Council still included four knights, and two

M.P.'s. Both M.P.'s were Council members of some standing, one had served

from 1902, the other from 1926.

Until the First World War the City gradually developed in a piecemeal

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1. Lyall Wilkes and Gordon Dodds, *Tyneside Classical*, p.59.

2. *Ibid.*, p.67.

fashion around the Grainger-Dobson area. Between the wars there was little

development with the exception of buildings like the new Police Headquarters,

the head office building for the North Eastern Electricity Company. The

City Council did consider development and there was some support for a City

Square to contain public buildings. Considerable thought was given to the

replacement of the Town Hall opened in 1858 but no decision was taken. One

Councillor in 1934 said that in looking at the records he found that the

City Council had been discussing a new town hall for at least thirty-five

years. There was concern about traffic congestion in the 1930's but no action

was taken to remedy the position. During 1938-39 the Council decided to

develop a large section of the city centre and to acquire properties.

Alderman Adams M.P., argued for the appointment of a "leading town planning

expert", "... to report upon the various important questions arising from.

the proposed development of these areas."[1] He pointed out the magnitude of

several proposed schemes, the need for expert advice, the "remarkably little

expenditure" by the City in this field and the danger of haphazard street

planning, especially with traffic problems.

> " With regard to town planning generally, they sought a
> harmonious whole, and as a whole, this central area ought
> to be surveyed now, and not at a later date."[2]

This was opposed by others who said it would only mean delay and they had

two city engineers, the old and the new and another expert was not needed.

The proposal was lost for it only obtained seven votes.

Unlike several other cities Newcastle suffered little from bomb

damage during the Second World War and therefore there was not the need for

extensive planning and rebuilding. Neither the Labour controlled Council of

1945-1949 nor the Progressive controlled Council of 1949-1958 engaged in

comprehensive planning. The Progressive Group on the Council was a loose

coalition of Conservatives, Liberals and Independents, it survived until 1960.

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1. City Council Proceedings (C.C.P.) (22 February 1939) pp.409.

2. Ibid.

There are interesting parallels between the situation in Newcastle in the 1820's and 1830's and in the 1950's and 1960's. In both these periods radical redevelopment plans were put forward which would transform the City. The plans were visionary at the time in their scope, concepts and comprehensiveness. They also involved enormous expenditure and considerable inconvenience, if not hardship, to individuals and organisations. On both occasions the initiative for the changes came from strong personalities who possessed outstanding leadership qualities and imagination. They were extremely adept at public relations and successfully handled any opposition to the proposals. The City Council members played a passive role. The possession or otherwise of expertise was an important factor in the 1820's and it has become increasingly more important since then.

There was a gradual change in the social and political composition of the Council similar to that traced by Lee in his study of Cheshire and Jones in his study of Wolverhampton.[1] Yet the change was slow and the members took a conservative view of their functions reacting to events rather than playing an active leadership role in the City. This partly accounts for the perpetual opposition to proposals involving more expenditure. The Central Government also exerted control over finance in the nineteenth century and this control was extended to most spheres by 1960, but in planning the local council still retained the independent initiative. Some M.P.'s are still recruited from among Council members today. The planning proposals of the 1960's were as important as those of the 1820's and the Grainger and Dobson area formed the core around which Councillor Smith and Planning Officer Burns put forward the 1963 Development Plan.

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1. J.M. Lee, *Social Leaders and Public Persons*.
   G.W. Jones, *Borough Politics*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

In English county boroughs[1] authority rests with the city council. It is the council which is finally responsible legally and politically for all decisions. In practice however, it normally formally ratifies the recommendations of its committees. As one official report expressed it:
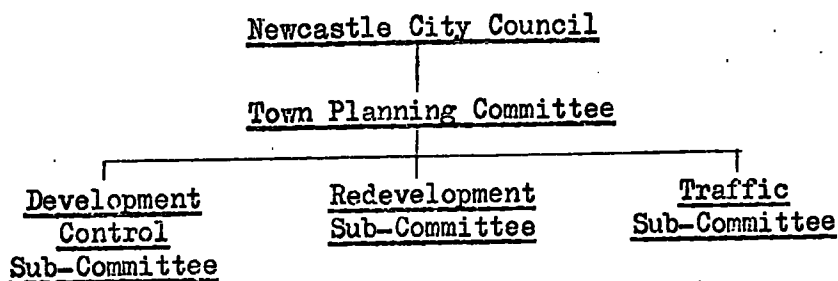
> "The Council, acting in session, originates and sanctions the complex of committees, sub-committees and departments which constitute the local government system of administration. Its authority lies both in its unique legal powers, which may, to a large extend, be delegated but for which it must retain ultimate responsibility and in its status as a democratic assembly."[2]

At the actual Council meeting in Newcastle, the Council formally ratifies the committee recommendation, it rarely rejects or refers these back. Members can propose motions, ask questions and generally debate the affairs of the Council. The meetings are a forum where citizens can hear the affairs of the city debated but more important the proceedings can be given wide publicity in the local press. This means that Council meetings are used as a political platform to either support or attack opponents. As stated in a study of Coventry City Council this can affect what issues will be raised at council meetings.[3] For example after 1967 the Labour group, then in a minority on the City Council, did not criticise the Conservative policy on city centre redevelopment, for fear the Conservatives would turn the criticism against Labour and this would be used by the Press.

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1. County boroughs will be abolished by 1974 and a new system of local government instituted according to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Committee on the Management of Local Government, (M.L.G.) Vol. 5, Ch. 14, p.382.

3. J.K. Friend and W.N. Jessop, Local Government and Strategic Choice, p.52.

From 1958 until 1967 the Newcastle City Council was controlled by the Labour Group. After the election in May 1958 they appointed their members as chairmen of all the committees and as a majority of the members of each committee. Thus the Labour group had political control of the City's administration and the Labour Group meeting became more significant than the City Council meeting in deciding policy. The Group meeting however was not necessarily more significant than Committees especially as the Labour group did not impose strict discipline on its members in committee as it did in full Council. This did mean that Councillor T. Dan Smith on one occasion had to introduce a resolution into the Council to request the Town Planning Committee to instruct the officers to prepare a report on the development of the central area of the City.[1] This illustrates the authority of the Council. Normally however matters were passed through the Planning Committee smoothly under the Labour majority and as such passed by the City Council almost automatically.

It is indicative of the position of planning in Newcastle that there was no independent planning committee until 1960. The new Committee had two sub-committees, one on development control and one on redevelopment. A Traffic Sub-Committee was established in 1962.

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                    Newcastle City Council
                            |
                    Town Planning Committee
                            |
        +-------------------+-------------------+
   Development          Redevelopment         Traffic
   Control              Sub-Committee         Sub-Committee
   Sub-Committee
```

The sub-committees of Development Control and Redevelopment did not make any significant contribution to city centre redevelopment in the first few years of their existence. This was because in the early 1960's the new Department

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1. C.C.P., (16 March 1960), p.1006.

was busy compiling the new proposals. At this stage, most of the decisions were major policy decisions and had to be taken by the full Planning Committee. The Reports of 1961 and 1963 were received by the full Committee without having any prior consideration given to them by sub-committees. This is true also of the major policy statements such as that on "Office Provision and Policy", March 1961. Once the overall major decisions were taken the sub-committees began to play an increasingly important role; the Redevelopment Sub-Committee in particular occupied an important place in the planning machinery for the city centre. This Committee was responsible for the day to day matter of redevelopment concentrating mainly on problems which arose from the planning proposals. It was used extensively to meet objections and to smooth out problems as they occurred and before they needed to go to the full Committee. This Sub-Committee endeavoured to reach an agreement with the major interests which would be affected by the city centre redevelopment plans. For example the Committee met and discussed the proposals with the directors of the big departmental stores in Northumberland Street. These round table discussions with the elected representatives were additional to the normal contacts with the officers. This was an attempt to get over information to important property owners and to gain their support. The Redevelopment Sub-Committee was also responsible for co-operation and co-ordination with other council committees. There were joint working groups and reports were issued on such matters as 'The Town Moor', and 'Communications'. The main functions of the Committee gradually evolved as being the control of the timing and administration of development and the formulation of broad policy towards development.

The Development Control Sub-Committee made no direct contribution to the redevelopment plans. Its primary function was to approve or reject planning applications. It was not concerned with the formulation of policy like the Redevelopment Sub-Committee. Both of these sub-committees included all the members of the Planning Committee. There was therefore no danger of

a lack of co-ordination or differences in policy. A considerable amount of the initial preliminary work was carried out by the sub-committees examining particular problems and then presenting reports to the full committee. This enabled the full committee to concentrate on the major policy matters and get through the work much quicker.

Membership of committees was considered to be important by Council members and there was competition to obtain places on particular committees. Committee places were alloted by the Group Leader but members were invariably appointed to their old committees and considerable weight was given to seniority and past service. Some committees were more important than others, for example Finance, while others were considered to have a higher status or to be more interesting. The Planning Committee was a popular committee because of its power over development and the emphasis given to planning in the post war period. This was reflected during most of this time by the fact that the Leader of the Council became Chairman of the Committee. Yet the committees which were most popular or took up most time or were considered to have "done most to improve things",[1] were not necessarily those where councillors felt they had "been most effective in getting things done or the right decision made".[1] This would be true of planning in the 1950's.

Many members of the Town Planning Committee had served on the Committee for several years. The outstanding example of this was Alderman Clydesdale who served without a break for thirty-six years from 1924 to 1960, and acted as Chairman for several years. Chairmen of the committee have always had considerable experience of the Committee and the last Labour Chairman of the Committee served on the Committee for eleven years. His predecessor served for nine years under Labour and continued as a member under the Conservative majority. Councillor Smith served for seven years, four as Chairman. If Chairmen of the Planning Committee have been ineffective in

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 2, Ch. 3, Part 2, p.112.

any way it has not been because of a lack of knowledge of the operation of the Committee or of the scope of the work undertaken by the Department. The number of places on the Planning Committee over the period 1958 to 1967 was fifteen. Thirty-six council members have served in these places. Of these, eighteen members have served five years or more. In the actual period under consideration twelve had served five years or more, ten served only one year. Over the nine years the average length of service was just under four years. There was therefore no lack of experience on the Committee. If the Committee was passive or made little contribution it was not because members were shunted around amongst different Committees. The established pattern was for a high proportion of the members to be long serving and experienced.

It was difficult to compare the socio-economic grouping on various councils for it was never absolutely clear what employment should go in what classification. Occupations differ widely and so do the ways in which people describe their occupations. The only official record of a council member's occupation was given on the official notice of poll. Taking this occupational classification as a guide was not satisfactory but it was the only readily available record. The kind of information contained in these tables was sometimes used in discussions on the quality or calibre of councillors. If there was a low proportion of members who were employers, managers and professional workers it was sometimes said that the quality of the membership was low. Criticism was also expressed if there was a high proportion of housewives and retired people. L.J. Sharpe has made a valuable contribution to this discussion.[1] If socio-economic groups were compared, the Newcastle Planning Committee compared favourably with the full Council. If the first four groups were taken together, (that is employers and professional workers of all types) in 1958 the Newcastle Council had 40% in these four groups and the Planning Committee 54%; 50% of those serving four years or more fell into

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1. L.J. Sharpe, 'Elected Representatives in Local Government', British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 13, (1962), p.196.

these categories also. For county boroughs as a whole 35% fell into these four groups. Of the fifteen members of the Committee in 1958, three were chartered surveyors, one was a builder and one was a company director concerned with the building trade. In the sixteen serving four years or more two were chartered surveyors. The same company director continued to serve. Three were professional worker employees, two were imspectors in the public service sector, as was one draughtsman. The Planning Committee therefore was well equipped with people of calibre, with experience of management and the public sector. The Maud Committee found that classification groups one and two tended to spend more time on finance and town planning.[1]

Of the fifteen members of the Committee in 1958 two (13%) were retired as compared to seven (9%) for the Council, and one of these two was Leader of the Council. Newcastle had a smaller percentage of retired people on the Council and on the Planning Committee than county boroughs as a whole. With regard to housewives, however, the position was the reverse. The percentage of housewives on county borough councils was 8%, Newcastle Council 17% and the Planning Committee 20%. In Sharpe's survey of 1959 he pointed out that Newcastle had the highest proportion of housewives in the county borough sample, 21.2%.[2]

It is recommended that members should be able to direct and control the officers, take the key decisions on the objects of the authority, and then plan to attain them, and review periodically progress and performance of the service.[3] This, however, did not happen in practice, and the Committee did not play this positive leadership role. They were inclined to be passive and to accept without full consideration the recommendations of the chairman and officers. There appears to have been little or no correlation between the

1. M.L.G., Vol. 2, Chap. 3, table 3.24.

2. Sharpe, op. cit., p.196.

3. M.L.G., Vol. 1, p.39, para. 151.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUPS BY PERCENTAGE

	*County Boroughs	Newcastle City Council May 1958	Planning Committee May 1958	Planning Committee 4 year service or more 1958-67
1. Employers and Managers with 25 or more subordinates	14	14	20	6
2. Employers and Managers with under 25 subordinates	15	8	7	6
3. Professional worker self-employed	2	14	27	19
4. Professional worker employees	4	4	-	19
5. Intermediate non manual	12	25	7	25
6. Junior non manual	16	5	7	-
7. Personal Service workers	1	-	-	-
8. Foremen and supervisors manual	5	-	-	-
9. Skilled manual	16	7	7	12.5
10. Semi-skilled manual	6	-	-	-
11. Unskilled manual	2	-	-	-
12. Own account, other than professional	2	-	-	-
13. Farmers employers and managers	-	-	-	-
14. Farmers own account	-	-	-	-
15. Agricultural workers	-	-	-	-
16. Armed Forces	-	-	-	-
17. Never gainfully employed	2	22	20	12.5
18. Indefinite or not answered	3	-	7	-
	100	100	100	100
	(439)	(76)	(15)	(16)

* <u>M.L.G.</u>, Vol. 2, p.23, table 1.9.

NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION

CLASSIFICATION	May 1958		4 years service or over 1958-67	
1. Company Directors	2		1	
Builder	1	3	-	1
2. Advertising Manager	1	1	1	1
3. Chartered Surveyors	3		2	
Medical Practitioner	1	4	1	3
4. Retired University Lecturer	-		1	
Industrial Chemist	-		1	
Accountant	-		1	3
5. Retired Police Officer	1		1	
District Gas Inspector	-		1	
Building Inspector	-		1	
Draughtsman	-		1	4
6. Married Woman (Employed)	1	1	-	
7.- 8. Nil	-		-	
9. Electrician	1		1	
Works Convenor	-	1	1	2
10 - 16. Nil	-		-	
17. Housewives	3	3	2	2
18. Retired	1	1	-	
	15 members		**16 members**	

NEWCASTLE CITY COUNCIL

TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE

MAY 1958

Percentage of Female Members

Newcastle City Council	Planning Committee
21%	27%
	*12.5%

(* four years service or over on the Committee 1958-1967)

Percentage of housewife Members

Local Government Electors	County Boroughs Councils	Newcastle City Council	Planning Committee
25%	8%	17%	20%
			*12.5%

(* four years service or over 1958-1967)

Percentage of those retired

Local Government Electors	County Boroughs Councils	Newcastle City Council	Planning Committee
9%	16%	9%	13%
			*12.5%

(* four years service or over 1958-1967)

qualities needed and the socio-economic class. In fact some members who could have been expected to have the qualities needed, including technical knowledge, appeared to lack the judgement required to make a contribution. It was difficult to evaluate the calibre of councillors and the Maud Report acknowledges this. They also say that;

> "An operational definition of the term 'calibre' would require a statement of all the qualities needed for the efficient performance of all the functions of a public representative and acceptable ways of measuring those qualities."[1]

The qualities necessary for good administration and wise decision-making are many and varied and include such intangible qualities as perception, judgement, objectivity, humanity, aesthetic judgement, vision, and a receptiveness to new ideas. Councillors also need to be representative as Dr. Jones stresses in his chapter on "The Calibre of the Council".[2] There is also the need to ensure that members are people of integrity. The problem of the required calibre is compounded when councillors have to make decisions about complex technical problems such as redevelopment. In Newcastle the situation was not improved by most of the councillors not recognising that there was any difficulty in them carrying out their functions.

The contribution of the Planning Committee to the decision-making process is considered in terms of time, policies, priorities, control and evaluation, decision-making, representatives, and political parties.

It is difficult to calculate the amount of time members spent on committees concerned with planning. The full Committee met once a month and the meetings lasted from one to three hours. The Redevelopment Sub-Committee met only when required and not at all in the first year or so of the new Department. The Development Control Sub-Committee met twice a month for one to three hours while the Traffic Sub-Committee met only once a month for one to three hours. Unlike the other two committees Traffic only had seven members.

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 2, p.3.

2. Jones, op. cit., Ch. 7.

The amount of time spent per month by individual members on Planning Committee work averaged between six and fifteen hours. This was the time spent in actual committee meetings and does not include working groups and other activities such as visits. Members served on more than one Council committee. These times should be examined in the context of the average monthly workload on members in September and October 1966:[1]

	Majority Party		Minority Party	
	Commitment	Actual	Commitment	Actual
Average workload	25 hrs	15 hrs	14 hrs	8 hrs
up to a maximum of	60 hrs	39 hrs	37 hrs	33 hrs
down to a minimum of	6 hrs	2 hrs	6 hrs	4 hrs
Average sittings per month	21	12	14	8
Maximum sittings per month	50	32	43	27
Minimum sittings per month	3	1	5	2

It was generally accepted by the Council that Planning was one of the hardest-worked committees and members had well above the average workload. The Maud Report also found out that Town and Country Planning took up relatively large proportions of all committee time.[2] The special report in May 1967 stated:

> "With the increasing complexity of the tasks of a local authority coupled with the rapid pace of redevelopment in Newcastle upon Tyne, it is becoming increasingly urgent to ensure that there is (a) a greater degree of co-ordination between work of these committees and,
> (b) a greater economy of time spent in committee by both members and officers and the most effective use of such time as is spent therein."[1]

This report underlines the position of members of the Planning Committee and their contribution in amount of time, how effectively the time was used was also touched on. The Report points out that members in committee " .. have responsibility for ensuring that the time they do spend is spent on the most

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1. _Report of the Parliamentary and General Purposes Committee on Delegations from Council and Committees_, (May 1967).
2. _M.L.G._, Vol. 2, Ch. 3, see table 3.23.

important issues." Members of the Planning Committee had a heavy work
programme with long agendas and a considerable amount of reading material.
They realised that they could not afford the time to go deeply into reports
or to discuss points with the officers. The pressure of time therefore and
the volume of work did not allow for a serious consideration of the redevelop-
ment proposals.

It can be argued that the main functions of the members working
through the committees is to formulate policy and determine priorities. The
Maud Report suggested that policy could not be defined, but "some issues are,
to reasonable men, so important that they can be safely termed 'policy issues'."[1]
It also states that the members should decide the objectives of the local
authority and the plans to attain these. This activity can be termed policy
making which would include the major decisions regarding city centre redevelop-
ment. In one paragraph the Report says:

> "True policy making arises out of particular problems when
> consideration of a new case leads to the determination of
> general guides to action which has general application."[2]

The Committee did not think in terms of policy making, objectives or guide
lines and therefore the officers were given no instructions regarding the
preparation of policy reports. These concepts are abstract and many members
had no experience in thinking in these kinds of terms. Thus there was no
attempt made to determine objectives and general guides to action and there was
no examination of existing plans or particular problems to find out whether
a new approach was needed. Members of the Committee were inclined to consider
matters on a personal subjective basis and to feel that those "things" should
be left to the "expert". The expert would provide reports with recommendations
as to the policy to be followed and the Committee would 'consider' the reports
and recommend them to the Council for ratification. It is difficult to see

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 1, p.38, para. 143.

2. M.L.G., Vol. 5, Ch. 9, p.271, para. 18.

in this approach of the Planning Committee "true policy making". Yet it

would not be inconsistent with the following:

> "Few members see themselves as policy makers – only three or
> four of all the members it was said, even in some quite
> large authorities."[1]

The Committee did not establish any objectives or guide lines for the

officers to follow yet they were committed to redevelopment. This was

particularly so of the Labour Party which had given specific consideration

to the city centre[2] and supported Smith in his planning aspirations. A

resolution on the city centre had been debated in the Council in March 1960

and passed. This called for a report on the possibilities of redevelopment

and reflected the growing feeling that the City was not developing as quickly

as it might.[3]

Some members of the Committee were aware of this danger and the

various problems within the City. For example a considerable amount of time

was devoted to discussing the traffic problems and possible solutions and

mention was made of traffic free pedestrian shopping areas. Over the years

various proposals were discussed as to how the existing shopping areas could

be extended. The principle of University extension in the city centre had

been accepted also the development of an educational precinct in the

Northumberland Road area. Thus the Committee had touched on some of the

problems and possible changes.

None of this was expressed formally by the Committee to the Officer.

He was not given any instructions either by the Committee or by the Chairman

and no aims or objectives were set for him to bear in mind when drawing up

plans. The Department was given a completely free hand to work on the

Development Plan Review and then report back. The Chairman of the Planning

Committee had particularly strong views on redevelopment but this did not lead

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 5, Ch. 3, p.40, para. 88.

2. City Labour Party General Committee (13 January 1959).

3. C.C.P., (16 March 1960) p.1006.

him to issue any instructions to the Planning Officer. In any case it was the view of the City Planning Officer that "councillors today are not in a position to contribute in this kind of way, or to lay down guide lines or priorities". There was however, a very close working relationship between the Chairman and the Officer, and this did ensure that points of difference were easily overcome. This enabled the proposals put before the Committee to be authoritative and precise so no vacuum was left where members might have made a more definite contribution. As one Labour member of the Committee expressed it:

> "Dan Smith and Burns always used to consult before the
> Committee meeting and invariably agreed. On one or
> two occasions Smith opposed his ideas but these were on
> minor matters."

This factor also discouraged the Committee from attempting to formulate policy.

Implicit in the concept of deciding objectives and formulating policy is the idea of priorities especially in a situation where resources are scarce which was the position in Newcastle. One American writer on planning claims that one of the main functions of the elected representative should be the creation of priorities to be followed by the officers. For,

> "Significant planning problems are never simply technical,
> they always involve the determination of priorities."[1]

In Newcastle no priorities were determined by the Planning Committee. A senior officer of the Planning Department said:

> "Dan Smith, the Leader of the Labour Party, had strong
> ideas about city redevelopment. This was one of the
> reasons why the Department was established."

In spite of his strong ideas Smith did not establish any priorities. The Committee did not discuss priorities yet they were under pressure to take action on certain matters such as the city road plan and central redevelopment. As one member expressed it:

> "We did not even have a proper road plan. People were

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1. A.A. Altshuler, The City Planning Process, p.3.

> complaining about this and that they could not get any
> replies from the City."

Owners and potential developers wanted to know what their future was to be
in the city centre. The Committee considered the building of a new civic
centre to be a priority for the defects of the old Town Hall had been pointed
out before the First World War. The Committee had feelings about these
matters but as one ex-Chairman of the Committee retorted:

> "We do not establish priorities or guide lines, we do not
> work like that, you have no idea how we make policy
> decisions. There are problems and we have experts who
> bring forward solutions to these problems."

Several leading members of the Labour Party however were not happy about the
situation and established a Policy Advisory Committee in 1963. This Committee
in operation made no contribution to planning priorities, it was mainly
concerned with financial priorities and the supply and allocation of funds
for capital projects. Their ambit included the £200 million development
programme only for capital control and co-ordination purposes. Neither this
Committee nor the Planning Committee were concerned to emphasise certain
planning matters or de-emphasise others or ask the question,

> "... which complicating factors shall be de-emphasised,
> how significant shall be judged, and what the substance
> of the assumptions shall be."[1]

The crucial point of control and evaluation for the Planning
Committee was when the officer presented his policy reports for Committee
approval and recommendation to the City Council. A whole series of reports
and recommendations were introduced and accepted by the Committee, starting
with the first report of the Planning Officer in April 1961. The Committee
was given an opportunity of studying these reports before the meeting and at
times summaries or simplified forms of reports were presented to the Committee
to help the members in their understanding of the issues and save time. At
the meeting they were explained fully and persuasively by the officer who

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1. <u>Ibid.</u>, p.453.

tried to answer any possible objections in his presentation. As one Labour member described it,

> "Sections of the review were explained and 'sold' to the Committee each month."

There were sometimes questions and discussion but never any opposition and no change or amendment of any consequence was ever made by the Committee. The Officer might touch on possible alternative proposals but he always made a definite recommendation as to what he considered the best line of development. The Committee were not in a position where they had to choose between different policies from different departments, or from clear alternatives presented by the Planning Department. No alternative policy came from any other authoritative source as did in 1958 in respect of the Pilgrim Street roundabout scheme. Alternative policies can lead to the rejection of the Officer's proposal as in Hull where the "Medical Officer of Health's advice was not taken on fluoridation because a competitive source induced confusion in the minds of the councillors."[1]

Members of the Committee did not feel competent to criticise the reports. They considered that these were technical documents being put forward by a highly efficient officer who, using the techniques of his profession, was indicating the best possible proposals. One of the main reasons for the lack of criticism was the high regard members had for the Officer:

> "There was no question in the Committee's mind that they had one of the best men in the country."[2]

They did not consider it to be part of their function to challenge the Officer to substantiate his proposals or to explain why other lines of development were not acceptable. The Committee made no attempt to try and place the plans and reports into a wider context. There was no realisation

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1. A.P. Brier, 'The Decision Process in Local Government', <u>Public Administration</u> (Summer 1970), p.165.

2. A Conservative member of the Planning Committee.

that the Officer might be speaking from a particular viewpoint and other viewpoints might be just-as valid. Members very often build up a loyalty to a Committee and this was so with the Planning Committee. In several ways this was good but it did mean that the Committee was inclined to accept the official view of the situation, without considering other views fully. The required overall evaluation was not made at the Group meetings nor was it made by the Finance Committee which sometimes acts in the capacity of an evaluating committee. It is not the normal practice for the Labour Party Group meeting to evaluate proposals or to try and place them in a wider context. In any case any attempt to evaluate the redevelopment plans would have been restricted owing to the strong support they had from the leadership. Evaluation attempts also would have conflicted with the desire for speedy action. The Finance Committee did not review the proposals for they did not call for any expenditure at the stage when they were being presented. It was only later when the question of implementation arose that the Finance Committee was drawn into planning. This involvement did not concern the plans however and they did not question whether the proposals were right or wrong. Any questions of this nature would have been difficult as the proposals had already been confirmed as Council policy.

The reports laid before the Planning Committee by the Officer were orientated towards whatever ideas and views were held by the Committee members. This is another reason why there was little criticism in the Committee and it is another factor which helps to explain the passive acceptance of reports. As one officer explained,

> "There was no conflict; planners and officers assimilate the ideas and concepts of the politicians and fit in their proposals to these ideas. The reports are moulded to fit in."[1]

The same point was made in the Report of the Maud Committee:

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1. A senior officer of the Planning Department.

> "The influence of the representatives pervades officers'
> planning whether or not members are brought into
> consultation at a formative stage."[1]

A good chairman and chief officer will ensure that this happens as in

Newcastle, where the close working relationship between Burns and Smith also

helped.

The Committee accepted the reports of the officers too readily and

gave then only superficial consideration and evaluation. An isolated

recognition of this danger was a change in their approval of the First Report

of the City Planning Officer as to Central Redevelopment. At first they:

> "approved the recommendations therein contained in their
> entirety for submission to the City Council".

This was later amended to read:

> "approved in principle the recommendations therein
> contained subject to modification ...."[2]

The nearest the Committee got to control or evaluation of policy

reports was when some anxiety and criticism was expressed about a few matters.

This was not expressed as a question of no confidence nor was it pressed after

explanations were given. One example was the criticism of the proposed traffic

scheme with its possible effect on business and employment. Labour councillors

were under pressure from trade union representatives within the Labour Party,

who were concerned about the effect of the restrictions on commercial and

delivery vehicles as well as private vehicles. Commercial business interests

were anxious about the effect on trade and their apprehension was voiced by

anti-Labour members. No modification was made to the proposals, however. It

was explained that these were an integral part of the central redevelopment

and could not be changed without jeopardising the whole scheme. Some

Committee members felt that the redevelopment plans were too extensive and

the pace of development too rapid. Projections of five years and twenty years

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 5, Ch. 3, para. 63.

2. Town Planning Committee Minutes, (26 June 1961).

were produced by the Department and some members of the Committee felt
that if the development was spread over a longer period of time it would
cost less. This kind of anxiety was rarely expressed and never carried to
a vote in Committee partly owing to the Conservative leader being strongly
in favour of planning.

Some criticism sprang from political differences between groups
on the Committee. The Progressive Group were opposed to the establishment
of an independent planning department and they expressed this within the
Committee and in the Council. This sprang from their general opposition to
any increase in expenditure or expansion of departments. They also resented
interference by planning with the rights of property owners to develop their
own property as they wished. On the other hand the Conservative Group was
favourably inclined towards an independent department and towards planning
generally and this led to a bipartisan approach to planning rather than a
critical one. As one Conservative member of the Committee put it,

> "There was no political conflict over planning, naturally
> we attacked our opponents when we could, but there was no
> substantial difference over planning."

Conservatives and Progressives were critical over the emphasis placed on
Corporation development as against private development in the proposals.
They argued that the private developers possessed the resources and experience
which the Council did not. There was also criticism of the amount of land
and the number of buildings being acquired by the City which led to
accusations of the 'municipalisation' of all land. It was argued that all
these acquisitions involved vast expenditure and a loss in rateable revenue
with no corresponding return to the City. Yet the Conservatives accepted
that the Council should own land when possible and agreed with the Labour
leasehold policy which this entailed. The Labour controlled Committee
sponsored joint Council-private development such as the Empire Theatre site
scheme. There was therefore no clear-cut division between the parties and
this was another reason why criticism was muffled. The very fact that there
was some criticism from the anti-Labour side meant that the Labour members felt

restrained to withhold any critical points they might wish to make. Their support for the proposals was solid, as one long serving Labour member of the Committee said, "If it was Socialist, I would vote for it." In discussing this point it appeared that a Socialist measure was any matter which the anti-Labour group opposed. Another long serving Labour member of the Committee, an ex-Chairman of the Committee, could only think of one example in Committee where there had been criticism and where action had been taken. The example was not even to do with central redevelopment but concerned the neighbourhood projects. Even in this instance when there was criticism it was stated that the Department was under tremendous pressure owing to the amount of work and the shortage of staff. This state of affairs alone, however, should have led the Committee to be more thorough in its evaluation of Departmental proposals and in putting forward constructive criticism. Even if they wanted to, none of the members felt capable of really challenging the Planning Officer, for he was generally accepted as being a very competent officer. Another reason for the lack of criticism or discussion within the Committee was the lack of any member holding strong views about planning and the City. Even on a controversial matter which aroused a great deal of public comment like the demolition of the Eldon Square buildings there was no discussion in the Committee. There was some discussion within the Committee, but this was not because of matters of principle so much as the differences in attitude adopted by the older more senior members and the younger members. For example, both Renwick on the Labour side and Oliver on the opposition side had similar outlooks and were uneasy about the scale of development. They were both in their sixties and joined the Council in the mid 1940's. As stated in an Essex study[1] however, the conflict was more to do with outlook, rather than party or issue. Dr. Hill in her study of West Yorkshire points out that

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1. J. Blondel and R. Hall, 'Conflict, Decision Making and the Perceptions of Local Councillors', Political Studies, (October 1967).

"The gap between senior and junior councillors may be quite wide."[1] This gap at times did disturb slightly the even tenor of the Planning Committee proceedings. One area where the members have traditionally been active in exerting control is finance. For example, Progressive members were very critical about the estimated costs of the new planning department.[2] With regard to the redevelopment proposals however, the Conservative Leader could state of the Planning Committee:

> " .... and I can say as a very good attender indeed, never at any time have we got down to any question of where the money is coming from."[3]

One of the reasons for this was Grey's own commitment to the proposals which did not encourage financial criticism. Another was the solid support given by Smith and the Labour Party. Smith and Burns were strong personalties who encouraged confidence in their statements. Smith attacked the Progressive opposition:

> "You talk about the cost to the ratepayers. The cost of not developing Percy Street and Northumberland Street is measured in millions of pounds."[4]

There was a desire amongst members to produce plans for the City and costs were inclined to be thought of, if they were thought of at all, as a secondary matter. At the planning stage there was no need for members to commit themselves to actual expenditure and this also helped to push finance into the background. This tendency was accentuated by the size and complexity of the finance involved in the proposals. It was mainly capital expenditure over a long period of time and involved borrowing from various sources, Central Government grants and loans, and Council, private and joint development.

There was no managerial system at this time to review such a huge

1. D.M. Hill, 'Democracy in Local Government', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leeds, (June 1966), pp.281-3.

2. C.C.P. (6 May 1959), p.971.

3. C.C.P., Councillor A. Grey, (5 April 1967), p.104.

4. C.C.P. (16 December 1959) p.622.

programme or to ask questions about the financial implications. This type
of programme and its size was new to the City and to Council members. It
was only in 1965 that the Council started to establish a unified management
system.[1]

The calibre of the members was reasonable compared to the Council
and to other local authorities, and Smith especially was good. Their failure
to ask questions about finance, was due as much to the novelty, complexity
and scale of the proposals, as to calibre. Members accepted too easily the
views of Smith and Burns and in the state of optimism about planning it was
just assumed that finance would be forthcoming. Members tended to be bedazzled
by the proposed 'new' city. Burns who had experience of such schemes did not
raise questions about finance.

The control exerted by the Planning Committee over the redevelopment
plans was negligible. Basic criticism, comment and even questions were
conspicious by their absence. The points raised were generally on secondary
matters and not concerned with policy. Members were not inclined to try and
persuade the Department to think again about any matter. When the nature and
extent of the proposals are considered the behaviour of the members is
remarkable. Fundamental changes were being proposed which could affect the
City for several decades and would cost at least £200 million. Searching
questioning and probing was required about the proposals and their implications.
This was not given by the Committee which passively accepted the proposals
without any positive critical assessment or overall evaluation. The members
are expected not only to formulate policy and to evaluate the advice of the
officers but they are expected to take the decisions to ensure the implementation
of that policy and advice. Members of the Planning Committee believed that they
were successful decision makers because of the number and the importance of
their decisions. They were also proud of their speed in getting through a

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1. J. Elliott, 'The Harris Experiment in Newcastle upon Tyne', Public
Administration, Vol. 49 (Summer 1971) p.149.

considerable amount of business in a relatively short time. Certain other committees were known for their slowness in procedure and procrastination over decision taking. In the words of one member;

> "The main contribution of the Committee was in pushing
> reports through rapidly. It was the Planning Committee
> which set the pace, the other committees were much slower."

Unlike some other committees they felt they were making an important contribution to the future of the City. Labour members were aware of their party's strong criticism of the delay and lack of decision making by past administrations and this helped to inculcate a sense of urgency regarding decision making. Councillor Smith had been one of the most vehement critics, now as Chairman he pushed through business as quickly as possible. His persuasive dynamic personality also helped to convince the Committee of the urgency. Another factor was the clear, careful and imaginative presentation of the reports by the Chief Officer. His stress on the importance of people, his moderate but authoritative approach to planning generally, all helped to disarm any possible critics. Both of these men were very sure of themselves and their ideas, and they were able to carry the Committee with them. They both stressed the need for new buildings and new roads but passed lightly over financial and social considerations. This was pointed out later for other planning reports also:

> "There is practically no mention whatever of finance, there
> was precious little mention of it in the original Development
> Plan, and there is practically none in here."[1]

Full consideration of these other factors would have taken a considerable amount of time and would have delayed the making of decisions. Through the plans presented to them the Committee were shown that the future Newcastle could be like;

> "We had a vision of what the city could be, we had the
> knowledge, and we worked hard for it. There was the
> realisation that if we did not act it would be piecemeal
> development."[2]

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1. C.C.P. (5 April 1967) Councillor N. Trotter speaking on the report
   'Planning - Progress and Purpose', 1963-67.
2. Labour member of the Planning Committee.

A vigorous public relations campaign was being conducted to stimulate and involve the public in the new plans. The campaign needed quick continuous decisions to engender and maintain the greatest impact. This was normally achieved by high-lighting reports as they were produced by the Committee. "Smith was keen to keep things on the boil. It was good public relations."[1] This campaign also led to a stress on urgency within the Committee, projects had to be coming forward continuously to ensure that there was no vacuum and public interest was maintained. In a sense, the Committee was part of the source of the campaign, but they also became affected by the atmosphere which was created by it. They were influenced by their own publicity in favour of the plans, and the need for more plans.

The Committee not only took decisions but they took unpopular decisions. They found that once they had accepted the officer's proposals other proposals had to be rejected. For example, they deliberately held up planning approval for several schemes until the Department had produced their plans. This meant that they came in for a considerable amount of criticism from would-be developers. Development of the Council's own land and property was also affected. An example of this was the Palace Theatre site which the Council were unable to develop owing to the lack of definite comprehensive planning proposals.

It can be argued that the Committee had a positive attitude to planning which was in marked contrast to the attitude of the preceeding administration. The Chief Officer, in his book describes the Planning Committee as "politically creating the atmosphere for the best form of development."[2] This includes the willingness of the Committee to accept reports and ideas quickly. More positively, their concern and enthusiasm about planning greatly encouraged the Department and assisted them in their dealings with other departments and committees, it also helped to ensure that

1. Senior Officer of the Planning Department.
2. W. Burns, Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne, p.44.

planning matters were accepted without any difficulty by the Council.

External factors also helped; there was a growing feeling in the City that Newcastle was being left behind, there were big developments taking place elsewhere but there had been no development in Newcastle since the end of the war. The traffic problems were getting worse without any serious attempt being made to bring forward and implement remedies. Smith claims this was an advantage for Burns and himself.

> "My election in 1961 as leader of the Newcastle upon Tyne
> City Council coincided with the appointment of Wilfred
> Burns as the city planning officer. In a sense we were
> both fortunate that the inertia of local government in
> the post war years was so complete that not even piecemeal
> development had taken place in anything but the most minor
> form."[1]

In a study of the borough councillors of Colchester and Maldon one of the conclusions is:

> " .. that the system does, and apparently will continue
> to reduce tensions to a minimum."[2]

This was true in Newcastle and especially in the Planning Committee where there was a consensus among members and the mass of business passed through rapidly with little or no conflict. It would be an overstatement to say;

> "Considerable efforts are made to keep the system running."[2]

In Newcastle it was not needed, long hours were worked and quick decisions taken and a favourable climate was created for comprehensive planning. The position was similar to Bath where it was found;

> "At the level of actual decision-making political differences
> became insignificant. This is particularly the case in the
> crucial area of committee meetings."[3]

There was a commitment and decisions were taken, but was the process conducive to making the 'right' or the most 'rational' decision? The process

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1. Dan Smith, 'Planning for Tomorrow's People', The Listener, Vol. LXXIII, No. 1888 (3 June 1965).

2. Blondel and Hall, op. cit., p.322 and 350.

3. B.S.R. Green, 'Community Decision Making in a Georgian City', Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath (1968), p.222.

and environment made for undue haste and insufficient consideration and
evaluation was given to the city centre proposals put forward by the
Department.

One of the main functions of council members is to act as
representatives and they should have;

> " .. the capacity to understand sympathetically the problems
> and points of view of constituents and to convey them to
> the authority and, at the same time, to interpret and
> explain the authority's policies and actions to those whom
> they represent."[1]

Most of the members might have had the 'capacity to understand', but it is
doubtful whether they were really aware of the problems and views of
constituents or of the implications of the authority's policies. There was
a lack of contact between the Committee and most of their constituents. A
Sheffield study also found that there was a lack of awareness, for example;

> "Redevelopment was stressed more by the electors than by
> the councillors, but the most significant difference
> between the electors and their representatives concerned
> roads and traffic. Over half the electors mentioned
> this issue, compared with one in five of the councillors."[2]

Efforts were made to contact the people going to be affected by the plans,
but these were not successful. There was a good deal of publicity which
included the distribution of literature and the staging of three exhibitions.
No efforts were made to hold public meetings about central redevelopment in
the city centre area unlike the meetings held in the suburbs to explain local
plans. It was felt that public meetings were not the best method to contact
people in central areas, and that they would be of little value in a
representative sense or in any other sense.

> "Public meetings are in any event notoriously unrepresentative
> and so unlikely to provide a means of general influence."[3]

The name and address of the ward councillors was given in the planning booklets

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1. M.L.G., Vol. 1, Ch. 6, para. 511(a).

2. W. Hampton, Democracy and Community, p.208.

3. M.L.G., Vol. 5, Ch. 3, para. 42.

for the various city centre redevelopment areas. As far as can be judged few if any councillors were contacted specifically about any of the proposals. This was partly due to the general nature of the plans and because certain firms preferred to contact the Department direct rather than go through the councillor. A few councillors felt it was wrong for the Committee to consider views of individuals or groups on these matters. They felt that they alone should make the decisions for they were democratically elected and were in a position to take the wider view, for individuals or interest groups represented no one but themselves and only put forward their self-oriented views. For these reasons their opinions should not be considered by the Committee, or if they were, they should not be given too much weight. One officer in the Planning Department was critical of councillors and suggested that they also were only putting forward personal viewpoints which were not necessarily representative.

> "Individual councillors can only be speaking for one
> interest and that does happen."

This is a limited view of councillors who would claim that they were elected by the citizens and they served and represented the City as a whole. Representing ward interests however are another matter as one study of a Newcastle suburb found;

> "None of the Councillors, indeed, regarded himself primarily
> as a representative of local opinion and interests, and
> most rejected this as an important aspect of their role
> when they were asked how they saw the purposes of councillors."[1]

This would also be the view of the members of the Planning Committee.

The Departmental officers however felt that unlike others putting forward views, the members had no direct financial interests in the outcome of the plans. Yet several members mentioned the possibility of their colleagues having interests which could be affected by planning decisions. One ex-Chairman of the Planning Committee said;

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1. R. Batley, The Byker Study, M.A. Thesis, University of Durham, (1970) p.353.

"Many members of the Council have interests which can
make membership of the Council or committees worthwhile."

This position is not unusual;

"Some disquiet also arises from builders and developers
being members of planning committees."[1]

The planning policy reports in Newcastle were not affected by financial interests but there were dangers regarding land speculation and contracts for redevelopment projects.[2]

The councillors did not represent any specific constituency interests but they were favourably inclined towards certain sectional interests. For example the Conservative Group pressed for the protection of business interests and were in favour of development being carried out by private firms rather than by the City Council. Members do have personal interests which were expressed in Committee, for example the preservation of historic buildings. Also some members have links with specific organisations, as one Labour member who said;

"I kept an eye on Co-operative interests but this was
mainly concerning shopping centres on new estates."

It would be wrong however to say of Newcastle upon Tyne, as one study said of another Newcastle;

" ... established organisations with social and economic
interests need apply little pressure because they are
naturally represented on the Borough Council."[3]

In the period 1958-1967 especially their interests were not naturally represented. As both Brier[4] and Newton have suggested there is a tendency for Labour councils particularly to be rather closed and cut off from other city groups.

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1. M.L.G. Vol. 5, Ch. 3, para. 110.

2. See the discussion 1) The Times (12 – 13 August, 1965)
   2) D.E. Regan and A.J.A. Morris, Public Law (Summer 1969) p.132.

3. F. Bealey, J. Blondel and W.P. McCann, Constituency Politics, p.38.

4. A.P. Brier, 'The Decision Process in Local Government', Public Administration (Summer 1970).

The Department considered that the representative function of the Committee was important inspite of the danger of individual interests. First the Committee represented party views accurately and they had to be recognised for the proposals to be accepted. Secondly;

> "They are important for their reactions reflect what a great number of people might feel."[1]

The Department also believed that any group which felt aggrieved would contact Committee members who would make their grievances known to the Committee and Department.

> "They consider the interests, reactions and criticisms of their public and convey them to the officers ..."[2]

In Newcastle this did not happen in practice. The members however were prepared to explain the Department viewpoint to their party groups, the Council and to other organisations. In this sense they were representatives, and as one Departmental officer said; " .. they will back it and fight for it with you." The members felt a strong loyalty to the Committee and Department and they therefore believed they should present and sell the proposals. As one Chairman expressed it;

> "The job of the Chairman and the Committee is to convince others of the value of the decision on the plans and projects."

This also agrees with Batley's findings;

> "They saw their public role primarily in terms of responsibility for the city as a whole and in terms of their specific responsibility as committee members."[3]

Professor Brenikov speaking on planning said;

> "It is too important to be left to alleged experts, for there are no experts. We speak as specialists, helping out as physical planners."[4]

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1. A senior officer of the Planning Department.

2. M.L.G. Vol. 1, p.43, para. 166.

3. Batley, op. cit., p.409.

4. Lecture to the Northern Branch, Royal Institute of Public Administration (14 November 1968).

The Committee did not accept this view and relinquished their representative role and accepted as authority the views of the officers, who were the experts.

Newcastle City Council operates under a strong political party system and therefore the role and contribution of the parties within the context of planning is considered. Most of the members of the Committee said that party politics did not affect the Committee work. The non political nature of planning has been stressed in Newcastle, and this is supported by a study of Committee minutes, the little voting which occurs is as much on non party lines as party lines. Introducing the 1963 Development Plan Review the Labour spokesman said;

> "I would point out that 95% of the time we have worked together as a Planning Committee and as a team."

This is similar to the response made to the following question of the Maud Committee:-

> "Does the fact that many councillors are attached to political groups affect the main work of your council?"

The replies from the county boroughs were as follows:

Councillors' attachment to political groups:

Does not affect council	48%
Affects some of the work	38%
Affects all of the work	13%
Don't know/not answered	1%
Total	100%
Numbers	(134) [1]

In Newcastle the Planning Committee was controlled by the majority group and their attandances at the Committee ensured that any matter the Labour Group agreed on would be carried by the Committee. On a few occasions when Labour attendance was low the Conservatives were able to get the Committee to agree to their ideas. In practice the initiative in the decision making process was taken by the Chairman. He controlled the agenda and the conduct of the meetings. There was no attempt however to agree before the meeting party

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1. M.L.G. Vol. 2, p.204, table 7.9.

policy or what line should be taken. The Labour party members supported strongly any proposals put forward by the officers. The support was not due to any direct pressure from the Party, but members were aware that the Party was committed in principle to redevelopment, and it was expected that they would support such a policy. If they failed to do so, other members were quick to bring their attention to what the policy was. There was a strong tradition of loyalty to the Party which particularly comes to the fore when there is anti-Labour opposition. This means that the Chairman could invariably depend upon this support in Committee. The Chairman of the Planning Committee also had an additional reason for support in being leader of the Group. These factors helped to ensure that business went through the Committee quickly and smoothly. The role of the party was to enable party policy to get through the Committee quickly and efficiently. The majority of county borough councillors answering the Maud Committee questionnaire also saw this as being the main reason "for believing party system essential". 67% said because the "work gets done more quickly/no argument."[1] There is some evidence that Labour councils operate more effectively than others in pushing through decisions.[2]

The role of the Newcastle councillors in planning policy making was minimal, this was also true of Labour councillors. The Party made policy decisions on traffic in 1959 and city centre redevelopment in 1961, but Labour members made no effort to establish objectives or guide lines for the officers based on these decisions. At the pre-agenda meetings of the parties the city centre redevelopment reports were available as they were presented to the City Council. Members of the Committee would comment on a report if necessary or answer questions if they arose. If it were a matter of policy this would be pointed out or a policy decision would be taken. For example, the Labour Party

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1. M.L.G. Vol. 2 p.208 table 7.14.

2. Noel Boaden 'Local Elections and Party Politics' New Society (8 May 1969).

had a long-established policy against the sale of any Corporation-owned land.[1] The majority of matters which came to the Group however, did not involve policy and the Planning Committee reports and recommendations were invariably accepted without question.

An important contribution the Labour Party made to planning was to help to create a climate of opinion which was favourably inclined to planning. It would not have been possible to establish a new department with a senior chief officer in an unfavourable climate. Nor would it have been possible for the far reaching comprehensive redevelopment proposals to have been accepted. The climate also made it easier for the Planning Officer to obtain the staff and finance needed for his rapidly expanding new department. The climate made it difficult for those against planning to oppose effectively. It also encouraged other departments of the Council to accept planning proposals.

The stress the Labour Group placed on what they called 'positive' or 'creative' planning was also part of the party contribution to the planning process. Positive planning was seen to be definite detailed planning for the whole of the city centre in a comprehensive manner. This was in contrast to the planning policy operated in the 1950's by the Progressive controlled Planning Committee.

> "It was a change from the negative to the creative
> approach to planning."[2]

The 'negative' approach involved piecemeal development as planning applications rose without having any overall plan.

It can be argued that politics has nothing to do with planning and therefore the parties can make no contribution. This was the view of one of the Newcastle Senior Planning Officers,

> "Councillors – they might have political principles
> but these are not applicable to planning."

This goes against the partnership principle of decision-making in English local

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1. City Labour Party Policy (7 May 1935).

2. Planning – Progress and Purpose, a report of the Town Planning Committee
   surveying the period 1963-1967, Preface: Alderman F. Butterfield.

government but it is probably true with regard to technical decisions. These can only be fully understood by the expert, by the technician, and the Committee and parties can only take a decision based upon his recommendation. Other decisions are not dependent upon a technical understanding and can be classified as human or political decisions. As one planner expresses it,

> " ... important planning issues that are fundamentally
> political, that is human rather than technical. The
> planning officer should be able to tell you the
> technical implications of the alternatives available
> including the relative financial costs and benefits."[1]

In these decisions the lay representatives should play a major role. They have to exercise a value judgement based on their personal assessment of the proposals.

The most important major policy decision was that to appoint an independent planning officer and establish a new planning department separate from the City Engineer's Department. This was political in the sense used by Keeble but it was also 'party' policy. The idea and initiative came from the Labour Party and Councillor Smith in particular. They were responsible for the concept and for carrying it through to fruition. There was opposition to the scheme but only three members actually voted against it in the Council. The initiative came from the Labour Party alone and not from any officer or Central Government department. The officers were either indifferent to the new appointment and new department, or they were opposed to it. The Conservative members supported the idea in the Planning Committee and they also supported it in the Council.[2]

Other decisions taken by the Committee can be classified as political in the non-party sense. They were seen as such by the Committee, even though the decision was solely the acceptance or rejection of the official advice and

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1. L.B. Keeble, 'The Role of the Councillor in Town Planning', _Journal of the Town Planning Institute_, (J.T.P.I.) (June 1966). (As from May 1971 the Institute of Town Planning was given the right to entitle itself 'Royal'.)

2. See Councillor A. Grey, _C.C.P._ (16 December 1959), p.632.

recommendation. Political decisions according to one chairman of the Committee were those which involved making a value judgement. For example, a value judgement had to be made about the principle of segregation of pedestrians and motor vehicles and elevated shopping at the first floor level. Another was to demolish the buildings around Eldon Square and erect a luxury hotel in one corner of the Square. These were regarded as political decisions by the Committee even though the opportunity of choice was severely limited. The acceptance of the first report of the Planning Officer in 1961, and the Development Plan Review in 1963 were also political decisions, but not party political. Issues have arisen, however, over which there are party political differences. For instance the Committee have split on party lines over the cost and financial return on development. Also there were differences about the place of the private developer in the redevelopment schemes as compared to Corporation development. Decisions taken on these matters were seen as party political decisions. Issues could become political because of the tactics of the opposition group, not because they contained matters of principle. It was argued that the Barclays Bank revocation was a "planning decision" taken on the advice of the Planning Officer; it was unfortunate that it should have "become political".[1]

Controversy over matters like the place of the private developer reflect something of the political philosophy of the parties. For example, the Pilgrim Street Roundabout scheme was a proposal that an office block should be built on the large traffic roundabout at the approach to the Tyne Bridge, and this would utilise what would otherwise be open space. The party controversy arose because the Council was going to erect the building and lease it. The Conservative opposition believed that it should not be a Corporation development but private. They also strongly criticised the cost to the City of £30,000 per annum by way of interest charges on the capital

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1. <u>C.C.P.</u> Alderman Butterfield (6 June 1962), p.110.

expended on the building. They considered this to be a waste of rate-payers money. The Committee understood and appreciated the meaning of this decision; it was not a technical matter which was difficult to comprehend and evaluate. It could easily be evaluated in terms that the Committee understood, that is political and financial. The possible repercussions were obvious; those stemming from other planning decisions were not. The opposition to the proposal from the Conservative Group also helped to clarify the issues and ensured that the decision taken was thoroughly debated and ventilated and the public was made aware of it. In the Maud Report it is said that:

> "The minority of councillors who said party politics
> affected the work thought it was affected through the
> enforcement of 'doctrinaire policies' or through delay
> 'because of political discussion'."[1]

It is difficult to argue this for the Newcastle Planning Committee for there were little signs of party doctrine and delay, in fact decisions were taken too rapidly. The lack of doctrinaire policies is reflected in that when the Conservatives came to power in the City in 1967 there was no change in the policy or administration of planning, unlike that of housing. Party politics did not affect planning policy-making in any significant way.

Evaluation and Conclusions

The elected members in a liberal democratic system are expected to play a positive role in directing and controlling the local authority.[2] It is difficult however to evaluate the members' contribution to the decision-making process, very few members are able to evaluate the contribution and fewer are willing to admit that they or their colleagues made no contribution. With projects of the technical complexity of the city redevelopment plans, is it meaningful to speak of members participating at all? This partly depends upon whether there are meaningful choices and whether the members understood the decisions being taken. The decision to build the Pilgrim Street office

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1. M.L.G. Vol. 2, p.213, para. 5.

2. M.L.G. Vol. 1, Ch. 3, para. 151.

block was in this sense meaningful, for there were alternative choices available, and it could be understood fairly clearly for it was not obscured by a lot of technical considerations. The possible repercussions were spelt out to the members in financial terms which they understood. This decision was also highlighted and given more consideration because of the opposition by the Conservatives. Yet, party political issues were unusual in Newcastle City planning. As Professor Self has said:

> "It is a curious fact that in Britain the planning
> of the built environment has hardly ever created
> issues of party politics."[1]

There were no party political issues raised over the Eldon Square scheme. This was put forward by the officers with a definite recommendation with no possibility of a choice. The officers stressed that the scheme was an integral part of the overall redevelopment. It was considered to be one of the key decisions taken by the Committee, and yet was it meaningful when it only involved the acceptance or rejection of the officer's recommendation? The Maud Report also noted this as a difficulty about members,

> "Too often it seems that the degree to which they
> will commit themselves to ambitious new projects
> is dependent on little more than the degree of
> confidence they place in their officers."[2]

The passive acceptance of officers' recommendations and the lack of thought given to alternative possibilities raises doubts about the value of the members contribution. Yet,

> " ... the planning process certainly involves a
> variety of interests"

and,

> " ... obvious scope exists for the formulation of
> alternative policies for environmental improvement."[1]

> Meaningful decisions not only depend upon real choices but they also

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1. Peter Self, 'The Build Environment' in Essays on Reform, 1967, A Centenary Tribute, edited by Bernard Crick, p.76.

2. M.L.G. Vol. 5, Ch. 3, para. 106.

depend upon the members comprehending what the decision is about. The reports presented to the Planning Committee were at times simplified. There was a danger however that reports could be made too simple so that problems were glossed over. Professor Self[1] discussed, "The intrinsic limitations upon the ability of councillors to determine general policies", and the difficulty of determining general policy and specific decisions. He made the point which was applicable in Newcastle that members might not have been clear about their own values, "until their application is known ...". Members could agree to city centre redevelopment because they did not understand what its application would mean and thus there was no conflict with values at that stage. There was some evidence to support the charge that some members did not really understand the proposals partly because of their scale and technical nature. This lack of understanding can be directed mainly at the policy reports of 1961 and 1963. The reports which followed proposed the implementation of that policy and outlined it in more detail. It was suggested that some members did not realise the significance or the implication of these reports, nor the fact that these reports would be used as the first justification for all subsequent reports. A good example of this was the Eldon Square proposals. The Committee did not realise that in the first report they had accepted that the Eldon Square buildings would be pulled down. It was only later, when they had to discuss the documents necessary for the public inquiry into the compulsory purchase of the Square, that they realised that the buildings were to be demolished.

> "When the Committee came to discuss the detailed plans
> and the analysis they discovered the decision had
> already been taken. Yet when the original reports were
> produced and debated, it was stated that detailed plans
> for each area would be produced and these would be
> brought before the Committee for its approval."[2]

It was also questionable whether the members understood the Eldon Square

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1. P. Self, 'Elected Representatives and Management in Local Government: An Alternative Analysis', Public Administration (Autumn 1971) p.272.

2. A Labour member of the Planning Committee.

scheme in itself or its essential key position in the redevelopment plans.
These were complex technical proposals of a comprehensive nature from which
many other decisions flowed.

The Maud Synopsis on members states:

> "Many chief officers in different types of authority thought
> that members were unable to grasp issues of any complexity.
> The general opinion was that only a minority, sometimes a
> very small one, made any real contribution in committee,
> although there were exceptions."[1]

There were certain members of the Committee who had technical
knowledge and experience but those members were not particularly useful in
the Committee. They tended to get bogged down in details rather than
considering a scheme as a whole. Other members felt that they made no
specific contribution and could waste the time of the Committee. This
criticism was perhaps more a reflection on their general overall calibre
rather than their technical knowledge.

This again raises the difficult question of the calibre of members.
The Maud Committee said that the members should have the following qualities:-

> "(a) The capacity to understand sympathetically the problems
> and points of view of constituents and to convey them to
> the authority and, at the same time, to interpret and
> explain the authority's policies and actions to those
> whom they represent. These, we believe, are the
> qualities of the good representative.
>
> (b) The capacity to understand technical, economic and
> sociological problems which are likely to increase in
> complexity.
>
> (c) The ability to innovate, to manage and direct; the
> personality to lead and guide public opinion and
> other members; and a capacity to accept responsibility
> for the policies of the authority.
>
> We would expect all members to be good representatives
> in the sense explained in paragraph 511(a) but not all to
> have the qualities set out in (b) and (c)."[2]

They go on to say that at least a nucleus should have the qualities of (b) and

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1. M.I.G. Vol. 5, p.458.

2. M.I.G. Vol. 1, Ch. 6, para. 511 and 512.

(c). The only member of the Planning Committee who possessed these qualities

was Dan Smith. He was a councillor of very high calibre and the only member

of comparable calibre to Wilfred Burns. Smith however was fully committed

to the redevelopment proposals and was not in a position to make an impartial

assessment of them. A small nucleus of members did possess some of these

qualities but they were not of sufficient calibre to challenge the combination

of Smith and Burns, even if they wanted to. These members lacked the technical

knowledge and the free time to enable them to assess the plans. As one

prominent member of the Committee said::

> "Some were very intelligent and interested but they
> felt that city centre redevelopment was a complex
> and difficult task which needed a professional
> technical approach."

The President of the Royal Town Planning Institute spoke of government being

too complex for some members to be able to control it.

> "Members need to spend many more hours grappling with
> the technical and political aspects of decisions than
> is practicable within the formal committee procedure."[1]

It was not just a matter of calibre but the very nature of the tasks required

of the members which made it difficult for a positive contribution to be made.

The nature and the extent of the work placed the initiative in the hands of

the full-time professional officers. The Royal Commission on Local Government

in England said:

> "The planning powers of the local authority are their
> most far-reaching, and perhaps the most difficult to
> exercise intelligently."[2]

Probably the most useful members were those who were able to ask relevant

questions and evaluate the implications of the proposals. They were able to

see the proposals as a whole and to place them in the total city context. In

a sense they were able to appraise the plans against some kind of vision of

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1. F.C. Amos, 'Management in New Local Authorities: Problems and Opportunities', J.R.T.P.I., (September October 1972) p.343.

2. Royal Commission Report (1966-1969) para. 47.

the future. Yet qualities of a realist and a visionary are rarely found in one person and this is one reason for the neglect of financial implications. Those who could make the greatest contribution to the planning process were also those who were the most committed to redevelopment and were also heavily involved in other council work. These members therefore were not in a good position to perform a critical function. Rarely did the members ask any critical questions on finance or any other matter.

In spite of their lack of contribution to the decision making process, members of the Committee still expressed satisfaction with their work on the Committee. This was in contrast to the 1950's when members found work on the Committee frustrating and time consuming.

> "I have sat on the Town Planning Committee for ten years ...
> I have had the opportunity of seeing what goes on in
> Committee. I have often wondered whether I have wasted
> my time. Hours and hours have been spent considering
> various projects which have never reached fruition ...
> and I feel that the time I have spent on the Town
> Planning Committee might have been spent more
> profitably somewhere else."[1]

The work in the period after 1958 was still time consuming but members felt they were producing something, unlike the 1950's when they saw no results for their work. The sense of achievement came partly from the production of the numerous reports which went together to make the city centre redevelopment plan. Members felt they were making a great contribution to the forward movement of the City. They also gained satisfaction from all the publicity devoted to planning and the stress placed on the Planning Department for which they were responsible. The approach to planning by the Chairman and the Chief Officer also increased the members self-satisfaction. Both men stressed the importance of planning and gained a considerable amount of publicity. Smith resigned and the Committee had to concern itself more with the difficulties of implementation and this had an adverse effect on the sense of satisfaction.

"One sits for hours in planning discussing the most

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1. <u>C.C.P.</u> The Sheriff (16 December 1959) p.631.

> mundane and the most trivial things, the kind of
> things that officers given the authority and the
> time could wipe off in five minutes."[1]

Members felt they were important because planning was important. Some members

gained satisfaction from knowing what was being planned generally, or for a

particular area. This gave them a sense of significance, for they were in

the position to inform people about the proposed plans. Members, therefore,

on the Newcastle Planning Committee claimed to have found the work satisfying

in spite of the lack of a meaningful contribution. This satisfaction was in

contrast to the findings of the Maud Committee which found that members of

planning committees, felt that it was a worthy public activity, but, did not

on balance get much sense of personal achievement from taking part in it.[2]

One or two Planning Committee members recognised that planning and

city centre redevelopment was a complex and difficult task which limited the

role of the members in the decision-making process. For example when the

Committee was considering the possibility of appointing an independent planning

officer and establishing a planning department, J.S. Allen, Professor of Town

and Country Planning at Kings College, University of Durham, Newcastle, was

invited to join a small informal committee to consider the matter. Professor

Cassie, who specialised in traffic engineering, was also used to give advice,

in the first year of the new department's existence. No advice, however, was

sought on city centre redevelopment and something of a gulf developed between

the planners at the University and those at the Civic Centre. Since 1958-1961

little effort has been made by the Committee to collect expert advice from

sources other than from its own Department.

The co-option of individuals to Council Committees is a long

established device in British local government to make expert advice and

representative views available to the system. Provision is made for co-option

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1. C.C.P. Councillor A. Grey (5 April 1967) p.1007.

2. M.L.G. Vol. 2 (see findings in Chapters 3 & 4).

by legislation. Many councils however use co-option to appoint political nominees. The Newcastle Planning Committee has not used co-option but in the neighbouring Northumberland County outsiders have been co-opted on to the Planning Committee. In July 1959 a member of the Newcastle Committee encouraged it to co-opt " .... architectural, engineering and even contracting professions",[1] so that guidance would be available and continuity of policy would be assisted. He also felt that this would be a recognition of the great public interest in planning and would help to counter-balance the considerable uninformed criticism of town planning. This plea was rejected as was the request for representation by the Chamber of Trade in 1962. Members felt co-option was unnecessary, for if technical advice was required, it was the function of the professional officers to provide it. It was also felt that there was no need to have co-opted persons on the committee to act as 'representatives'. The elected members considered that they were quite competent to represent all the interests that needed representing. This accords with the theory which sees the political parties as interest aggregators. Many Newcastle councillors also took the same attitude as those in Hull where both parties described co-option as a "dangerous precedent".[2] The Maud Committee found that only occasionally do county boroughs co-opt persons to their planning and development committees. More generally they found that,

> "Members rarely placed a high estimation on the
> value of co-opted members ..."[3]

This attitude of superiority and the failure to devise, or use, machinery to obtain information from non council sources is dangerous in crucial matters such as redevelopment. Another study also emphasises this failure;

> "The difficulty on the local authority's side has
> been the reluctance to use co-option other than
> as a vehicle of patronage and councillor recruitment,

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1. Town Planning Sub-Committee Minute Book No. 6, p.65.

2. Brier, op. cit., p.162.

3. M.L.G. Vol. 5, p.464.

and the failure to provide for real consultation
in those areas of modern need, slum clearance,
redevelopment ..."[1]

K. Newton expressed a more fundamental point about democracy and this type

of attitude;

"The dangers to pluralist democracy in English city
government lie not so much in the exclusion of
working class groups from political influence but
in the exclusion of some community groups, working
or middle class, from centres of influence."[2]

It is perhaps not difficult to define the role of the elected member

in local government.[3] What is difficult, however, is to make their role

meaningful in the actual intricate operation of a large local authority,

especially in a complex technical activity like comprehensive redevelopment.

The problem is not solved even when the committee have an above average

membership in terms of calibre and an outstanding chairman.

In Newcastle the Planning Committee made an apparent contribution

in initiation and legitimation. They took the initiative and made the crucial

decision[4] to appoint an independent planning officer and to establish a

planning department. This was crucial, for it meant a major change in policy

and indicated a definite commitment to planning which led to the redevelopment

proposals. The initiative came about because of the views of one member only,

Councillor Smith, and it was Smith who made it possible for the new City

Planning Officer to get his comprehensive redevelopment proposals accepted as

policy. The members gave legitimation to the proposals and because of this

the officers were able to draw authority and support from the system, and were

able to operate in a favourable climate.

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1. Hill, op. cit., p.308.

2. 'Community Decision-Makers and Community Decision-Making in England and
   the United States', Paper for Seventh World Congress of Sociology,
   (September 1970) p.46.

3. M.L.G. Vol. 1, Ch. 3, paras. 147 and 151.

4. See P.H. Levin, 'On Decisions and Decision Making', Public Administration,
   (Spring 1972) p.33.

The members however made little or no contribution to deciding planning policy, objectives or priorities. They had difficulty in understanding the proposals and their implications and were inclined to accept the proposals of the officers without question. The searching scrutiny and evaluation which was required was never given and members concentrated on the physical aspects of the proposals to the exclusion of social and financial implications. They failed to act as representatives for their constituents, interest groups or the City as a whole. The legitimisation provided by the members appears to have been no more than a cloak for the implementation of the ideas of the City Planning Officer, with the approval of the Committee Chairman. Members played a passive role and were the creatures of the decision-making system, rather than the controllers and directors of the system.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

This chapter considers the contribution of the City Planning Officer

and his Department to the policy decision making process for city centre

redevelopment. The officer's planning philosophy and its application is

examined and the relationship between the Department and other bodies. An

attempt is made to evaluate the City Planning Officer's contribution to policy

making.

The independent separate Planning Department officially came into

being on 1st November 1960, but Wilfred Burns, the Planning Officer had taken

up his position earlier so that he could have three months without the

responsibility of running a department. During this period he was able to

formulate the organisation of the new department, to arrange office

accommodation and to recruit staff. For several years the City had experienced

great difficulty in recruiting qualified planners. This was partly due to an

acute shortage of planners which still prevailed in 1960. It was a sign of

the City's new planning image and the personality of the new Planning Officer,

that he was able to recruit fairly swiftly, a strong team, many of whom were

known to him personally. Burns spent part of the interim period acquainting

himself with the general planning position and getting to know the city partly

by walking round the streets of various areas. Two decisions had been left

in abeyance until the new officer took up his position, one was the appointment

of a Deputy Planning Officer, the other was the engagement of consultants.

Burns rejected both of these suggestions. He preferred the section heads to

report directly and to be responsible to him personally rather than going

through a deputy first. He was strongly against and did not feel it was

necessary to appoint consultants. The Committee held no strong views about

these two points and some were opposed to the suggestion for example:

> "As a matter of principle I am not enamoured with
> consultants. It is power without responsibility."[1]

Burns' stand on these two issues is indicative of his definite views and his desire for close control over the Department. The new Department was organised in five main sections; policy, redevelopment, development control, traffic and administration. The section on policy was concerned with the policy guide lines to be followed in preparing the development plans and in long term planning for the city. This section was headed by Kenneth Galley, who became City Planning Officer when Burns resigned on his appointment to the Ministry in London. Policy also included an important Research section headed by Gordon Cherry, who resigned this position in 1968 and took up an appointment with the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies. The redevelopment section was responsible for the implementation of plans and the details of schemes such as the comprehensive development areas. Michael Hewling who had been at Coventry with Burns was in charge of this section. Development control kept a check on existing development and exerted general day to day planning control. This section was under Percy Jackson who became City Planning Officer for Lincoln. There was also an administrative section and a traffic section was added later. The original proposals for the Department in 1959 were to cost £52,500 including £45,000 on salaries. This compared to £9,245 expenditure on the town planning section of the Engineer's Department. The intention was to have twenty qualified planners, plus fifteen other staff. Compared to other comparable cities and departments Newcastle would have almost twice as many planners. In 1966 there were 83 positions, in 1967, 77 positions; on the average there were sixty in post most of the time. Of the 77, 36 were qualified graded posts and these included the traffic engineering staff. In the financial year ending 31st March 1967 the expenditure in the City Planning Office's department was £181,273 and included within this was £111,461

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1. A Conservative member of the Planning Committee.

expenditure on employees. It can be argued that the City has been generous in its financial support to the Planning Department over the years. The Department has not always been fully staffed but this has not been due to the City but due to the difficulty in recruiting qualified personnel.

Burns was able to attract a very good team to Newcastle who were committed to him and his ideals. He believed that it was;

"One of the most advanced thinking planning teams in the country."[1]

The team was mainly composed of the three unofficial deputies and the team leaders, about nine officers, but he was able to inspire strong loyalty and dedication in the Department generally. The staff worked very hard on the various city centre redevelopment plans and it was not unusual for them to stay behind after the normal office hours so they could give further thought to proposals without the interruptions of the normal daily office routine. Another example of the dedication and interest of the senior officers was their eagerness to accept invitations to speak to a wide variety of organisations, not only within the City but also in the region. These talks explaining the proposals were all conducted by staff on a voluntary basis. There was loyalty and affection for Burns as a person, for he had a very agreeable manner, and was easy to work with. His planning objectives went beyond the physical and;

"It was noticeable that the other officials of the Planning Department shared Dr. Burns view. In interviews, they defined their objectives in terms of 'extending human happiness' and helping people 'to lead a fuller life'."[2]

This was at a time when there were wide differences within the planning profession as to the nature of planning. There was conflict between those who took a narrower, more conservative passive view of the profession, and those who wanted to see it take a much more active role in a wider sphere.

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1. W. Burns, Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne, p.91.

2. Batley, op. cit., p.379.

Burns was in favour of the latter view and the Newcastle staff supported

him. Michael Hewling of the Department expressed "the new and positive

role" of planners:

> "I believe the achievement of quality and character in
> the built environment of the town and country demands
> that the basic professional understanding should be
> broadened and enriched by varied special skills within
> a unified planning aim. In the coming year the Council
> of the Institute must
>
> (i) encourage by all available means the full participation
> of the profession in the wider opportunities for
> planning now developing;
>
> (ii) widen the scope of Resolution II in its Membership
> Statement to encourage the development of special
> skills within the profession."[1]

This concept was reflected in the wide range of specialists on the staff of

the Planning Department apart from the qualified planners there were engineers,

economists, sociologists, statisticians and others. An important section of

the Department devoted itself to research and supplied the information which

other sections used as the basis of their proposals. It was recognised that

in its plans and techniques the Department was among the most progressive

departments in the country. This again reflected the strong nature of the

team which Burns was able to draw together and inspire. The team's dedication

and loyalty to Burns continued throughout his period with the City. This

dedication was not only to him but also to the City. He claimed:

> "The senior officers in the department were and still are
> after five years fired with a great urge not only to give
> of their best in making the city physically as efficient
> and beautiful as possible ..."[2]

Burns was not only concerned with the senior officers but he tried to involve

the whole Department in the planning process. This was not easy with a large

and growing staff but he did institute an office news sheet. This attempt to

assist communications within the Department did not last very long, mainly

because no one in the Department could find enough time to prepare it. It is

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1. Candidate's statement, Town Planning Institute, Election of Council 1966-67.

2. Burns, op. cit., p.91.

a good example of the desire of Burns to keep all members of the Department interested in what was going on within the Department. He not only wanted the Department to be modern and efficient but he also was concerned that it should be personal. The discontinuation of the news sheet indicates the pressure Burns was working under and also the pressure he was inflicting upon the Department.

Wilfred Burns graduated from Liverpool University with a Masters degree in Engineering and later obtained the Diploma in Town Planning from Leeds University. He became a member of both the Institute of Civil Engineering and the Town Planning Institute. He was academically and professionally very well qualified for the position in Newcastle. From 1946 to 1949 he was in Leeds where he held two engineering and planning posts. In 1949 he moved to Coventry and became Principal Planning Officer to that city in 1952. He left Coventry in 1958 to become Deputy County Planning Officer to Surrey County Council. His experience of the type of work needed in Newcastle was considerable. In particular his period in Coventry where he was responsible to the City Architect and Planning Officer for all the work of the planning department. Coventry is the best known city of the post war years for its city centre redevelopment schemes and its imaginative comprehensive planning. Burns was responsible for most of the redevelopment work in that city and for the preparation of the Development Plan. His experience in Surrey was not so directly relevant but it did involve problems of planning in the greater London area with its complicated traffic problems. Burns was keen on research and the use of modern management techniques of surveys and analyses. He initiated research programmes in both Leeds and Coventry.

For a practising planner, Wilfred Burns is a prolific writer. He published 'British Shopping Centres' in 1959; 'New Towns for Old, the Techniques of Urban Renewal' in 1963, and 'Newcastle a study in Replanning' in 1967. He is also the author of numerous articles to various journals and

has given scores of lectures to a variety of organisations. Burns has served on the Council of the Town Planning Institute for several years and on the Planning Committee of the Association of Municipal Corporations. In 1967-68 he was the President of the Town Planning Institute, the highest office the profession can bestow. He has also served on several other bodies such as the Sports Council and the Ministry's Planning Advisory Group. The University of Newcastle awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1964 in recognition of his contribution to the replanning of the city and in particular the city centre. From 1968 to 1970 he held a visiting professorship in town planning at Newcastle University. As can be seen from his record Burns has had an extremely successful career but in his application for the position of Principal City Officer in Newcastle, he failed to secure a place on the short list. He was successful in being appointed Chief Planner to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in London and took up this position in April 1968.

The philosophy and ideas of Wilfred Burns on planning and redevelopment were expressed clearly in his published works. His first book 'British Shopping Centres', was a general survey of shopping centres with suggestions as to what are the best types. Mr. Burns was in favour of pedestrian precincts and he noted the possibility of two level shopping. Both of these concepts are important in the Newcastle plans. The book covers the subject fully looking at social and economic factors as well as design. He pointed out the difficulty of fitting in various factors such as road safety considerations, provision of car parking, servicing of shops, and preservation or enhancement of amenities. Criticisms were made of the lack of adequate thought and research which had been given to some of the problems involved. The criteria which should be used in planning a shopping centre in the city centre or elsewhere were described. Burns stated that "all planning must be a compromise between conflicting aims."[1] Yet the compromise must

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1. W. Burns, British Shopping Centres, p.48.

also be comprehensive. This comprehensive approach to planning was one of the features of Burns' work. He tried to consider all the different aims and factors, basing his recommendations on definite scientific research and careful consideration.

In his second book, 'New Towns for Old, the Technique of Urban Renewal', Burns moved from the development of shopping centres to the development of towns as a whole. He covered the whole subject of redevelopment ranging from complex technical problems to public relations. He again emphasised the comprehensive approach to planning.

> "Redevelopment is taken to mean the process which involves
> clearance of property and the building of new structures
> according to a definite preconceived plan with a layout
> different from that of the area before redevelopment was
> undertaken. It implies a comprehensive plan, for
> redevelopment cannot seriously be called such unless it
> is on a substantial scale and is part of an overall plan,
> otherwise the process is mere rebuilding."[1]

He stated that the only arguments for redevelopment are:

(a) traffic congestion, and
(b) worn out structures.[2]

Several town centre schemes were examined and lessons drawn from them. For example, large scale land ownership was said to be essential by either a public or private developer if substantial changes in the environment were to be made.[3] There was a great deal in the book on the technical nature of planning. He regarded much of the post war building programme as a failure. At the end of the book he stressed the importance of public relations and considered some of the lessons to be learnt from the post war era. Most of the lessons were written into the redevelopment plans for Newcastle, for example, precincts for pedestrians, multilevel segregation, various traffic ideas and a stress on research. In many ways this was a technical book but it was clearly expressed for the layman. In the introduction Burns says out

1. W. Burns, New Towns for Old, the Techniques of Urban Renewal, p.14.

2. Ibid., p.21.

3. Ibid., p.61.

of his experience;

> "I came to believe that redevelopment was not so
> much a difficult technical job as a way of
> thinking."[1]

Planning for Burns was not just a technical subject but it was a philosophy,

perhaps almost a religion.[2]

The third book by Wilfred Burns was on Newcastle itself and was

called 'Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne', and "...

is a discussion of the basic plan and a report on its present progress."[3]

It was a well produced glossy paged book of 96 pages, liberally illustrated

with photographs and diagrams. Burns stated;

> " ... that the aim of this short book should be, as
> far as possible to create the atmosphere of planning
> in Newcastle and to set out some of the basic
> philosophies behind the plans."[4]

He was keen to protect the historical heritage of the City and its character,

yet the traffic congestion had to be eliminated and the outworn centre of

the City replaced. The planning process was described and the need emphasised.

Several pages are devoted to the traffic planning for the City. One chapter

describes the implementation of the city centre plan and was mainly photographs

and descriptions of new buildings, but it also considered the complexity of

the project, the need for good architects and for car parking. The following

two chapters described the housing plan and the leisure plan. 'Towards a New

City' was the title of the sixth and final chapter, which was mainly concerned

with public relations and the people who were being planned for and those

who were doing the planning. The chapter also listed what the Department

had done in the last five years. This is a very readable book written in

short sections rather like short articles in a magazine. There is an

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1. _Ibid._, p.XI.

2. See J. Davies, _The Evangelistic Bureaucrat_.

3. _Newcastle, a Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne_, Book cover.

4. _Ibid._, p.VII.

impression that it was written and put together in a hurry, from various

sources, to form one complete book. The book does not go into a great deal

of detail but it does perhaps create the atmosphere which Burns mentions.

At times the style of writing also creates this atmosphere;

> "A unique, powerful, exciting city indeed, and one that
> deserves the care and energy that all connected with
> city development try - we hope successfully - to give
> it."[1]

Some of the short sections are stimulating and illustrate the width of Burns'

ideas, for example one on;

> "Movement; everyone seems to have a need to see
> movement - and this is perhaps not fully satisfied
> by the television set."[2]

With the use of the other books also, it was possible to gather

what were the "basic philosophies behind the plan." One of the key words in

the philosophy was 'comprehensive'. Burns believed very strongly in a

comprehensive approach to planning, the area must be seen as a much wider

whole. A piecemeal approach to planning and redevelopment was no good and it

did not solve the real problems and eventually could add further to the

difficulties. Comprehensive planning not only meant planning for a large area

like a city centre as one entity, but it also meant taking into account every

possible relevant factor. The planner must not only concern himself with

physical planning but he must also consider economic, social and aesthetic

factors. Certain policies follow from this basis, one is strict control of

development to ensure that owners adhere to the comprehensive plan. Another

is large scale ownership, for it is only possible to develop in a comprehensive

manner if there is large scale ownership and control. It is preferable if

land ownership at least is in public hands. All development within the area

must meet the demands of the plan or it will not be allowed. This policy

means that development which in the past had been evolutionary, that is

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1. _Ibid._, p.8.

2. _Ibid._, p.34.

evolving to meet the needs and demands of the area and owners, would now become revolutionary. Change would be brought about by compulsion and would often be a complete change which could happen suddenly. This view of planning involved the planner laying down objectives and standards for many other people and institutions, including the Corporation's own elected members and full time officials. Once the plan was approved it was mandatory on all the various interests concerned otherwise it ceased to be comprehensive. Mr. Burns believed that town planning "has come into its prime in comprehensiveness."[1]

He went on to say;

> "It will mean different things to different people, and variety of provision, of outlook and character will be of the essence of a good plan. This is what we mean by comprehensiveness."[2]

Part of what is meant by this term and an extension of it is the planner's concern with people. As Burns puts it in his Newcastle study;

> "Town planning as I have constantly emphasised throughout this book is not about roads and houses, green lungs and community centres it is about people."[3]

This is understood in very wide terms, comprehensive terms, it is philosophical and idealistic as well as practicable. It means that planners are concerned about "the protection of the public good."[4] The use of terms such as these raises questions; what is the public good, who is to define it, are other bodies also concerned about the public good, what is the reaction of planners when there is conflict between different bodies about this? In his Presidential address Burns tried to answer the question "what does man want out of life?"[5] The answer lies at the base of the work of planners in Burns

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1. *Ibid.*, p.87.

2. *Ibid.*, p.88.

3. *Ibid.*, p.84.

4. W. Burns, Presidential Address to Town Planning Institute, *J.R.T.P.I.* (September October 1967), p.333.

5. *Ibid.*, p.330.

view:

> "I think we are concerned with a man's need for:
>
> (a) personal relationships,
> (b) his need for freedom of choice,
> (c) the means whereby he can enjoy the kind
>   of life he chooses, and
> (d) the restrictions he has to accept in the
>   interests of seeing that he does not
>   unduly restrict the legitimate achievement
>   of other men's aspirations."[1]

Planners are therefore concerned not only with roads and traffic and buildings and pedestrians but they are also concerned about man's aspirations, his educational and social needs in any particular area, his aesthetic sense as well as his material needs. Planners have definite views about society according to Burns, and these views they write into their plans, for this is what planning is all about. These views however are good and acceptable, for unlike other views they are based on objective scientific fact. Burns argued strongly that any planning proposals must be based on definite evidence collected by scientific research methods and techniques. Any modern techniques available should be used ranging from surveys and sample polls to the use of complex computers. These methods also involved the skills and experience of professional planners. This was all part of the philosophy of Burns, planners were professionals using the techniques of their profession to put forward proposals. This stress on objective research criteria helped to rebut the view held by some people, including Newcastle councillors that "Burns was far too idealistic in his view of planning."[2] These views on planning and the position taken up by Burns put the other city officers and the elected representatives in a weak position to challenge planners. According to the planners these persons were amateurs who did not have the necessary information to make a judgement and there was always a danger of them putting forward subjective personal viewpoints. This is also true of other officers, they

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1. *Ibid.*, p.330.

2. Conservative member of the Planning Committee.

might be professional in their own right, but they are not professional planners examining in a comprehensive manner, and therefore they are inclined to take a narrow departmental viewpoint. Mr. Burns had no doubt:

> "that the furtherance of the profession of town planning and the maintenance of its high standards of skill and conduct, so that impartial and expert advice can always be given, is of the very highest importance ..."[1]

Part of the profession of being a planner means informing people about the plans and getting them involved. It is not enough to bring forward proposals based on the best research methods, but these proposals ought to be given the widest possible publicity in the best possible way. Comprehensive planning "means looking at the problems of an area with a view to satisfying the needs of people who are to live, work, or play in that area."[2] But planning also means telling those same people what the plans are all about, there is:

> " ... a duty to explain in as full a way as possible what is being proposed and why."[3]

Good public relations were considered to be essential by Burns in any competent planner. From the very concerns of planners trying to create a satisfying environment to live in comes a desire to let people know what is being proposed in the plans. All this is related to the way in which Wilfred Burns saw planning and his basic philosophy.

Planning therefore must be comprehensive, it is basically about people and the people must be informed. Its proposals are based on objective evidence collected and evaluated by modern professional techniques. For instance in the measurement of the flow of motor vehicles, pedestrians and the various trends in commerce and retail trade. These statistics form part of the case for the segregation of traffic and pedestrians, the pedestrian shopping precincts and shopping at the first floor level. The figures also

1. Op. cit., p.333.

2. Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne, p.87.

3. Ibid., p.84.

show why it is necessary to discourage private cars coming into the city centre and why people should be encouraged to use public transport. Burns' view of planning was much more than the use of statistics, he claimed to be concerned with the whole of life of the community and this included the cultural and social aspects. He was concerned about the 'character' of the town and its historical heritage. New life and vitality should be brought back into the city centre by erecting private apartments and halls for students. As Burns stated he had a "twin headed belief in what planning is about", that is,

> "making the city physically as efficient as possible
> with an inbuilt local character and a firm belief in
> the good life of the city, but also to understand
> human beings in their personal needs and social
> aspirations."[1]

The planning philosophy of the City Planning Officer was reflected in the planning process followed in Newcastle, and also in the actual planning proposals, the basic element of which was the City Development Plan.

The new Planning Department came into operation officially on 1st November 1960, and one of the first tasks which required action was to review the City Development Plan, and either to bring it up to date or replace it with a new plan. In four and a half months the Department presented its first report to the Council on central redevelopment. The report stated that the 1951 plan, which had been approved in 1953, was inadequate, for it had only dealt with some of the major roads and a broad zoning pattern. Since then there had been three major changes which necessitated a new plan; first, the activities of the property companies in the redevelopment field had been quite unprecedented, secondly, the continuation and extension of existing use and thirdly, the tremendous increase in traffic. This report put forward most of the proposals which Burns was to elaborate in greater detail in the following years. Ideas about shopping centres and the circulation of

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1. Ibid., p.91.

pedestrians, the segregation of pedestrians and vehicles. The possibility
of a hotel in Eldon Square was mentioned. Priorities in implementation were
listed as: central motorway system, new Princess Street, some prominent car
parks, the redevelopment and expansion of the shopping centre. Some of the
proposals were similar to those of 1951, for instance the road pattern was
not greatly different, the new Princess Street was still given priority, the
need for three bus stations was still recognised. The difference in the two
plans was as much in the relative scale of the proposed redevelopment as in
the individual projects. In 1951 the only new shopping centre designated was
Princess Street, and there were no plans to separate pedestrians from vehicles
and no detailed study was made of the city centre apart from zoning possibilities.
Burns studied the whole of the city centre in depth and envisaged wholesale
redevelopment unlike the 1951 plan. A greater attempt was made to tackle
the problems of the city, like traffic, and Burns was prepared to propose
radical solutions. These plans were comprehensive and attempted to plan in
more detail. For example there were proposals to plan and control the heights
of buildings and also advertisements. The 1951 approach to planning was
evolutionary as compared to Burns approach which was revolutionary. As
expressed in the 1961 Report:

> "Because of the age of the City Centre, a large scale
> effort has now to be made in respect of redevelopment,
> and the process will be one almost of central area
> revolution rather than evolution."[1]

This report was accepted by the committee without any amendment and later by
the City Council on 19th April 1961. On the basis of this report the detailed
City Development Plan was produced and approved by the City Council on 20th
November 1963. It was then submitted for approval to the Minister of Housing
and Local Government. This had been published earlier in the year as the
Development Plan Review. It was a very extensive work of three volumes which
covered the work of the Department since its inception. It did not differ in

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1. City Planning Officer, First Report, (24 March 1961) para. 13.

any significant way from the Report of 1961 on Central Area Redevelopment.
The 1963 Plan was based on more extensive research and survey work, it was
able to go into detail and examine problems in some depth. While the 1961
proposals only covered the city centre the 1963 proposals covered the whole
area of Newcastle upon Tyne. By his submission in 1963 Burns wholly superseded
the Development Plan which had been approved in 1953. In 1963 Burns made
four main points critical of the 1953 Plan; he thought that city centre
shopping needs had to be reconsidered as had the siting of public buildings
and the design of the area affected. The road plan which in 1953 provided for
only one north/south main road and for all east/west traffic to pass through
the shopping centre, had to be radically changed. Finally many factors not
considered in 1953 must be examined. In 1963 the most important proposals
were listed in the report as follows:

> "Traffic: the separation of pedestrians from vehicles
> is now a basic principle in all major redevelopment
> schemes and it is the basis of the plan for the centre
> of the City. In relation to the new areas this could
> be achieved by providing that circulation of pedestrians
> and vehicles take place on different levels."[1]

The idea of 'separation' was one of the most important points in the proposals
and the concept of 'different levels' was one of the most radical. This
section provides the basis for the whole of the development plan. 'Public
transport' was seen as playing a vital role mainly because its use could help
to curtail the number of private cars in the city centre. A considerable
amount of research was undertaken for the 'Car Parking' plan which proposed
strict control of parking. 'Shopping', substantial changes were proposed for
the shopping area because "the general lineal form of the shopping centre is
not convenient for the shopper."[2] The plans were concerned to see an expansion
of the shopping area and new and better circulation routes. Newcastle's
importance as a regional centre was emphasised in the section on 'Public,

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1. Development Plan Review (1963) Ch. 11, para. 268.

2. Ibid., Ch. 11, para. 285.

Social, Recreational and Educational Buildings'.

> "From this point of view its future importance in
> the social and cultural field must match its
> importance in the world of shopping, industry
> and commerce."[1]

Proposals were made for 'Residential and Hotel Accommodation' and it was

envisaged that high cost accommodation would be welcomed by certain groups

of people. A luxury hotel was planned for a site overlooking Eldon Square.

Four main preservation areas were proposed for the city including the Dobson/

Grainger area, the areas round the Castle, St. John's Church and the Guildhall.

Various other factors were considered such as the character of the City,

heights of buildings, roofscapes. The Plan was concerned with visual aspects

of redevelopment as well as the more material. The Chairman of the Planning

Committee claimed:

> "This Review puts forward a completely new basis on
> which it is proposed that the City should adapt
> itself as capital of the region to meet the rapidly
> changing needs of society."[2]

When compared to the 1953 Plan this was probably a fair statement.

One of the most important roles of a chief officer is his relation-

ship with his committee chairman. This relationship is particularly important

when the department is new and trying to establish its position. Burns

established a good relationship with his Chairman from the beginning and

continued to win the confidence of the successive Chairmen. He was good at

getting on with people. In his resignation speech he said:

> "I don't think I have had a cross word with any member
> of the Council in spite of the pressure that I have
> sometimes put on with the interest I have in getting
> schemes through."[3]

His relationships with Dan Smith were particularly close. Smith had been an

important figure in his personal appointment and he had provided the initiative

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1. Ibid., para. 304.

2. Ibid., Dan Smith, Foreword.

3. C.C.P. (13 March 1968) p.1390.

which led to the establishment of the Department. The ideas Smith had about planning and his ambitions for the City chimed in well with those of Burns. For example, they both believed in positive, large scale comprehensive planning. Burns said;

> "Smith was concerned about various problems. These he
> would bring to the chief officer informally and talk
> them over with him."[1]

Burns was able to put forward the answers that Smith wanted and to gain his confidence and a completely free hand in preparing plans for city centre redevelopment. The open acceptance by Smith of Burns' ideas and concepts helped the relationship between the two men and made easier the work of the Department. Burns and the Department were delighted and grateful for this freedom which allowed them to get on with the work of preparing plans without interference from others. As one senior member of the Department expressed it:

> "Dan Smith was the best of the councillors, he could
> take the broad view, he had the wide understanding
> which is needed."

Smith did not interfere and did not get bogged down in detail when discussing plans. Burns was very open and willing to listen to Smith and his successors and also to any member of the City Council. From the beginning Burns was in daily contact with Smith about the progress of the various planning reports and redevelopment and when Smith became Leader of the Council they worked even closer together. The preparation and the implementation of the city centre redevelopment programme was one of Smith's main objectives, and the position of Burns and the Department was tremendously strengthened because of the support of the Leader of the Council. Smith was also a strong personality and his support meant that the Council and other departments were more amenable to the Planning Department.

> "But one gets the impression, my Lord Mayor, and I say
> this with reluctance, nothing has happened in planning
> since the departure of T. D. Smith who with all his

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1. Interview in the Planning Department (19 December 1967).

faults had the ability to engender on his side some
sort of drive."[1]

Successors to Smith did not have the same driving force and this
was reflected in the Department but by this time the Department was well
established and so it was less important. A committee chairman is also a
key figure in getting the officer's proposals across to the Committee, the
Council and the community and here again Smith was very helpful. Not only
was he a lucid speaker but he was enthusiastic about the proposals and gave them
his full support. The Maud Report, stresses the importance of the chairman
helping the department in other ways also, for example:

> "It seems that where priorities are fought out in a
> political arena, where competition for resources
> results in the trial of strength between interests,
> the part of the committee chairman is often of
> overriding importance. This is particularly so
> in some party authorities where the process may
> involve the majority party leader and the group."[2]

Burns and Smith always used to consult before meetings regarding the proposals
and how to put them across. With all his Planning Committee Chairmen Burns
had a happy working relationship and his proposals were shaped to take into
account their known wishes and what they would accept. This excellent
understanding between officer and Chairman was conducive to a happy and
efficient Committee and Department.

The Planning Officer worked well with the Chairman, he also worked
well with the Planning Committee. As a person he was popular and approachable
and he made every effort to be helpful and pleasant to members. In the
Committee he always went to great pains to put over his proposals clearly with
the supporting evidence. The Officer knew the Committee, their prejudices
and ambitions and his reports were presented with this knowledge in mind.
But even before this stage Burns was trying to influence the members:

> "The temperature of the Committee was not ready for
> any new scheme. We talked to the Chairman and members

1. Leader of the Conservative Group, C.C.P. (5 April 1967), p.1005.

2. M.L.G., Vol. 5, Ch. 7, para. 112.

> of the Committee. We did not make any firm proposals,
> we just talked about the problems and needs. It is
> really a matter of education."[1]

He presented his proposals in an imaginative way and made wide use of an

impressive range of visual aids such as maps, diagrams, photographs and

coloured slides. Because of the size and complexity of some of the reports

he often provided simplified summaries. The Committee were also taken on

coach tours of the city centre so that the plans could be explained more

clearly. Burns was able to win their confidence not only because he was a

competent officer but also because they trusted him as a person. Professor

Self has referred to the importance of trust between politicians and officials.

The Committee were impressed by his humanity, his stress on concern for people.

He gave an impression of sound common sense yet he was enthusiastic about his

proposals and could inspire the Committee.

> "For the officer a combination of professional expertise
> and common sense produces the ideal result."[2]

The Committee regarded him as being a very competent and efficient officer

who was completely in control of his Department and its operations.

> "One of the great achievements of Burns was to
> carry the whole of the Committee with him."[3]

This was not easy for the proposals he put forward were new and radical and

on a much greater scale than the Committee had experienced. The largest

scheme in Newcastle, since the Grainger and Dobson period, had only included

one street, but the new proposals covered most of the city centre. They

involved wholesale demolition and 'revolutionary' new ideas such as pedestrians

and traffic at different levels. Burns worked hard to get his ideas across.

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1. A senior officer of the Planning Department.

2. G.F. Darlow in 'Who are the Policy Makers?' Public Administration (Autumn
   1965), p.281.

3. A Planning Committee Member.

> "There was a monthly meeting of the Planning Committee
> and Burns argued the need for city centre redevelopment.
> He came back to this time and time again, the need for
> redevelopment."[1]

The proposals put forward by Burns for the redevelopment of the city centre

were accepted without any significant amendment by the Committee. He put

forward quite definite recommendations as to what policy should be followed,

he did not feel that open ended choices should be put forward for the members

to decide which policy they preferred. On the other hand he stated;

> "I always present the arguments and counter arguments.
> I try to deal with possible objections in my
> presentation. The Committee have always accepted
> my proposals."[2]

Whether the Committee members could have been expected to play a

more positive role or whether the officer should have presented definite

choices was open to discussion. A view which was probably held by the majority

of the Committee was put forward by one leading member;

> "There were reasonable suggestions and proposals being
> put forward by professional officers; it was only
> reasonable that they should be accepted by the
> Committee."

The proposals were based on objective scientific methods, and formulas but

it can be suggested in Town Planning that;

> " ... the formulas used have built into them
> assumptions about what life ought to be like
> which are, strictly speaking, matters of
> policy."[3]

While the proposals themselves might be objective were they presented in a

fair objective manner to enable members to resell the ideas and understand

the possible implications? According to one senior officer of the Department;

> "There was no conflict, planners and officers
> assimilate the ideas and concepts of the politicians
> and fit in their proposals to these ideas. The
> reports are moulded to fit in."

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1. A Planning Committee Member.

2. An interview in the Planning Department (19 December 1967).

3. R.J. Buxton, Local Government, p.174.

The Officers of the Department did not feel that the members had much to offer to the planning process, yet their support was essential if the plans were to be accepted; they therefore had to be convinced of the value of the proposals:

> "The Councillors have no idea about city centre redevelopment, they just accept what we had to say. Councillors today are not in a position to contribute in this kind of way or lay down guide lines of priorities."[1]

Yet Burns and the other Officers were agreed that the councillors were important in creating the 'political climate' within which it was possible to put forward comprehensive planning ideas. They were also helpful in gaining the rapid acceptance of the plans by the Council and other bodies. This support was necessary for some members believed that planning would;

> " ... stifle and thwart the individual enterprise of the enterprising citizen."[2]

There was also scepticism about the value of experts;

> "It has been said that experts are people who know more and more about less and less - people who are capable of making organised confusion out of chaos."[2]

The enthusiasm and support of the Committee helped the spirit within the Department and also removed some of the responsibility from the Department. For example, the acceptance of the plans by the Committee in a sense also meant the acceptance of the responsibility for those plans. This was a process of legitimisation and the Department always stressed that 'the plans have been approved by the Council' and they are 'Council policy'. At times there was a tendency for the Department to rely upon the legitimisation almost as an easy way to escape having to answer questions about the plans. Knowing they had the support of the Committee the Department felt free to concentrate on their work without any inhibitions as to the nature of their proposals. The Department considered that Councillors could reflect public opinion to some extent but

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1. Planning Department Officer.

2. C.C.P. (16 December 1959), p.622.

they could contribute very little to the planning process. This was also the
opinion of many Committee members, expecially the more intelligent members.
As Burns himself explained:

> "The job, then, of deciding what should or should not
> be redeveloped is one requiring experienced and
> balanced judgement, and will be based on the factual
> physical survey modified by the assessment of
> conditions of bad lay out."[1]

In his following book however, Burns does stress the importance of councillors.
He is aware of the need for co-operation and a close working with the
committee if the work is to go through and especially if it is to go through
at a reasonable speed and he states;

> "The important thing is to have a common spirit of
> endeavour and of values in the two teams. This has
> been remarkably so in Newcastle, and there is the
> same concern for a new city, for a beautiful city
> and for a personal approach to planning between two
> teams. Without this combination I am certain that
> no city can develop in a modern way, and certainly
> not at any speed."[2]

This spirit did exist in Newcastle and Burns in many ways was responsible for
it. As one prominent long serving member of the Committee expressed it;

> "The personality and position of Burns were the whole
> basis of the plan. There was no question in the Committee's
> mind that they had one of the best men in the country. Not
> only did they have the right man but also the right team.
> Burns approach to the Committee was very good, his
> explanations and arguments, his mild pleasant personality,
> all these factors ensured that there were no objections or
> opposition by the Committee to the Department's proposals."

But one study of Newcastle does question the role of the elected representative.

> "A situation seems to have developed which was similar
> to that which Kaplan* found in Newark." (U.S.A.)

> "A general commitment to planning and confidence in the
> planner led to an arrangement where elected representatives
> took the political credit for planning schemes which the
> planner had almost complete independence to develop."[3]

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1. New Towns for Old, p.68.

2. Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne, p.92.

3. Batley, op. cit., p.35, (* H. Kaplan, Urban Renewal Politics, pp.46-47.)

The City Planning Officer did not start from a very good position in his relations with the other chief officers and departments. First there was the climate in the Corporation generally among the chief officers.

> "In the earlier time of which I am speaking, we were very concerned in this Council by a lack of co-operation between our chief officers. We had a situation which was causing a great deal of displeasure with certain chief officers who were not speaking to each other, and any communications they had was by virtue of correspondence and we were disconcerted in committee by evidence of differences of opinion as to what the objectives were."[1]

Secondly there was resentment that a new officer for a new Department had been brought in at chief officer level. Involved in this was feeling about the level of salary to be received by the new Officer, and what was considered to be over generous provision for establishing the new Department. It was said that it would;

> " ... have twice as big a staff as the other three cities comparable to ours which have already made a similar appointment, and spent more than twice the money they are spending."[2]

Thirdly some officers were suspicious about the role of the new Department and questioned its value. The necessary planning work had been conducted before the new Department was established and those who were to lose this work were not happy about it. Fourthly the premature retirement of the City Engineer had also created some ill feeling. Burns was fortunate in one respect here, for a new City Engineer was appointed to replace Parr. Both men had to establish their personal positions together. The City Engineer knew that his Department would not contain the planning functions and started off from this base. Burns soon established an amicable working relationship with the other new Officer. This was not so easy with the other chief officers and departments and it was a while before the Planning Department was accepted. The strong departmentalism which is a tradition of English local government

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1. Alderman Butterfield, C.C.P. (5 April 1967), p.992.

2. C.C.P. (16 December 1959), p.622.

did not help and one Newcastle Planning Committee member said:

> "There was also conflict between the chief officers,
> several were at daggers drawn against each other.
> There was little working together among the officers,
> there was no co-ordination so this meant there was
> little progress or change."

Committees also were very conscious of their areas of responsibility and were

quick to point out if another department crossed the lines of demarcation

into their areas. Burns had to try to establish his position and Department

so that he could secure the co-operation of the other departments. Close

co-operation and co-ordination between the various Corporation departments

was essential for comprehensive planning especially on the scale envisaged

by Burns for the city centre. Co-operation was necessary first for the

formulation of the plans and then for their implementation. Several plans

were produced jointly with other departments. The Planning Department tried

to encourage other departments to join in such projects for this ensured

that conflict with that department was kept to a minimum and they became

committed to the plans produced. Burns described some of this activity in

his report of 1961:

> "Many people from outside my own Department have
> co-operated in working out certain aspects of this
> plan and the policies for the City Centre. In
> particular the plan for the road pattern has been
> prepared in co-operation with the City Engineer, the
> shopping provision, the City Estate and Property
> Surveyor and the section dealing with buses with the
> General Manager, Newcastle Transport Undertaking.
> Other officers have been consulted on various
> technical details."[1]

There was conflict with other departments when they found they could not

develop as they wished due to plans drawn up by the Planning Department. This

problem was highlighted and became more acute after the publication of the

1963 Development Plan Review for planning control became much more rigid. An

example of the friction which was created with other departments was that of

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1. City Planning Officer, First Report (24 March 1961) p.1.

the Estates and Property Department. This Department controlled a considerable amount of Corporation land and they found they were severely restricted in developing it due to the city centre plans. The views which Burns held of planning did not always help to ease tensions. Other officers were critical of his expressing views on subjects covered by their departments whether it was schools or roads. Yet the claim that Burns made that " ... planning is concerned with the whole way of life of people ..."[1] led him into pronouncements on these topics. In suggesting or implying that only planners were concerned with people and the totality of life the Department was regarded as being arrogant and lacking in understanding. The unwillingness of Burns at time to compromise, because of planning ideals, also strained relationships and created difficulties. Burns in his book on Newcastle acknowledged some of the difficulties, he discussed the relations with councillors and the need to work together:

> "The same might be said in connection with relationships
> between departments. This is undoubtedly an even more
> difficult problem than that of relationships between a
> department and its committee or committees."[2]

This antagonism is found elsewhere for example Banfield and Meyerson mention it in their study of Chicago in the United States.[3] Over the years however, Burns built up a reasonably harmonious relationship with other departments, their chief officers and senior staff. The general problem of co-operation and co-ordination was recognised by the City Council in their appointment of a Principal City Officer in 1965. One of his main functions was to be co-ordination of the departments and their programmes and especially with regard to the vast city centre redevelopment plan. In 1962 Burns could state:

> "Relations between the department and other departments
> continue to improve and it might be hoped, that in due

1. Newcastle, A Study in Replanning at Newcastle upon Tyne, p.89.

2. Ibid., p.92.

3. E.C. Banfield and M. Meyerson 'Politics, Planning and the Public Interest'.

course, there will be a development team (including
all the officers) pulling with force in one direction."[1]

No development team was set up but the Principal City Officer was supposed
to serve the same purpose.

Burns was concerned to establish good relations with outside bodies
especially the big property owners and the large stores in Northumberland
Street. Definite attempts were made to bring them into the planning process
not necessarily to hear their views but to persuade them to arrange their
redevelopment in line with the ideas of the Department. Not that the owners
of property affected by the Department's plans had any option. If their wishes
did not conform with those of the Department, planning permission would not
be granted for redevelopment. The Department was not prepared to compromise
on what it considered to be essential. A good example of this is Barclays
Bank in Northumberland Street where the City revoked planning permission on
the advice of the Department and thereby had to pay compensation. The
Department realised that they needed the co-operation of the business
community if the plans were to be implemented with the minimum of delay and
expense. Many of the larger groups were contacted informally by the Department
and negotiations were conducted on a personal basis for delicate financial
considerations were involved and very large scale schemes. There was a
tendency for the Department to give more consideration and attention to the
larger stores rather than to the small individual stores. This was natural
considering the size of their respective areas and investment. The Department
was always willing to meet and discuss the plans with affected interests but
it was normally only a matter of the Department giving information rather
than the firms putting forward their ideas. Interested parties were informed
by the Department only after the plans were finalised. There was no shortage
of literature about the proposals but whether there was enough information

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1. City Planning Officer, <u>Annual Report 1961-62</u>, (June 1962).

available during the formative stage of the decision making process is another question. An example of how the Department consulted on the central area redevelopment were the proposals approved by the Planning Committee on 9th February 1962. On the basis of these a number of interests within the area concerned were consulted.[1] In the light of the comment received certain amendments were made but none was of a significant nature. Owing to the anxiety among affected interests and the slowness of the process the Development Control Section established a procedure for commenting informally on developers' applications. These were normally submitted by the professional advisers of the interests concerned. This did help a little towards improving relations between the Department and the developers. Burns was not in favour of outside property developers coming into the city, he believed local interests should be given preference. In his first report he

> " ... recommended that the Committee indicate that at
> this stage they do not propose to decide upon the role
> to be undertaken by property companies except to make
> it clear that the Committee would not welcome at this
> stage, action by property companies to acquire land
> within the redevelopment areas and that any premature
> action by developers on these lines would not prevent
> the Council from taking the proper course of action in
> the best interests of the City."[2]

Apart from the various commercial interests the Department was also keen to establish good relations with the University of Newcastle and various professional and amenity bodies. Contact between the Committee and the University Planning School had been very close while the proposals for establishing a City Planning Department were being considered. Once the new Department was established there was little contact between it and the University School. The Council did however make grants available for research projects on planning topics such as traffic. Smith and Burns wanted the

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1. See page 76.

2. City Planning Officer, <u>First Report</u>, (24 March 1961) para. 260.

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT AREA

PERCY STREET - BLACKETT STREET AREA

Schedule of Consultations

The following interests have been consulted during the course of preparation of the final scheme.

Commercial Interests in the Area

1. Fenwick Limited
2. Marks & Spencer
3. British Shoe Corpn. (Freeman, Hardy and Willis)
4. Finlay, tobacconists
5. Woolworths
6. Fergusons
7. Multiple Shops Federation
8. Martins Bank
9. Barclays Bank

Other Organisations within the Area

10. Ministry of Works
11. Prudhoe Street Mission
12. Poor Children's Holiday Association
13. Young Men's Christian Association
14. Northern Counties Club
15. Brunswick Methodist Church
16. Central Methodist Church

Potential Developments

17. Littlewoods Stores
18. Peter Robinson
19. Grosvenor House Hotels
20. Trust Houses Limited

Submitted to: Council 18th July 1962, Minister - 2nd November 1962, Public Inquiry, 1/2 October 1963. Approved: 15th June 1965.

University to establish itself quite firmly within the City. They recognised it as being an influential and prestigious institution. No use was made of the planning experts of the University in city centre redevelopment nor were they asked to comment as impartial advisers. The Department was not in favour of outside consultation, they felt little could be gained from it and in any case it was not democratic. For the same kind of reason they were against co-option to the Planning Committee. The University were large property owners in the city centre and they were knowledgeable about their rights. They had ambitions for further extensions within the city centre which both Smith and Burns were prepared to accept. Because they were a large scale developer accepted by the City Council, Burns had to work closely with them. This close co-operation however did not extend to the University Town Planning School. Several members of the School did not like Burns' plans, attitudes, views of planning or what they considered to be his arrogance.

The main amenity society in the Newcastle area is the Northumberland and Newcastle Society. This is a relatively small, little known body which is concerned with buildings not only within the City but also in the county. Burns spoke to the Society soon after his appointment and explained his ideas and plans. He stressed that he was prepared to keep them informed about matters of interest but this information did not involve bringing them into the formative stages of the decision-making. Several prominent members of the Society believed that they were informed too late to make any constructive suggestions. More efforts were made by Burns to draw into the planning process the Northern Architectural Association and he suggested that they could be consulted formally regarding buildings. On two or three occasions he spoke to the Association and was well received. They were also critical about the lack of information and complained that local architects were not employed by the Corporation more frequently. The Department wanted to have

good relations with these two bodies but they did not consider them so important that they should be consulted about decisions. These societies were provided with the same information and published material as was available to the general public. Burns was concerned about the character and historical buildings of the city but he was not prepared to use the Society whose purpose was this end also.

In his relations with the other main bodies in the planning process the City Planning Officer had considerable freedom, for example he was given no instructions by the Planning Committee or its Chairman as to objectives, guide lines or priorities. The Chairman is the most important figure in determining an officer's responsibilities but Smith had no precise views as to what form redevelopment should take. He was passionately concerned, however, to see redevelopment and gave Burns his fullest support. Burns therefore was in the enviable position of having the enthusiastic support of a strong Chairman but yet having complete freedom to put forward his own ideas. The Labour Group strongly supported Burns and therefore his planning proposals passed through the Council without any great difficulty. Strong political support was necessary for the Planning Officer to be able to overcome entrenched vested interests within the Council. He was also assisted by operating in a new field which did not necessarily lead into direct conflict with other chief officers. During the policy formulation stage there was no conflict. In the United States a lot of consideration must be given to business interests for they can be an influential political force. This is not normally true in Britain and in Newcastle their influence was minimal partly because of the wide statutory powers available to the Council. Thus there were few constraints on Burns from political or commercial sources neither was he bound by previous planning commitments. This was unusual for most planners have found that they had to formulate their proposals following on planning decisions taken several years previously. This is true of most decisions in organisations, it is rare to find major policy decisions which are new and

independent. Most decisions are concerned with carrying on with policies which were decided or evolved in the past. In Newcastle Burns was fortunate that there had been no development since the 1930's, and no start had been made on implementing the 1951 Development Plan neither had it been reviewed and brought up to date as required by law. The City Planning Officer because of his power resources and freedom was in a strong position to ensure that his proposals for the City's redevelopment became official policy.

Evaluations and Conclusions

It is difficult to evaluate a planning department in any precise way and to assess the contribution of the City Planning Officer and his Department to the city redevelopment proposals is also difficult. The Officer himself considered various tests which could be applied to plans such as, an aesthetic evaluation which is perhaps the easiest of all. A second test would be economic, evaluating how the plan worked for the promoters and for the individual shopkeeper, but this is often based on a value rather than a factual judgement. Another evaluation could be based on usage i.e. on the volume of people. Again this must be a value judgement unless there are surveys available:

> "The main feature revealed by this analysis is that an
> assessment of relative commercial success is not
> possible on a factual basis, and that value judgements
> are highly suspect. Judgements on convenience,
> pleasantness and aesthetics are also impossible on
> a factual basis, but here the value judgements are
> easier and more obvious."[1]

It is not possible to use the criteria mentioned above to evaluate the Newcastle city centre plans for they have not yet been implemented. Even if they had been implemented, as Burns states the criteria mentioned is questionable. In one sense the only real judge is posterity. It is possible however to pose questions about the performance and claims of planners including

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1. Burns, New Towns for Old, p.64.

Wilfred Burns. Are their claims reasonable and acceptable? Have they

accepted their responsibility to the democratic political system, to the

partnership theory of local government? Or as the Maud Committee phrased it

have they provided:

> "... the necessary staff work and advice so that
> members may set the objectives and take decisions
> on the means of attaining them."[1]

Have they been prepared to seek and accept advice from all sources which

could be of possible help and have they been responsive to constructive

criticism and willing to change? Have they shown prudence and foresight as

well as decisiveness and imagination? Have they kept to their own aims and

been concerned about people?

The contribution of the officer in local government today tends

to be high because of the nature of the complex technical services operated

by the authorities. It is suggested however that the contribution of the

Newcastle Planning Officer was quite outstanding. The Newcastle City Council

have been almost unanimous in its praise of Burns and of the plans. They

claimed in a publicity booklet:

> "The Planning Department has over the past five years
> prepared detailed schemes for comprehensive redevelopment
> in many parts of the city. These plans have captivated
> the imagination of the country."[2]

The proposals were eulogized by the local press and commended highly by the

national press. Other planners have also been warm in their congratulations

to Burns on his proposals. They selected Newcastle as their conference centre

in 1968 for it had:

> " ... one of the most dynamic and progressive images
> among British cities... it had a vigorous approach
> to redevelopment including the creation of a new
> city centre and a policy of careful conservation of
> the city's historic past."[3]

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1. M.L.G. Vol. 1, p.39, para. 151(d).

2. Newcastle, A Five Year Partnership (undated).

3. Town Planning Institute Brochure.

Burns' achievement was recognised by Newcastle University presenting him with an honorary doctorate of science. At the ceremony the Public Orator said:

> "The revolutionary principles of city centre planning
> which he evolved in collaboration with the Newcastle
> Planning Department long foreshadowed the findings
> of the Buchanan Report. They have received unstinted
> praise both here and abroad; and they have made the
> City a Mecca for experts in this field from all over
> the world."[1]

In the 1967 New Years Honours list, Dr. Burns was awarded the C.B.E. for his services in the field of town and country planning. His high standing in the profession of town planning was recognised by his own peers when they elected him President of the Institute of Town Planning for the year 1967-68. Further recognition of his ability and calibre came with his appointment as Chief Planner to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government as from the 1st April 1968. Thus Wilfred Burns has been recognised as an outstanding planner by his profession and by others. This also involves a recognition of his work and plans for the Newcastle city centre redevelopment. Much of his approach and his ideas about planning became normal practice but he has often been in advance of the field. His books have been well reviewed and his methods and planning philosophy outlined therein are considered to be good. These methods and ideals he has applied to his planning work in Newcastle. Burns perhaps had the qualities which the Schuster Report thought a chief planning officer needed:

> "These abilities demand a creative and imaginative
> faculty of mind and power of synthesis, and a broad
> human understanding."[2]

The local newspaper has claimed in a headline over an article by Burns on City Redevelopment:

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1. University Congregation (23 March 1966).

2. Report on the Qualifications of Planners (September 1950) para. 167.

> "No City in Britain strides forward more boldly
> than Newcastle into the challenging New World
> of the 1970's."[1]

Burns was a man of strong personality and he had the drive to ensure that

his imaginative proposals were accepted. He could operate in the official

and political system with ease which is necessary in Britain and the United

States[2] if proposals, especially radical proposals, are to become policy.

Unlike the United States however, the Planning Officer did not have to bargain

with other groups nor did he have to compromise. This strong position partly

reflects the evangelic approach of Burns to planning. The same element led

him to become an active apologist and publicist for planning generally and

Newcastle's planning specifically.

The City Planning Officer made the outstanding contribution to the

redevelopment proposals. His wide claims about planning however can be

questioned. For;

> " ... some planners make claims for their profession
> that cannot be justified."[3]

It is claimed that planning is for the public good. Planners can see and

know what the public good is; it is part of their profession. The essence of

the public good is people; planning is concerned with people, their problems

and aspirations. Houses, roads and shops are only important in so far as they

improve the public good and increase the well-being of the people. Planners

are concerned about the whole of society while other departments are only

concerned with limited spheres of interest. The planners claim to know what

is the best for the people not only now but in the future. That is not to

say they will not make mistakes but as far as possible within the limits of

available knowledge their plans will be right. Planners are able to make

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1. Evening Chronicle (20 July 1965).

2. See, M. Meyerson and E.C. Banfield, Politics, Planning and the Public
   Interest.

3. Malcolm MacEwen, 'Planning', The Listener (15 October 1970).

these claims because their training and use of scientific techniques enable them to know what is best for people, whether it is to do with schools, shops or swimming baths. This kind of claim, Burns believes, bears full fruit in the comprehensive approach to planning. Here a total area is planned and redeveloped completely, in depth in detail and according to the ideals of the planners. The Newcastle Principal City Officer has expressed concern about the claims of planners:

> "I believe that one of the reasons why there is a
> barrier between planners and people is that the
> planners start off with the assumption that certain
> general principles are right and need not be questioned
> in the course of his work."[1]

In a democratic society the claims and principles of any group in a position of power need to be questioned and examined. This is particularly so of groups such as planners who claim to be judges of the public good and especially if they are:

> " ... a profession which has hardly suffered from an
> excess of critical self awareness."[2]

The profession makes pronouncements and claims that those are right and rational but there are no means available for measuring their 'rightness' or rationality. There is an assumption that they are value free for comprehensive planning is orientated towards 'efficient' management with an emphasis on policy analysis and quantitative techniques:

> "Perhaps some management concepts of the comprehensive
> planning task represents the ultimate illusion of a
> 'value free' bureaucracy."[3]

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1. W. Frank Harris, 'Planning and Local Government - the Next Ten Years'
   J.R.T.P.I. (February 1969) p.55.

2. J. Brian McLoughin, Book Review. J.R.T.P.I. (1967) p.115.

3. M.L. Harrison, Paper entitled 'Political, Administrative and Ideological
   Factors in the Evolution and Operation of the Local Authority Development
   Control System' Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge
   (September 1971) p.19.

The same author suggests that;

> "The Local Government decision-making process is
> viewed as if it were the product of one governing
> mind."[1]

It is assumed that the process will lead to the 'ideal' solution, and this
will be so if the planners can ensure that their views are accepted. To
suggest that the planners have a unique understanding of the system or that
they have unique skills or responsibilities does not justify their claims
either.

The planning profession itself is not agreed about its role and
functions and claims made by one group of planners would not always be
accepted by another group. There are two main views, one is that planning
is a rather specialised profession and it should not concern itself with other
disciplines or with matters which do not fall clearly within its province.
The other view, would consider this a narrow conservative description of the
profession. Those who took the second view saw the profession as covering
several disciplines and being concerned with planning for society in the widest
possible way. This has been a matter of controversy in the United States as
well as Britain, as one American author puts it, do;

> " ... planners plan for all, are they generalists, or
> are they purely specialists who should be consulted
> only on specific problems?"[2];

In Britain the dispute was reflected in the election of members to the Council
of the Institute of Town Planning. Newcastle City planners were well to the
fore in the debate and took the wider more radical view of the profession.
For example Michael Hewling was critical of the Institute's Council and said;

> "Unfortunately it has failed to recognise the new and
> positive roles now developing for the practising planner
> and the range of activities these involve."[3]

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1. Ibid.

2. Altshuler, op. cit., p.329.

3. Candidate's statement, Election 1966.

Burns himself supported the generalist view and was in favour of a more

open membership policy and a wide application of planning to every sphere.

He did not necessarily see planners being trained as generalists but he was

in favour of a generalist approach to planning, which in practice was a

comprehensive approach. Burns was in favour of a team approach where several

specialists were employed within the planning department and not from outside.

He would make these full members of the profession, contrary to the following

view:

> "Either a candidate is sufficiently interested to
> become a planner or not. Any intermediate condition
> is merely an expensive version of Honorary Membership
> or a kind of second class citizenship."[1]

Membership policy continued to be a controversial issue and was the topic of

the President's address in 1971.[2] There are therefore differences within the

profession as to its role and philosophy.

There were critics outside the profession who disagreed with Burns'

philosophy and approach to planning. For example a University lecturer in

Sociology, who is interested in planning and became a Newcastle City Councillor

in 1969 has sarcastically said:

> "With Dan Smith they thought he was god. The thing
> about Burns is that not only do others think he is
> god, but he believes he is god."

The same lecturer refers to a speech given by a senior Planning Officer of

the City at the University of Newcastle on 9 February 1967, in response to a

question about whether or not he felt any anxiety about the possibility of

making gigantic mistakes, the officer said, that <u>someone</u> had to take decisions,

and there was " ... the big thrill of taking decisions - the bigger the better."

The officer continued:

> "You've got to have a touch of arrogance to be a
> planner - and a basic confidence to <u>know</u> that you're

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1. J.R.N.Middlebrook, Staff Architect/Planner (private practice) Election 1966.

2. F.J. Amos, Royal Town Planning Institute (13 October 1971).

right even when everyone else is saying that you're
wrong, and the present City Planning Officer is such
a man."[1]

This arrogance and a lack of willingness to compromise on what
he considered to be planning ideals led to criticism from other planners.

"In his view (Burns) the planning officer should decide,
and if he felt it was right, he should stick to it, even
if it took ten years to be accepted. These views are
almost god-like and cannot be questioned."[2]

In practice Burns' attitudes and views were never put to the test in
Newcastle, he was never questioned nor were his proposals ever rejected, so
he was never put in a position where he was asked to compromise his planning
ideals. There are obvious advantages in a rigid,strong position, for there
can be enormous pressure for proposals to be changed, thus destroying the
comprehensive unified plan for the area. It is better that objective planning
criteria should be used as the basis for decisions rather than the subjective
personal criteria of pressure groups.

If the criticisms of the Planning Officer are valid they enhance
the importance of the only legal check over the action of planners, that is
the elected members. It was acknowledged however by the members and the
officers that the members contribution to the decision-making process was
extremely limited. They did not act as a check in any direct sense and while
their presence and views might have limited the officers, there was little
evidence of this. The members were limited by the complex technical nature
of the plans and by their lack of ability and time. They were also limited
by the view taken of their role by the officers. Burns thought the members
had little to contribute especially in defining planning objectives and
priorities, but they were a useful sounding board and they could help to

1. J.G. Davies, A Study of a Planning Exercise in Newcastle upon Tyne,
   unpublished Research Study, Newcastle University, p.154.

2. Lecturer in Planning, Newcastle University.

create a favourable climate of opinion. The Planning Committee were not encouraged to ask questions or to think about overall objectives. Decisions, in a sense, had already been taken by the Department, before the proposals were put before the Committee. One study on planning in a county borough considers the anti-democratic tendency for decisions or value judgements to be pre-empted by the experts.[1] Not all planners would agree with Burns' interpretation of the role of the members. For example;

> "I believe that final determinations about our community
> should be made by our elected representatives. The
> planners should provide him and the citizenry with the
> most complete information about the choices available,
> and the ramifications of each choice."[2]

Some planners, administrators and politicians would disagree and argue that this is too idealistic a view and is not feasible in reality but an ex-senior member of the Newcastle Planning team has stated;

> "The argument now is in broad measure these social
> needs can only be elicited when people are able to
> express their desires having first been faced with
> clear alternatives."[3]

In Newcastle the Planning Officer did not give the members clear alternatives or information about financial costs and benefits or the ramifications and implications of the proposals. This was partly because at times the Department had not worked out the implications and details and the Committee were asked to approve a policy outline with a more detailed plan to follow later. The members simply had to accept or reject simplified reports. Burns believed his ideas and methods were correct but his approach to the elected members is questionable. The following statement could be applied to the Newcastle redevelopment proposals;

> "It does however, lead to the disguising and suppression
> of a good many value judgements which ought to be

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1. Friend and Jessop, op. cit.

2. A. Levine, 'Planning Politics and the Citizen', Paper to Town and Country Planning Summer School, 1962.

3. G.E. Cherry Town Planning in the Social Context, p.47.

> determined by genuinely political debate. Important
> issues of this kind and priorities in transport and
> land use, housing densities, industrial location
> control are often embedded by officials in technical
> reports which are designed to be swallowed whole and
> tasteless, by elected representatives. The elected
> members have neither the time nor the experience to
> separate out and challenge the value judgements that
> they ought to be making, when these are entangled in
> masses of technical and pseudo-technical matters. He
> is all too often presented with the choice of endorsing
> the 'suggestions' of official working parties, or of
> delaying a process which he knows to be desperately
> slow."[1]

Reports were certainly technical and embodied value judgements and were

designed to be acceptable to members. The members were very keen to pass

planning business as quickly as possible. If value judgements were not

discussed it was as much due to the confidence placed by the members in Burns

as in the actual presentation of the reports. Burns endeavoured to gain the

support of other departments which meant that those departments did not put

forward alternative proposals. He was in a strong position vis-a-vis other

departments because of strong political backing.

The Planning Department was working under continuous pressure to

produce plans and this pressure was intensified owing to staff shortages.

Smith and Burns were partly creators of this pressure and they also suffered

under it as did the Planning Committee. In this kind of atmosphere there was

a greater need for studies, advice, help and an independent evaluation from

outside:

> "Administrators work under constant pressure to get
> decisions agreed and implemented, and unless they
> have developed a sensitive and reflective under-
> standing, can easily be influenced (often
> unconsciously) by narrow beliefs and barren
> assumptions."[2]

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1. A. Sharman, 'Politics Planning and Management', J.R.T.P.I. (July/August 1967).

2. P. Self, The Built Environment, in Bernard Crick, Ed., Essays on Reform 1967, A Centenary Tribute, p.73.

Burns did not have narrow beliefs but because of the pressure he was less willing to listen and consult with other bodies. Any factor which slowed down the production of the planning proposals was viewed with suspicion. The sensitive and reflective understanding did perhaps become blurred. The whole Department was geared to one end and it was difficult to see anything else. It was not possible to give the long and mature consideration to the plans which they required. A good example of how quickly the Department produced reports is the First Report on the city centre area. The Department came into being on the 1st November 1960, and the Report was produced by March 1961. This Report contains all the major proposals for the redevelopment of the city centre and there were no substantial amendments or additions to them. Burns stated:

> "The policies dealt with in this report are in broad
> outline only and it may be necessary as the result of
> further and detailed work later on, to suggest some
> minor amendments to them."[1]

The amendments were only minor and all the subsequent decisions were based on this report. This basic policy Report was produced in an incredibly short time and while the Department worked very hard to produce it this was only possible because they made all the assumptions and decisions. The only consultation was with some other Council departments and this was because of departmental need and politics.

> Burns was aware of the importance of his proposals:

> "More importantly the survival of the city centre depends
> upon imaginative treatment of all redevelopment projects
> including urban motor ways, because once new buildings
> and roads have come into being the solutions to the
> problems of the next sixty to one hundred years have
> largely been determined."[2]

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1. City Planning Officer, _First Report_ (24 March 1961) para. 1.

2. _Ibid._, para. 258.

A stronger case could hardly be put for full consultation and participation and mature consideration. This has not happened however, according to a sociologist who at one stage worked with the Newcastle planners;

> " ...habit of power has induced a foreclosing of
> thought and an incapacity to listen to or take
> other people seriously."[1]

This was the attitude of the City Planners to the Royal Fine Art Commission's evaluation of the redevelopment plans.[2] The Town Clerk of Manchester[3] suggested another danger which may befall planners, they may not be asking " ...the right questions" because they are too "immersed in the plan and strategy". This happened to some extent in Newcastle.

It has been suggested by some critics, including a senior Conservative member of the Planning Committee, that the Department was too theoretical and idealistic, and too much concerned with physical planning and ideals. They therefore tended to neglect the financial and the real social considerations. Smith and Grey, two Chairmen of the Committee, and the Committee itself were also too idealistic about planning and gave insufficient thought to the implications of the proposals. In the debate on the five year review of the Department in 1967[4] it was suggested that the planners were unaware of reality and stayed in "their ivory tower in the Civic Centre" and people were "showered with publicity but it was all theory".

Critics of the idealistic "theoretical planning" have concentrated mainly on finance and implementation but they have also pointed out:

> " ... that comprehensive redevelopment can be a valley
> of death in human terms whatever it may look like in
> the architect's model."[5]

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1. Davies, op. cit., p.289.

2. Royal Fine Art Commission (R.F.A.C.) Letter, (20 October 1967).

3. G.C. Ogden, J.R.T.P.I., (July 1968), p.313.

4. C.C.P. (5 April 1967), p.992.

5. The Times, Editorial (14 June 1971).

There was little attempt in Newcastle to cost the proposals in any rational systematic manner and no kind of cost analysis technique was used. The Department was not particularly concerned about financial implications for, as they saw it, there were various problems within the city centre and it was the function of the planner to put forward solutions to these, it was the function of another department to find the required finance. If the question did arise, the planners were more likely to talk about the cost of not planning and redeveloping. They asked what was the cost of traffic delays and the social cost of crowded fume-filled shopping streets. Redevelopment was inevitable, they said, and any delay just made for higher costs:

> "Delays and lower standards can in fact in the long
> term result in even greater expenditure."[1]

Various financial figures were released by the Department but these were for public relations and were in no way a properly costed estimate of the plans. The mass media liked to have some figure which looked good in the headlines, therefore the sums of £175 to £200 million were suggested as the cost of development. This approach by the Department was unsatisfactory, they should have given more attention to the costs and financial repercussions of their proposals. When the time came for the plans to be implemented this deficiency was criticised as one long serving Labour member of the Committee said;

> "I agree. I feel we did not give sufficient attention
> to the plans when they were first discussed."

But even before the implementation stage, there had been criticism:

> "Another point which has received insufficient attention
> is the huge cost of redevelopment. The area involved is
> so large that costs are going to be tremendous. Is the
> private developer willing to pay such high costs? Who

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1. City Planning Officer, op. cit., para. 258.

is going to pay for the tall flats in the city centre
for instance? Once you realise the scale and the
proposed buildings, you also realise the hugh costs
involved."[1]

Another point of criticism which has been levelled at the Department

concerned the implementation of the plans. They were first outlined in 1961

but there was little sign of implementation in the first ten years. Most of

the forecasts by the Department as to when demolition would take place and

when rebuilding would commence have proved to be inaccurate. For example in

the '5 year Programme 1964-1969' under Central Redevelopment,[2] five projects

are listed; shops and hotel - Eldon Square, shops on the site of the old

Green Market, Redevelopment in Pilgrim Street, provision for car parks for

approximately 3,000 cars, preservation of historic buildings. One section of

Eldon Square was demolished in 1970 and as at January 1973 no new buildings

had been erected, nor had any been erected for the second project. Some

development had occurred in Pilgrim Street which was connected with road

improvements on which a public inquiry had been held in the 1950's. The

first multi-storey car park did not open until late 1971. The record on the

preservation of historic buildings is mixed; the Royal Arcade has been

demolished after various different decisions were taken about its future. A

financial bequest to the City allowed the Holy Jesus Hospital to be restored

in 1969. But the old Liberal Club was still standing derelict in January 1973

after many years in this condition; and no decision has been taken about the

Old Assembly Rooms which have been closed since 1967. A start however, has

been made in cleaning many of the old Grainger and Dobson buildings, and a

notable achievement of the Department was to persuade one firm to rebuild

its new Grey Street premises exactly as designed by Dobson in the 1820's.

With regard to one of the most important areas of the city, Burns stated in

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1. Lecturer in Planning (University of Newcastle).

2. Newcastle Development Plan Review, 1963, Ch. 25, para. 1002.

March 1961;

> "It will be essential, therefore to secure, as early
> as possible an area of land to the north of Blackett
> Street so that some building can take place in the
> relatively near future."[1]

As at January 1973, no building had taken place. One factor which did

cause some delay was obtaining approval from the Minister of Housing and

Local Government for the plans. For example the Comprehensive Development

Area Scheme for Blackett Street and Prudhoe Street was submitted to the

Minister on the 2nd November 1963, he did not give his approval until the

15th June 1965. As at January 1973 however, there had still been no development

in the area. One of the many problems arising because of the long drawn out

delay in implementation is planning blight. Because of the planning proposals

for an area, owners have been unable to develop or sell their properties.

Among the many critics of this situation was one local chartered surveyor

who said;

> "The assets of individual organisations and people were
> being allowed to fall into decay in order to meet the
> faraway planning needs of the new Newcastle. Even plans
> with the highest priority were taking a lot of time to
> develop. Newcastle's slow, extravagant and comprehensive
> planning proposals are pushing people into limbo."[2]

The Department's forecasts about the implementation of its plan have proved

incorrect and have led to considerable uncertainty, distress and financial

loss. There has been some delay because of the difficulty in obtaining

necessary capital and getting private developers involved but there has been

no delay because of a change in political control or party politics. The

Department should have been aware of the possible delays and amended its

programme accordingly, the Planning Officer had considerable experience of

those planning problems, implementation, financial and others because of his

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1. City Planning Officer, op. cit., para. 255.

2. R.A. Sisterson, Public Inquiry (27 October 1966).

position in Coventry. There is uncertainty in planning, but;

"The local authority can seek to reduce the uncertainty."[1]

The Planning Department should, at least, have acknowledged the uncertainty

and made the position known to the members and the public.

Burns has stressed that planning is for and about people and

therefore they must participate:

"Good public relations means much more than just getting
public interested. Some sections of the public should
participate, and make possible a much more imaginative
scheme."[2]

There was, however, no participation in the planning process for redevelopment

but there was an excellent public relations campaign:

"The Committee has therefore produced leaflets, plans
and reports for the general public and every
opportunity has been taken to explain the proposals
by word of mouth and display."[3]

Great efforts were made to attract good publicity from the mass media. The

Department produced an attractive series of publications to inform the public.

According to the Conservative Leader they were:"The greatest publishers since

Caxton."[4] Numerous lectures and talks were given by the Department and their

models of the new city proved to be very popular. Yet, there was no meaningful

participation; the public were informed but not consulted. Surveys were made

of facts not of opinions. In Newcastle there was no " ... sharing in the

formulation of policies and proposals"[5] no possibility of choice by either the

Committee or public, and no " ... continuous open debate"[6] as required by

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1. J.D. Stewart, Management in Local Government: A Viewpoint, p.142.

2. Burns, New Towns for Old, p.191.

3. Planning, Progress and Purpose, A report of the Town Planning Committee,
    surveying the period 1963-67, p.41.

4. Councillor A. Grey, C.C.P. (5 April 1967), p.1007.

5. People and Planning, Report of the Committee on Public Participation in
    Planning, para. 5(a).

6. Ibid., paras. 7 and 20.

the Skeffington Committee. The following could be applied to the process in Newcastle :

> "Public relations is concerned with selling the finished product, or with creating a climate favourable to its acceptance; a one way process in which the citizen cannot be said to participate. The careful press release, colourful brochures, laudatory speeches, ingenious exhibitions, even the public meetings, 'to encourage public discussion of the Council's proposals', merely serve to sugar the pill, for they generally occur after the decisions have been made, at least at local planning authority level, when the only remaining choices are to accept it or to object to it."[1]

It can be difficult to get participation in planning because of factors such as public apathy and the technical complex nature of the proposals. In Newcastle, however, no attempt was made to invite participation. The claims made by the planners were not observed in practice.

The City Planning Officer was a man of strong personality and high professional skill and he had the freedom and political weight to ensure that his plans for city redevelopment became official policy. His professional performance has been acknowledged to have been of a high order, yet there have been critics,

> "The strife and destruction in Motorway Cities – like ... and Newcastle upon Tyne (promised by Mr. T. Dan Smith to become 'the Brasilia of the Old World') – are not encouraging."[2]

Critics have been more vocal on the lack of information provided by the planners, on delays and the financial implications of the plans. Not all the claims made by the planners would be acceptable to others in our society and these claims and their practice could be contradictory to the ethos of the democratic political system. The theory of the system is that the people elect representatives who take decisions on their behalf, the system is supposed to be open and responsive to the community. The decision-making
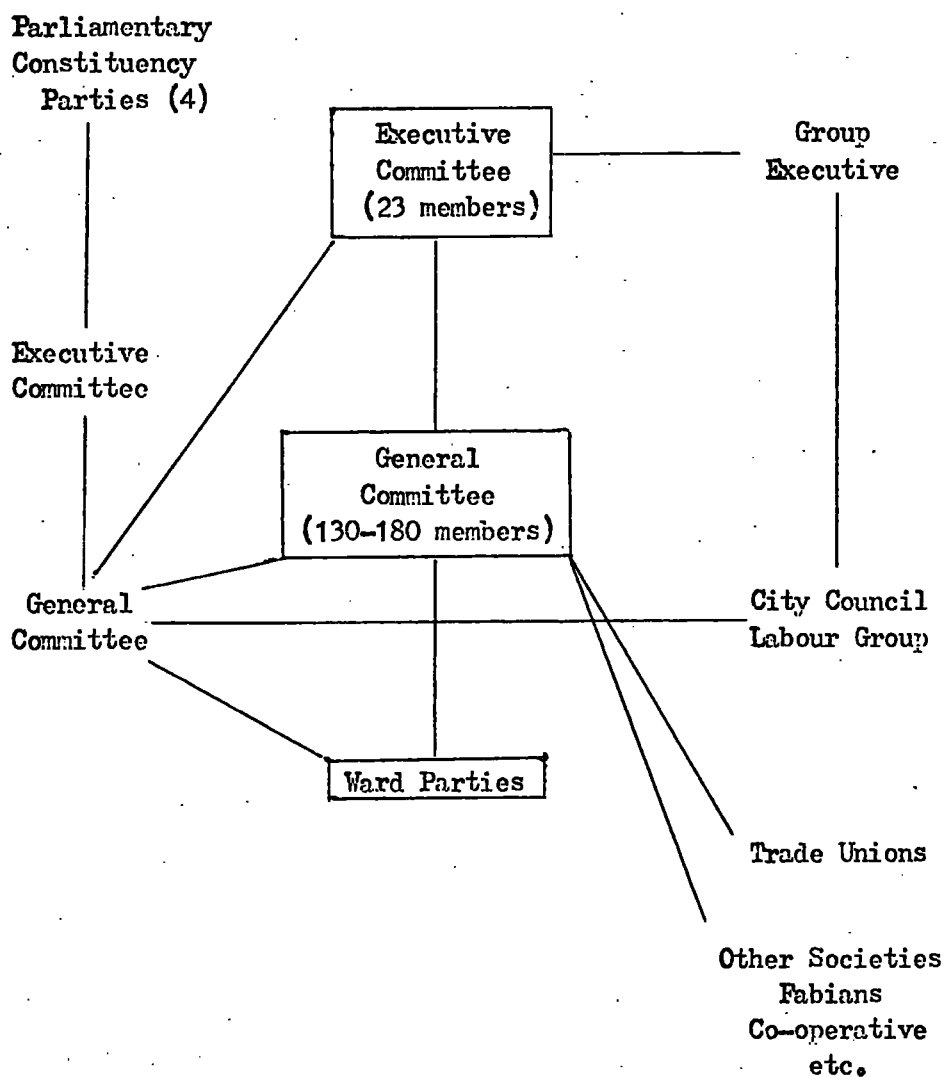
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1. J.L. Grove and S.C. Proctor, 'Citizen Participation in Planning' J.R.T.P.I. (December 1966).

2. Jeremy Bugler, 'The Ringway to Ruin', The Observer (25 February 1973).

process is based on a partnership principle with the representative taking decisions with the advice and assistance of the officers. In Newcastle it could be argued that the decisions were pre-empted by the officers and there were no meaningful choices for the representatives. The planners claimed that they knew what was good for the people and that their comprehensive planning should be mandatory on all. While the planners have provided information about their intentions they have rarely been prepared to consult or respond to the ideas of others. The planners may have shown decisiveness and imagination but they have been woefully short of prudence and foresight. Their lofty aims, especially their stated concern for people, is to be commended, but their claims for their profession and their practice is in danger of making a negation of these aims.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CITY LABOUR PARTY.

Parliamentary
Constituency
  Parties (4)

Executive
Committee
(23 members)

Group
Executive

Executive
Committee

General
Committee
(130-180 members)

General
Committee

City Council
Labour Group

Ward Parties

Trade Unions

Other Societies
Fabians
Co-operative
etc.

This chapter considers the contribution of the Newcastle City Labour Party to the policy making process. The party gained control of the City Council in 1958 and retained a majority of the seats until May 1967 when they lost to the Conservative Party. During this period most of the important decisions regarding city centre redevelopment were taken, and the City Planning Department was established and a city planning officer appointed. The various sections of the City Party are examined for their contribution to the decision process. Particular attention is devoted to the operation of the Labour Group of the City Council and its leadership. An examination is made of how the Party endeavoured to get these policies over to the electorate.

Policy was not made at the ward level neither did the wards discuss policy matters and there is no evidence that city centre redevelopment was discussed in the late 1950's. It was only after the decisions had been made and become Council policy and received publicity in the press that the topic cropped up at the ward level. This was only because Councillors in the reports on Council business mentioned the matter. Any comment on the subject was likely to be on the gossip level and directed against alleged high costs, and expenditure especially on the Civic Centre. The activities of ward parties, their limited range of discussion and lack of contribution to policy matters reflected the membership at this level. Few members had education beyond the statutory school leaving age. Members of experience with knowledge of the type necessary for policy making were disinclined to attend owing to the lack of vitality in the wards. In the rare ward which had a high proportion of white collar workers and professional people the party was in a better position to make a contribution. If this type of person was interested and prepared to attend meetings they could gravitate to become office holders within the party. It was the office holders who were in a position to contribute most towards policy partly because of their position, but more so because of their background and knowledge. No attempt was made to draw in the rank and file on policy making for the city centre and it is

doubtful even if the attempt had been made, whether any worthwhile contributions would have been forthcoming. Individual councillors who were involved in the formulation of this policy were members of ward parties but they did not see the ward as having any contribution to make. One of the most important functions of the ward is to select candidates and they zealously guard this prerogative. In safe Labour wards they virtually select the councillors. T. Dan Smith was fortunate in that he had a secure base in a very safe ward from which to pursue his policies such as redevelopment. In Newcastle the City Party had no financial sanction which it could use against the wards. Because of this and strong ward feeling the party did not attempt to get safe seats for two of its group leaders in the 1960's; who were not returned to the Council.

Above the ward level in the City Party was the General Committee which represented the whole of the party within the city including trade unions. The membership of the Committee varied between 130 and 180 and the actual attendance at meetings was normally less than half the membership. There was an Executive Committee which consisted of five officers plus eighteen other members and the Leader of the Labour Group on the Council as an ex officio non-voting member. Members of the Executive had to be members of the General Committee and several were also City Councillors. The executive is concerned with administrative matters rather than with policy formulation and this can be true whether the party is out of office or in, for example, a Report to the General Committee in June 1969 said that there had been virtually no policy formulated since 1958. The General Committee, constitutionally, is the ultimate decision making body in the party, but it is more valuable as a fairly representative body, which allows two way communication between the leaders, councillors, and rank and file members. In a sense it is the one body to which Labour Councillors are accountable for city wide policies. Yet the Committee rarely perceives its role in this kind of way, partly because decisions are acceptable if they are taken by Labour Councillors, and partly because the Committee is not fully aware of Councillors activities. Furthermore Councillors

are well represented at meetings and are not slow to defend themselves and attack possible critics. In practice the Committee rarely attempts to assess the implementation of policy by Labour controlled Councils. It does have authority however and this was revealed in the controversy over the traffic proposals in the redevelopment plans. This matter became significant because of the trade union concern. Trade unionists are an important element within the City Party because of their voting and financial power and also because they are experienced in committee procedure and speaking. These factors compensate for their lack of formal education. The importance of the unionists is reflected in the party office holders. For example two full-time union officials became Chairmen of the Party and City Councillors and one also became Chairman of the City Finance Committee in 1958. This illustrates the importance of a power base in the General Committee. It also meant that there were few active members of ability outside the executive organs and therefore the possibility of challenge to the Party Leadership from outside was restricted.

There was a considerable overlap between the various groups within the City Labour Party organisations. This made for good co-ordination between the different bodies; it also allowed individuals or groups to exert influence at different levels of the organisation. The councillors were the key figures being members of all the different bodies. Their position was also strengthened because they were in a position to have superior, or more, information than other members of the Party. They also had more experience in speaking and of the organisational procedure of the Party. This enabled them to create and use opportunities. Their position was also helped due to the non or periodic attendance of several trade union representatives. (Though it is possible for the councillors themselves to be the accredited representatives of trade unions). Councillors therefore can be extremely influential in policy formation within the Party organisation. No other group was in a position to make a similar contribution. The councillors were the representatives who introduced city centre redevelopment in the various committees.

Their position enabled them to explain the ideas to the Party, and get them accepted as official Party policy.

The main working body, or the striking force of the City Labour Party is normally the Labour Group of city councillors and not the City Party Executive Committee. This helps to explain why Chairmen of the City Party give up their position to concentrate on their work as a councillor. The official Labour Group comprises all Labour members of the Council, aldermen and councillors. A representative from each of the four constituency parties within the city and one from the City Party also attend Group meetings. Party candidates can also attend. None of these persons can vote but they have the right to speak. They are present at these meetings to assist in the co-ordination of party activities. Their contribution to Group discussion is normally minimal. In a classification of party systems Newcastle could be classified as Two-Party marginal and since 1945 the two main political groups have each been in power for two periods. It also has elements which are found in Bulpitts "positive one-party system".[1] For example the Labour Group in 1958 took all the aldermanic seats and all the committee chairmanships and the Conservatives followed the same policy in 1967. The Labour Group has a strict interpretation of the Model Standing Orders.[2] In fact the Newcastle Labour Group has modified them to make them stricter. For instance on 'questions' the Model Standing Orders allow questions if not against policy. In Newcastle all questions require to be submitted to the Group and be approved before they can be put to the Council. The Group operates a strong party system and all matters are voted and acted on according to the Group decision and Party policy, unless the Group decides that a free vote should be allowed upon an issue. A free vote is unusual but it was agreed to for one redevelopment issue on which the Group was divided, the preservation of historic buildings within the city.

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1. J.G. Bulpitt Party Politics in English Local Government, p.p. 123

2. Labour Party Model Standing Orders for Labour Groups.

The Newcastle system can be compared to that described by Wiseman in his study of the Leeds City Labour Group.[1] The Group decisions are normally taken at the Pre-Agenda Meeting of the Group which is held on the Monday before the Wednesday Council Meeting. This meeting is well attended and an acceptable reason has to be given for an absence. The meeting goes through each item on the Council Agenda and members can ask questions and raise points. Topics are discussed quite freely, partly because it was not possible to do so outside, for then critical points could be used by the opposition. Information is provided by the chairman of the Committee concerned, a committee member or the Group Leader. A study of Coventry argued that the majority party group meeting fulfilled a positive role in the policy forming machinery of the Council;

> "by providing a forum for the debate of particular
> controversial issues at a stage before a formal committee
> decision was reached." 2

This was also true in Newcastle but its value was limited because of the shortage of time. If any matter is particularly controversial a compromise is agreed or a vote is taken and the decision is binding upon all members. Normally this is accepted by the minority without ill-feeling. If a member disagrees with the decision he can always conveniently absent himself from that Council, but this is unusual. If the majority is small, they would attend to ensure that the Group retained its majority. The ultimate sanction against any member is withdrawal of the party whip. There is no example in recent years of the whip being withdrawn. In the Group meeting there is pressure on members to get through the business, and business towards the end of the agenda is inclined to be pushed through quickly. It is the function of the Chairman, who is the Group Leader, to ensure that matters move through at a reasonable speed. If the chairman is a strong personality, like Smith, this happens, otherwise there is a tendency for discussion

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1. H.V. Wiseman 'The Party Caucus' New Society, Vol. 2, No. 57 (1963)

2. Friend and Jessop, Op. cit. P. 58

to prolong itself, especially on non-technical subjects.

Matters on the Council Agenda in the period 1958-1967 concerning planning and redevelopment were passed without any great comment. The Group were committed to the general planning policy and were quite prepared to accept the Chairman's advice on any matter raised. As Brier says in his study in Hull:

> "the Labour Group mainly reinforced decisions taken in committee, by imposing party discipline in meetings of the full council and thereafter supporting established policy."[1]

The Group were fairly united in their approach to planning matters and even on a controversial topic like the traffic proposals the Group accepted the strong lead given by the Group Leader.

These proposals were debated at length but the leadership had no great difficulty in obtaining a favourable vote. Smith as Leader was in an almost unassailable position, and as Chairman of the Planning Committee he was fully primed with information to convince the Group of the rightness of the proposals. It is claimed by some that the party group is the main policy making body:

> "In the words of one chief officer, 'It appears to me that the council has no machinery for making policy except perhaps that very loose knit organisation known as the group meeting."[2]

A Sheffield study suggests something similar:

> "It is worthwhile in local politics, also, to influence the most humble back-bench councillor who, unlike his parliamentary counterpart, is not presented with a cabinet decision as a fait accompli. The most important policy decisions are taken by the full party group."[3]

This would not normally be true in Newcastle for example the Group did not make the policy for city centre redevelopment, they merely accepted the reports of the Planning Committee which embodied policy recommendations. There are certain

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1. Brier, op. cit. p.167

2. M.L.G. Vol 5, ch 8, para 12.

3. W. Hampton, Democracy and Community, p. 244

matters which the Group have considered to be matters of principle on which

there is a definite Party policy.   For example there is a long standing policy

that the Council should retain the ownership of any land and if they could not

utilise it, it should only be leased to other bodies; the Group was prepared to

reject Committee reports which went against this policy.   The Group normally

however is not a policy making body, it usually automatically accepts the view

of the committee submitting the report.   Bulpitt states in his study that;

> "Policy making in all the Councils was largely a function of
> the Committees."   1

The conclusion of the Maud Committee is similar, groups do not normally initiate

policy, they vet it.   More local authorities;

> "referred to the more regular function of the group in
> filtering new policy proposals on their way from committees
> to the Council."   2

One explanation for the lack of policy-making is given by Heclo;

> "Probably the main difficulty in the group meetings is the
> large amount of time given over to the details of the next
> agenda and the little time left for the discussion of more
> general party policy."   3

Another factor is that while members become involved and interested in their

committees, they are not normally concerned with wider power;

> "Councillors are not in political life locally, in order to
> put their personal mark on the present and future development
> of the town. They are modest both about their ambitions and
> their capabilities. Though they are not at all unwilling to
> spare their time and efforts, it is more in order to achieve
> political status than to modify policies critically important
> to the community."   4

Members in Newcastle appeared to be more concerned with status, than policy or

redevelopment, judging by the time spent discussing it and the strong feelings

expressed.   Bulpitt [5] mentions that Council patronage was strongly affected

1.   Bulpitt, op. cit. p. 96

2.   M.L.G.. Vol 5, Ch 8, para 12

3.   H.H. Heclo "The Councillors Job" Public Administration (Summer 1969) p. 196

4.   J. Blondell and R. Hall "Conflict Decision Making and the Perceptions of
     Local Councillors" Policital Studies (October 1967 p. 331)

5.   Bulpitt, op. cit. p. 96

by party political disputes. In Newcastle this was true within the parties as well as between them. This is also supported by the Barking Study which stresses the strong social motivations of many councillors;

"The Town Hall is the best club in Barking." [1]

As in Newcastle it is not necessarily seen as the place for taking important policy making decisions nor is the Group. The Group is a communication device which allows the members to know what is going on in the various committees and it acts as a forum for comment and discussion. It allows the Labour Councillors to speak with a collective voice on issues and it co-ordinates members' support or opposition in the full Council. [2] The Group decides who will speak in a debate but those who wish to speak are invariably allowed to do so. It could be suggested that the Group Meeting allows different community interests to contribute to the decision making process. There is no evidence to support this view in Labour Group meetings touching on redevelopment, except perhaps on historic buildings.

The Group in practice is the main Party device to ensure that Councillors conform to what the Party expects. For example, the importance of attending Council committees is stressed at Group meetings. In the unusual event of the failure of Party control in committee the matter can always be brought to the Group. Councillor Smith was forced to do this when on two occasions he failed to get the Planning Committee to approve a resolution on city centre redevelopment. He brought the resolution to the Group and was able to persuade them to approve it as policy. This meant that it was approved by the full City Council under the Party whip and therefore had to be implemented by the Planning Committee. But this procedure is very unusual and it also led to the unusual situation of a major policy decision being initiated through the Group.

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1. A.M. Rees and T. Smith <u>Town Councillors, a Study of Barking</u>, p. 78

2. H.V. Wiseman <u>Local Government at Work</u>, p. 74

There is a Group Executive Committee, normally of eight to ten members, whose main functions are administrative. But it also considers controversial matters and topics which touch the members. The Committee can take action in an emergency and make recommendations to the Group Meeting but they normally do not make recommendations on Council committee policy. The Executive Committee includes a good cross section of the Group and most of the important personalities, who are also the chairmen of the most influential committees when the Party is in power. Thus the Executive recommendations are normally acceptable to the Group, yet the Group is still jealous of its authority and is quick to stress that it is the Group as a whole which must take the ultimate policy decisions. The Executive does not make a vigorous or important contribution to Party administration or to policy formulation. In "practice" its sole role appears to be to give political and constitutional support to the Group Leader. It involves the most important personalities in the Group with the Leader and also gives legitimation to his actions. The system concentrates a considerable amount of potential power in the hands of the Group Leader. Any matters of importance are always referred to him for comment and ratification. For example, any statements to the mass media or questions for the Council, must be submitted to him first for vetting and approval. As Chairman of any Group Meeting but especially the Pre-Agenda Meeting, he has control over what is placed on the agenda and the debate. If he wishes to take the initiative in any matter he is in an excellent position to get a matter accepted. He can also discourage matters of which he disapproves. The Leader's decision is normally accepted as final, but much depends upon his personality and how he uses the power resources which are available to him. The Group Leader in Newcastle never took an autocratic position as in Liverpool [1] and members could

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1.   see R. Baxter "The Working Class and Labour Politics". *Political Studies* (March 1972) p.p. 100

not be overridden. The lack of debate over policy owes more to the nature of the Party system and members belief in, and loyalty to the Party, rather than to dictatorial leadership.

In the period 1958-1967 there were four Leaders of the Labour Group; F. Russell, 1958-1959; T.D. Smith, 1959-1965; F. Butterfield, 1965-6; B. Abrahart, 1966-1967. These men were elected annually by members of the Group. They appealed to the majority of the members because of their ability and moderation; ability as compared to other members of the Group. They had not proved themselves unpleasant or unfair and they were agreeable to the majority. They had proved their loyalty to the Party and had served it for several years. Frank Russell had served on the Council for 13 years. Smith for 8 years, and Butterfield for 5 years. Abrahart had served for 5 years but had been an active member of the Party for several years and it is indicative of his interest in the Party that on his retirement he moved his home to Newcastle to gain the residence qualification to stand as a Council candidate. The position of Leader will vary in power and prestige according to the use to which it is put by the man elected to serve. If he is energetic and talented with definite ideas he will be able to use the position to put the ideas into practice, he will be a leader. On the other hand, he can conceive the position as being more of a chairman receiving reports and presiding over meetings. None of the Labour Group Leaders, with the exception of Smith, gave a strong lead in policy matters. Smith, particularly in planning policy made a vital contribution.

It is difficult to state precisely what contribution any individual person has made to a decision-making process. This is particularly so in a complex field like local government, and city centre redevelopment especially in Newcastle where it was an on-going dynamic, activity. Many elements make up the decisions and several are difficult to evalute such as the personal characteristics of the chief decision-makers. Yet it would be true that one of the most important individual contributions made to Newcastle city centre redevelopment was by Councillor T. Dan Smith. Two main areas can be examined to support this contention; one, the

official leadership positions occupied by Smith, that is formal power, and two, what Green calls 'structural power', that is the ability to set conditions, make decisions and take actions;[1] that is real power.

The relevant official positions held by Smith were the Chairmanship of the City Party, Leadership of the Labour Group on the City Council and Chairmanship of the Planning Committee. Smith was Chairman of the City Party between 1953 and 1956 and relinquished the position voluntarily, otherwise he would probably have been re-elected. This position reflects his status and support in the Party. It enabled him to establish groups to formulate policy and to put over his ideas to the Party. According to more than one leading member of the Party he was able to 'educate' and lead the Party which was not done by his predecessors or successors as chairmen. As Chairman and as an ex-Chairman he was able to command a fair measure of support within the Party apart from his personal leadership qualities. This made it difficult for his opponents to attack him or his policies successfully. One significant point about this position was that it was an important step towards acceptance by the City Council Labour Group and the Leadership of that Group. Labour became the majority party on the City Council in 1958 and Smith became Leader in 1959 upon the retirement of the old Leader. The position of Leader is important for owing to strong party discipline and a tradition of loyalty the Leader had the opportunity to exert substantial influence. Unlike other members of the Group he had considerable freedom and could make decisions and show initiative. He was in a position to introduce new policies and support them, and also discourage them. As Chairman of the Group Executive he was at the centre of activity and aware of what was going on and could influence it during formative stages. Smith had the support of the Executive, he was also supported by many Group Members because of his ability, and even by some because of his past left wing activities and views. There was some opposition to him but it was minor and did not impair his influence as Group Leader. This position

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1. B.S.R. Green, 'Community Decision Making in a Georgian City'. University of Bath, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis (1967)

enabled him to swing the Group behind the radical redevelopment proposals and

ensured that they went through the Group easily and were fully supported in City

Council meetings. The decision to appoint a new chief officer, the City Planning

Officer, and to establish the new Department was so important that it had to have

the full support of the Group. Smith was responsible for these proposals and was

the chief figure in persuading the Group to accept them. A quote from a Chicago

study is not inappropriate, it was:

> "found that the heads of the Democratic party had ample
> power to decide almost any matter."[1]

Committee Chairmen in English local government can be very powerful

figures if they are prepared to use their position to exert influence, make

decisions and pursue policies. They can occupy positions like Ministers in

the British Cabinet with the same kind of power and be less susceptible to

outside influence. As advocates for their department, and in their ability to

obtain resources for it, they can determine its growth or otherwise. "What

matters is carrying the committee, the party group, if one exists, and the

council. Working from this position, some chairmen have made their control

over policy almost unassailable." [2] Councillor Smith was in this position

and was also further strengthened by his close working relationship with the

City Planning Officer. As Chairman of the Planning Committee he was the best

informed person about planning in the Group. Smith was a hard worker and kept

in daily contact with the Department and its activities, yet he gave the

Department full freedom to implement policy decisions. The operation of the

Labour Group system also helped the Committee chairmen for the Group normally

accepts automatically any report supported by the Chairman and therefore would

give it full party backing in Council meetings. This system is well illustrated

in a case study of Hull City Council.[3] Nearly all policy is initiated by

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1. E.C. Banfield and J.Q. Wilson 'City Politics', p. 244

2. M.L.G., Vol 5, Ch. 7, para 80

3. Brier, op. cit.

Committees which make the appropriate reports and recommendations to the full council. As Chairman of the Housing Committee, Smith was able to bring pressure on the Town Planning Committee, by threatening to appoint planning staff in housing, unless they established an independent planning department. This illustrates the influence of an energetic chairman. Smith was Chairman of the Planning Committee during the formative stages of the decision making process in planning.

In 1963 he became Chairman of the newly established Policy Advisory Committee which was responsible for deciding priorities in Corporation work. This Committee was important regarding the implementation of planning decisions as was the Finance Committee of which Smith became Chairman in 1964. It could be argued that as all the important policy decisions regarding planning had been taken by 1963, the Planning Committee was no longer so significant, and the important committees were now those concerned with priorities and the allocation of resources, such as Policy Advisory and Finance. The switching by Smith, of his Committee positions therefore reflected these factors.

Smith occupied a pre-eminent position not only because of his official leadership positions but because as the Maud Report suggests:

> "the two elements of conventional and personal authority are hard
> to disentangle, but it seems clear from our observations that
> the first cannot be maintained without the latter."[1]

This would also seem to be true from the Newcastle experience. Smith not only occupied official positions but he gained personal authority from his forceful, dynamic personality, his ability and hard work. He not only occupied positions but he utilised them; he used the powers which were inherent in the positions to initiate policies, to make decisions and take actions. Others have held the positions but have not had the personal authority to utilise them. Smith was not just a passive Group Leader

1. <u>M.L.G.</u> vol 5, ch. 7, para 118.

or Committee chairman but he was an active leader taking action and stimulating his Group and Committee members and also the Corporation. He helped create or 'set conditions' even before the Labour Group came to power. For example, he got the Council to examine, "the whole problem relating to traffic congestion."[1] He was also creating the climate within the Labour Party stating that there was an "urgent need for the appointment of a positive planner to plan the kind of city we need."[2]   Smith had the ability to set the conditions and to make the decisions which were acceptable to others, as for example in his resolution that "the Town Planning Committee be asked to consider the appointment of a Town Planning Officer to undertake the development of a separate Planning Department."[3]

It is indicative of his standing that he was able to get this resolution accepted as an ordinary member of the two committees concerned. Another example of Smith's ability to take action and his initiative and drive was his resolution; "that this Council requests the Town Planning Committee:

(i)   to consider the Central Area of the City as the subject of

comprehensive development under the Town and Country Planning

Act 1947, and

(ii)   having regard to the urgency of the matter, forthwith to instruct

the appropriate officers to prepare a joint report for consideration

by the committee not later than 30th May, 1960."[4]   This resolution

and his speech illustrate the breadth of his ideas and the almost visionary nature of his thinking. Smith was an innovator, a rare breed perhaps in local government, this is also revealed in his ideas for a City "Cabinet"; the Policy

1.   C.C.P. (September 4 1957) p. 290

2.   Newcastle Upon Tyne City, Labour Party General Committee (10 February, 1959)

3.   Town Planning Committee Minute (25 March 1959)

4.   C.C.P. (16 March 1960) p.1006

Advisory Committee, and a City "manager" ; the Principal City Officer. He had the ability to utilise people and their ideas, and to apply them to the problems of the City. This ability and his authority enabled him to be a successful innovator in a conservative bureaucratic environment. Another factor which helped Smith was his forceful clear and persuasive expression, he was something of an orator and was able to inspire others with his ideas and win their support. He was also working almost full-time on council business and he spent a lot of time consulting and talking to the groups which would be affected by City Centre redevelopment. This also reflects his interest in public relations which he used extensively. In this support and belief in planning Smith was prepared to make decisions and take action which was unpopular like; deferring planning decisions for long periods until a City plan was prepared. A final point which helped his personal authority was his evident concern and enthusiasm for Newcastle, its people, and its progress, this with other factors gained him the respect and support of many people. Councillor T.D. Smith obviously had defects; he was perhaps too willing at times to accept solutions and ideas put forward by 'experts', to gloss over difficulties, to ride rough shod over objectors and objections, to be in too much of a hurry and, as politicians tend to do, he would stress the points which supported his ideas and underrate or omit arguments against. These criticisms however do not seriously impair his outstanding contribution to the policy making process and city centre redevelopment.

Smith's contribution was crucial and possible, because of his official positions and his personal authority. The Newcastle experience could almost echo that of New Haven under Mayor Lee: "No one but the Mayor could have given redevelopment the priority it received. In another administration, the Development Administration could have been frustrated and helpless. In Lee's the Development Administrator's furious drive and energy found infinite outlets in redevelopment."[1]

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1. R.A. Dahl, _Who Governs?_ p. 127

Constitutionally it is the function of the General Committee of the

City Party to decide the policy and programme of the Party.[1]   But it is left

to the Executive Committee to take the initiative and this only happens if the

leadership feels strongly about policy.   Smith was the catalyst which in 1958

led to the formation of ad hoc. policy working groups which produced reports on

education health and transport. No group was established on planning but Smith

had already produced a report on housing which led him to stress the need for planning.

The Party has a poor record on research and policy planning and formulation. One

impression Bulpitt received from his case studies was;-

> "that the great weakness of party activity in all the local
> authorities was the inability or unwillingness of the party
> groups on the Councils effectively to co-ordinate Council
> business and engage in long-term planning."   [2]

While in power the Labour Group tried to overcome the first point by establishing

the Policy Advisory Committee and appointing a Principal City Officer. The problem

of policy planning was only tackled in a spasmodic, ad hoc fashion.   The reports

which were produced in 1958 were used in drawing up the Party's election Manifesto

for the May elections.   But there was no direct reference to redevelopment in

this policy statement. It was touched on, however, by the City Party Chairman in

an eve of poll article in the local newspaper. He said the main priority would be

given to housing but it was intended to improve the traffic flow in the City Centre.

This concern for traffic improvements in the City Centre is reflected in the attention

given to this problem in the years prior to 1958. Leaders of the party were aware

of the need for improvements and how the town plan was a key factor. Councillor

Smith in particular was very critical of the lack of planning. For example in 1953

he moved a resolution asking for a comprehensive report to deal with the traffic

problems of the city. [3]   He continued to return to this general theme as in April

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1.   Newcastle upon Tyne City Labour Party Constitution, Clause Xll

2.   Bulpitt, op cit.

3.   C.C.P. 1955-56, p. 306

1958 when he stressed the need for research and specialised staff and action to tackle the planning and traffic problems. [1]

With the advent of Labour to power in May 1958 policy formation in practice passed to the Leader of the Group and the various Committee Chairmen. The City Party, particularly the Executive, were kept informed and consulted about policy, but once the Group had the departmental resources of the Council available to them there was not the same need for the City Party in policy formation. It was still felt necessary however to explain Council policy fully to the Party to gain their approval. This was done by leaders of the Group speaking to the Executive and General Committee of the Party. Councillor Smith was the main spokesman on the redevelopment planning and traffic proposals. In February 1959, as Chairman of the Housing Committee, he spoke about housing but he also stressed the "urgent need for the appointment of the positive planner to plan the kind of city we want." [2] At a General Committee Meeting [3] he spoke on Traffic Policy and recommended a parking meter system to the 59 delegates who were in attendance. This would overcome the problem created by cars parked all day outside offices and shops. After many questions and a full discussion the principle of parking meters and payment was accepted by 43 votes to 5.

The following year, in January, on Electoral Policy Smith, as Leader of the Group, proposed that the main appeal to the electorate should be on improvements in the City Centre, particularly the Haymarket area. [4] He amplified his proposals fully at an Executive meeting in March. [5] He stated that the Group had agreed to extend the scope of development from the purely Princess Street proposals. The

1. *C.C.P.* 1957-58 p. 989

2. General Committee, (10 February 1959)

3. *Ibid,* (8 September 1959)

4. *Ibid,* (12 January 1960)

5. Newcastle City Labour Party Executive Committee (1 March 1960)

Party should agree that they are in favour of the extensions of the University
generally in its present area. Private developers would have to be brought into
the City Centre redevelopment for the Council could not build it all themselves.
The whole area should be designated for compulsory purchase. All the proposals
were fully endorsed by the Executive Committee and a few days later they were also
accepted by the Annual Meeting of the City Party.[1] At the various meetings of
the Party the redevelopment policy was questioned and debated and it was always
possible for a meeting to reject as well as confirm a report. In this kind of
way the Party was involved in policy formation.

The process was revealed as more than just a public relations exercise
in 1961 when opposition to the traffic proposals developed within the Party. This
was because some trade unions believed their members could be adversely affected
and also generally there were some doubts in the Party about the proposals. One
Councillor who was strongly opposed to the proposals brought the matter up in a
Group meeting but gained no support. He therefore raised the matter at the General
Committee where he gained the support of unionists and others. The fears of the
unionists had expressed themselves soon after the Party gained power. In October 1958
the Transport and General Workers Union made a strong protest against the Traffic
Committee's recommendations making an order restricting unloading in the city. The
City Executive [2] discussed this and agreed that the Traffic Committee and the
Unions should meet together to solve this problem. Opposition to the traffic
proposals came to the surface again when the Executive Committee [3] invited a member

1. 58th Annual Meeting (8 March 1960)

2. (7 October 1958)

3. (10 October 1961)

of the Planning Committee to speak to the General Committee about 'Off Street Car Parks and Parking Meters'. The Planning Committee member spoke to the meeting which expressed opposition to the proposals and requested:

> "that the Group be asked to stay their hand in this matter and that a special meeting be held to consider policy for traffic". This was agreed by the delegates: of the 50 present, 27 voted for and 6 against. 1

This was a serious setback for the leadership and Smith in particular. The General Committee is the main policy making body in the City party, at least in theory. It was inconceivable constitutionally and politically that the leadership should be putting forward policies which had received a large adverse vote at General Committee. This was particularly so as these proposals had aroused considerable opposition within the Party and among the public generally. Furthermore the leadership considered the proposals to be crucial to the redevelopment plans. The Executive [2] therefore considered the resolution as a matter of urgency and reaffirmed the policy which had been accepted by the Party in September 1959 and April 1961. They also invited Councillor Smith to defend the policy. At the special meeting [3] of the General Committee on traffic policy Smith moved, on behalf of the Executive, that the policy be accepted. An attempt was made to "move the reference back" of the Executive recommendation, if carried this would have meant the virtual rejection of the proposals. This motion however was lost and of the fifty-two delegates attending, eleven voted for and nineteen against it. Councillor Smith then moved :

> "That the traffic proposals accepted on 8th September, 1959, and the City Centre redevelopment plan accepted on 11th April, 1961 be reaffirmed."

He said:

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1. (14 November 1961)

2. (5 December 1961)

3. (12 December 1961)

> "The issue was on parking meters and the end of free parking,
> and the Group were anxious to implement the policies already
> agreed. The principle of charges for parking had been accepted
> and the development plans made it clear that one policy is
> necessary to cover all vehicles."

He tried to answer the trade union critics of the policy:

> "The trade unions concerned had been consulted at all stages
> and most of the unions suggestions had been incorporated in
> the traffic proposals. Public transport must have a right
> to priority. The City Plan is based upon public transport
> and the safety of the pedestrians. It had been acclaimed
> as the most far-seeing plan in the world."

There was a heated debate to which Smith replied and pointed out:

> "What we are trying to achieve is a technical solution to a
> capitalist contradiction."

His motion was carried in spite of several attempts to amend it by thirty-four

votes to two. This incident was the only serious opposition within the Labour

Party to the City Centre redevelopment plans, even then it was directed against

the traffic proposals and the decision to end free parking rather than the rede-

velopment proposals. The leadership however, considered that these proposals were

inter-connected and each was essential to the other. The opposition was led by

a Councillor with a strong personality who was a persuasive speaker, but he received

no support in the Group in his criticisms and therefore brought them to the City

Party. His initial success was due to trade union support, especially from the

Transport and General Workers Union. But representatives from the wards were also

uneasy about the proposals for this was a matter which they could understand and

they felt they could join in the debate. The case for and against parking meters

was comparatively straightforward, unlike the complex redevelopment policy. This

combination of factors made the Executive anxious and they found it necessary to

invite Councillor Smith to move their recommendation. It is indicative of Smith's

standing and prestige in the Party that he was asked to move the recommendation.

He was the natural choice from outside the Executive, as Leader of the Group and

Chairman of the Planning Committee and his standing with the General Committee was

good due to being an ex-Chairman of the City Party. The large vote in favour of

the recommendation is also a testimony to his speaking ability and mastery of the subject. This vote had nothing to do with party discipline, it is more due to "a kind of discipline by personality",[1] in which one man assumes a position of dominance within a group.

The Labour Party made several attempts to convey this policy on redevelopment to the electorate and the first major effort was in 1960. Councillor Smith proposed to the General Committee,[2] that the main appeal to the electorate should be on improvements in the City Centre particularly the redevelopment of the Haymarket area. He said, Newcastle was under shopped and shopping was important for the prosperity of the City and the election should be fought on the proposals to make Newcastle prosperous. Even after the elections the theme of development was still being emphasised and at the Annual Meeting of the City Council the new Lord Mayor spoke of Newcastle as being the;

"Brasilia of the Old World."[3]

In 1961, Labour again gave the main emphasis in their literature to "Planning".[4] They attempted to explain their aims regarding the development of the city. These included a new scheme for the central area for traffic and a number of redevelopment schemes which would sort out the movement of pedestrians from vehicles. This was also carried through into the 1962 election campaign. One of the main slogans was, "The Motor Way City". It was claimed that, "Ours is the first Centre Development Plan that the City has had since the last century."[5] The list of achievements claimed in 1963 included city centre redevelopment, and for this the "best architects" had been engaged. Smith felt it necessary to defend the cost of the redevelopment policy in the election campaign, "We will manage the city's redevelopment plan in a way for which we can afford to pay."[6] The cost of

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1. Bulpitt, op cit.

2. (12 January 1960)

3. C.C.P. (25 May 1960)

4. City Labour Party Policy Statement (1961)

5. Ibid (1962)

6. Evening Chronicle election article (8 May 1963)

redevelopment was the main point of the Conservative election statement in 1964.

In 1965 Alderman Butterfield stressed what the position was before Labour came to

power, "For years the City's development has been allowed to stagnate." "There

was no scheme for Central Area Redevelopment or for a pedestrian and shopping pre-

cinct." [1] The Conservative Leader argued in his election article, "We want new

development on the ground, not just plans, in the Civic Centre." Butterfield

continued to emphasise redevelopment in the 1966 campaign. [2]

1967 was a vital year in the municipal elections; the Conservatives

needed only one overall gain to take control of the City Council. Councillor

Abrahart's headline for the Labour eve of poll article was "City's new look is a

testimony of progress." [3] Redevelopment in the City Centre was part of the "new

look". "Our planned redevelopment is transforming the city, in the centre and in

the suburbs." Most of the Conservative article by Councillor Grey was concerned

with "sound finance", and the failure of the Socialists to make progress in this

and other fields. Abrahart had endeavoured to meet the financial criticism in his

article in the local morning newspaper. "Newcastle's £200 million city development

plan was designed to produce high rateable value." [4] The Conservatives won two

seats from Labour and then took ten of the twenty aldermanic seats. This gave the

Conservatives an overall majority of four seats.

The Parties emphasised redevelopment in their election campaigns but

it is doubtful whether it was more than a secondary influence affecting the voters.

One issue which sprang up continually during election periods was finance and the

Conservative opposition concentrated on that. Concern about the issue was partly

reflected in interviews conducted by the writer and in letters to the press. It

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1. Ibid (12 May 1965)

2. Ibid (11 May 1966)

3. Ibid (10 May 1967)

4. The Journal election article (11 May 1967)

came up also in criticism of the new Civic Centre but this was more against the cost of the new civic cutlery and the carillon of bells rather than the actual building. Little criticism was made of the overall redevelopment plans during the campaigns and it is perhaps easier for the public to understand and make judgments about cutlery and bells rather than complex plans for future redevelopment. More important perhaps than local issues was the general movement against Labour throughout the country, as in the local government elections of 1967. In Newcastle the swing against Labour was 5.2%, slightly less than the rest of the country:

> "Those who do participate are less influenced by local concern
> than by the amalgamation of factors that determines support
> for parties which are essentially national appeal." 1

The turn out in the city was high, 40.2% which was the highest since 1961 when it was 40.5%. This greater interest appears to reflect several factors. One could be the national trend against the party in power nationally. Voting at local government elections against the party in power nationally, is one way of protesting against the performance of the national government. In Newcastle the marginal nature of Labour control and the possibility of change owing to it being an aldermanic election year could have been other factors. These factors led to greater party activity and rivalry which also could affect turn out. Local issues such as redevelopment appear to have little effect on turn out or voting patterns. This was also suggested in a study on Reading:

> "If the preceding analysis is sound, the conclusion to be drawn
> is that local issues and local controversies have exerted very
> little influence on the municipal election results in the Reading
> area since the war." 2

The City centre proposals were accepted by the City Labour Party as policy and were put before the electorate as such. There was a genuine attempt to appeal to the imagination of the electorate, through the redevelopment plans,

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1. P. Fletcher in L.J. Sharpe, ed, <u>Voting in Cities</u>, p. 321

2. Roy Gregory, 'Local Elections and the Rule of Anticipated Reactions'
   <u>Political Studies</u> (1969) p. 46

and win their support.   The Evening Chronicle claimed;

> "The Labour Party fought the election mainly on the development
> plans and the result can be considered a triumph for them." 1

This is doubtful, and throughout the whole period of labour control

the main electoral emphasis was on housing.   The redevelopment proposals however

were given wide publicity and the electorate were in a position to use this in-

formation in deciding whether to use their vote and for which party.   The grass

roots organisation of the Labour Party did not participate in planning policy

making.   This was due as much to the lack of ability at that level, as to the

lack of opportunity.   The General Committee of the Party had greater opportunities

but they were only informed about the proposals after the decisive decisions had

been taken.   They were a useful forum for the Party and also a representative

body, but they were not a policy making committee.   Neither was the Executive

Committee, which was more concerned with administration, and representing various

sections of the Party.   Councillor Smith however was able to germinate some of his

policy ideas within the organisation of the City Party.   The Evening Chronicle said;

> "It is common knowledge of course that in many Councils, and
> Newcastle among them, that policy is framed by the Group meeting
> of the ruling Party." 2

This was not true in Newcastle regarding planning and redevelopment, policy.   The

Labour Group did not 'frame' policy, they accepted recommendations.   These recom-

mendations normally came from Committee Chairmen via their reports and not from

the Group Executive.   The Group like the General Committee felt that they should

be informed about proposals but their main function was to accept and support

policy, not to initiate it.   In many fields of local government the central party

organisation   in London, or the central government, encourages action at the

local level, this was not so in planning.   Furthermore planning was not a matter of

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1.   (13 May 1960)

2.   Scrutiny column (27 May 1963)

strong political interest or controversy such as housing or education. The lack
of interest by the Party in policy making can allow individuals or small groups
to get important proposals accepted as policy by the Party.

While the Labour Party made no significant contribution to policy making
one Labour Leader was crucial.   Smith was the most important moving force in the
development of planning policy.   His leadership and ability ensured that planning
ideas were accepted and supported.   The vision, enthusiasm and drive of Smith were
infectious and helped to ensure success.

He helped to create a climate for positive planning before 1958.   From
1958 he was able to utilise the authority of the Party to break through the tight
traditional system.   He was able to get his ideas enacted against the wishes of
the powerful Chief Officer concerned and he was able to neutralise the Chairman of
the Committee concerned who was a strong personality and a 'Senior' Labour Party
member.   The leader of the Group could depend upon the organisation and discipline
of the Group, he could mobilise support, overcome opposition and ensure that the
radical planning proposals received priority treatment in terms of time and
resources.   No officer, individual chairman or member could have established the
Planning Department or have successfully moved the planning proposals or have given
the necessary political impetus.   In this role Smith's position as Chairman of the
Planning Committee was secondary, yet it was necessary to give him legitimacy in
the system and allow him to use and encourage the Committee to press the planning
proposals forward.   Smith was a strong leader and a politician par excellence, and
as such evoked corresponding opposition but this in turn strengthened the almost
automatic support the Party gave its Leader.

The Labour Party played a crucial role in the policy making process in
planning.   This was due to the organisation and style [1] of Labour Politics which
allowed policy to evolve and to be given strong support throughout the decision

1.   Bulpitt, op cit. p. vii "The term style refers to the way political disputes
      and debates were carried on as distinct from the content of these debates and
      disputes."

making process. The Labour Group was well organised with a strong tradition of loyalty and discipline. This type of approach to local politics was essential if controversial matters like a new department and redevelopment were to overcome inertia and opposition and become Council Policy. The Labout Group was the only group which had this type or organisation in contrast to the Progressive and Conservative Groups, which were weak, fluid bodies lacking in organisation and with a strong tradition of individual independence. The official Conservative Group was formed in 1959 but even in 1966 the Group Leader was stressing that his Group was:

> "....entirely independent, reaching its decisions only
> after a full discussion." [1]

The Labour Group could also have a full discussion but this rarely happened on planning, partly because there were no strong views in the Party against planning and there was a general consensus that 'something should be done'. Furthermore there were no links with planning and redevelopment interests with the minor exception of the trade unions which expressed concern about the traffic proposals. The Group was not open to outside pressures because of electoral dangers, for they were not in any way dependent upon the business vote of the central city areas. Compared to the United States [2] an electoral defeat on specific policies, such as redevelopment, is almost unknown in English cities. The closed nature of the Party with its internal procedures and norms made it less open to outside pressures. All these factors placed trusted leaders of ability in a strong position if they were able and prepared to use the position. The overlapping membership and links within the Party also strengthened the Party and the leadership. There are dangers in this position of too much independent power held by a closed Group with little public accountability. Yet it is doubtful

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1.   Evening Chronicle (11 May 1966)

2.   Altshuler, op cit. p. 136

whether the radical planning proposals opposed by some of the officers and
elected members, could have become Council policy without the support of a
strong political group:

> "It seems from these studies that a unified party group or a
> Council can act as an important counter-balance to the powers
> of permanent officials ---- ." [1]

This would be true in Newcastle under Smith. An American study [2] suggests
that effective planning in cities needs elitist support. The Labour leadership
in a sense acted as an elitist group. In Newcastle however, the emphasis should
be laid upon the individual leader, in this case, Smith, but it was the Party
organisation which enabled him to bring his ideas to fruition. The Party was
ineffective in the actual conception of policies but it was crucial in the process
which gave the policies legitimation and support. The Maud report states;

> "There is no doubt that in many authorities operating on party
> lines the party group makes a more significant contribution
> than any single 'constitutional' committee towards policy
> initiation." [3]

The Labour Group of Newcastle City Council could be classified as making this
"more significant contribution", to the policy making process. But in the
policy initiation of planning the really significant contribution was made by
Councillor T. Dan Smith.

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1. K. Newton "Community Decision-Makers and Community Decision-Making in
   England and the United States" Paper for Seventh World Congress of Soc-
   iology (September 1970) p. 33

2. F.F. Rabinovitz, _City Politics and Planning_ p. 58

3. _M.L.G._ Vol 5, Ch 8, para 12.

CHAPTER FIVE

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

The most important single body operating in the local government sphere is the central government. This is as true in the formulation of planning policy as in other matters. It can be argued however that central government control should be strengthened especially in matters of policy.[1]

The central government involvement in the Newcastle decision-making process imposed certain constraints upon the City Council. These emerged in different ways, first there was statutory control and its implementation. For example the Town Planning Act of 1947, consolidated in an Act of 1962, required the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG) to approve the development plans of local planning authorities, such as county boroughs. They had power to reject or amend plans as they saw fit or to require the planning authority to submit a modified scheme. One reason for this control was to keep development plans in harmony with broad planning policies. In fact policy was often not very clear and wide discretion was left to the planning authorities. The planning authorities were given power to make a compulsory purchase order which enabled them to acquire the property and land in an area, and they could designate comprehensive development areas where the problems of the area could be tackled as a whole. The Ministry however was required to approve these plans and orders and to act in a quasi judicial capacity if there were appeals made against the planning authorities' decisions. In these circumstances the Ministry could hold a public inquiry. The Ministry also had powers to 'call in' any planning application for investigation. For example the Ministry 'called in' the planning application to

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1. O.A. Hartley 'The Relationship between Central and Local Authorities'. Public Administration (Winter 1971).

build the London Hilton Hotel. No matter has ever been 'called in' from Newcastle.
The 1968 Planning Act changed the procedure for approval of development plans but
the Newcastle redevelopment plans mainly went through under the 1947 and 1962 Acts.
Under the 1947 Act planning authorities were supposed to submit their development
plans by July 1951 and to review them once in every five years. The reviews were
subject to the usual appeals procedure. The application and administration of
legislation can be as important, if not more important than the statutes themselves.
In fact the Ministry did not apply the statutes very vigorously. For example, the
time limit for the submission of development plans and their review was not en-
forced. The Ministry explained this by; the difficulties in introducing a new
system, a lack of experience and a shortage of experienced planners. Another ex-
planation could be the rather laissez-faire attitude of the Ministry itself. They
did however ask Newcastle in 1959 when the review would be undertaken and Councillor
Smith used this as one argument for establishing an independent planning department.
The review of the 1953 Development Plan should have been submitted in 1958 but was
not submitted until March 1964. The Ministry have exerted little statutory control
over the City, especially in the 1960's, but one of the few large schemes the City
did try to implement prior to 1960 was rejected by the Minister. In November 1955
he refused to amend the Development Plan on planning and financial grounds to allow
for a major new city centre shopping street. The City tried every means they could
to get him to reverse his decision, they wrote strong letters and several reports,
they sent delegates, consisting of members, officers and local M.P's, they refused
permission for Corporation Officers to meet   those   from the Ministry. Eventually
the Minister visited the city in December 1957 to inspect the site and meet the
Planning Committee. In March 1958 he withdrew his objections to the scheme subject
to a settlement of the traffic problems. No solution however was forthcoming and
the City thought this was because the Ministry of Transport policies were contrary
to those of the M.H.L.G.   A letter of 21st May, 1958 from the M.H.L.G. disagreed

and said: "We both think that a shopping street which might also take through traffic is potentially objectionable and dangerous..." The letter went on to say: "As you know we are always happy to meet you. In this case however I do not see how it would help." In July, Smith moved that the scheme should become part of a bigger scheme but in December 1960 the new City Planning Officer recommended that the Princess Street scheme be scrapped and this was accepted. Since 1960 there has been no example of this kind of Ministerial refusal in Newcastle, but the case does illustrate that if the Ministry takes a strong stand even a large determined city has little or no power in the matter.

A second example of how the Ministry attempted to influence and guide the planning authorities was through the issue of departmental publications, like circulars. Professor Richards says of circulars: "...commonly treated as an additional technique of central control, rather than simply as a means of communication."[1] They dealt not only with technical information but they also laid down policy guide lines. The Newcastle City Planning Department, however, was well in advance of most planning authorities and also of the Ministry. Several of the principles and techniques applied in Newcastle were later recommended by the Ministry in its official publications. The control exerted on Newcastle through circulars was slight or non-existent. Furthermore the City believed its techniques were the best available and they therefore did not welcome advice. According to one study this was probably not the general view.[2] Thirdly, influence is exerted through the personal contacts and visits made by officials of the Ministry. The Ministry had several regional offices situated throughout the country and one was based in Newcastle. These regional offices were an important liaison between the Ministry and the local authorities and officers visited and inspected the plans being prepared by the planning authorities. "In particular they try to see every

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1. P.G. Richards, The New Local Government System, p. 55

2. "Many local authority planners feel that, at present, both kinds of guidance (policy and technical) are inadequate and they would welcome an increase." J.A.G. Griffith. Central Departments and Local Authorities. p. 310

development plan and amend it before it is formally submitted."[1] The Newcastle

City Planning Officer had considerable experience in working with Ministry officials

over redevelopment especially in Coventry, he ensured that good relations were

maintained and the Ministry was informed about the proposals and asked for comments,

and they were also used as support. It is indicative of the importance Burns placed

upon the Ministry officials; he always saw them personally rather than leaving them

to other officers in his department. Councillor Smith, leader of the City Council

and Chairman of the Planning Committee, also maintained close contacts with Ministry

officials. He claims "the man I confided in most of all was James, the chief planner

in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government."[2] Professor John R. James was

born and grew up in the North East. He was the Research Officer of the Ministry

of Town and Country Planning in the Newcastle regional office between 1946 and 1949.

This Ministry became part of the MHLG. James became Research Officer for the Ministry

in 1949, Deputy Chief Planner in 1958 and Chief Planner in 1961. In 1967 he became

a Professor of Planning at Sheffield University. His successor at the Ministry was

Burns, Newcastle City Planning Officer. James had a definite interest in the city

and area and in 1960 presented a paper on "The Next Review of Development Plans",

which was partly based on his Newcastle experience. Smith presented a paper at

the same meeting entitled "Development Problems of a Regional Capital".[3] He

remarked on James, "So he was a tremendous help to me in understanding the civil

servant's mind. He recognised in our Newcastle experiments something meaningful".[2]

Another example of the close relationship between Newcastle and the MHLG and Ministry

of Transport was the Planning Advisory Group. A mixture of civil servants and local

government officers. This group included Mr. Burns and Mr. James. In 1965 the

1. Ibid, p.311

2. Dan Smith. An Autobiography, p. 82

3. Town Planning Institute. 34th Spring Meeting (May 1960)

group produced the report "The future of Development Plans" which became the basis
of the 1968 Planning Act. This kind of contact eased the relationship between the
city and ministries, it is also a recognition of the importance of the ministries
in the schemes of redevelopment. On matters of importance the local authorities
will go further than the informal contact and will often send an official delegation
to London to see the civil servants concerned and possibly the Minister. These
delegations normally include officials as well as elected members. For example:

> "In May last year council representatives went to London to meet
> Ministry of Housing and Local Government officials to give a
> number of assurances about the proposed development."[1]

Newcastle has met the norm suggested by the Royal Commission that: "The normal
practice should, it seems to us, be one of continuous consultation." Instead of
the unsatisfactory position of being at "arm's length."[2] The Minister however
has to take care that his position is not compromised by too close a relationship.
For example the Minister refused to allow his chief inspector to assist in the
selection of candidates for the position of Newcastle Planning Officer:

> "because of the need to preserve the complete independence
> of his inspectorate."[3]

One reason for this attitude, as pointed out by the ex Permanent Secretary to the
MHLG is that:

> "Planning is, as I remarked earlier, a political and not a
> scientific exercise."[4]

Control was exerted through statutes, publications and persons but
fourthly one of the most important forms was the examination and approval of
schemes through the medium of the public inquiry. There were several important
public inquiries into the Newcastle redevelopment plans. Mr. Burns had recognised

1. Evening Chronical (14 May 1965)

2. Royal Commission on Local Government, vol 1, ch 3, para 105 (June 1969)

3. M.H.L.G. Letter (21 August 1959)

4. Evelyn Sharp, Book Review in Political Studies. (June 1971) p. 238

the importance of these, in his opinion one of the most crucial decisions was that based on the public inquiry on Eldon Square. If this had led to a ministerial rejection the scheme could not have gone ahead. Even at the late date of 1967 he stated at a public inquiry: "If the motor-way was not approximately in the position I would want to replan the whole city centre."[1] The inquiries are conducted by inspectors, appointed by the Minister, these are independent and have no contact with the local planning authority. They hear the evidence put forward by those interested and concerned and make a report to the Minister on their findings. These are invariably accepted by the Minister. In the past, Newcastle interest groups have made representation regarding the appointment of inspectors. For example, in 1959 for the inquiry into the Pilgrim Street roundabout scheme they asked for an inspector to sit, who could assess the planning merits of the proposed city scheme. This was agreed by the Ministries and the inspector sat with two assessors, one a specialist in road traffic engineering, the other in planning. The same representation was made in 1967 for the inquiry into the Central Motorway East. This was accepted by the Ministries and a planning as well as a traffic inspector conducted the inquiry. This does highlight the desire of the Ministry to appear to be fair and impartial. The City was forced by these inquiries to prepare a strong case putting forward evidence and witnesses to support its pro-posals. Several officers of the City Council could be involved including planners, engineers and surveyors. The case was normally led by a lawyer from the City Legal Adviser's Department. They must be able to answer the objections and evidence put forward by the objectors and also to withstand cross examination by those ob-jectors, their expert witnesses and perhaps legal counsel. The importance of this was heightened owing to its public nature and the fact that the press would publish any strong criticism or defects on the City's side. Adverse publicity

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1. Evening Chronicle (1 March 1967)

could bring reactions from the public and perhaps even from councillors and members of the Planning Committee. The public inquiry made the Planning Department reexamine and consolidate its case, it made them more aware of criticism and possible defects in its proposals. It made them more accountable to the public. As a result of an inspector's report the Ministry can modify or reject proposals. In Newcastle the only major intervention by a Ministry was regarding proposals for the Pilgrim Street roundabout. After the public inquiry in 1959, the Ministry requested the City to reconsider other schemes. A second scheme was put forward by the City but again the Ministry asked them to reconsider it:

"in relation to the general development of the adjoining areas."[1]

In effect the Ministry rejected the two schemes put forward and forced the City to submit a new scheme. According to the Chairman of the City Engineer's Committee:

"It is the Minister who is responsible for holding up the scheme. It was considered in 1945 and we have been fighting with Ministries and other people to get this long overdue development."[2]

It has been stated however that:

"A broader question remains, whether or not this type of inquiry is the most suitable vehicle for the task of informing the Minister about the relevant facts."[3]

A more negative restraint, stressed by the City Planning Officer and City Engineer, was caused by the lack of one central ministry for local government:

"Part, for example, is the concern of the Ministry of Transport and part the concern of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In our city it is also the concern of the Department of Education and Science and the University Grants Commission. How can one carry out comprehensive development in these circumstances? If local government can co-ordinate its requirements — as we have tried to do in Newcastle — surely central government should do likewise."[4]

1. Ministry of Transport, letter (6 December 1960)

2. Alderman Peter Renwick, C.C.P. (7 June 1961) p.155

3. H.R. Burroughes, 'Public Inquiries and Large-Scale Development', Public Law (Autumn 1970) p.250

4. W. Burns and D.T. Bradshaw, 'Planning for Movement in Newcastle upon Tyne' (27 April 1966)

The need for a single ministry was recognised by both the Maud Committee and the Royal Commission on Local Government.   A fifth area in which the Ministry of Housing and Local Government was particularly active was in trying to secure the preservation of historic buildings and this led to conflict with the City. For example, the Ministry agreed to the demolition of Eldon Square when an assurance was given that other buildings including the Royal Arcade would be preserved. The Arcade had been a source of conflict for a long time with the City wanting to pull it down for it stood in the way of their proposals for the large Pilgrim Street roundabout.   Eventually the City was allowed to demolish it on the understanding that the Arcade would be rebuilt into the new commercial building planned for the centre of the roundabout.   In 1966 the City asked to be released from this undertaking due to the high cost of the development, they estimated that the scheme would have to be subsidised at £40,000 a year.   After investigation and discussion the Ministry agreed to this in 1968 and instead the City would concentrate especially on preserving the Holy Jesus Hospital, the Keelman's Hospital and Blackfriars.   But as one report said;

> "Newcastle upon Tyne Corporation had failed in its first serious
> attempt to reconcile the demands of city centre redevelopment
> with the need to preserve buildings of major architectural and histor-
> ical interest." 1

Trouble however also arose over the Holy Jesus Hospital which dated from 1682. For many years it had stood derelict gradually falling into greater disrepair, several councillors had expressed the opinion that it ought to be demolished. Discussion had been held with the Ministry as to its future over several years without any agreement being reached. In 1968 the Ministry assessed the cost of repairs at between £16,000 and £17,000; the City said it would not be less than £60,000 to £70,000. Whether the Ministry would also have agreed to the demolition of this building will not be known for the City was given a legacy for a local

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1. The Guardian (18 February 1966).

history musuem which they used towards repairing the Hospital and converting it. The Newcastle experience reveals as much of the weakness of the Ministry as it does of its influence.

Sixthly it is often suggested that most central government control was exerted through control of finance either by giving grants or giving approval to the raising of loans. The award of grants and the approval of loans allowed the Ministry to influence and often determine the nature of the service to which these monies would be used. The Ministry of Transport made a percentage grant toward roads which in the case of principal roads within the Newcastle city boundary was 75%. [1] Major capital programmes of local authorities must be approved by the MHLG., for example, in April 1967 the Newcastle redevelopment plan was given a boost when several major schemes were included in the Ministry programme for the next five years. These amounted to a total cost of £19 million. This public investment programme was an attempt to distribute available money to priority projects over the five years. The City made several attempts to get extra financial assistance from the central government without success. In 1964, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, Councillor Smith said :

> "We are attempting to secure a block grant without interest for
> certain central area projects which we feel can be justified
> by using Newcastle experience as a national example for pro-
> viding financial planning experience necessary for other towns
> who will have to implement the Buchanan Report proposals." [2]

When the Conservatives gained control of the City Council they also tried to obtain financial assistance. The Minister for Planning and Land turned down the request for a £25 million interest free loan towards development plans. He said there was no justification for the "exceptional financial assistance" being sought by

1. The Local Government Act 1966 allowed grant of 75% of capital on principal roads and replaced grants which depended on class of road.

2. Evening Chronicle (6 May 1964)

the City. Redevelopment work was probably going along too fast and:

> "It implies a far greater amount of work per year than has
> been achieved in Newcastle in the past and in the light of
> the need for economy in public expenditure, substantially
> more than is likely to be approved." 1

This is where the sanction lay; the Minister must give approval for the raising

of capital, which becomes more important when no assistance is given through

the normal grant method. The City used local members of Parliament to try

and bring more pressure on the Minister. The financial restraints placed

by the central government have been as important as the planning restraints.

Seventhly, the Ministry can put forward changes or amendments to schemes but

in Newcastle they have rarely made any changes and these have always been of a

minor nature. For example, in the major Jesmond Road motorway plan, in spite of

many serious objections and counter proposals, the inspector recommended; and

the Minister approved; only slight amendments in the Victoria Square and Archibold

Terrace areas, this was to retain a few houses. They delayed approval in the

Brandling Park area on a technical point regarding the exchange of land regarded

as open space. The only major set-back to city plans from the Ministry was over

the approval of the Pilgrim Street proposals.

One final constraint can be mentioned; The Royal Fine Art Commission

(RFAC) which advises public bodies on aesthetic matters, of buildings and planning

proposals. The Ministry of Transport asked them to advise on the Newcastle city

centre road scheme. In fact, the RFAC considered the whole plan for the city cen-

tre and submitted a report to the Ministries of Transport and Housing and Local

Government. This report which contained some serious criticisms of the plans was

never taken up by the Ministries, nor did they inform the RFAC why they took no

action. Thus the advice of a potential instrument of control was not used by the

Government.

1.　Ibid (15 January 1969)

The control exerted by the central government over the Newcastle city centre redevelopment plans, has, in actual practice, been almost negligible. There has been little or no contribution by the departments and their role appears to have been passive or negative. Another study of planning reaches a similar conclusion:

> "Despite these limits: Whitehall's sanctions have tended to be negative as regards decisions on most planning applications, and control over policies have come to be exercised indirectly." [1]

Several reasons can be put forward to explain the apparent passive nature of the Ministries contribution. First the Ministries were restricted by the nature of the work being carried out in Newcastle, the quality of it and the high calibre of the City Planning Officer and his Department. City Centre redevelopment plans such as those of Newcastle are highly complex technical operations. They are based on a mass of research information and specialised techniques which are difficult to follow even for the professional planner unless he has the fullest information and understands the local situation. The plans were also based on certain objectives and assumptions which the Central Government was not always able to question. Another difficulty was the scale and advanced nature of the Newcastle proposals. They covered the whole city in considerable detail and were proposing radical comprehensive solutions which were well in advance of the rest of the country. It was also difficult to fault the proposals due to their quality; every available modern planning technique and research method had been used to ensure the plans were correct. The authoritative RFAC said :

> "In its view this constituted one of the few serious attempts in city planning to resolve the conflict between technology and a civilised environment." [2]

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1. M.L. Harrison, Political, Administrative and Ideological Factors in the Evolution and Operation of the Local Authority Development Control System, University of Cambridge, Department of Land Economy, (September 1971) p. 2

2. RFAC letter (20 October 1967)

Many of the methods and techniques used by Newcastle were later recommended by
MHLG to other local authorities. For example, in Planning Bulletin No. 1 they
recommended the procedures which Newcastle had used for their first report on
Central Redevelopment in May 1961. The quality of the work reflected the high
calibre of the City Planning Department. Mr. Burns, had a national reputation
as a planner, and, he was a man of personality and strong views which did not
encourage criticism from those in inferior positions with less experience, which
was the position of many Central Government officials. His experience and reputation
were recognised on several occasions by his appointment to Central Government bodies
like the Skeffington Committee on Participation in Planning and then ultimately his
appointment as Chief Planner at the MHLG. Councillor Smith of the Planning Committee
also had a national reputation as an outstandingly powerful politician supporting
progressive policies. This was recognised by the central Ministries when he was
appointed to the Steering Committee responsible for the influential Buchanan Report
and then to the Royal Commission on Local Government. He was voted "Man of the
Year" for his planning work by the Architect's Journal. [1] His position in the
region and in the Labour Party was recognised when he was appointed Chairman of the
new regional Northern Economic Planning Council. The bigger local authorities have
such large and highly qualified staff, such huge programmes, and are also so well
known in the departments, that their wishes carry great weight:

> "Most of their chief officers are men of considerable professional
> standing and talk as equals or as superiors to the highest ranking
> professionals in the departments. In the professional associations
> their reputations stand with the most exalted. So also the chairman
> of the chief committees may well be men of importance in the national
> counsels of their political parties." 2

Secondly the Ministries were restricted by the shortage of experienced staff and

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1.   Architect's Journal (19 January 1961)

2.   Griffiths, op. cit. p.528

the very heavy work load which had to be carried by the officers. These factors

also led to long delays in reaching planning decisions. With regard to staff

shortages the Permanent Secretary of the MHLG said of planning inspectors;

> "...it is not at all an easy business to find sufficient men
> with the right qualifications for the work." 1

The City were concerned about this for it meant considerable delay for their

programmes :

> "And on enquiries that I have made in Planning I have been told
> that in Whitehall one man only working zealously deals with the
> affairs of Newcastle. The City Plan and various things must
> obviously come on to his desk." 2

The actual system itself demanded considerable work for;

> "....the administrative divisions must go through reports in detail,
> in order to make sure that all objections have been considered, and
> that the inspector's recommendations are acceptable within the current
> policies of the Minister and of any other Ministers concerned." 3

Schemes of the size and complexity of Newcastle's threw extra burdens upon the

Ministry's machinery therefore there was no encouragment for the Ministry to

probe too deeply into them. The Ministries were conscious of the delay any deep

scrutiny, rejection or modification could lead to. The financial costs of delay

to the planning authorities was considerable also the cost of amendments and the

utilisation of scarce manpower. If another planning inquiry was required this

would also put costs up and create further delay. As the Skeffington Report

said;

> "Planning has acquired a bad name partly because intolerable delays
> have held up the implementation of urgently needed developments." 4

The new Planning Act of 1968 was partly designed to change the procedure and thereby

eliminate serious delays. One further restraint on the staff side of the Ministry

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1. Evelyn Sharp, The Ministry of Housing and Local Government, p.148

2. Councillor A. Grey CCP (5 October 1966) p. 441

3. Sharp, op. cit. p. 146

4. People and Planning, HMSO (1969) para 22.

was the lack of any regional office in Newcastle until 1965. Thus during the most

formative period of planning the city centre, control had to be exerted from London.

A third constraint was the lack of any alternative proposals to the city's.

Only in the case of the Pilgrim Street roundabout and the Jesmond Road motorway

were alternatives put forward. In the former case these proposals were influential

in the Ministry asking the City to provide an alternative scheme, in the latter they

were rejected. Both schemes were put forward by local amenity and professional groups

and were documented and argued by specialist planners, architects and engineers.

In the latter scheme the objectors were critical of the inspectors apparent acceptance

of the City's scheme without giving any evidence for rejecting the alternative pro-

posal. It would have been difficult for the Ministry to reject the city scheme

considering the amount of work entailed and the financial and man power costs.

All the pressure on the Ministry was for the acceptance of schemes; pressure the

other way was light and carried no political weight. These factors also helped to

nulify the influence of the RFAC.

Another important factor in the relationship between central and local

government is the philosophy or attitude of the government department. Griffith

suggests that there are three separate attitudes laissez-faire, regulatory and

promotional.[1] The tradition of the MHLG is laissez-faire, encouraging the autonomy

of local authorities and trying to restrict control. In town and country planning

however they tend to be more regulatory, but;

> "In the absence of policy the Department's attitude becomes more
> laissez-faire." [2]

There was no particular departmental policy to fit the Newcastle case. This is

one reason why the Ministry could play a passive laissez-faire role. They were

not even required to play a promotional role encouraging the use of modern

1. Griffith, op. cit. p. 515

2. Ibid, . p. 521.

techniques and methods as Newcastle was already using these. Where there was a policy as in the preservation of historic buildings the Ministry took a much more positive line, not only regulating but trying to promote a specific policy of preservation. One Ministry planner said they were criticised for doing too little and not giving enough advice but other bodies said they interfered too much. The attitude of a Ministry of Transport official was that, the planning authority were responsible and did the work; the Ministry should not interfere but only act as a kind of 'long stop.' Furthermore local authorities differ so much in their problems and circumstances that it is difficult to evolve any comprehensive policy or guide lines. The authorities must be left with considerable freedom. If a promotional line is taken it is normally for the benefit of the smaller local authorities and these are the authorities which are lacking in specialised planning staff.

A final restraint on central government ministries which appeared in Newcastle was the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (PCA). At the beginning of 1970, Mr. William Elliott, the Member of Parliament for Newcastle North, asked the PCA to investigate complaints about the administration of the 1968 Public Inquiry into the Jesmond Road motorway. The Jesmond motorway was to connect with the Central Motorway East which had been the object of a public inquiry in February 1967. Two weeks before the public inquiry into the Jesmond Motorway the Minister announced his decision on the Central Motorway East. The objectors thought the two cases should have been decided together and that the decision given at such a time had boosted the city's position and their proposal had been "quite hopelessly prejudiced." They suggested that;

> "the long delayed announcement so very close in front of the second
> Inquiry gave every excuse for some objectors to feel that such timing
> could have been deliberate." 1.

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1. N.N.J. News letter (August 1969)

"The Minister has not followed democratic procedures in this matter. By giving his decision at the time when he did he gave the objectors to this scheme only two working days in which to prepare a new case". [1]

The PCA, however, reported in February 1971, that the MHLG and the Ministry of Transport were not at fault. Until this decision was given the two Ministries were not prepared to agree to the city starting motorway construction.

The Central Government contribution to the Newcastle city centre redevelopment plans has been minimal. Their role has been passive and laissez-faire rather than positive and controlling. They have exercised certain restraints on the City but these have had little, or no, effect on redevelopment, except in the financial implications of implementation. This position is also suggested in another study;

"It could be that many of the current views about central control result from the preoccupation with formal relationships which mark so much of the literature." [2]

As one Town Planning Consultant puts it;

"The influence of the technical and administrative officers of the Ministry of Housing and of Transport on the game is ill defined, tending to extend it but not to influence its outcome." [3]

Their lack of a positive contribution has been as much due to the strength of Newcastle City Council as to the weakness and philosophy of the two main government departments concerned.

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1. Peter Elphick, Motorway Public Inquiry, _Evening Chronicle_, (17 September 1968)

2. N.T. Boaden, Central Departments and Local Authorities, _Political Studies_, vol. XVlll (June 1970) p. 184.

3. F.Medhurst, "Politics of Planning", _Town and Country Planning_ (November 1970) p. 478

INTEREST GROUPS.

This section considers some of the bodies which had an interest in the redevelopment proposals. Included in this group is the Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC) which is an official government body, yet it had no official power and exerted its influence in a similar way to well established conservative interest groups. The interest groups could be classified as either having a financial interest in redevelopment or an amenity interest. Both the business interests and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne had economic interests in the proposals. The Northern Architectural Association (NAA)[1] mainly played the role of an amenity group, yet many of its members had a financial interest in redevelopment because many new buildings had to be designed. No such considerations affected the Northumberland and Newcastle Society (NNS) which was the main amenity group.

The main economic interest groups involved in the Newcastle city centre were the large retail stores and the University. Neither of these interests played a significant part in the decision making process. First because a consensus existed as to the need for redevelopment. Secondly these interests were not threatened by the proposals as smaller groups were. Thirdly the City made special attempts to consult with the large groups from 1960. These groups tended to use the administrative channel rather than any other. There was also a natural reluctance not to get involved in politics, this has been noted by Clements[2] in Bristol, and Green in Bath where there was a :

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1. The N.A.A. became the Royal Institute of British Architects - Northern Region as from July 1970.

2. T.R.V. Clements "Local Notables and the City Council".

"reluctance on the part of large businessmen particularly
to get involved in decision-making." 1

These large groups were in a position of strength owing to their

large property holdings, capital resources, and professional expertise and

potentiality for determined opposition to the proposals. The position of

the small businessmen was different they did not have the same power resources

and they were not consulted by the Department as the large concerns were. They

tried to strengthen their position by joining together in groups and opposing

the proposals at the public inquiries. They were however not successful partly

because the organised business groups, such as the Chambers of Trade and Commerce,

did not bother themselves with the proposals as such. They concentrated their

attention on the more peripheral issues, such as parking, rates, and rents, which

were of more "direct" interest to their members. This was also true in Bath;

"The main consensus of opinion was that the Chamber (of Commerce)
is quite active in putting forward proposals, suggestions and
criticisms, particularly on matters directly affecting trade
such as parking and redevelopment but is not politically effective." 2

Business leaders were somewhat disarmed by the professionalism and

competence of the City Planning Office, his staff and their publicity. His

theories and assumptions about the city were not questioned or even carefully

studied as a whole. One reason for this was the recognition that little could

be achieved by opposition to the City owing to its legal and political position.

Under the various planning acts the City has tremendous power to take over property

and undertake development. The cost of opposition was high, with little chance

of success, for the appeal body -- the Central Government Ministry - normally

accepted the planning authority's case. Politically it was impossible to

challenge the Labour majority. Their position was not dependent upon the votes

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1. B.S.R. Green, Community Decision Making in Georgian City. Unpublished Ph.D.
   Thesis, University of Bath (1968) p. 18

2. Ibid, p. 68

or support of the business interests. There was no direct link with the

Conservative minority either, which in theory could have acted as the

spearhead of the opposition. In fact the Conservative Group, and

particularly the leader, supported the redevelopment proposals.

The University was one of the most important interest groups,

because of its large property holdings in the city centre, but also because

of its position of prestige and power. For these reasons it was accepted by

the City and particularly the controlling political Group, for university

expansion was an essential part of the vision of a 'new' city. The University

was eager to co-operate with the City on which its survival depended and it

gained, especially from the City's assistance in the acquisition of property.

There was opposition to this 'unholy alliance' and this is reflected in a

letter on the City Planning Officer:

> "One of his greatest errors of judgment was to allow himself
> to succumb to the blandishments of the University to the
> detriment of other interests until the University now has a
> virtual stranglehold on a great deal of the development of
> the central area." [1]

Councillor Smith was more important in this respect for he was able to push the

policy through the Party and Council against the critics. As the Public Orator

put it:

> "It took time and argument to convince Dan Smith that the University's
> great needs could be married to those of the City he loves and serves
> so well, but once convinced he has proved a redoubtable and unflagging
> ally in the formidable task of persuading his sometimes reluctant
> colleagues that our needs, like his, outweigh those of the taverns
> and candy shops our buildings have displaced." [2]

The presentation of homorary degrees to Smith and other City representatives

stimulated ill feeling among the Councillors. Many Councillors are very conscious

of their position and status and were resentful that these awards had gone to

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1.   Evening Chronicle (5 April 1968)

2.   University Honorary Degree Ceremony (23 March 1966)

others. An ex Council member said he had heard an allegation that the City

had been:

> "sold down the river for a handful of honorary doctorates from
> the University." 1

The University Grants Committee have also been critical of the relationship

between the University and the City and they pointed out;

> "the funds that are given to us are for University teaching and
> research and not for the embellishment of cities, however de-
> sirable that may be." 2

Groups like the University which had access through the administrative channels

did not necessarily have more influence. For example, the University were not

able to get approval for a tower block neither was the RFAC able to get its

points accepted:

> "People exercising power are not necessarily more influential
> with respect to a particular policy than people exercising
> persuasion." 3

In Newcastle neither group were particularly influential. The close relationship

between the University and the City placed certain restraints upon the University

and individual academics and prevented them from making any positive contribution

to the discussion and evaluation of the redevelopment proposals.

The main function of the NAA was to protect the interests of its members

but it also played an amenity role. It also believed:

> "Architects ... can express an independent view... (the) problem
> is how to defeat political machinery. The professional planner
> cannot do this, he is a servant of the machinery. The N.A. can
> stir the lay public to an awareness of its environment. Its
> influence can thereby – who knows? – reach beyond the local
> authority members. And then we might be somewhere near achieving
> the only thing that matters – regional and local plans which are
> sound in conception and strong in popular support." 4

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1. Evening Chronicle (14 April 1967)

2. Letter from U.G.C. (22 August 1970)

3. W.R. Gwyn, 'British Politics and European Unity' Political Studies
   (March 1972) p.111

4. Northern Architect, answer to letter (January 1966)

Architects can express views which are independent of planners and local authorities but, because they are architects they also cannot be completely objective, in their views. To talk in terms of defeating the political machinery in itself suggests that the architect has taken up a set position, this is not necessarily any better or more objective than the planner. The Association like the NNS failed to gain any large public popular support; they also failed to touch the members of the City Council or to gain representation on the Planning Committee. Apart from the important Pilgrim Street scheme they were not successful in their representations to the Minister. They were fairly successful in gaining publicity by their articles and by evidence at public inquiries. Unlike the NNS they could not recruit members from the general public but they had greater financial resources than the NNS. Their influence on the City however was restricted by the rigid position adopted by the City planners and the lack of recognition. The main contribution of the NAA was in publicity, by providing information, raising the standard of debate and stimulating the planners to defend and explain their proposals.

The NAA worked closely with the NNS which was the local amenity society most concerned with redevelopment. There was a membership overlap between the two societies and their contribution was similar. The NNS has been useful in drawing together like-minded people genuinely concerned about the city and allowing them to put forward a concerted viewpoint. It has achieved publicity and provided information and stimulation. The Society has improved in recent years with a part-time Secretary and a more active leadership, but it is still weak in resources, publicity, and contact with councillors and the public. It would be stronger with a wider membership and approach. There has been criticism of the Society and the NAA :

> "both of which it seemed to me, had acquiesced in the former concept
> of a city's desecration but which now expended great zeal in trying
> to stop our more enlightened plans." 1

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1. Dan Smith – An Autobiography, p.50

Smith was referring to the early 1960's, but more recently the City Planning Officer

has suggested that the aims of the Society would be put to a better use if it formed

itself into a historic building trust. If this was done they could receive public

sympathy and cash.[1]   Critical comments by City representatives however, are

probably a good indication that what the Society was saying and doing had some

relevance and impact or otherwise it would not be worthy of notice.

The City authorities were also critical of the RFAC , for what they

considered its lack of understanding and insufficient study of the redevelopment

proposals. The Commission was important as being the only authoritative impartial

body to study the proposals, it included some of the most eminent architects and

planners in the country. Their report on the proposals contained some fundamental

criticisms but these were relayed through the administrative channels and were

not available to the public or to amenity groups. In trying to achieve their

objectives through the administrative channels the Commission denied their

'watchdog' functions. The Commission's advice was ignored for several reasons,

first because it came so late during the decision making process and it was so

fundamental it would have meant a complete recasting of the plans. Secondly the

City Planning Officer did not accept the validity of the criticisms; he had great

confidence in his own technical ability and concept of the 'new' city. Thirdly

the political leadership was enthusiastically committed to the plans and had a

high regard for the Planning Officer. This was echoed by the Planning Committee

and Council. The leadership were very critical of the 'superficial' visit of

inspection to the city made by the Commission. Fourthly the Planning Committee

were aware of the advanced nature of the plans and the work involved. The RFAC

report was placed at the end of a long Committee Agenda and there was no time for

it to be discussed at the meeting. Finally the plans had been very well received

1.   The Journal (29 December 1970)

when they were published, they had been through a major public inquiry and had been approved by the Minister. Amenity Groups which might have used the Commission Report were not aware of it. The behaviour of the RFAC was similar to the economic groups but their influence was similar to the amenity groups.

Interest group theory can stress the importance of the administrative channels and official recognition [1] and this would be true in Newcastle to a limited extent for the large economic groups and the RFAC, but they had minimal influence, in the decision making process. The amenity groups were not recognised and had little or no access to the administrative channels and therefore tried to use other channels, mainly publicity. Little attempt was made to use the parties or the Councillors though on one occasion the NNS sent a letter regarding a motorway direct to all members of the Council. The NAA were particularly successful in publicity mainly through their Journal while the NNS achieved most publicity through its representations at public inquiries. Publicity was an attempt to influence the decision makers indirectly and to encourage the electorate and other groups to exert pressure. The NAA rated public opinion fairly highly and the original decision to reconstruct the Royal Arcade :

> "....arose largely out of a lack of sufficiently strong local opinion to fly in the face of the out and out preservationists." [2]

what was probably more important was several Councillors being in favour of preserving the Building. The reason for the lack of success of the amenity societies was the consensus which existed among the Councillors as to the need for redevelopment.

It is suggested by Newton [3] and by the authors of a study on Newcastle under Lyme that;

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1. See W. Hampton Democracy and Community, p. 216

2. Northern Architect Comment No. 11 (July/August 1963)

3. K. Newton, City Politics in Britain and the United States Political Studies (1969) p. 211

"established organisations with social and economic interests need
apply little pressure because they are naturally represented on the
Borough Council." 1

In the case of redevelopment this was true in Newcastle upon Tyne only in a

marginal sense, as when anti Labour members strongly attacked proposals that

the Council should acquire all land in the city centre. Interests were re-

flected in this way but it does not mean they had power, and Councillors of

long standing knowing the difficulties of city officials are often impervious

to these outside pressures unless it suits their political purpose. This is

particularly so when the politicians gain power. Lee finds something similar

in his study, in the group he terms the 'ministerialists" [2] See also the

article by Blondel and Hall. [3] The limited representation by political parties

and councils has led Professor Self to call for some new ɛ

"...form of functional or consumer representation" [4]

One of the roles of interest groups is seen as offering advice to the government.

This role was not encouraged by the Planning authorities in Newcastle, yet at

times the need for advice was acknowledged. For example, advice was sought on

the establishment of a new planning department, and the NAA gave their views

on how high architectural standards could be achieved in the city centre [5]. Only

recently has advice been more formally sought with the establishment of consultative

committees for the conservation areas. Another role of groups is to acquiesce

in government decisions, that is to accept and not to oppose official proposals.

This was important in Newcastle for opposition by the large commercial firms and

1. F. Bealey, J. Blondel and W.P. McCann, Constituency Politics p. 320

2. Lee, op cit. p. 214

3. Op. cit. P. 322

4. P. Self, Elected Representatives and Management in Local Government;
   An Alternative Analysis, Public Administration (Autumn 1971) p. 277

5. N.A.A. Report to City Planning Committee (April 1964)

the University could seriously have affected redevelopment. It is particularly

important for groups to acquiesce :

> "whose occupations and involvement have enabled them to develop
> an understanding of the development processes, who can examine
> a situation with skill and reach conclusions." 1

Britain is committed to a certain democratic ideology which requires not only

acquiescence but also positive approval and the high powered public relations

campaign in Newcastle was designed to win this approval. For the proposals to

be implemented the large business groups in particular had to approve them.

The influence of the interest groups was insignificant in the decision

making process and one of the main reasons was the dominant position of the Council

at the centre of power and the weakness of the groups in comparison. They were

not able to challenge this dominance because there was a consensus among the

members and the parties as to the need for 'something to be done'. This feeling

became attached to the strong planning policies of the City Planning Department.

The manner in which these policies were expressed tended to disarm the interest

groups and this was one reason why they were not able to present a united front on

the city centre proposals. Thus they made little impact on the electorate or the

central government. With the strong party system in English cities and the tendency

for the electorate to vote according to national movements, there was little oppor-

tunity for interest groups to be influential, unlike the United States. In New-

castle only the largest business concerns and the University were able to achieve

meaningful recognition of their interests.

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1. D. Bradshaw and K.A. Golley, "Mobility and Environment in Newcastle upon Tyne" Paper presented to International Road Federation (October 1970)

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION.

This study has examined the contribution of various groups to policy making for City centre redevelopment in Newcastle upon Tyne. The decisions taken were of the utmost importance to the community and its future and they revealed the power and weakness of the groups operating within the political system. The traditional concept of the system is a partnership with the elected members making the policy decisions advised by the officers. The political parties are expected to put forward policies and the Central Government is expected to control the local authority: Interest Groups if they are recognised are expected to be influential.

The first group examined were the elected members who played a passive secondary role. They supported the key decision to appoint an independent planning officer to head a new department but the initiative and drive for this came from a strong political leader. This leadership was essential to stimulate the members and to overcome the inertia in the decision making process and the opposition of the powerful City Engineer. In policy making for redevelopment also the members played a passive role; they were in favour of some kind of development, but apart from this general feeling they made no major contribution to the policy. Their main function was to support and approve the proposals of the officers which helped to create a favourable climate of opinion for planning. But;

"the reality of the decision-making process tended to become largely concentrated within the departmental framework." 1

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1. Friend and Jessop, op. cit. p. 57

The strong support of the members was necessary for radical proposals to be accepted rapidly in a conservative bureaucratic organisation. Especially as the Department was new, coming in from outside and challenging the status quo and existing norms. The strong lead given by the Party Leader, and their high regard for the Planning Officer, also helps to explain the support and passive approach of the members. They did not see themselves as policy makers nor as representatives but as committee decision takers, albeit in a 'rubber stamp' sense, approving the recommendations of the officers. This is similar to the situation described by Lee in Cheshire.[1] It was difficult for members to make a contribution because of the extent and technical nature of the proposals; this was particularly so of the major policy reports of 1961 and 1963. Members tended to view these in simplistic terms and there were perhaps a lack of understanding of these proposals and their implications. Heclo[2] suggests that the complexity of the issues leads the members to concentrate on details[3]. This meant that there was less likelihood of the policy proposals conflicting with the social and political values of the members. If the contribution of the members was defective this was not due to their lack of experience of the Committee or of professional matters, the Planning Committee members compared favourably with members generally in county boroughs. The members were weak as mediators between the officials and the electorate and were not open enough to the various groups within the community. The contribution of the members needs to be improved and use should be made of advisory groups, co-option and training, especially in matters such as redevelopment:

1. Lee, op cit.

2. Heclo, op cit, p. 201

3. See also T.E. Stephenson, 'The concept of Lay Control' Political Studies (1970) pp 245.

"Policies in local government are rarely made explicit" [1]

But perhaps a system of corporate planning would give members more control over policy.

The second group examined were the full time professional officers. They can still occupy their traditional subordinate role of giving advice, as in the establishment of the Planning Department. This however was a comparatively simple policy decision unlike the difficult redevelopment proposals. In redevelopment the Planning Officer played the dominant role with few or no restraints from the members or any other group. He involved himself in the system and utilised it fully as described by an ex Newcastle planner;

> "To give vitality to planning and reality to the plans that are
> produced, one must infuse the planning process with the realism
> brought by political engagement." [2]

It is indicative of the dominant role of the planners that interest groups approached them rather than the elected members about issues. All professions and experts claim a special competence or knowledge but few make claims as wide as planning. This reinforced the strong position of the planners and made it difficult for others to challenge their proposals. The attitude adopted by the planners was perhaps necessary to get the mass of complex proposals approved in the shortest possible time. Proposals,however, of such magnitude should be spelt out very clearly with their alternatives and implications especially if they are key policy proposals. Also the whole policy making system should be much more open during the formative stages; good public relations are no substitute for participation. The Director of the Town and Country Planning Association [3] has said that many planners are sceptical about the general public having any contribution to make especially at the structure plan level but they are also sceptical about the elected members.

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1. J.D. Stewart, 'Community and Corporate Planning in two-tier Local Government'
   J.R.T.P.I. (September/October 1972) p. 349

2. G.E. Cherry, Town Planning in its Social Context, p. 164

3. Peter Hall, 'We are all Planners now' The Guardian, (23 November 1971)

There is a danger of planners in the arrogance of their assumptions pre-empting decisions and abrogating the role of the elected members. It could be argued this happened in Newcastle in redevelopment policy making.

The contribution of the City Labour Party to policy making was insignificant but the contribution of their leaders was crucial. It was necessary however for the leader to have the support of the Party. The Party did not make policy; it normally ratified the policy recommendations of Council committees. In planning, these were the recommendations of the officials, with a passive Party group there is a danger of officers deciding policy, or of just keeping the system going without tackling the real problems of the community as in Newcastle, in the 1950's. Between 1958 and 1965 Dan Smith was the key figure in initiating change and policy. He was able to persuade and use the Party in favour of planning but the actual redevelopment proposals came from the planners. Planning was not an ideological matter and there was a consensus within and between the parties about it. Yet there was still sufficient disagreement from members and officers and a conservative system to need strong Party support. The Party by its organisation and style of politics made it possible for the proposals to become 'Council Policy'. The Labour Group tended to be a closed body with a lack of real contact with other organisations and advice. It was therefore inclined to see matters only from the official and administrative viewpoint and to fail to evaluate proposals and reflect community opinion.

It is sometimes said that the Central Government, have too much control over local government. This was not true in planning in the 1960's in Newcastle, where the central ministries played a minimal role in policy formulation. On one hand this reflects the strength of the City in Planning and on the other, the weakness of the ministries. Whether the Central Government could have played a more positive role is debateable, but they could have followed up the report of the Royal Fine Art Commission which they did not. The Government public inquiries did give some reassurance to objectors as to the impartiality of the system. Inquiries pro-

vided a useful platform for objectors publicity and forced the planners to explain and defend their proposals. Inquiries conducted by the local authorities could not have the same standing or independence. The Central Government can be a useful source of alternative independent expert opinion. This opinion can be backed by sanctions as in the 1950's when planning proposals of the City were not allowed to go forward. In redevelopment policy making however they played a weak secondary role. Their position could have been strengthened by an informed 'Inspectorate' [1] which also would have been useful, because of periodic inspections, reports, and possible consequent publicity leading to a more open decision making system.

The various interest groups in the community had little or no influence in the formulation of planning policy. They were informed about the proposals after the formative stages and acquiesced in the decisions. The groups with the most power resources were in favour of the proposals as their own interests were safe-guarded. But the weaker groups were not recognised except as part of a public relations system. If it is accepted that the party system is not as effective as it should be, in representation, policy making and evaluation, then the decision system ought to be more open to outside opinion on the basis of representation and/or special knowledge. Independent expert opinion is needed by the elected members in complex matters such as redevelopment. The universities are an important source of this knowledge but they made no contribution to the Newcastle decision except in the establishment of a new Planning Department. There was a failure to use the services of the Royal Fine Art Commission who in their turn failed to give their report any publicity. In issues as important and as far reaching as redevelopment interest groups should be able to play a positive and valuable role and so enrich the final scheme. Their views need not be accepted but at least they should be given a reply and they should be able to see that their views were given serious consideration.

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1.   Hartley, op. cit. p.452

There was no public participation in planning in Newcastle in spite of the expressed belief in it by the Planning Officer and Committee Chairman:

"Participation of the individual is the keystone of democracy. If plans, broad and detailed, do not involve people, then in effect a dictatorship is being created." 1

In practice the City thought that this was covered by their excellent public relations campaign. Participation did not take place partly because of the attitude and heavy work load of officials, and the difficulties of getting people to participate, expecially before participation became official policy. It could be argued that most of the citizens were apathetic about development, but even the minority which were not, were not allowed to participate. This again highlights the closed nature of the decision making system, its elitist rather than pluralist nature.

The local press in one sense helped to make the system more open by giving good coverage to the proposals, criticisms, and letters. Criticism however was very limited and information printed was normally 'received' official material. The press provided little or no background information and they did not probe or evaluate the proposals. They were constrained by the economics of providing such a coverage which was sometimes contrary to what was 'news' worthy, they did not see themselves as being the guardians of the public interest.

Three of the main points which arise from this study concern the political leaders, the officials and the decision process.

The study reveals the importance and the power of individual leaders such as Councillor Smith, leaders of ability who are prepared to utilise the system and power resources available to them through their official positions.

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1. D.T. Smith, 'Regionalism' Northerner, Newcastle University Students' Representative Council (1964)

It was Smith who took the initiative in the policy decisions and won and
retained the support of the Party. He was essential to bring change and progress
into an inert conservative organisation in spite of the opposition of other members
and officials. Yet he was only able to do this because he had the strong support
of his Party. This should be an important function of parties to initiate and
support innovation. There were few restraints upon a leader of strong person-
ality and the system allowed him to take a considerable amount of power into his
own hands. He could normally dominate any sphere in which he chose to exert
himself, but he also had a general influence informally and formally through the
Group and the Policy Advisory Committee;[1] this would sometimes be a negative
influence - saying no to a proposal. Power however was also dispersed and to
have the most effective influence it was necessary to be chairman of the committee
concerned, i.e. Housing, Planning, Finance etc.

The full-time officials are in positions of considerable authority for
they often make not only the administrative decisions, but also the policy decis-
ions in reality. In Newcastle the elected members, made little or no contribution
to policy-making for redevelopment. They were in favour of 'some kind of develop-
ment' but the planners decided the nature and extent of the radical proposals.
The planners had a genuine freedom to decide policy, for they were not restricted
by past decisions or any other group. The City Planning Officer was in a domin-
ant position because of these factors. But also because of his strong personality
and views, his ability and positive support from the political leader. This does
raise the question of how elected laymen can control experts especially in complex
matters such as redevelopment. Sharpe expresses one danger of this problem;

> "The service gradually comes to serve objectives set by the professional
> group or groups running the service rather than those of its recipients
> or society at large." 2

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1. See J. Elliott, 'The Harris Experiment in Newcastle upon Tyne'. Public
   Administration (Summer 1971) p. 152

2. L.J. Sharpe, 'Theories and Values of Local Government' Political Studies
   (June 1970) p. 174

This problem is also the subject of more general studies by Meynaud [1] and

Thompson. [2]   Official attempts to improve the position can have the opposite

effect;

> "The whole ethos of the Skeffington Report suggests that the flow of
> information upwards is to be of benefit to the professional planner,
> rather than to the elected member..." [3]

A third point arising from the study concerns the closed nature of the

decision making system and reveals how easy it is for important policy issues

and the decision making to be insulated within the official environment and to

become impervious to other community forces. This was partly because of the

nature of the political parties, especially the Labour Party. The Labour

Party did not operate as a coalition of interest groups neither did it act as

a channel for outside opinion. The consensus within the parties regarding

planning also prevented debate. Public officials normally work within a

tradition of secrecy and the planners were no exception to this in spite of

their active public relations. They did not accept any contribution from other

sources. The system placed the decision makers in a dominant position and even

the Central Government were ineffective on the rare occasions when they 'exerted

pressure'.   The President of the Royal Town Planning Institute has pointed out

that;

> "75% of the profession are in public service and another 20% in
> private practice, where survival depends on charging substantial
> fees...." [4]

These fees often came from local authorities. Thus there was little

independent planning expertise available which could have been used to try and

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1.   Jean Meynaud, _Technocracy_

2.   V.A. Thompson, _Modern Organisation._

3.   R.J. Buxton, _Local Government_, p. 173

4.   F.J.C. Amos, Presidential Address, _J.RTPI_ (November 1971), p. 399

make the system more open. The only independent source of expertise in Newcastle was Newcastle University but it failed to act for the community in either evaluating or challenging the submissions of the City planners. It acted like a normal economic interest group and only a few individual academics assisted through amenity groups.

There were no economic dominants operating in the City or within the parties; those interest groups with power resources did not use them. A consensus existed in favour of the political decision making system and there was no effective opposition to, and some latent support for, redevelopment. The system did not require that provision should be made for outside advice or views and thus the prescribed decision makers could avoid discussing alternative policies and the possible implications of their decisions. In contrast to his policy, while in Newcastle Dr. Burns has suggested that changes could be made so that:

> "Planners were likely to produce alternative plans, and to illustrate their differing advantages and disadvantages so that council members and the public would be brought much more into the process of planning and would be able to express views and indicate preferences for policies." [1]

At the centre of the system there was a core of persons, the leading chief officers and politicians, who formed an elite group of which the officers were the more permanent element. In the 1950's they rarely acted as a concerted group in any positive way and each department normally pursued its own departmental interests. This partly reflected the laissez-faire conservative nature of the system. The system however was malleable and could be dominated by a strong political leader as it was after 1958. It was also possible for a chief officer heading a key department to occupy a dominant position by his ability to

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1. Chief Planner, Department of the Environment, The Guardian (16 June 1971)

work the system, his personality and by retaining the support of the politicians.

It can be argued that this kind of system and this concentration of authority is essential to take swift effective policy decisions on the problems of a rapidly changing society and because of a conservative bureaucratic official environment. Good officers are allowed to utilise their abilities to the full and elected members can still monitor the needs of the community and initiate change and encourage policies. However the stress on effectiveness and efficiency can bring a clash with democratic ideals. It was a closed system which did not allow participation by others or debate during the formative stages of policy, and no details were given of the possible implications of the policy. The proposals of the officers were not necessarily the right and the best for the community, but the citizens were not allowed to participate and so perhaps to improve the proposals. There was a lack of accountability both of the members and officers and there was an over concentration of power in a few persons. In redevelopment this power was in the hands of Councillor Smith and Dr. Burns. This type of political decision making is perhaps inevitable in modern techno-logical society but there is a need for further study of where power actually lies. How can the role of the elected member be made more meaningful especially in the areas of technical complex policy making? In what way can officials be held to be accountable? The process described in this study of the continually increasing power of the expert and the declining influence of the lay members will continue to grow as public bodies increase in size, complexity and in their concern for efficiency and their activities become more specialised. The system needs to have built into it more positive corrective and monitoring devices to help to balance the potential power of leaders. Meynaud writes;

"So the debatable aspect of this movement in relation to the democratic ideal is not the search for efficiency, but the absence or the insufficient amount of control wielded over its methods by the elected representatives. This is particularly true of planning which, if properly applied, remains our principal method of reconciling efficiency with justice in the administration of limited resources." 1

This analysis of the evolution of city centre redevelopment policy making in Newcastle upon Tyne reveals that the traditional concept of the system is defective in explaining what happens in practice. If over powerful politicians and officers are to be curbed and a meaningful viable system of democracy is to survive urgent attention must be given to the problems and questions raised in this study.

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1. Meynaud, _op cit._ p. 15

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