

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

**CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS: VARIATIONS BY
ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENT**

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CHAPTER 1

CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

A political party is a group of individuals united around a common set of values relating to public issues which seeks to implement those values through control of the decision-taking mechanisms which make public policy. The distinguishing characteristics of a modern political party are "a centralised bureaucracy and a country-wide mass organisation"(1).

Both the central bureaucracy and the mass organisation have the same task: organising and mobilising support for the party in its efforts to win and hold power. Neither the bureaucracy nor the mass organisation is dependent upon the existence of a political system in which parties regularly compete for power. The 1977 Constitution of the USSR defined the 'rights' of various mass organisations and only one party, the Communist Party, was included in the list (2).

However, in the UK, as in other liberal democracies, party structures and activities at both the national and local levels are directly linked to the most significant feature of their mechanisms for making public policy, regular elections on the basis of adult suffrage to decide which competing parties are to be granted the power, for a specified maximum period, to decide "who gets what, when, how" (3). In the UK, electoral success leads to control of the Legislature and hence the Executive, leaving unsuccessful contenders for power to project themselves in and outside Parliament as a credible 'government-in-waiting'. Each party has a central bureaucracy which provides it with research and other services and which encourages and guides a mass organisation, manned by volunteers and rooted in the parliamentary constituencies, in the many tasks which must be performed if elections are to be fought and won.

These tasks are varied. Parties' local organisations have the all-important and jealously guarded function of selecting candidates for general and local government elections and they oversee the local campaigns which will typically include canvassing to identify electoral support which must be mobilised 'on the day', the production and delivery of election addresses and local publicity events of all kinds. These activities will be run from committee rooms manned by party activists. Through

their selection of candidates the parties' local organisations influence the composition of parliaments, governments and council chambers.

Local party organisations are not only active at election times. Much has to be done between elections to maintain readiness for elections, and local parties are permanent bodies which raise vital funds, monitor changes in the electoral register, assist supporters who are old, sick or likely to be away at election time to obtain postal votes, recruit new members and generally maintain their party's profile in the constituency.

Some of this work will involve 'election type' activities such as leafleting and canvassing. Of all inter-election activities, raising money is probably the most important because elections (which local parties must pay for) can be expensive (4) and are frequent since local government elections take place each year in England, Scotland and Wales. Fund raising is also important because it generates a programme of social events which provide an opportunity for members to maintain their cohesion and commitment to their party.

What kind of difference can local organisation make to electoral outcomes? It is difficult to answer this question since local and national election results are largely decided by national events, issues and figures, and constituencies are no longer the fulcrum of politics they were before the growth of the mass media and modern parties. Moreover, there is no simple test for measuring the impact of organisation. However, 'familiar' MPs, whose electoral effect has been calculated (5), appear to enjoy a small but consistent amount of extra support. Butler and Pinto-Duschinsky suggest that organisational impact is probably of the same long-term nature and scale, and observe that even if it amounts to no more than 1 per cent of the votes cast this is still significant, since "a switch by 1% of the voters would have robbed the winning party of its majority in the general elections of 1950, 1951, 1964, 1970 and February 1974" (6).

The most direct way a local party can maximise votes is through the identification and registration of supporters who, because of sickness or likely absence on polling day, are entitled to a postal vote. Although it is impossible to identify in detail how postal votes are cast (at election counts they are added to the papers from polling stations), the Conservatives have a discernible advantage although estimates of the outcome in terms of seats varies (7). In January 1986 the Dover and Deal

Conservative Association had approximately 2,000 registered Conservative postal vote pledges which amounted to 2.5 per cent of the constituency's electorate. The Conservative majority in the 1983 General Election was 9,220 but in October 1974 it was only 2,294 and the Association's officers believe "that postal votes probably won the election..." (8).

Clearly, local party organisations are an important feature of British politics. The central parties could not match candidates to every locality, organise their campaigns and undertake inter-election activities to make sure the ground was prepared. Only local organisations can do these things and they perform a vital role in a necessary division of political labour. Conservative Associations, which are the subject of this thesis, are especially significant since these local constituency organisations are the basic units of the oldest and most electorally successful political party in the world. The next section outlines the origin and development of these important but under-researched bodies and introduces the key research question to be addressed. The remaining four sections examine this question in more detail and describe the methodology employed in this study.

Associations: Origin and Development

The impression is often conveyed that the Reform Act of 1867, which extended the franchise to the urban working class, marked the birth of mass parties and the concomitant growth of local constituency organisations. However, although the impact of the 1867 Act was most significant, the earliest local Conservative organisations developed in response to the first Nineteenth Century franchise reform in 1832.

The 1832 Act added "about four hundred and fifty-five thousand voters to the electorate, which was in consequence more than trebled" (9). However, the stimulus to local political organisation owed much less to the size of the new electorate which amounted to less than three quarters of a million out of a total population of about sixteen million (10) than to the complex registration procedures which the Act introduced. The extension of the franchise meant that it was necessary, for the first time, for constituencies to maintain an electoral register. In county seats the maintenance of

the register was entrusted to the overseer of the poor, in borough seats responsibility was vested either in the overseer or Town Clerk. However, in no seats was there an automatic right to be on the register. Voters who believed they qualified had to make a formal application for inclusion and "an annual list of existing voters and claimants was exhibited and could be challenged" (11) in peripatetic Revising Barristers' Courts. These courts rapidly became the focus of intense partisan activity as rival political parties struggled to get sympathisers onto the register and to deny the claims of opponents. The parties were represented in court by paid agents, often solicitors, from whom the modern-day constituency agent is descended. The struggle in the Revising Courts was organised by local registration societies and these societies were part of wider groupings of local notables who constituted the 'Association' although the organisational distinction between the two was blurred.

Interestingly, the Conservative Party appears to have been the first to recognise both the challenge and the opportunity offered by the new system of registration and to make the appropriate organisational response for, as Gash points out "a feature of the years between 1835 and 1837 was the rapid and almost spontaneous spread of constituency Conservative Associations throughout the country" (12) a process encouraged by Sir Robert Peel who urged Conservatives to "... register, register, register" (13). In county and borough the new Associations

"brought in regular subscriptions, appointed permanent secretaries and treasurers, attended to the business of registration, employed solicitors, often made themselves responsible for seeking out and recommending candidates, and almost always held periodic dinners where MPs, candidates, local landowners and civic dignitaries could meet, speechify and demonstrate the Party's strength" (14).

These first Conservative Associations "...were not elected by the whole body of members (but) were self-elected and self-perpetuating" (15) although the Party's Liverpool Registration Association, first formed in 1832, was reorganised on largely representative lines in 1848 (16). However, this was an isolated example and the strength and value of a representative structure was not appreciated or widely copied until after the Reform Act, 1867 which doubled the size of the electorate to two million. Representative Conservative Associations then rapidly increased

in number partly because of the sheer growth in membership and partly because of the example set by the Radicals in Birmingham who sought to increase the efficiency and acceptability of their local machinery which had the complex task of ensuring that the two votes of each supporter were judiciously distributed among the three Liberal candidates in the constituency (17). Their Birmingham organisation, which introduced the concept of the 'caucus' to British political language, was guided by a central body largely made up of elected members from the wards. The Birmingham Radicals were instrumental in forming the National Liberal Federation in 1877 in an effort to promote their organisational model and obtain a leading hold on Radical opinion throughout the country. The representative model made considerable impact on the Conservatives. Following the General Election defeat in 1880, Disraeli told Queen Victoria that

"The Conservatives have been too confident, and that they had not had that same organisation or worked as hard as the Liberals had the Liberals had worked on that American system called caucus, guided by the great Radical, Mr Chamberlain" (18).

The Conservatives were not slow to emulate their rivals and soon built up Associations of a similar type which were "quite as representative and popular as those on the Liberal side, although usually less pretentious" (19) and by the mid-1880s there was little to distinguish Liberal and Conservative local organisations. However, there were limits to the 'representativeness' and 'popularity' of Conservative Associations which are highlighted by the Party's attempts to mobilise post-1867 working class support. After 1867, the Conservative Party's first organisational efforts in the constituencies were directed toward the establishment of Working Men's Associations, since their votes were vital to the Conservatives' survival. It is seldom sufficiently emphasised that the National Union, established in 1867, with the aim of "bringing together in some federal or confederal form existing Conservative Associations (as well as encouraging the creation of new ones)" (20) was originally directed toward encouraging the further growth of Working Men's Associations which had sprung up especially in Lancashire and the West Riding in the run-up to reform. Hanham emphasises that the founders

"... formed an Association (later known as the National Union) to assist in the promotion of Conservative Working Men's Associations, and Leonard Sedgwick, the first Secretary of the National Union, and a number of volunteers spent most of 1868 travelling the country in order to explain how Conservative Working Men's Associations could best be formed" (21).

By 1874, about 150 Conservative Working Men's Associations had been established (22) but, despite their success, they failed to gain Disraeli's entire approval. As he said in a speech to working men in Glasgow in 1873:

"I have never been myself at all favourable to a system which would induce Conservatives who are working men to form Societies confined to their class. In the Church and the polling booth all are equal" (23)

John Gorst, Disraeli's Principal Agent from 1869 to 1874, shared his chief's view, and sought to promote the development of Associations open to members of all classes. However, he was not at all successful in encouraging working men to participate (24) and after reaching a peak in the mid-1870s, Working Men's Associations tended to become simply Working Men's Conservative Clubs. This development was encouraged by the fact that, from the outset, Working Men's Conservative Associations had had an important social dimension with their members meeting in public houses or in club rooms provided by middle class patrons (25). The current distribution of Conservative clubs still reflects the rapid spread of Working Men's Conservative Associations in Lancashire and the West Riding one hundred and twenty years ago. There are currently 1372 Conservative clubs in England, Wales and Scotland and 332 (24.2 per cent) are to be found in these areas. Many still retain 'Working Men's' in their title (26).

The slow decay of the Working Men's Associations and their transformation into Conservative clubs completed a class separation within local constituency organisations, thus bolstering the social exclusiveness of the many Associations then being established but which, at least in theory, were open to all classes (27).

All Conservative Associations in England, Wales and Scotland are now affiliated to the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations (although Scotland has a separate but interlinked Union of its own). The National Union of constituency organisations is one branch of a tripartite structure which includes the Parliamentary Party and Central office which was founded by Disraeli in 1870 to provide professional, organisational support. Links between Central Office and the constituency organisations are necessarily close. A constant stream of literature on every conceivable topic flows from the various departments at Central Office and its eleven Area Offices to Associations around the country.

From their earliest days, Conservative Associations have enjoyed a formidable reputation based on the nature of their membership and their relationship to the leader. Thus, it is often implied that as middle class organisations, they have greater participatory skills than that found in working class organisations. However, any advantage of this kind is probably far less important than the fact that the mass organisation does not claim a leading role within the Party as a whole and its energies are not diluted in intra-Party debates over policy, ideology or leadership struggles. The relationship of the mass organisation to the rest of the Party and particularly its leader, was settled in the 1880s following the attempt by Randolph Churchill and the so-called 'Fourth Party' to stake a claim on behalf of the infant National Union to policy-making powers and to use its organisation as a spring board for 'Tory democracy'. (28). In this connection, it is significant that, as Norton and Aughey observe, "most party literature ... tends to emphasise the organisational functions" (28). Whilst the analogies employed to describe the relationship of Conservative leaders to the rest of the Party range from 'monarchical' through 'Hobbesian' to 'familial' (29), the practical consequences of the relationship are not in doubt. The leader is expected to lead and the rest of the Party respects this prerogative, at least while the leader is successful. Thus, undistracted by wider ambitions, the voluntary wing is free to fulfill a valuable supporting role in the Party's search for power to which all resources are devoted in a single-minded fashion since its "raison d'être is to hold office (and) its tribal instinct is survival" (30).

Little has been written on what Conservative Associations are supposed to do, what they do and how they do it. A notable exception is the 1976 Report of the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties (the Houghton Committee) whose survey shed light on some aspects of their activities. In particular, the Report indicated that Conservative constituency organisation is strongest in those areas where the Party is politically strongest and weakest in the constituencies where the Party is politically weakest.

This general finding is examined in greater detail in this thesis through an in-depth examination of a small sample of Associations located in different political environments. The study seeks to establish whether systematic variation by electoral environment can be confirmed and, if so, its extent and scale. A wide range of Associations' features and activities will be examined, many of which were not addressed in the Committee's Report. It is anticipated that such a study will not only reveal more of the relationship between organisational and political strength but also many details of Conservative Associations' inner workings which have not hitherto, been systematically charted.

Clearly, the success of such a study depends on having a methodology which (i) allows specific and important areas of Associations' activities to be isolated and compared, and (ii) provides a means of linking any variations to local environments. The remainder of this chapter deals with these central methodological issues and describes how the data were collected.

Measuring and Comparing Associations

Like 'society-at-large', organisations possess both a social structure in which component individuals stand in some relation to one another and a shared orientation or 'culture' which defines common values and hence rules of conduct. However, unlike 'society-at-large', organisations:

" ... have been deliberately established for a certain purpose. If the accomplishment of an objective requires collective effort men set up an organisation designed to coordinate the activities of many persons and to furnish incentives for others to join them for this purpose"

(31).

Success for Conservative Associations, as for all organisations, lies in the attainment of certain objectives or goals, which Etzioni defines as the "future state of affairs which the organisation is attempting to realize" (32). Movement toward, or the attainment of, organisational goals is a measure of organisational 'success', or effectiveness. Effectiveness "is a measure of the degree to which the objectives of a policy programme have been achieved ... the critical feature of such a definition is the explicit link of the objectives of the service or procedure to actual performance, that is the achievement of objectives" (33). Effectiveness is thus concerned with the production of a specific outcome in contrast to 'efficiency', "the focus of which lies in the achievement of the maximum result with the minimal effort or inputs" (34).

Statements about Associations' electoral success and importance seem to refer primarily to their effectiveness as vote maximisers although the efficient, cost-effective allocation of resources such as time, money and expertise is also often implied, especially when 'machine' metaphors are employed to describe their workings.

Every organisation has many goals distributed throughout its structure. According to Simon (35) organisations are nothing more or less than decision-making, decision-facilitating structures designed to attain a desired end. Given this desired end, what might be termed 'sub-goals' and 'sub-sub-goals' are distributed throughout every organisational level. In realising its particular goal each part of the organisation creates the means for another part to realize its goal, and so on. The result is a series of interlocking 'means-ends' chains in which the many ends are simultaneously the means to further ends. Simon emphasises that this division of organisational labour is vital for problem-solving and decision-taking since, along with accompanying rules and procedures, it limits organisational participants to manageable tasks. However, although the division of labour enhances organisational rationality it can only be approached, never fully achieved, since a cost-benefit analysis of all courses of action is impossible. Consequently, organisational participants base their actions on incomplete knowledge gained from a limited survey of options. In Simon's memorable phrase, "human beings satisfice because they have not the wit to maximise" (36). The classic definition of bureaucracy as "a clearly defined hierarchy where office-holders have very specific functions and apply universalistic rules in a spirit of paternalistic impersonality" (37) also emphasises that organisational goals are inseparable from any division of organisational labour.

Etzioni's 'desired state of affairs' which organisations seek to realize is usually embodied in some form of declaration, charter or constitution, and Conservative Associations are no exception. A set of formal or official goals are clearly spelt out in a publication produced by the Central Office known as the 'Model Rules' (38), which offers a detailed constitution for Associations which is periodically revised and re-issued. It contains a list of eleven 'Objects' (or goals) toward which local parties are expected to work. These are:

1. To provide an efficient organisation of the Conservative Party in the parliamentary constituency of, hereinafter referred to as the constituency.
2. To spread the knowledge of Conservative principles and policy, and generally to promote the interests of the Party in the constituency.
3. To secure the return of a Conservative Member of Parliament for the constituency.
4. To secure the return at local government elections of such candidates as are chosen for support by the Party.
5. To secure the return of a Conservative Member of the European Parliament at European Assembly elections, in co-operation with other Conservative Associations in constituencies within the same electoral area.
6. To watch the revision of the constituency register of electors in the interests of the Party and to take steps to ensure that all supporters who are qualified are in a position to record their votes.
7. To keep in touch with Conservative Associations in other constituencies, and to afford mutual assistance whenever possible.
8. To co-operate with the area council and with Party headquarters in the common aim of establishing in power a Conservative Government.
9. To contribute to the central funds of the Party.

10. To contribute to the funds of or transfer property to any other Associations where this may be desirable as a result of parliamentary redistribution and which is at the time of such contribution or transfer affiliated to the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations in accordance with the Rules of the National Union.
11. To raise adequate funds for the achievement of the foregoing objects, including fighting funds for Parliamentary, European and local government elections.

These eleven 'Objects' can be grouped into formal goals of different kinds. The ultimate aim of Associations is clearly to help win elections, and their ability to do so constitute the ultimate test of their organisational effectiveness. The Model Rules do not contain a simple affirmation of this, their over-riding purpose, but they do identify different dimensions of this 'primary goal' in the perhaps oddly-positioned (in view of their centrality) Items 3, 4 and 5 of the 'Objects', which refer to the return of candidates in general, local government and European elections respectively. Items 1 and 2 and 6 to 11 inclusive are, by contrast, high-level 'subordinate goals' which encapsulate and sum up the range of things which the Party believes must be done if electoral success is to be achieved. They are means to an ultimate end, but are obviously held to be so fundamental that their status as significant 'ends' is proclaimed in the 'Objects'.

This study analyses the work and workings of Conservative Associations and explores the Houghton Committee's findings that variations are linked to local environments. Throughout, high-level, major 'subordinate goals' of the type identified in the Model Rules are used to isolate significant features of Associations' organisational life and to measure any variations between Associations. Using formal goals to measure differences between prescribed and actual structures, roles and activities presupposes that the 'subordinate goals' employed can be given some kind of 'content' against which actual performances can be compared. Throughout succeeding chapters the 'content' of these official subordinate goals - because they are official - is taken to be what the Party says it is, both in statements of various kinds made to Associations, and where clarification is required, by representatives of the Party's bureaucracy in Central Office and its Area Offices.

Documentary evidence of what the Central Party considers acceptable 'goal content' is, for many areas of Associations' activities, not difficult to find, as ensuing chapters will seek to demonstrate. Whilst Associations are certainly not the creatures of the central Party bureaucracy, and in no sense is there a 'line of command' from the centre to the periphery, Central Office is constantly seeking to advise and guide Associations on what should be done and how to do it, thereby giving official substance to official goals. Examples of 'goal content' which will be used in this study include the recommended organisational structure outlined in the Model Rules, formulae for calculating both the annual financial contribution to the central Party which every Association is expected to make and target membership levels for each constituency, plus detailed advice on the timing and content of inter-election political activities.

Electoral Environments

It is suggested that variations between prescribed and actual structures, roles and activities will exist and, further, that such variations may be expected to be linked to Associations' local environments and the opportunity they offer for electoral success. The assertion that all organisations and their environments are closely linked and 'interactive' is a fundamental feature of General Systems Theory.

General Systems Theory, when applied to organisations, states that:

"Social institutions, in much the same way as organisms, have needs of survival and adaptation to their environment which they satisfy by means of a particular pattern of interdependence between their parts. Viewed as Natural Systems, organisations are composed of an inter-related series of processes: it is the inter-relationship and the process, rather than one or another separate aspect, which should constitute the object of study. Secondly, General Systems Theory emphasises the similarity of the processes occurring in many different types of relationship. Whether one is dealing with a machine, an organism or an organisation, it is fruitful to use the idea of a supply of resources ('input'), a conversion process

(‘throughput’), and the production of an object or objects (‘output’). Once again, the way in which the parts are shaped by the process as a whole is emphasised” (39).

These inter-dependent processes are the analytically separable parts of an organisation which may or may not be recognised by the organisation itself but which can be treated as sub-systems contributing to the working and maintenance of the whole. Each sub-system performs a task. It receives ‘inputs’ and, after conversion, ‘trades’ them as ‘outputs’ with other sub-systems. ‘Inputs’ and ‘outputs’ may be tangible such as the objects manufactured by a factory’s production process out of raw materials received from the environment and then passed to another department for conversion into sales and cash returns. They may be intangible such as the skills, morale and commitment ‘manufactured’ by Training and Personnel Departments. Either way, all the processes are inter-connected and, say, dissatisfaction over pay and conditions may have an effect on production, sales and the ability of the enterprise to attract willing workers.

Systems theorising is firmly rooted within what Burrell and Morgan call “the sociology of regulation” which is concerned to explain “the importance of understanding order, equilibrium and stability in society” (40) in contrast to the “sociology of radical change” which takes as its central concern not survival, order and adaptation but the roots of conflict, breakdown and disorder. General Systems Theory draws explicit parallels between societies of all kinds and organisms since, like organisms, societies maintain themselves and prosper through the interrelated and self-adjusting workings of their constituent parts or sub-systems.

As Hunter observes, “the notion of a system is valuable because it focusses attention on the interconnectedness of organisational activities” (41). Thus, intra-organisational ‘linkages’ between the structures and activities examined in ensuing chapters are important. What are the consequences in other organisational areas of, say, a limited membership or lack of a property to serve as a base and HQ? Although ensuing chapters each focus on a major feature of Associations’ organisational life every effort is made to identify these important interconnections and, hence, the way or ways in which Associations ‘hang together’.

However, General Systems Theory emphasises that this interconnectedness is not only 'internal' but 'external'. It extends to each organisation's environment, since organisations are dependent for their survival and prosperity upon an exchange of goods and services with their respective environments.

'Open' systems theory takes explicit account of an organisation's environment as a source of both problems and resources. It seeks to identify the ways in which organisations are shaped by environmental challenges, and the environmental resources of various kinds which the organisation draws on to maintain its activities and existence. As such, 'open' systems theory can be contrasted with the 'closed' and 'partially-open' systems approaches in which, for the purposes of organisational analysis, the environment is either ignored or introduced only to "explain ex post facto complexities in the data, while hypotheses derive entirely from internal factors (e.g. technology, organisational rewards)" (42).

The links between environment and organisational features of various kinds are close. Woodward has charted the connection between environmental demands for certain kinds of 'outputs', technology and organisational structure and claims that it is possible to trace a cause and effect relationship between a system of production and its associated organisational pattern and to predict the organisational requirements of a firm from its production system (43). Woodward takes environmental demands for an 'output' as given and concentrates on the ensuing implications for technology and organisational structure. By contrast, Emery and Trist are concerned with the impact of the environment itself on the functioning of organisations. They identify four 'ideal' and analytically distinct kinds of environments (two 'stable' and two 'turbulent') which, they claim, have implications for organisational size, central control, responses to problems, relationships to other organisations and wider society and, ultimately, the value systems of organisational participants (44). A similar interest in the effect of environmental change per se is found in Burns and Stalkers' work on firms' structural adaptation to uncertain and rapidly changing markets (45).

Like all organisations, every Association is located within an environment which provides the constraints, possibilities, problems and resources likely to shape and direct its activities. How do these environments differ and, hence, what are the significant environmental factors which might

be correlated with variations in Associations' features and characteristics? One possible way of discriminating between different kinds of environment involves categorising constituencies by their socio-economic characteristics.

All parliamentary constituencies are different but not all of them are very different. Similar kinds of constituencies can be identified by means of 'cluster analysis' which groups constituencies by age structure, housing, employment and the socio-economic status of heads of household. Cluster analysis "accepts that social conditions are correlated with each other ... (and) ... calculates measures of similarity between all the units of analysis, and on that basis groups the most similar units into a number of clusters" (46). Cluster analysis can identify many different kinds of constituencies. One recent study (47) listed 30 clusters ranging from 'Centres of Learning' to 'Multi-occupied Inner-London'.

A prominent feature of cluster analysis is the extent to which the major parties dominate most of the various groups of constituencies making it clear that "social homogeneity leads to political hegemony" (48). Although the loosening of traditional class loyalties has led, since the early 1970s, to a new 'volatility' among the electorate (49), the socio-economic characteristics of constituencies are still a reliable indicator of political control. This is partly because, although now less important, class is still significant, and partly because the 'first past the post' electoral system amplifies socio-economic voting patterns and converts them into cluster hegemony. It has been observed that:

"Even though socio-economic status greatly influences a party's vote, it alters the vote by less than one per cent for each percentage point change in a constituency's socio-economic status. The first-past-the-post electoral system compensates for the imperfect conversion of social characteristics into votes by awarding a constituency to the party with the largest number of votes" (50).

Cluster analysis identifies different kinds of electoral environments with distinct socio-economic features. However, as a sampling frame for testing the influence of environment on Associations it has its drawbacks. From a local Association's point of view the most significant feature of its environment is not its constituency's specific socio-economic profile but the electoral consequences.

What is the number of votes it can expect to gather, will it win, can it win or must it expect to lose? These categories of electoral opportunity cut across clusters with different socio-economic characteristics since some constituencies go against their 'cluster trend' by failing in friendly environments and succeeding in hostile ones due to any combination of factors such as permutations in socio-economic variables, local traditions, the strength of the candidate, effective local campaigning, good organisation or simply the size of the swing at the last election.

In this study, a simpler and more all-embracing sampling frame has been adopted. The environments correlated with Associations' features have been drawn from the spectrum of electoral opportunity familiarly labelled in everyday political vocabulary as 'safe', 'marginal' and 'unwinnable' seats. Ten out of a total sample of twenty Associations were chosen at random from 'polar environments' at opposite ends of the spectrum of electoral opportunity. Five Associations are located in safe seats where in the 1983 General Election, Conservative MPs were returned with majorities greater than 15 per cent of the total poll - the standard test for 'safeness' is 10 per cent of the poll. Five are located in unwinnable seats where the 1983 General Election saw the return of MPs representing other parties with similarly safe (i.e. 15 per cent of the poll) majorities.

The sample of twenty Associations is considerably smaller than the eighty Associations included in the Houghton Committee's survey and it is recognised that both the small size of the sample and the sampling procedure adopted have their drawbacks. The small size of the sample means that alternative hypotheses concerning the strength and weaknesses of Conservative party organisation cannot be explored. For instance, apart from political strength, organisation may be affected by urban/rural status or by region. Secondly, by taking constituencies that fall within distinct political categories (rather than sampling all constituencies) it is impossible to produce national estimates of membership and finance. These are important points. However, the production of such estimates are not the aim of this study and on balance, it was thought preferable to examine a small number of Associations in depth not least because it would have been difficult to undertake the full programme of data collection (see 'Data Collection' below) with a larger number of constituency organisations. Moreover, it is emphasised that the focus of this study is the link between organisational features and political

strength. Other factors may contribute to organisational strength (or weakness) although it is suggested that other possible alternative environmental factors are likely to be closely linked to the Party's political standing in an area.

The categories of electoral opportunity employed in this study are based on figures polled by party competitors in the General Election of June 1983. This method of obtaining a sample of different electoral environments can be criticised on the grounds that the configuration of political forces at this General Election was exceptionally favourable to the Conservatives. As a result, Conservative winning and losing margins in the constituencies shifted, conferring on the Party an overall parliamentary majority of 144, an increase of 100 seats on the 1979 result, despite a reduction in the swing from 5.3 per cent to 3.8 per cent. The allegedly atypical outcome of this election suggests that sample Associations should be identified on the basis of long-term electoral experience and not short-term results. This argument was rejected.

In the first place it was not possible to incorporate any kind of significant or consistent historical dimension into the sample. By and large, safe seats remain safe and unwinnable seats remain unwinnable but it is in the nature of marginals to change hands with the swings of electoral fortune. It would have been impossible to construct a sample of 'marginal holders' and 'marginal challengers' that had retained their current status across a number of General Elections. Moreover, widespread boundary changes make the pedigree of many seats uncertain. In the Boundary Commission's review which was implemented in 1970, only 210 constituencies were untouched (51). The Commission's third review was even more radical and in 1983 only sixty-six constituencies fought the General Election on their 1979 boundaries (52).

There are real difficulties lying athwart any attempt to give a sample of constituencies a consistent historical basis. However, such an attempt was considered to be as unnecessary as it was difficult since it would not, in the end, be of real significance. Constituencies' histories may be important but the way to find out is to ask. Do sample Associations agree with the post-1983 safe, marginal or unwinnable categorisations or is their self-assessment coloured by longer-term, historical experience

which might be at odds with their current electoral situation? In other words, it is historical discontinuities (of the kind which might result from an 'unusual' General Election) rather than continuities which provide an opportunity to assess what influence history has on Associations' perceptions of themselves and on their behaviour. Finally, it should be noted that only English Constituencies were included in the sample. This was deliberate. Organisation in Wales and Scotland appears similar to that in England, but lacking data to confirm that this is indeed the case, it was thought safest to exclude non-English constituencies. The sample also excluded seats where a post-1983 by-election had occurred since the results of such elections can be wildly untypical of 'normal' party strength.

Assumptive Worlds

A study which seeks to examine the links between organisations and their environments is in danger of being overly 'positivistic'. Positivism seeks to explain social reality as something 'out there', consisting of independently-existing 'facts'. In explaining human behaviour, the 'out there', may be "universal psychological forces (e.g. aggression), non-social factors (climate or technology), or reified social constructs" (53) including, it should be added, electoral environments of different kinds. According to Berger, positivistic sociology sees society in terms of a prison or puppet-theatre (54). On the former view Society is external to Man who is limited and shaped by the pressures exerted by impersonal social 'facts' of different kinds. In the latter view, socialisation is the compelling force moulding identities and conferring roles. Positivism assumes that an observer of social reality is in as good a position to trace the ways the 'out there' is shaping a situation as the participants, since the 'out there' consists of independent 'facts' available to anyone. Once these 'facts' have been located, the positivist approach will:

"seek to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements. Positivist epistemology is in essence based upon the traditional approaches which dominate the natural sciences" (55).

However, an alternative view has it that the key to understanding social reality lies not in the identification of 'regularities and causal relationships', but in the meanings which individuals attach to the world and its contents, both social and natural. As Silverman has put it, "people act in terms of their own and not the observer's definition of the situation. The members of different organisations may attach separate meanings to what has occurred and hence react in different ways" (56).

Thus anti-positivists are concerned to explore and chart the 'assumptive worlds' (57) of social actors, that is the constellations of meanings with which people make 'sense' of their world and act (or not) accordingly. Anti-positivists' approach to social science is 'ideographic' involving:

"the analysis of the subjective accounts which one generates by 'getting inside' situations and involving oneself in the everyday flow of life - the detailed analysis of the insights generated by such encounters with one's subject and the insights revealed in impressionistic accounts, found in diaries, biographies and journalistic records" (58).

In the study of organisations this 'bottom-up', cultural and anthropological approach highlights, and helps to explain, the oft-observed gap between prescribed goals and activities and actual behaviour. It underlines the importance for organisational outcomes of conflicting or congruent 'assumptive worlds', whether in tracing the development of community policing (59) or the management of personal social services (60) and, hence, the importance of negotiation and bargaining. The concept of 'assumptive worlds' is important to this study. Any explanation of variations in Associations' structures and activities in different environments must encompass the understandings and interpretations which organisational members have of (a) the goals they are given, and (b) the significance of the local electoral environment. It may be, for instance, that some Associations feel that some of the goals are unimportant or unattainable or inappropriate to their situation. Again, members of an Association in an inhospitable 'polar' environment may feel defeated and demoralised, whilst members in another organisation may view the same kind of environment as a challenge.

Thus, the collection of data as designed to include interviews with an Association officer in every sample constituency at which their motivations and their perceptions of the local environment and its possibilities could be explored in detail.

Data Collection

Do Conservative Associations in different kinds of electoral environments display different characteristics? Open systems theory, which stresses the intimate relationship between organisations and their environments, suggests that systematic variation is likely, given that different kinds of electoral environments contain different challenges and opportunities. The aim of the study is to establish whether such variations do indeed exist by examining, in detail, the work and workings of a sample of Associations in four very different kinds of electoral environments. Data collection was designed to 'measure' any systematic variations by reference to the standards, good practices, model procedures and prescriptions which the Party's professionals constantly urge on voluntary local workers whilst not forgetting the fact that these workers own values, attitudes and perceptions play an important role in deciding what can and should be done.

Thus, data collection proceeded in three distinct stages. Basic information needed to measure sample Associations' features and activities against the formal goals prescribed by the central Party (and to correlate those features and activities with associations' environments) was obtained by means of a self-administered questionnaire for Association Chairmen in the twenty participating English constituencies. The questionnaire was first piloted in two non-participating English constituencies and underwent substantial redrafting as a result.

It was divided into four sections each dealing with a central issue of organisational life. Section I, (Background Information) sought basic data on a variety of topics concerning, among other things, the number of local government representatives and Chairmen's views on their constituencies electoral status. Section II, (Membership) dealt with issues affecting a key human resource.

Section III, (Organisational Structure) sought to obtain a clear picture of each sample Association's organisational arrangements. Finally, Section IV, (Working to Win) was devoted to the all-important topic of Associations' various activities between and at elections. The balance of the questionnaire was skewed toward this final Section. Whilst Sections I, II and III contained ten, twenty and twenty seven questions respectively, Section IV contained forty three questions. The questionnaire is reproduced in full as Appendix 1.

Of the 100 questions, fifty three were 'closed' ie the range of responses was constrained by the alternative offered. The questionnaire mostly sought to establish matters of fact and only a few questions invited Chairmen to offer opinions, views and assessments. This was deliberate. The document was designed to collect basic comparative material which would provide the basis for the second stage of data collection - involving interviews with Chairmen. These were semi-structured interviews lasting, on average, about two hours each. Interviewees were encouraged to comment on all the answers they had given in the questionnaire, which elicited much valuable supplementary and contextual detail and insight into their priorities, attitudes and values. One subject, dealt with during the interviews, which had not been included in the questionnaire, was the delicate topic of Associations' finances. The piloting of the questionnaire had strongly suggested that Chairmen would be reluctant to commit financial details to a questionnaire. As a consequence, the final draft of the questionnaire contained only a few questions which touched on money matters in a general way and the replies to these were used as the basis for further discussion in the interviews. Although more financial detail could have been wished for, most Chairmen proved willing to discuss financial matters in outline and much fascinating information of a kind nowhere recorded outside of the Party was obtained. At the conclusion of each interview, Chairmen were asked if they would be prepared to provide a copy of their Association's last Annual General Meeting's Report and Accounts to help put the questionnaire and interview data into context. A number were initially reluctant to provide written material of this kind as opposed to talking 'off the record'. However, after assurances that the material would be treated as confidentially as other data these documents were obtained from every participating Association.

Information from the twenty constituency interviews was written up and sent back to the Chairmen for checking. In most cases, these summaries were extensive and ran, on average, to seven or eight

pages. There were the inevitable corrections to errors of fact and/or interpretation but the exercise also generated more information since most Chairmen took the opportunity to add fresh detail.

In planning the second phase of data collection consideration was given to the possibility of interviewing non-officers - as well as the Chairman - in each sample Association, since it was recognised that Chairmen would project the opinions, attitudes and points of view of those in authority. This possibility was rejected for two reasons. In the first place this would have been prohibitively time-consuming. Secondly, it was felt that whilst the Chairmen were likely to project the 'official view', their opinions were of interest because they are pivotal figure usually of great experience, wielding much influence throughout local constituency organisations. However, although the study relied exclusively on Association Chairmen in both stages of data collection, they were not the only source of information and views about the relationship between Associations and their electoral environments. In the third phase the data from both the questionnaire and the constituency interviews were discussed with interested constituency agents, Central Office personnel working in both Smith Square and its Area Offices and others. They were able to offer much invaluable comment on its implications and locate it within their experience of the Conservative Party's inner workings. The 'non-Association' interviews which were carried out are listed in Appendix 2.

Some material identifying the standards, 'good practices', model procedures and prescriptions which are promoted by the central Party, and against which Associations were measured and compared, was gathered prior to interviews with constituency Chairmen. Some was available on request from Central Office. Other material was obtained from Area Offices and the author's personal contacts within the Party. Additional material was collected during the third and final phase of data collection. As might be expected, trained constituency agents and professionals from the central Party organisation (who are responsible for actually specifying 'goal content') were able to authoritatively identify what it was they thought Associations should be doing and how they ought to do it. One constituency agent was particularly helpful. At his Chairman's suggestion he made much Central Office material available and proved an invaluable guide through the maze of

literature. Thus, detailed information on 'goal content' was collected from a number of sources and finally filled ten files covering:

Organisation	Local Government
Computers	Elections
Membership	Conservative Political Centre
Leaflets	Newsletters
Briefing Material	Finance

Negotiations over access were commenced in August 1986 and the responses of constituency parties shed some interesting preliminary light on the differences between Associations in the four electoral environments. Firstly, Associations fitting the various sample criteria were identified by listing all the 1983 General Election results with the winning party's majority shown as a percentage of the total poll. The resulting list of safe, marginal Conservative-held seats, other held marginal and unwinnable seats is shown as Appendix 3.

Letters inviting participation were then sent to fifteen Associations randomly selected from each electoral category, i.e. total of sixty letters. This was three times as many seats as was needed. The purpose of extending the invitation to such a high number of local parties was two-fold. In the first place it insured against a high refusal rate and, secondly, it was planned that two extra Associations in each sub-sample should be sent the questionnaire to protect against any withdrawals or other problems at an important stage of the research.

Advice on the content of the invitation was taken from an Area Agent, a constituency agent and the Chairmen from the two non-participating Associations where the questionnaire had been piloted. Three important suggestions were made which shaped the content of the invitation. It was felt that, without a guarantee of anonymity, most local parties would refuse to consider any invitation to take

part. The letter therefore stressed that no participating Association would be identified, and throughout the study sample Associations are referred to by letter as shown in Fig. 1 below.

SAFE	MARGINAL	MARGINAL	UNWINNABLE
	(Con held)	(Other held)	
Associations	Associations	Associations	Associations
A-E	F-J	K-O	P-T
inclusive	inclusive	inclusive	inclusive

Fig. 1.1 Alphabetical Identification of Sample Associations by Electoral Category.

It was also thought advisable for the author to stress his role as an active Conservative Party member and for basic details about the project to be enclosed with the letter of invitation. The letter and the accompanying research outline are reproduced as Appendices 4 and 5 respectively.

Replies were slow in forthcoming. To some extent this was not surprising since, from the wording of the replies, it was clear that Chairmen in every environmental category consulted either their fellow officers and/or their constituency's Executive Council. However, by mid-October only eleven replies had been received. On 20 October reminder letters were despatched to the forty nine Associations which had not responded. By mid-November replies had been received from a further seventeen Associations, bringing the total up to twenty eight, or a fraction less than half of the sixty approached. These seventeen replies contained a variety of apologies for the delay, ranging from a change of officers and pressure of work, to lack of an agent and loss of papers. However, refusals and the distribution of acceptances meant that the total sample was far from complete. At this point attempts were made to establish telephone contact with the Associations still not replying to discuss any reservations or questions they might have.

This approach brought its own frustrating problems. In one case it proved absolutely impossible to contact the Chairman. Even the Area Office concerned appeared confused about this Chairman's details. They had an alternative telephone number but it turned out to be a maternity hospital (which did not employ anyone of the right name). In two other cases, five and seven messages respectively were left on Association 'Ansafones', but to no avail. In thirteen cases, Chairmen promised to "look into" the request, but failed to call or write back.

Nevertheless, by early December enough replies had dribbled in to fill all the sub-samples with the seven seats each required, with the exception of the Unwinnable category which had only four acceptances. Another ten seats were thus taken at random from this category in Appendix 3 and fresh letters of invitation were sent on 10 December 1986. On the basis of comments made by a number of Chairmen during the previous three months, this letter contained a fresh paragraph designed to reassure recipients that it was not the intention "to criticise Associations where membership might be low and activities restricted" (see Appendix 6). This reassurance, combined with personal calls a week after despatch, proved successful, with the three further acceptances needed in the unwinnable category being received by 15 December 1986.

As Table 1.1 below shows, negotiations over access followed a clear pattern.

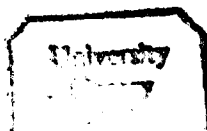
Electoral Environment	Associations Approached	Sample(s) Achieved	Superfluous Acceptances*	Refusals	Non-Response
Safe	15	24.9.86	4	-	4
Conservative-held marginal	15	27.10.86	2	2	4
Other-held marginal	15	19.11.86	1	4	3
Unwinnable	25	15.12.86	-	6	12
	70		7	12	23

* The first seven acceptances received for each environmental category were included in the sample.

Table 1.1: Progress of Access Negotiations

Associations in the safe category were the swiftest to reply, contributed the most 'oversubscriptions' and none refused to participate - although four failed to respond. By contrast, the unwinnable category was the last environmental category to be filled (and more Associations were approached), there were no 'oversubscriptions' and both refusals and non-replies were high. Reluctance to participate was lowest in the safe seats and highest in the unwinnable seats.

In their written refusals, all Associations bar one offered two basic reasons for this reluctance. These were either (i) lack of an agent (although the project did not require their participation),



and/or (ii) lack of time and pressure of other activities. The only written refusal not to advance either or both of these two reasons, declined on the basis that some of its members had helped a researcher who had subsequently turned out to belong to the Workers' Revolutionary Party!

The presence of a paid constituency agent within an Association certainly seems to have influenced the acceptance rate charted in Table 1.1. Out of the twenty eight Associations in the four electoral categories, nine were the sole employers of full-time professional agents and a further four had access to the services of an agent whom they shared with other constituencies. The distribution of agents among the twenty eight Associations which finally accepted the invitation to participate is presented in Table 1.2 below.

Electoral Environment	Sole Services of Agent	Sharing Agent	No Agent
Safe	7	-	1
Conservative-held marginal	3	-	4
Other-held Marginal	-	2	5
Unwinnable	-	2	5

Table 1.2: Distribution of Agents Among Associations Accepting Invitation to Participate

It seems likely that the presence of an agent, to whom the questionnaire could be delegated, did play an important part in some Chairmen's decisions on participation.

However, verbal refusals and conversations with Chairmen of Associations which never made a final reply indicated another, possibly more important reason for the pattern of acceptances in Table 1.1. Many Chairman - mainly, but not exclusively, from unwinnable seats - were anxious about being 'reviewed', 'assessed' and 'compared' (three oft-used words). The Chairman of a northern inner-city Association summed up this concern in a verbal nutshell "... we don't want to be reviewed by you or anybody else". This attitude was not simply an impatient assertion of constituencies' valued independence and autonomy. These Chairmen thought participation in the project 'pointless' since, as one put it, "... not as much goes on here as we would like", and a number of reasons were volunteered to explain why, including low membership, difficult area, and lack of money.

It was comments such as this which led to the revision of the original letter of invitation when it became necessary to canvass more unwinnable seats.

An Area Agent with whom the negotiations over access were discussed claimed that the fear of being 'assessed' (and found wanting) was frequently encountered by the Party bureaucracy in its dealings with certain constituencies. He was unsympathetic toward Associations which were sensitive about their low levels of activity and dismissive of their explanations, implying that, in some cases at least, Associations did less than "... they should and could ... some of them won't answer our questionnaires, so they certainly won't be interested in yours ... the thing is they don't want anyone to know what they aren't doing".

Whether some Associations "should and could do more" is an important question in a study devoted to examining what it is Associations do and to what extent (and why) the doing varies. It is an issue which will be examined in subsequent chapters alongside the central, electoral environment thesis. For the moment, putting 'blame' on one side, it is sufficient to observe that negotiations over access were impeded by a not-uncommon sensitivity over low levels of local activity with sensitivity apparently lowest in the 'safe' seats approached and highest in the 'unwinnables'.

The existence of this sensitivity cast some doubt on the representativeness of the sample that was finally assembled. Where local parties which felt they had nothing to fear from outside scrutiny more willing to participate? If so, this might mask or distort variations in levels of activity in the different electoral environments. There was no way this possibility could be 'designed out' of the study which hinged on a number of voluntary organisations selecting themselves for participation. However, on balance, this was not felt to be a serious problem, since the 'representativeness' or otherwise of the sub-samples would be explored and tested during the third stage of data collection ie during interviews which Central Office Staff, Area Agents, constituency agents and others.

The questionnaires were sent to Chairmen as soon as an agreement to participate was received. Thus, the great majority were with respondents (and many already returned) by the close of access negotiations. All questionnaires, including the two extra in each sub-sample, were returned by the end of January 1987, but only the first five received in each environmental category were used in this study.

Constituency interviews began in February 1987. Nine interviews were completed before the General Election on 11 June 1987. The other eleven were completed by the end of the year. Sixteen of the twenty interviews were taped. The third stage of data collection, involving interviews with non-Association personnel was completed by May 1988. After the General Election full copies of each participating Association's election expenses - which are available to members of the public on payment of a small fee - were obtained from the Acting Returning Officer in each constituency whose names and addresses were published by the Home Office shortly before the General Election (61). These provided further data on the work of Associations and the relationship between their activities and their electoral environments.

The findings of the study are presented in Chapters 2 - 5 inclusive, each of which focusses on a key issue. These are Membership (Chapter 2), Money (Chapter 3), Structure (Chapter 4) and Political Activities (Chapter 5). Each chapter is divided into two parts. The first offers a comprehensive review of the central policies, prescriptions and practices which provide a standard against which the sample Associations can be measured. The second seeks to establish whether sample Associations measure up to these prescribed 'targets' and, if not, whether any variations can be systematically correlated with different kinds of electoral environments. The findings of the study are drawn together in Chapter 6.

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- (i) for parliamentary elections in county constituencies - £3,240 plus 3.7p for each entry in the register of electors.
- (ii) for parliamentary elections in a borough constituency - £3,240 plus 2.8p for each entry in the register of electors
- (iii) for local government elections - £144 plus 2.9p for each entry in the register of electors.

These limits are periodically revised.

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CHAPTER 2

MEMBERSHIP

Central Policies, Prescriptions and Practices

Central Office places considerable importance on the recruitment and maintenance of members. However, little hard information is available on the Conservative Party's total membership since the Party does not keep centralised records. The Social and Democratic Party (SDP) had a fully centralised and computerised membership register and, in June 1988, the Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC) Sub-Committee on Organisation took the first steps towards creating centralised membership records in the Labour Party by "imposing a requirement on local parties to submit membership lists and accounts to Labour headquarters..." (1). A move of this kind would constitute an unacceptable challenge to Association autonomy and is not contemplated by the Conservative Party which is almost totally reliant on information from the constituencies in compiling membership figures. At the beginning of 1950, the Party "claimed a membership of 2,805,832 ... though that figure was exceptional" (2). This figure is repeated elsewhere (3) and works out at about 4,500 members per constituency. Two decades later, the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties (the Houghton Committee) sought membership data from all parties but "the Conservatives gave no figures" (4). However, the Committee estimated the Party's average constituency membership to be 2,400 which yielded a national membership of 1,500,000. This is the figure currently claimed by the Party and by far and away exceeds the 300,000 individual members claimed by the Labour Party (5), the SDP's 58,000 members (6) and the 80-90,000 Liberal Party subscribers (7). However, average membership figures can be misleading since these vary from seat to seat. Membership is said to be generally higher in safe Conservative seats than in safe Labour constituencies (8) but no comprehensive figures are available to indicate the extent of the variation or to support this claim. Some figures are provided by the British General Election series but these are fragmentary and badly out of date (9).

Membership is a central concern of the Constituency Fund Raising Unit located in the Treasurer's Department at Central Office. It was established in 1976 to advise Conservative Associations in England, Wales and Scotland on all aspects of fund-raising and to publicise and disseminate good

practices. It distributes a fund-raising pack at each Party Conference and, since Summer 1980, it has produced a quarterly newsletter entitled 'Money Matters' which is sent free to all Association Treasurers. Until the early 1980s, the Party's main organisational effort went into helping Associations generally to increase their income levels and, whilst the link between financial success and a strong membership base was not neglected, it was not stressed as consistently and persistently as it has been since. The emphasis on membership as the key to organisational success can be dated to 1982 when a series of by-election defeats focussed attention on constituency organisation in general and membership issues in particular. Enquiries revealed that a decline in some Associations' subscription income was symptomatic of a situation in which fewer and fewer workers ran more and more events to meet the rising costs of maintaining Associations and their activities. The Unit now loses no opportunity to link financial success with political success and both with a strong membership. It emphasises that "A growing membership brings a higher income and a thriving Party..." (10). The Unit recommends that an Association should aim for a membership equal to 25% of the Conservative parliamentary vote in the constituency although this target may have to be approached in planned stages if the existing membership base is debilitated. The Party's popular vote of about 13.7 million in both 1983 and 1987 yields, on this formula, a national membership target of 3.4 million or more than double that currently claimed.

The link which the central Party perceives between membership levels and financial and political success hinges not only on numbers of members but on subscription levels, a subject which 'Money Matters' has addressed on numerous occasions. The first edition noted that whilst local Associations have always prided themselves on the fact that anyone could join a branch for whatever they could afford, this relaxed approach was not always in the Party's best interests

"The fact remains, however, that if all subscriptions are collected at the lowest common denominator then the effects of inflation will rapidly erode the real value of subscription income, thus increasing the pressure on fund-raising events" (11).

In the Summer of 1981, the Constituency Fund Raising Unit conducted a survey which appeared to indicate that the average subscription across the country was about £1.80 per member which it reckoned represented "about £2,700,000 or about one third of total constituency income" (12). As a

consequence, it issued a call at the time of the Party Conference in 1981 for every Association to raise average subscription to £5 per member by the end of 1982 (13).

Reaction was mixed, since some well-placed constituencies thought the level too low and other, less fortunate Associations believed the figure inappropriate for their areas. The Unit hastened to assure Association activists that it was not in favour of a minimum subscription which could price-out many of those unable to pay more but that it was in favour of asking for increases where appropriate in order to achieve a £5 average across an Association's membership as a whole (14). The Unit has consistently recommended that in order to achieve this aim, other parties' subscription levels should be publicised on all recruitment and renewal literature.

The role of Conservative Central Office in membership matters is not limited to exhortation. As in all other areas of Association activity specific help, advice and guidance is available either from Central Office or its Agents located at Area level. In addition, a constantly changing selection of recruitment literature and publicity material with membership implications is promoted by the Press and Communication Section of Central Office's Special Services Department and can be purchased from its Print Sales and Distribution Centre in Reading. In the Autumn of 1987, a standard recruitment leaflet was available. This came in two versions, one for use by Associations accepting payment by credit card which also allowed potential subscribers to pay by cheque (15) and a cheque only version for Associations without a credit card facility (16). These leaflets emphasised that the Party did not have a set or minimum subscription but in both leaflets the four 'subscription boxes' started at £5 and included a £10, £20 and a blank box.

A major recruitment aid is the long-established 'Book Scheme' which with variations "has been in existence for over 50 years" (17). It is described by Central Office as an "effective method of approaching potential subscribers by post and then gently reminding them when they do not reply" (18). Prospective members are sent a small four page booklet with stiff covers which outlines the reasons why their support is required and this is delivered with a covering letter and a reply paid envelope. The booklet is updated from time to time and the version available in Autumn 1987 carried a picture of Margaret Thatcher bearing the caption "HELP HER KEEP BRITAIN FREE". It emphasised Associations' roles in the planning, organising and financing of election campaigns and

the fact that they give financial support to the Central Party which is used for "national publicity, countless political activities and assisting where necessary those marginal constituencies we must hold or win to provide a Conservative Government" (19). In keeping with the Party's flexible approach to subscription levels the booklet emphasises that the decision on how much to subscribe is left up to supporters with £1 being seen as a "token of support", £5 being considered "average" and £10 or more "regarded as generous" (20).

Booklets are provided with optional plastic wallets and the centre pages can be localised with an Association's name, address, telephone number, local government wards and expenditure breakdown. They are delivered with a covering letter and a pre-paid envelope and, according to the Central Party, "something like one third of the recipients will return the book in the envelope and over half of these will probably subscribe" (21). However, Central Office emphasises that the response to mailshots will depend heavily on the approach, with blanket distribution eliciting a positive response rate of about 5 per cent, whereas mailing to known supporters "could result in response rates of up to 17.5 per cent" (22). After a lapse of ten days or so it is advised that a reminder letter should be sent followed, if necessary, by another two reminders at about weekly intervals. However, as one interviewee put it "pestering doesn't help" and most Associations using the Scheme appear to restrict themselves to one or at the most two reminder letters. It is stressed that no mention of the booklet is to be made in the accompanying covering letter although reminder letters can "apologetically ask" (23) for its return. However, although some recipients do return the books (whether or not they subscribe) thus enabling them to be used again, many do not and an Association's stocks will inevitably decline.

The central Party supplies not only detailed instructions on how to run the Book Scheme and the books themselves but a range of associated stationery including initial and reminder letters. Alternatively, constituencies can adapt sample letters from the North East Cambridgeshire and Rugby and Kenilworth Conservative Associations which were included in the instruction pack available in Autumn 1987 (24). The instruction pack provides comprehensive details of the numbers of new members recruited by the Book Scheme in Manchester, North East Cambridgeshire, Rugby and Kenilworth and Torbay. These results are summarised in Table 2.1 below.

Constituency	Period	Members recruited	Subscription Total	
Manchester	Ardwick	1982	27	£77
"	Blackley	"	162	£485.50
"	Central	"	23	£102
"	Gorton	"	7	£21
"	Moss Side	"	209	£794.50
"	Openshaw	"	20	£116
"	Withington	"	416	£1520.25
"	Wythenshaw	"	116	£428.25
N.E. Cambridgeshire	1984	820	£3209.60	
Rugby and Kenilworth	"	265	£1165.10	
Torbay	"	294	£814	

Table 2.1: New members recruited by the Book Scheme in Manchester, N.E. Cambridgeshire, Rugby and Kenilworth and Torbay.

The results from Manchester are especially interesting since it is the kind of urban area in which the Party has been in difficulty in recent years. The Constituency Fund Raising Unit drew attention to these results when it urged Associations to make £5 the target average subscription noting that "examples in tough Labour Wards in Manchester show average subscriptions in excess of £4 through the use of a Book Scheme" (25). This compares with the average subscription of £4.39 in Rugby and Kenilworth, £3.91 in N.E. Cambridgeshire, and £2.76 in Torbay.

The Book Scheme seeks to capture the interest and attention of potential supporters. However, whilst the delivery of attractively packaged appeals can, as the evidence clearly shows, have an impact on both recruitment and renewal levels, the scheme does not contain built-in inducements of the kind now provided by the Party.

Since the early 1980s Associations have been able to bait the recruitment hook and raise subscription levels with the Countdown Discount Shopping Card supplied by Countdown plc which entitles holders to discounts on a wide range of goods from national retail chains. A card can be

obtained direct from Countdown plc at a cost of £15 per annum but are available to Associations at £2.50 each inclusive of VAT and postage. They have to be ordered in batches of ten. Other organisations, including the Royal College of Nursing, have similar 'bulk subscription' arrangements with Countdown p.l.c. Cards purchased by Associations are then offered to potential and existing subscribers on the payment of a minimum subscription which, the Party recommends, should be £15 (26) although it can be higher or lower. The introduction of Countdown cards can cause problems if an Association already has a number of members already giving more than the Countdown subscription. Most Associations avoid this problem by giving the card 'free' to such subscribers. Party members paying £15 to their Associations for a year's subscription to Countdown are not, of course, saving on the cost of a card but the arrangement does save subscribers the trouble of applying for and renewing the card annually since this is attended to by Associations which issue new cards annually from their stock. Associations also forward Countdown's quarterly newsletter to members holding the card. About 8,000 Party members distributed across forty five to fifty constituencies currently hold a Countdown card. Constituencies which have made extensive use of the card in their recruitment campaigns and efforts to increase subscription levels include Loughborough, Bath and Torbay.

Until Summer 1986, Associations obtained their cards direct from Countdown but the processing of many small orders caused the company administrative problems. From September 1986, cards have been available directly from the Blue Rosette Department at Central Office which offers a range of Party products on mail order. When the responsibility for the central supply of Countdown cards was relocated, Central Office took the opportunity to develop a number of membership inducements which are offered in a package called Membership Plus. For a minimum subscription of £20, Membership Plus offers existing or prospective members

- (i) A Countdown card and booklet - value £15
- (ii) A regular newsletter from the Party Chairman
- (iii) Specially negotiated terms for private health insurance from British United Provident Association (BUPA) and Private Patients Plan (PPP)
- (iv) Regular mailings of new Blue Rosette literature

A leaflet is available setting out these membership benefits which Associations can distribute on recruitment drives. An interesting feature of the Membership Plus scheme is that all the administration is handled directly by the Blue Rosette Department at Central Office which retains £10 of each Membership Plus subscription to operate the service and supply the benefits and remits the balance to subscribers' Associations along with their names and addresses. There is thus a central register of Membership Plus subscribers.

Membership Plus was piloted in late 1986. Results suggested that a response rate of about 8% might be expected following the distribution of literature to lapsed members in weak branch areas or to members giving less than £10 per annum. One thousand sets of literature were distributed to these target groups and succeeded in recruiting sixty members giving £20, ten members giving £30, four members giving £40, five members giving £50 and one member giving £100 which yielded a total income to participating Associations of £1,210 (27).

Apart from requiring some adjustment to administrative procedures and record systems, Countdown cardholders and Membership Plus subscribers are simply ordinary Association members who pay above average subscriptions. This is not the case with members of patrons' clubs who are offered a privileged position within Associations in return for a substantial annual subscription. These clubs are specifically designed to attract and involve local 'notables' and as such their members constitute an elite inside some Conservative Associations. They seek to enlist the financial support of local notables for whom ordinary membership may have little attraction or who have no time to become more actively involved

"There are many who strongly agree with the aims and policies of the Conservative Party but whom, because of business, professional, or other commitments do not have the time to become actively involved in the Conservative organisation. With this in mind, the Patrons' Club was formed as a means of channelling this support" (28).

The basic recommended subscription is £100 per annum for a single person and £150 per annum for a member and spouse. However, there are considerable variations between and within clubs. In the North, the reported average subscription is £80 for a single person and £120 for a couple. The author was told that the Colne Valley Patrons' Club has a member who subscribes £1,000 per

annum. The Fareham Conservative Patrons' Club was founded in 1984. It has a target of one hundred members subscribing a total of £33,000 per annum. This is broken down into sixty members subscribing £150, twenty members subscribing £250, ten members subscribing £500, three members subscribing £1,500, one member subscribing £2,000 and finally, one member subscribing £2,500 (29). In the run up to the 1987 General Election, the Beaconsfield Patrons' Club's declared that its aim was to raise £10,000 per year to fund the coming campaign (30).

Three important features of all patrons' clubs are (i) the social programme, (ii) the provision of financial assistance to other constituencies and (iii) special attention from their Conservative Member. An annual dinner and reception are two annual events which figure in all club programmes. The dinner is usually held in the House of Commons. Clubs which do not have a Conservative Member will usually be hosted by a Peer. Members take it in turn to host the local reception and it is, perhaps, not surprising that the membership of wives is reckoned to be an important factor in any club's success. In many ways, these clubs are reminiscent of the first Conservative Associations formed in the 1830s (see Chapter 1). Lacking a mass electorate - and hence any need for mass membership - these Associations were essentially dining clubs made of 'notables' whose social activities maintained the Party's presence in the constituencies and provided funds for the vital registration work and legal contests in the Registration Courts. Indeed, the Patrons' Club in Beaconsfield is sub-titled the Conservative Association Dining Club.

The purpose of patrons' clubs is to raise large sums of money to fund major initiatives and campaigns at the local level and, most importantly, to channel vital financial support to less fortunate marginal constituencies. The patrons' club in Beaconsfield calls itself 'The Mutuals' in recognition of this important aim, pointing out that it already pays for a trained agent in a neighbouring constituency and hopes to do more (31). The clubs in Epping Forest and Fareham are also pledged to raise money to support the Party's efforts in other seats. Finally, patrons' clubs emphasise that their members will have privileged and direct contact with their M.P. and/or other senior members of the Government. Many, like the clubs in Epping Forest and Fareham, promise members a quarterly letter/bulletin from their Member. There are currently about one hundred clubs which, by their very nature, are overwhelmingly concentrated in safe Conservative seats and

they form an unseen though important channel along which resources can be moved to areas of greater need.

Associations are the target of continual exhortations to increase membership levels and they are provided with a wide range of advice, examples, aids and membership inducements to help them in their task. However, Central Office's traditional encouraging and enabling role is undergoing considerable change with the development of direct mailing techniques. Use by the Conservative Party of centrally organised direct mail shots dates from the period leading up to the General Election of 1983 and the elections to the European Parliament in 1984 and is closely linked to the privatisation programme which has created a very large pool of share owners, who can be targeted using lists available from specialised agencies.

The most ambitious phase of the programme began in earnest under the Party Chairmanship of Norman Tebbit M.P. who appointed a Direct Mail Manager in the Special Services Department of Central Office with the task of overseeing an intensive direct mail programme in the run-up to the 1987 General Election. The programme was discontinued in April of that year for fear of infringing electoral law since, unlike other forms of general publicity financed by Central Office, letters are targetted at specific individuals in specific seats and it could be claimed that direct mail expenditure should form part of constituencies' election expenses. When the programme was suspended in April 1987, over three million households had been written to and the Party claims the letters "were probably read by up to eight million electors, approximately 20% of the electorate in England and Wales" (32).

During this period, Central office used a variety of direct mail agencies to mount forty two separate appeals to particular interest groups such as farmers and doctors and key sections of the electorate such as young householders. An appeal to companies for donations was also included in the programme. The biggest single mailing was to the 1,400,000 shareholders in the then recently privatised British Telecom plc. Every mailshot included a questionnaire (or 'survey form' as it was called) appropriate to the group targetted. British Telecom shareholders were asked a number of questions about the future of State-owned industries and householders were asked which issues - such as curbing price increases, reducing unemployment and improving the Health Service

- they thought most important. All the questionnaires provided recipients with an opportunity to make a donation to the Party and to indicate whether they were interested in becoming members.

The programme was originally conceived as a communications exercise which was designed to be merely self-financing but by March 1987 it had "raised nearly £20,000 more than budgetted" and generated "a flood of donations and membership requests" (33). By that date, 12,500 recipients had indicated they were interested in membership (34). Donations made in response to Central Office mail-shots do not count toward a membership subscription and Associations are responsible for approaching potential members identified in this way on the basis of lists of names and addresses sent out by Central Office.

Following the 1987 General Election, Central Office's direct mail programme recommenced in Autumn 1987 "as part of the exercise to explain the Government's plans for the third term" (35). In order to avoid clashes with local appeals, constituencies were notified that the post-General Election programme would be restricted to the months of March, April, May, September and October. One of the central objectives of this programme was to raise funds for a proposed Constituency Tactical Support Unit (CONTACT) described as

"... a mobile team that moves from constituency to constituency giving advice and technical training to voluntary workers. Their goal is to convert local party offices into professionally run campaign centres. CONTACT's portable computers and printing equipment will ensure that we make good use of all available resources. The unit will enable our many volunteers to focus on local problems and come up with the right solutions" (36).

Lists of shareholders, of which the largest was the recently privatised British Gas plc, were targetted for the appeal, which sought £400,000 to fund CONTACT for five years. Recipients could donate any amount they wished although the appeal form had boxes for £30, £50, £75, £100, £250 and £500. By donating £5,000 or more, donors could become 'Blue Chip Contributors' entitling them to receive a regular newsletter, and to be invited "to special events organised especially for Blue Chip Contributors" attended by senior members of the Party. In addition their names would be "engraved upon a special Commemorative Plaque in Central Office and

kept on permanent display" (37). As with all other mailings, provision was made for recipients to indicate an interest in joining their local Association. The first 500,000 letters were sent out in October, 1987 but, unfortunately, they arrived on 'Black Monday' - the day of the stockmarket crash. However, in the event, average contributions to this appeal were practically double the average amount received in response to pre-General Election appeals and over £100,000 was raised which included thirteen 'Blue Chip' donations. Another 250,000 CONTACT appeal letters were sent out in May 1988 to shareholders, company directors and purchasers of 'white goods' i.e., washing machines, fridges and so on.

By May 1988 the direct mail programme had generated a grand total of 26,000 requests for membership information since its inception. The distribution of requests was, of course, heavily biased in favour of seats containing target groups, particularly shareholders, of which over 60 per cent are located in London and the South East. The requests ranged from three or four from seats in Glasgow and the Western Isles to 110 from Windsor and 125 from Chelsea. The 26,000 requests for further membership details included membership enquiries generated by the three Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs) during this period which provided potential subscribers with a 'phone number to ring. The response to these varies from 500-2000 names depending on the strength of the appeal. As with the direct mail programme, details of PPB responses are sent direct to the constituencies for action.

The attitude of Associations to the direct mail programme is mixed. Some are deeply suspicious and appear to want little to do with the initiative. In the words of one Party professional their message is "don't bother us with these names". Others seem simply unable to gear up their organisation to respond rapidly to the information supplied. An interesting sidelight on the failure of some constituencies to act swiftly on the information generated by the pre-General Election direct mail programme is shed by an anxious letter from the Director of the Special Services Department who wrote

"I have one major concern with the numbers now coming in. That is that the number of letters complaining about the lack of follow-up of their interest in joining the Party is also increasing" (38).

Worries over the failure of some Associations to exploit the information being supplied led Central Office to send questionnaires to 12,000 of the respondents who had requested further membership information asking whether they had been contacted by their local Association. It received over 6,000 replies of which nearly one third claimed not to have been contacted. Some Chairmen said they had never received the names. One interviewee observed that many of the potential members his Association had contacted proved unwilling to subscribe having already donated to the centre and suggested that at least some of these had forgotten they had been approached. The possibility that many who express an interest in joining local parties are unaware that they will be required to pay twice is interesting but it is implausible to imagine many would forget being canvassed. Overall these figures seem to provide prima facie evidence of a large scale failure on the part of some Associations to exploit an important new source of membership information. However, at least some Associations seize the membership opportunity offered with both hands. In one non-participating Association, the M.P. makes it his job to call personally on enquirers and has been rewarded by a £100 subscription from a startled but flattered householder. In two non-participating seats known to the author, information coming in from Central Office is acted on virtually the same day. One seat is safe and the other held by a very small Conservative majority but each receives two or three names and addresses a week when a Central Office mailshot affecting their constituencies is in progress. It is worth noting that both have full-time agents.

Technological developments have also had an important effect at the local level where, in May 1988, about 280 seats had computer facilities. The use of computers in constituency Associations was pioneered by Mr. T. Statham, Agent for Bath in the late 1970s. The post of Constituency Computer Advisor, responsible to the Director of Special Services, was established in 1984. It is emphasised that the objectives of campaigning with a computer are (i) Membership, (ii) Fund-raising, (iii) Political Campaigning, (iv) Conservative Information and (v) Word Processing (39). Software is available from Resource Management plc at a discount when ordered through Central Office and includes the 'File Plan Plus for Membership' programme which performs a range of functions enabling all aspects of Association membership to be dealt with effectively. Standard forms and letters come with the programme so that Associations can collect subscriptions by direct

mail. 'File Plan Plus for Membership' software is in use by over 200 constituencies (40). A Book Scheme programme enables Associations to computerise this recruitment tool

"The Book Scheme programme simplifies the administration, prints personalised letters and, in due course, enters the relevant information for each new member recruited directly into the 'File Plan Membership Data Base'" (41).

A membership programme is also available from Silverjay Ltd of Croyden which in Autumn 1988 was in use in about twenty five constituencies. However, unlike Resource Management Plc, Silverjay Ltd is not officially endorsed by Central Office.

Constituencies which do not have their own computers "but who (sic) accept the principal of renewing membership by direct mail can ... use the Central Office Bureau Service" (42). The Bureau provides a comprehensive membership renewal and recruitment service

Existing members - through the Bureau, membership renewal and reminder letters are printed each month on the anniversary of their subscription due date. Letters are signed and posted by the constituency.

Prospective Members - When the list of prospective members has been fed on to the computer and checked, an initial and a reminder letter will be produced for mailing by the constituencies detailed above" (43).

Central Office emphasises that constituencies employing computerised direct mail methods to renew existing members and recruit new ones will find a dramatic increase in membership subscription levels. Whereas traditional doorstep collections may raise £1.50, "actual experience ... shows this level may be raised to an average of £5" (44) and examples are given of constituencies which have raised their subscriptions by use of computerised direct mail. In Bath, average subscriptions were increased from £1.26 to £6.37, in Fife from £1.02 to £6, in Guildford from £1.67 to £4.74, in Putney £3.33 to £10.10 and in Tynemouth from £2.08 to £6.59 (45).

Attempts by Central Office to promote membership in the constituencies are closely linked with an annual audit of Associations' resources. The audit was an important component of the Grass Roots Campaign launched at the Party Conference in 1984 when the Party Chairman announced "the organisational battle has begun" (46). The aim of the Grass Roots Campaign was to strengthen and improve organisation in the constituencies and it was emphasised that "membership, money, communications and campaigning must be our priorities" (47). The Grass Roots Campaign called for a membership target of 25 per cent of the Conservative vote, average £5 subscriptions, regular newsletters, exploitation of local media and expansion of the Party's specialist groups at the local level for women, the Young Conservatives (YCs), the Conservative Trade Unionists (CTU) and the Small Business Bureau (SBB), all of which "provide the special interest for particular groups of supporters and are vital to our success" (48). The general aim of the campaign was to stimulate a "growth of political awareness at the local level modelled on the Liberals' style" (49). The aim of the audit was in the words of one interviewee "to get Association officers to take a hard look at their own organisation and see where improvements could be made".

It began in the shadow of a number of by-election debacles. The post-mortem into the loss of apparently safe seats like Portsmouth South revealed an unhappy picture of self-immolating cliques with a tiny membership (50). The first audit forms were in two parts " ... the first requested details of total income, total expenditure, employees, type of office premises and equipment at constituency level, the second giving details of branch coverage, newsletters distributed, canvassing and the number of known supporters in each local government ward" (51). The response was generally poor and many Associations resented what they saw as Central Office interference. For instance, in the Yorkshire area, only about one third of Associations replied. However, even the very partial picture which began to emerge at this stage gave Central Office an insight into some Association's strengths "and, more importantly, ... weaknesses" (52) although no membership or other data has ever been made public. The audit has enabled specific help and advice to be given to cooperative constituencies by Central Office Area Agents and specially briefed liaison teams comprising Area officers, Area Finance and General Purpose (F&GP) Committee members and National Union Executive Committee members. In the Yorkshire Area the audit liaison team has eight or nine such members.

The audit is now a regular, annual exercise which provides Central Office with much valuable data. There has been some improvement in the numbers of Associations making audit returns but one informed interviewee said that in his Area "it was still not over 50%". Several of those connected with the audit exercise emphasised that suspicion among Association officers was still widespread with many "fearing criticism" despite the fact that its aim was to provide constructive advice and help. One interviewee commented that some Agents were as much prone to parochial resentments as some Association officers "and Central Office has a long way to go with their training in this respect." The result is that at least some of the Associations most in need of review and assistance do not receive it.

Information derived from the audit is helping to shape the priorities and preoccupations of Central Office departments such as the Constituency Fund Raising Unit. It also assists in defining the content of the well-publicised high-profile national campaigns which occur from time to time. The Grass Roots Campaign was succeeded by Campaign '88 which, significantly, focussed on membership recruitment. It was described by the Party Chairman, Peter Brooke, as the "first full-scale membership drive we've had for ten years" (53). It was a comprehensive initiative involving

"Every constituency - agents, their staffs and voluntary workers and officials ... Computers and the most up-to-date campaigning methods will be used. But the main effort will be to win recruits with personal contact - calling on people in their homes and chatting to them informally" (54).

The campaign set constituencies a membership target but, interestingly, this was not the 25 per cent of the total Conservative vote which had been promoted throughout most of the 1980s. Instead, each constituency was urged to aim for a level of membership equivalent to its quota assessment which is an annual sum payable by Associations to Central Office based on the Conservative percentage of the poll in the constituency. Membership levels calculated in this way are much less than 25 per cent of the constituency vote. Thus, 25 per cent of the Conservative vote in, for example, Hull West, Mid-Staffs. and the Rhondda would, on 1987 General Election figures, give membership targets of 2849, 7161 and 903 respectively. In contrast, the quota formula yielded target figures of 773, 4789 and 605 respectively for that year (55).

Summary

Throughout the 1980s, Central Office gave renewed emphasis to membership issues and constantly underlined the importance of developing and maintaining a solid membership base as the key to organisational success, both financial and political. During this period, 25 per cent of the Conservative vote in the constituencies was the recommended membership target for each Association. This was revised downwards for Campaign '88 which encouraged Associations to aim for a membership equal to their quota assessment, thus implying that 25 per cent was too ambitious a target. A variety of aids, materials, schemes and membership inducements are available to help Associations enhance and maintain their membership base but recent developments have subtly altered Central Office's traditional exhortatory and enabling role in membership matters. The annual audit has begun to identify key organisational issues and, indeed, specific constituencies which appear to need help and support. The audit collects information on membership but, like other data, this is confidential. However, it is clear that the audit played a part in promoting the development of the Tactical Support Unit designed to boost campaigning capacity especially in unpromising urban and inner-city areas. The centre's increasing role in membership matters can also be seen in the Membership Plus Scheme and especially Central Office's ambitious and sophisticated direct mail operations. The trend is towards a greater, informed involvement by Central Office in membership matters but the Party eschews any suggestion that the ultimate aim should be a central membership register. Central office intends to develop its capacity to help Associations improve their membership base but emphasises that ultimate responsibility for membership matters must lie in the constituencies. How the sample Associations which participated in this study have met the challenge of developing and maintaining a membership base in their different electoral environments is explored below.

Membership: Local Patterns

The questionnaire, interviews and Association documents yielded much detailed information on a whole range of membership topics including membership numbers, membership targets, subscription levels, the centrality of membership issues within Associations and recruitment activities.

These membership related issues are examined in turn below. A similar structure will be adopted in succeeding chapters for the presentation of data on the sample Associations.

Membership Numbers

The participating Associations had widely varying membership levels. Their membership figures are summarised in Table 2.2 below. The data refers to members 'on the books', not all of whom had paid their current subscription.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
A 1100	F 400	K 300	P 105
B 800	G 350	L 200	Q 200
C 5293	H 868	M 202	R 253
D 900	I 1700	N 600	S 50
E 977	J 400	O 1000	T 70

Table 2.2: Membership of Participating Associations

Association C, located in a safe seat in the Home Counties heartland had 5293 members, the highest figure of all the local parties in the study. In contrast, Association S in the Unwinnable category, located in a northern urban seat, had only 50 members, less than 1 per cent of Association C. Table 2.2 does not include members of patrons' clubs. Four seats (A, C, E and O) had clubs with a membership of about 80, 110, 130 and 70 respectively. Interestingly, none of the Chairmen included these numbers in the membership totals supplied in the questionnaire. They were regarded not so much as members as a special kind of 'supporter'. They were clearly seen as prestigious social groupings on the periphery of - indeed almost outside - organisational life. Table 2.2 shows some overlap in the membership numbers between electoral categories. The lowest membership figure in the Safe, Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories is, in all cases, less than the highest membership figures in the adjacent, less hospitable category. Thus, the lowest membership figure in the Safe category is 800 (Association B) but this figure is exceeded by the 1700 and 869 members in Associations H and I in the Marginal (Con.

Held) category. Nevertheless, despite this overlap, there is a clear membership gradient from electoral category to electoral category when mean averages and median averages are calculated, as Table 2.3. below demonstrates.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Ave.	1814	743	460	136
Median Ave.	977	400	300	105

Table 2.3: Membership - Mean and Median Averages.

The existence of this kind of fairly steady gradient through the electoral categories would not necessarily have been predicted. It might be hypothesised that 'safeness' and 'unwinnability' would lead, for different reasons, to organisational somnolence and that Associations with the highest membership would be found in marginal environments where the incentive to recruit new members seems greatest. In fact, interviewees were agreed that membership levels in 'polar environments' sometimes failed to reach their potential. As one chairman pithily put it

"Some Associations in good areas have too little to worry about and some in bad areas too much. The result is the same - less members than they should have - not nearly enough".

However, the existence of the gradient in Table 2.2 does not show an overall elevation of marginal membership over that of safe and unwinnable seats. This did not surprise interviewees who accepted the gradient as, overall, an accurate picture. According to them the gradient was to be explained by reference to the membership potential of different electoral environments. As the Chairman of Association C put it "... of course we'll have more members than a seat in the centre of

Liverpool, there's more to go at here." Another Chairman from a safe seat emphasised the cultural aspect "... in my constituency lots of people are members... lots know someone who is. It's not exceptional ... being Tory and showing it. I'd say it's routine." The Chairman of a Conservative held marginal observed "It's alright for them in Dorset and Berkshire. Members grow on trees there... we have to fight for everyone up here." Chairmen from unwinnable seats were pessimistic about their environments. One commented "... the area has changed out of all recognition. We daren't even canvass in some parts", whilst another observed "It's an uphill struggle here... we have our old faithfuls but you can't get new ones and the old ones get older". The Chairman of a beleaguered Association with a militantly Left Wing Council said "some people will whisper round the door at you and say they're supporters but we won't tell the neighbours will we?". Generally, the more hospitable and promising the environment, the more members. The very safeness of the environment may depress membership levels in some true blue constituencies. Nevertheless, the overall trend is clear. Membership varies according to electoral category.

Having established the existence of a membership gradient across the electoral categories employed in this study, the relationship of individual Association's membership figures to centrally prescribed membership targets is now examined. The aim, of course, is to establish not only the performance of participating Associations in relation to those targets but also to see which electoral categories, if any, are successful in attaining them.

Membership Targets

Since the early 1980's, the Conservative Fund Raising Unit in Central Office has urged Associations to aim for a membership figure equal to 25 per cent of the Conservative vote. The membership figures of the participating Associations as a percentage of the 1983 General Election vote are presented in Table 2.4 below.

Association	Membership as % of Conservative Vote, 1983	Association	Membership as % of Conservative Vote, 1983
A	3.50	K	1.70
B	2.56	L	1.09
C	16.33	M	1.60
D	3.56	N	3.65
E	3.58	O	6.80
F	1.79	P	1.17
G	1.72	Q	1.95
H	1.26	R	2.24
I	8.88	S	0.43
J	1.86	T	0.56

Table 2.4: Membership of Participating Associations as Percentage of Conservative Vote, General Election 1983.

The mean and median averages for each of the four electoral categories are presented in Table 2.5 below.

	Safe	Marginal (Con Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Ave.	5.91	3.10	2.97	1.27
Median Ave.	3.56	1.79	1.70	1.17

Table 2.5: Membership as % of Conservative Vote, General Election 1983 - Mean and Median Averages.

As Table 2.4 demonstrates no Association's membership begins to approach anywhere near 25 per cent of the Conservative vote. Indeed, only one Association (Association C) achieves even double figures. Again, the picture is of considerable variation within electoral categories and of overlap between these categories. Individual seats score percentages which exceed levels found in seats in more promising conditions. Nevertheless, overall, an unambiguous though shallow gradient

through the electoral categories is revealed by Table 2.5. The shallowness of the decline is directly attributable to variations in the size of the Conservative vote in the different electoral categories. In 1983 this averaged 29491 in the safe seats, 20728 and 15916 in the two marginal categories and 10087 in the unwinnable seats. The target is thus reduced, in absolute numbers, the less favourable the environment. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to alter the relative position of each electoral category.

Interestingly, only two Chairmen (Associations D and I) were able to identify correctly the centrally prescribed membership target of 25 per cent of the Conservative vote. The other eighteen appeared unaware of its existence, pointing to a major failure in the Party's centre - local communications. There may be a number of reasons for this. The figure has not been well-publicised by Central Office. The communication problem may have been compounded by the fact that no less than seven Chairmen were in their first period of office. High turnover of Association officers, leading to a lack of continuity and expertise, was identified as being organisationally disruptive and unhelpful by several interviewees from outside the participating Associations.

Significantly, no less than five Chairmen volunteered the information that their Treasurers were probably aware of the existence of a membership target although they were emphatic that it had neither been reported to them nor to their Executive Council. Although it was not possible to confirm or refute the suggestion that their Treasurers were better informed on the subject, it is not irrelevant to observe that the overwhelming impression conveyed by discussions on this and other topics was that, in many Associations, very little Central Office material is systematically circulated among Association officers and even less is routinely reported to Executive meetings. Information from the centre appears often to remain with recipients who fail to draw it to others attention, either from lack of method or because they judge it irrelevant or inappropriate.

The Chairmen certainly thought the target membership figure inappropriate and wildly excessive. The only exception was the Chairman of Association I in the Marginal (Con. Held) category with 1700 members amounting to 8.88 per cent of the 1983 vote. He approved, not because he thought it attainable but because it "presented everyone with a target to aim for". However, he confessed

that the possibility of reaching such a figure was viewed with scepticism by most within the Association, a fact which tended to undermine its utility as an objective.

However, although only one Association operated, however symbolically, with the centrally prescribed membership target, two other Associations operated with membership targets of their own. These were Association E in the Safe category and Association L in the Marginal (Other Held) category. In the former, the target was 10 per cent of the local government vote in each branch and, in the latter it was 5 per cent of the General Election vote. Association E had a total Conservative vote at the last local government elections held before the interview of 9975. Its membership of 977 thus amounted, overall, to 9.79 per cent of the vote, virtually meeting its self-imposed target. The 200 members in Association L fell well short of the 916 members required by its 5 per cent target. Interestingly, the Chairman of Association E invoked Drucker's concept of 'management by objectives' (56) commenting that "no organisation can go anywhere if it doesn't know where it is going".

The research was carried out well in advance of Campaign '88 which, apparently recognising that a 25 per cent target was inappropriate, urged Associations to undertake a membership campaign with the aim of achieving a membership equal to their quota assessment based on the percentage of the poll achieved by each Association at the last parliamentary election. The total membership of Associations in each electoral category is compared with the categories overall 'quota equivalent' target in Table 2.6 below (individual Associations cannot be shown since their identity could be traced through their quota figures). The quota figures employed in Table 2.6 were those in force at the time the membership figures were collected.

Electoral Category	Mean Average Quota	Median Average Membership	Membership as % of Quota
Safe	5539	1814	32.75
Marginal (Con. Held)	2298	743	32.34
Marginal (Other Held)	1070	460	43.10
Unwinnable	626	136	21.73

Table 2.6: Association Membership as % of 'Quota Equivalent' Target.

As Table 2.6 demonstrates, no electoral category reached its 'quota equivalent' target. In fact, individually, eleven Associations had a membership of less than 25 per cent of their 'quota equivalent' target. Seventeen had less than 50 per cent. These figures, though gathered some twelve to sixteen months before the launch of Campaign '88, strongly suggest that the vast majority of participating Associations were, on any realistic assessment, unlikely to reach the membership target set for them by Campaign '88.

Table 2.6 above showed mean average membership as a percentage of mean average quota assessment for each electoral category. In Table 2.7 below, both mean and median averages are displayed.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Ave.	32.75	32.34	43.10	21.73
Media Ave.	24.15	16.97	29.32	17.36

Table 2.7: Association Membership as Percentage of 'Quota Equivalent' Targets - Mean and Median Averages.

As Table 2.7 shows, the mean and median averages by electoral category do not reveal the clear gradients found in previous tables. The formula (57) results in substantial quota assessments for seats in the Safe category where the Conservative Party has both a high proportion of the poll and, usually, a high number of individual voters since they are mostly rural or semi-rural constituencies with large electorates. Thus, in 1983 the mean average percentage of the poll in the seats in the Safe category was 53.86 per cent (voters 29491). In contrast, the mean average percentage of the poll in 1983 in the two marginal categories was 40.38 per cent and 34.78 per cent respectively (voters 20728 and 15916). The combination of these two reinforcing factors pushes the quota assessment in these categories downwards just as they push it upwards in safe seats. This situation is repeated in the Unwinnable category. Here, the mean average percentage of the poll was 24.31 per cent in 1983 (voters 10087). The combination of these factors forces the quota figures sharply downwards once again. Thus, as a result of the quota formula, both types of marginal seats and unwinnable seats fair much better in terms of the Campaign '88 membership target than they do when simply measured against the Conservative vote.

No seats in the sample came anywhere near either of the two centrally prescribed membership targets but the differences between electoral categories remained distinct and observable at least when measured simply against the Conservative vote. The next section examines whether similar differences can be seen in respect of subscription levels.

Subscription Levels

The gradient between electoral categories clearly reasserts itself when members' subscription levels are examined. The average subscription levels reported by the sample Associations are presented Table 2.8 below.

Association	Average Subscription Level	Association	Average Subscription Level
A	£4.00	K	£1.50
B	£4.00	L	£2.50
C	£5.60	M	£0.50
D	£5.30	N	£2.25
E	£4.50	O	£4.00
F	£2.00	P	£12.00
G	£3.50	Q	£4.20
H	£3.50	R	£2.00
I	£7.00	S	£2.00
J	£3.00	T	£1.00

Table 2.8: Associations' Average Subscription Levels.

The resulting mean and median average subscription levels by electoral category are shown in Table 2.9 below.

	Safe	Martinal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Ave.	5.28	3.80	2.15	4.22
Median Ave.	5.60	3.50	2.25	2.00

Table 2.9: Subscription Levels - Mean and Median Averages

As Table 2.8 shows average subscriptions ranged from £12 down to 50p. The £12 average subscription was, in fact, enjoyed by an Association in the Unwinnable category with only 105 members. This seat is located in an unpromising metropolitan area, dominated by an aggressively Left-Wing council. However, small areas are 'gentrified' and the local party is virtually run by a group of young professionals whose subscriptions are substantial. Association I, a joint-second in the 'subscription league' with £7 draws heavily on similar professional support but in much greater numbers. In two wards, the members of which the Chairman affectionately described as "our Yuppies" the average subscription was then "at least £20 and going up all the time". In contrast, the lowest subscription level of 50p was found in Association M in the Marginal (Other Held) category. Nevertheless, although there is considerable variation in Associations' subscription levels, the overall trend is clear. Subscriptions tend to increase the stronger the Conservative position. Average subscriptions decrease the less favourable the electoral environments although, once again, there is a certain amount of overlap where individual seats are concerned. The mean average gradient in Table 2.9 is distorted by Association P but the median average gradient is unambiguous. Interestingly, the distinction between the two marginal categories is maintained.

None of the interviewees were surprised that subscription levels varied according to electoral category. All were agree that, broadly, socio-economic reasons were the cause of variations. The Chairman of Association T said "we can't go around asking for a lot, it's just not that sort of area". These sentiments were echoed by the Chairmen of Associations L, K, and S. The Chairman of Association C, a safe seat, had an equally well-developed sense of what constituted the 'right' subscription level

"They (subscriptions) come in all shapes and sizes of course..... but you know round about what the right level is..... in our constituency we ask for a decent figure. It's horses for courses".

This 'feel' for the appropriate average seemed to be the guiding principle regarding subscriptions, rather than the central target of £5. By and large, Chairmen were well-informed about its existence although a substantial minority, six in number, were unable to correctly identify the figure. Only two Chairmen (A and B) claimed that their Associations operated with this target. The

average subscription level in both Associations was £4. However, it is likely that this figure simply reflects the financial potential of their very similar localities both of which yielded an average subscription round about the central target figure.

Chairmen from a number of Associations in all electoral categories spoke of the periodic need to exert some upward pressure on subscription levels. However, the aim was not to reach a target but to compensate for any decline in the value of existing subscription income. Subscribers would, in the words of one Chairman, "be gently asked to pay a little more but not more than we can reasonably expect". Four Associations (A, B, G and I) did follow central advice and publicised other parties' subscription levels in their membership and recruitment literature. This was regarded as a good way of encouraging subscribers to pay a little more. The £5 target thus appeared to have little direct impact on the sample Associations. Whatever the electoral category, Associations appeared to operate with a clear idea of a subscription level appropriate to their locality. However, there may be an indirect impact. Most Chairmen were generally aware of the need to ensure that subscriptions did not diminish in value and this might be attributable to the centre's emphasis on, and publicity about, subscription levels.

These levels, like the other membership issues reviewed thus far, varied according to electoral category. However, in themselves, subscription levels say very little about the centrality of membership issues within Associations - a topic already raised peripherally in 'Membership Numbers' above. This important topic is examined in the next section.

Membership as a Corporate Issue

Measuring the centrality of membership issues is obviously a difficult task. However, an attempt was made to assess the importance which participating Associations gave to this subject. This was done in the questionnaire by asking for information on (i) the type of membership records maintained by participating Associations and (ii) the frequency of membership reports to Associations Executives. It is suggested that the former is an important indicator of an

Association's structural capacity to organise and monitor membership-related activities and that the latter is some evidence of concern and interest in the subject.

The questionnaire revealed that there are three basic kinds of Association membership record systems:

- (i) 'branch only' records
- (ii) branch records plus a central manual register and
- (iii) wholly centralised computerised registers.

In the first system, each branch within an Association maintains its own records and this results in membership data being fragmented among peripheral organisational units. Under this system Association officers are totally reliant on the branches for membership data, the renewal of existing members and the recruitment of new ones. In the second system, a central manual register is maintained using membership card counterfoils from the branches. Sometimes, the central register is simply the counterfoils filed in alphabetical order under branch headings. Alternatively, the information on the counterfoils is transcribed onto record cards or into a book. Here, the focus of membership responsibilities is still located in the branches but Association officers are provided with an overview of the membership situation. If total numbers are falling or there appears to be a special problem in a branch they have the data to initiate discussions, help arrange campaigns and so on. In contrast to 'branch only' records and central manual registers, a Computerised central register removes most membership responsibilities from the branches. Once the total Association membership is on file, renewal notices can be sent out in batches as members fall overdue. Branch responsibility is then limited to calling on members who do not respond to these renewal letters and perhaps delivering any subsequent reminders which an Association may chose to send. Similarly, the emphasis in recruiting activities tends to shift to direct mailing from the centre with, perhaps, branch members having a 'follow-up' function.

The distribution of these three different record systems is shown in Fig. 2.1 below.

Association	Central Computer Branches	Central Manual/ Only	Branch
A	X		
B		X	
C	X		
D	X		
E	X		
F		X	
G			X
H	X		
I	X		
J	X		
K		X	
L			X
M			X
N		X	
O	X		
P			X
Q			X
R		X	
S			X
T			X

Fig 2.1: Association's Membership Record Systems.

Fig 2.1 has a number of interesting features. Firstly it shows that computerisation is well-advanced in the sample Associations. Eight possessed some form of computer facility. Secondly, computerisation was not proceeding at an equal pace in all four electoral categories. Computer facilities were concentrated in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories with only one computer

located elsewhere. Thirdly, 'branch only' records become more common the less favourable the electoral category. One Association in the Marginal (Con. Held) category, two in the Marginal (Other Held) category and four in the Unwinnable category possessed fragmented and decentralised 'branch only' records allowing no central oversight of the membership situation on the organisational periphery. Chairmen from 'branch only' Associations agreed that the prevailing record system reduced the saliency of membership issues within their organisations and made it difficult to monitor branch activity in this area. This was regrettable because of what they (and other Chairmen) described as an almost in-built tendency on the part of many ward branches to neglect membership matters. One Chairman explained the issue clearly

"Getting and keeping members is hard work. Well, most people don't like knocking at doors for a start... it's easier in the long run to have a social with people you know.... all your friends.... than to go to the trouble of getting new people, calling on them when they're watching Coronation Street. That's how the slide starts you know, before you realise it, it's all out of the window and someone has to start again".

Chairmen from 'branch only' Associations emphasised that some of their branches performed their membership duties punctiliously but confessed that others did not. The 'branch only' record system made it difficult to call them to any kind of account. The more neglected the membership position, the more branches tended to resent requests for information and the more evasive and vague their replies to any requests for membership data.

Confirmation that 'branch only' records are indicative of a situation which inhibits the development of an Association-wide, corporate concern for membership issues is supplied by an analysis of the frequency of branch membership reports to Association Executive meetings. Such reports give the organisation as a whole an opportunity to keep track of overall membership numbers, renewals and recruitments. Chairmen were asked how often their Executives received such information. The frequency of reports can be seen in Fig. 2.2 below.

Association	Every Meeting	Most Meetings	Some Meetings	Very Occasionally	Never
A		X			
B			X		
C	X				
D			X		
E	X				
F			X		
G					
H	X				X
I	X				
J	X				
K				X	
L					
M					X
N	X				X
O		X			
P					
Q					X
R			X		X
S					X
T					X

Fig. 2.2: Frequency of Membership Reports to Association Executive.

Fig. 2.2 reveals that seven Association (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) never received membership reports from their branches at Executive meetings. As Fig. 2.1 revealed, these are precisely the Associations possessing 'branch only' membership records. It is suggested that this correlation confirms the lack of a corporate concern for membership issues in Associations of the 'branch only' type which become more common the less hospitable the electoral environment.

Central computerised records are the reverse of 'branch only' systems. They offer the leadership of local parties complete oversight of the membership situation and the opportunity to control both renewal and recruitment activities. The presence of a central, computerised record system is a strong indication that at least the structural inhibitions preventing the development of membership as a corporate issue have been removed. Is membership a more salient and prioritised issue within Associations possessing this system? The frequency of membership reports to Executive Councils in computerised Associations certainly suggests this is the case. As Fig. 2.1 shows, eight Associations (A, C, D, E, H, I, J and O) possessed computerised membership record systems. Five of these Associations (C, E, H, I and J) received membership reports at every Executive meeting. The remaining three Associations (A, D and O) received reports at most meetings. The reasons for this situation, which is the reverse of that found in 'branch only' Associations, are not difficult to identify. A computer facilitates membership activities which can be undertaken with regular ease. Progress will need to be regularly reported to branches for both information and to coordinate 'follow-up' activities. Moreover the data is, of course, available at the push of a button. Seats with computerised membership record systems thus appear, on the indicators employed in this study, to demonstrate a high level of corporate concern over membership issues. Certainly, Chairmen from such seats stressed that reports to their Executives led to frequent debates and discussions on how to develop membership policy and fostered a generally high awareness within their organisations of the significance of membership issues.

The indicators suggest that Associations with 'branch only' records and those with computerised systems have very different levels of corporate concern over membership matters. The position is less clear in seats where a manual central register supplements, and is parallel to, branch records. Fig. 2.1 shows five Associations with this mixed system (B, F, K, N and R). Fig. 2.2 reveals that three of these (B, F and R) sometimes receive Executive reports. The Executive in another Association (K) received reports very occasionally and one (N) was given reports at every meeting. Clearly, a central manual register can inject a degree of 'corporateness' but, as the pattern of reporting shows, this will vary from Association to Association. In one constituency (K), the manual register seemed to be little more than a mailing list for social events, AGM notifications and the like. In others, it was more actively employed to monitor the membership situation but its

usefulness was limited by the time it took to extract information especially if membership details were kept on separate cards and counterfoils. It is perhaps significant that the Association (N) which received membership reports at every Executive had a Membership Secretary responsible for maintaining records which were kept in a bound register showing both running branch totals and numbers falling overdue each month.

These findings suggest an obvious question. What was the level of corporate concern for membership-related issues within those Associations with a computer facility before its installation? This was an issue pursued in some depth with Chairmen and discussions revealed several grounds for concluding that whilst membership-related issues had increased in saliency with the installation of a computer facility, such issues had not, previously, been neglected.

Firstly, five computerised Associations (A, C, E, I and J) had possessed a dual record system prior to the acquisition of hardware, which suggests that this system was not uncommon in more hospitable electoral environments before the move to put membership records on computers got under way. This system can, as suggested above, provide a degree of central oversight and control and increase the saliency of membership-related issues. Secondly, seven of the computerised Associations (A, C, D, E, H, I & J) employed agents and Chairmen stressed their important role in keeping the topic near the forefront of organisational consciousness.

The assertions that membership was accorded some importance prior to computerisation couldn't be checked in any detail but there is evidence that the claims were not unfounded. The relatively recent installation of computers meant that they had not made, as yet, much impact on membership numbers (see 'Membership Recruitment' below) and the membership figures for the computerised seats (see Table 2.2) do not suggest long-term neglect. Moreover Chairmen asserted that, prior to computerisation, their Executives had received membership reports 'often' or, more usually 'sometimes'. An opportunity was afforded to examine the Minute Books of two Association's Executive Councils (E & J) and references to membership matters were found to be not uncommon. There is, therefore, strong grounds for concluding that computerisation in the sample Associations, which was almost entirely limited to seats in more favourable electoral circumstances, had enhanced and not created a corporate concern for

membership-related issues. No evidence of such concern was found in 'branch only' Associations which predominate in less hospitable electoral environments.

Broadly, the data suggests the level of corporate concern over membership issues among sample Associations varied considerably across the electoral categories. It was found to be highest in seats with a computerised, centralised membership register and lowest in those employing a 'branch only' system. Seats with a dual membership record system comprising a central manual register and branch records emerged as an intermediate category, in which the capacity for some oversight and control was exploited differently in different Associations. There is a discernible link between the levels of corporate concern over membership issues and the electoral categories employed in this study since the prerequisite of a fully-developed corporate concern for membership-related issues - the possession of a computer facility - was found to be almost entirely restricted to seats in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. The possession of a centralised, computerised membership register appears vital in raising the saliency of membership issues but these facilities were not found in all electoral categories; a situation which interviewees attested mirrored the position in the Party at large. However, it is suggested that computerisation had enhanced a pre-existing concern for membership matters. Such concern was not visible in 'branch only' Associations in less hospitable environments.

The level of corporate concern for membership issues was found to vary across the electoral categories. How do these varying degrees of concern manifest themselves in the key membership activity - the recruitment of new subscribers? This question is addressed in the next and final section.

Membership Recruitment

Voter turnover is different in different constituencies. For example, Association I has a very large transient population and approximately 25 per cent of the registered electorate is lost each year. The figure in other constituencies varies, with Chairmen placing it anywhere in the region of 5-15 per cent. Although voter turnover is not necessarily mirrored exactly among members, some losses are inevitable because of deaths, removals and plain refusals to renew (a not uncommon occurrence if renewal coincides with a period of political unpopularity or controversy). Some recruiting is

therefore necessary simply to maintain membership numbers. Associations with high membership levels have to work hard to stand still, especially if they are located in areas of particularly high voter turnover.

In the questionnaire, Chairmen were asked (i) how many members had been lost for whatever reason during the previous twelve months and (ii) how many new members have been recruited. These numbers and the net outcomes are displayed in Table 2.10 below.

Associations	Membership			Association	Membership		
	-	+	Net		-	+	Net
A	50	88	+ 38	K	11	5	- 6
B	113	156	+ 43	L	15	-	-15
C	170	280	+110	M	6	8	+ 2
D	50	75	+ 25	N	15	52	+37
E	63	96	+ 33	O	21	66	+45
F	30	118	+ 88	P	6	3	- 3
G	15	13	- 2	Q	15	12	- 3
H	48	79	+ 31	R	10	10	
I	117	397	+280	S	4	2	- 2
J	50	85	+ 35	T	5	3	- 2

Table 2.10: Association Membership - Losses and Gains in Previous Twelve Month Period.

All the Associations bar one in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories had increased their membership levels in the previous twelve months, in some cases quite substantially. The exception was Association G. Net outcomes in the other two electoral categories were much more mixed. Of the five Marginal (Other Held) Associations, two (K and L) had lost members overall. One (M)

showed only a very slight improvement. No seats in the Unwinnable category registered a net gain although one (R) managed to maintain a 'no change' position. The average changes in each of the four electoral categories is shown in Table 2.11 below.

	Safe	Con. Held Marginal	Other Held Marginal	Unwinnable
Mean Average Membership Change	+48	+86	+12	-3
Median Average Membership Change	+38	+35	+ 2	-2

Table 2.11: Changes in Membership Levels over Twelve Month Period - Mean and Median Averages.

When the mean averages are considered, Associations in the Marginal (Con. Held) category did particularly well largely thanks to the efforts of Association I and, to a lesser extent, Association F. However, the net outcomes in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories are broadly comparable especially when the median averages are considered. The significant difference is between this pair of electoral categories and the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories. Overall, seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category replaced their losses but failed to register any substantial increase. The unwinnable seats failed to replace their losses and, hence, showed a marginal decline in overall membership numbers.

The variations in net membership outcomes suggests not inconsiderable levels of organised recruitment activity in some seats and its virtual absence in others. This, in fact, was the case. Chairmen were asked (i) whether organised recruitment campaigns had been held in their Associations in the previous twelve months and (ii) how many members had been acquired in this way. The data is presented in Table 2.12 below. Numbers recruited are shown in brackets in the 'Campaign(s)' columns.

Assoc.	Campaign(s)	Assoc.	Campaign(s)
A	Yes (60)	K	No (N/A)
B	Yes (135)	L	No (N/A)
C	Yes (195)	M	No (N/A)
D	Yes (25)	N	Yes (45)
E	Yes (30)	O	Yes (50)
F	Yes (100)	P	No (N/A)
G	Yes (13)	Q	No (N/A)
H	Yes (65)	R	Yes (10)
I	Yes (350)	S	No (N/A)
J	Yes (75)	T	No (N/A)

Table 2.12: Membership Campaigns in Previous Twelve Months and Numbers Recruited.

Table 2.12 has three interesting features. Firstly, it shows that all seats in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories had undertaken organised recruitment campaigns in the previous twelve months. However, only two Associations in the Marginal (Other Held) category (N and O) and one in the Unwinnable Category (R) had done so. The distinction is, once again, between pairs of electoral environments. Secondly, it is surely significant that six of the seven Associations which did not promote any organised recruitment campaigns in the previous twelve months were identified in the previous section ('Membership as a Corporate Issue') as possessing features indicative of a low level of corporate concern for membership issues. With the exception of Association K, all are 'branch only' Associations. Only one 'branch only' Association (G) undertook a campaign. Thirdly, it is clear from the differences in numbers recruited that the campaigns had varied considerably in scale and intensity, a fact confirmed by Chairmen but difficult to quantify with any precision. The campaigns had included centrally organised, computerised direct mail operations, the delivery of recruitment leaflets and canvassing by groups of activists. Four Associations (C,D,F & I) had definitely recruited subscribers identified by the Central Office direct mail programme but were unable to provide exact figures. Estimates ranged from "probably half a dozen" to "over thirty". Other Chairmen were unsure whether any of their new subscribers had been

recruited in this way. All Chairmen claimed their Associations would act promptly on being sent names and addresses by Central Office.

However, many Chairmen from Associations which had mounted campaigns stressed that the previous very active twelve months as not a typical period. The pattern of recruitment activity and, hence, the sometimes substantial increases in membership were unusual. A General Election was in the offing and Associations were getting into gear with membership drives and other activities with a membership 'pay-off', such as socials, canvassing, leafleting and surveys. As one Chairman put it, "we're getting ready now; just waiting for her to give the word". It is, of course, interesting that a substantial number of Associations spanning the less two favourable electoral categories had not responded even to the major stimulus of an anticipated General Election.

Three Associations (C, H and J) had employed the Book Scheme in their recruitment drives and another three (F, I & N) had purchased recruitment literature from the Party's Print and Distribution centre. Perhaps surprisingly, none of the Associations which had mounted campaigns had employed membership inducements of any kind nor made use of Central Office's Computer Bureau. There appeared to be two reasons for this. Firstly, by and large, Chairmen were ill-informed about the range of membership inducements and services offered by Central Office. For instance, only one Chairman could correctly describe the 'Membership Plus' scheme. Secondly, Chairmen were generally sceptical about the efficacy of the inducements and services of which they were aware. Thus, whilst all Chairmen had heard of the Countdown card, none were particularly enthusiastic. It was generally felt to entail, in one Chairman's words "too much awkward administration". A certain amount of exasperation with Central Office was clearly evident on occasion and was summed up by one Chairman who said

"... All these targets, schemes and whathaveyous. It's all right for them.... I could sit all day and dream up bright ideas. At the end of the day though we have to do all the work and they never help you with that!"

Too much importance should not be attached to this and similar remarks. Most of them were of the 'more in sorrow than in anger' variety. However, they were clearly underlain by some exasperation at being the targets of what Chairmen saw as continual exhortation.

If the sometimes quite substantial increments shown in Table 2.12 reflected an abnormal level and pattern of activity what was the level and pattern in a 'typical year'? Chairmen were generally vague on this topic. Some pointed out that simply maintaining a membership base could be hard work given the public's lack of interest in politics generally and party membership in particular. Even committed supporters are reluctant to join, a fact which Chairmen attributed to the Conservative Party's grip on power which one described as leading to a situation in which "they're too complacent.... they don't think we need them". Interestingly, several Chairmen fondly recalled the dying days of the Labour administration in the late 1970s when, as one put it "we found members growing on trees". The episodic nature of recruitment activities emerged strongly at several interviews and was identified by the more perceptive Chairmen as the reason for not being able to talk sensibly about a 'typical year'. They explained that the topic might come to the top of an Association's or branch's agenda if the inevitable wastage of members appeared significant or if particular local or national political opportunities presented themselves. Clearly, a variety of external political pressures and internal organisational considerations shape the pattern of recruitment activities in most Associations, which respond to these pressures and considerations rather than to a centrally prescribed target.

Overall, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that recruitment campaigns in 'typical years' were largely a 'system maintenance' activity aimed at 'topping up' membership figures and keeping them steady rather than at their continual expansion. Growth in absolute numbers tends to occur intermittently as the result of particular campaigns mounted to exploit an opportunity in the external political environment.

The growing use of computers may go some way toward eroding the 'system maintenance' and episodic nature of recruitment activities. Following their installation, membership issues do tend to become more of an on-going concern partly because they have to be kept fully-employed in order to be cost-effective and partly because they make campaigning so much easier. Nevertheless, successful campaigning will still remain largely contingent on local or national political events and opportunities as one Chairman was at pains to point out

"When you are computerised you can do a lot much quicker than ever before and that's certainly a real incentive. But there's still good times and bad times to do it in... you might have other things more important right then and anyway we'd never campaign at the wrong time politically".

The installation of computers in most Associations possessing this facility was too recent to enable an assessment to be made of their impact on membership levels though interviewees were unanimous in asserting that numbers were growing. However, two Associations (L & I) which had both moved to a computerised membership register about two years previously claimed a growth of 10 per cent and 15 per cent over that period thanks to their use. However, Chairmen from those and other Associations pointed out that the switch to a computerised membership system will usually lead initially to a drop in membership as a result of having to 'purify' inaccurate and outdated membership records. For instance, Association C had 'lost' over 1500 members when branch records were checked prior to transfer to its new computer. This situation is, of course, another indication of the precarious status of membership issues and concerns in 'branch only' Associations.

Chairmen from computerised Associations did not, however, expect massive increases in membership levels believing that 'natural' limits would be set by a combination of prudence (you cannot constantly canvass everyone) and political opportunity. The most important benefit, at least in the short-term, was seen as financial. All attested to increased subscription levels - the direct result of subscribers sending cheques or using their credit card rather than paying collectors on the doorstep with whatever loose change they happen to find in their pockets.

Other interesting insights into recruitment issues were obtained from the questionnaire. Organised recruitment campaigns are, of course, only one of the ways in which Associations can acquire new members. In addition to such campaigns, new members can be acquired by self-referral and introduction by existing subscribers. Chairmen were asked to rank different methods of recruitment in descending order of importance and the results are presented in Table 2.13 below.

Assoc.	Doorstep Canvassing	Mailing/ Literature	Self- Referral	Introduction
A	2	1	4	3
B	1	2	3	4
C	2	1	3	4
D	2	1	3	4
E	2	1	3	4
F	1	2	3	4
G	4	1	3	2
H	2	1	3	4
I	2	1	4	3
J	2	1	3	4
K	1	4	3	2
L	4	3	2	1
M	4	2	3	1
N	1	2	3	4
O	2	1	3	4
P	4	3	2	1
Q	4	3	2	1
R	1	4	3	2
S	4	3	2	1
T	4	2	3	1

Table 2.13: Recruitment Channels Ranked by Participating Associations in Order of Importance.

The ranked preferences in Table 2.13 enable the relative importance of different methods of recruitment to be assessed for each electoral category. The total scored by each recruitment method in each electoral category is displayed in Table 2.14 below. The lower the score, the more important the method.

	Doorstep Canvassing	Mailing/ Literature	Self- Referral	Introductions
Safe	9	6	16	19
Marginal (Con. Held)	11	6	16	17
Marginal (Other Held)	12	12	14	12
Unwinnable	17	15	12	6

Table 2.14: Relative Importance of Alternative Recruitment Methods.

As Tables 2.13 and 2.14 show, mailings and literature followed by doorstep canvassing are the most important recruitment methods in both the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. This pattern is not surprising given the number of Associations in these categories with a computer facility. The same pattern is displayed by the one Association (O) outside these categories with a computer. Self-referrals and personal introductions are the least important methods in all seats in these two categories with the exception of Association G. This 'branch only' Association ranked personal introductions as second in importance.

In the Marginal (Other Held) category, personal introductions become more important. Two Associations (L and M) ranked introductions as the most important recruitment method whilst another (K) placed it second to doorstep canvassing. Personal introductions become even more important in the Unwinnable category. Here four Associations (P, Q, S and T) ranked personal introductions as the most important recruitment channel in their organisations. The only exception was Association R which identified this method as second in importance to doorstep canvassing. The six Associations ranking personal introductions as the most important recruitment method (L, M, P, Q, S & T) are all 'branch only' Associations, lacking visible evidence of a corporate concern for membership issues (see 'Membership as a Corporate Issue'). All six failed to undertake any organised recruitment campaigns in the twelve months prior to the questionnaire being completed (see Table 2.10). The two Associations where personal introductions came second in importance have also been identified as lacking a corporate concern for membership issues.

Recruitment methods are important. Mailings, literature and canvassing are 'outward looking', proactive methods of recruitment whilst self-referral and personal introductions are 'inward-looking' and reactive. As in previous sections, individual seats display individual characteristics and lack of 'fit' where their electoral category is concerned but, overall, a clear trend is discernible. Tables 2.13 and 2.14 show a shift across the electoral categories from proactive to reactive recruitment methods. Seats which have been identified as the least likely to view membership as a corporate issue are, in fact, the most passive and 'closed' where membership recruitment is concerned.

These findings are significant. They strongly suggest the presence of an isolationist organisational culture in many of the sample Associations located in the less hospitable environments. The causes and consequences of this culture will be discussed in the Conclusion. For the moment it is sufficient to emphasise that it cannot simply be attributed to a lack of that important facility - a computer - which makes membership canvassing and renewal less of a chore. Chairmen from computerised seats were unanimous in asserting that personal introductions had never been a major channel of recruitment in pre-computer days, recalling past campaigns on the doorstep or employing leaflets and newsletters to illustrate their claim. It was argued earlier (see 'Membership as a Corporate Issue') that the presence of computers (almost entirely restricted to more favoured electoral categories) had enhanced and not created a corporate concern for membership-related issues. Here is more, albeit circumstantial, evidence for this claim. It appears, therefore, that an introverted and isolationist culture is closely associated with less favourable electoral categories. This hypothesis was confirmed by many interviewees especially officials of the Central Party, who agreed that Associations in less promising environments were prone to isolationism although they expressed surprise at the apparent extent of the culture and the fact that it appeared to encompass a number of marginal seats in apparently promising positions.

Summary

The second half of this chapter has presented data on membership numbers, membership targets, subscriptions levels, the centrality of membership as a corporate issue and recruitment activities. In all these areas variations, linked to electoral environments, have been demonstrated. This link is

not complete. Whatever the topic or issue, individual Associations in each electoral category were found to display characteristics more appropriate to Associations in other categories. Nevertheless, after allowance for individual variations, a trend is clearly observable. The membership-related features of Associations tend to vary according to the electoral environment in which they are situated.

The sections on membership numbers and subscription levels revealed a gradient through all four electoral categories with safe seats having both the most members and the highest subscription levels and the unwinnable seats the least members and the lowest subscription levels. In both these sections, it was possible to discriminate between the two marginal categories. The same situation was found to apply in respect of membership targets, at least when membership was measured against the 1983 General Election vote in the sample seats. Safe seats had the highest levels of membership as a percentage of the 1983 vote whilst seats in Unwinnable category have the lowest, despite the fact that the total vote in the safe seats was much higher in terms of absolute numbers. Nevertheless, no seats were found to have a membership anywhere near either of the two centrally prescribed targets, i.e. 25 per cent of the Conservative vote or the 'Quota equivalent'. Indeed, the data strongly suggests that as far as membership-related activities and issues are concerned, the local level has little knowledge of these central targets and where these are known, they are generally disregarded.

The final two sections sought, firstly, to establish which Associations appeared to regard membership as a corporate issue and, secondly, the pattern of recruitment activities within the sample. Here, the major distinction was found to be between pairs of electoral environments. Seats in the Safe and Marginal (Con.Held) categories were found to have a high level of corporate concern for membership-related issues attributable to the possession of a computer facility, allowing central oversight of membership matters in a way not possible when records and responsibilities are located at branch level. However, it was emphasised that the use of computers had enhanced and not created a corporate for membership-related issues. The seats in these categories were found to have engaged in extensive recruitment activities over the previous twelve months but it was stressed that this recruitment activity was related to the imminent General Election and could not be taken as 'typical'. Indeed, the research indicated that recruitment activities are governed by internal

organisational and external political considerations which means they are essentially episodic even when Associations move to computerised campaigning.

In contrast, some seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category and almost all the seats in the Unwinnable category appeared to have low levels of corporate concern for membership issues. These local parties were characterised as 'branch only' Associations since their branches are responsible for all aspects of membership, allowing the centre no oversight or control of membership-related issues. These seats were found to have undertaken very little in the way of organised recruitment activities in the previous twelve months. Indeed, several seats have suffered a net decline in membership numbers despite the proximity of a General Election.

Finally, it was suggested that the importance of personal introductions as a means of recruiting new members in these 'branch only' Associations indicates the presence of an introverted organisational culture generally unreceptive to, and alienated, from the local environment. The existence of an isolationist culture, specific to less hospitable environments, was confirmed by Party officials who were familiar with the phenomenon. In addition, the evidence of Chairmen from better-placed Associations suggests that this culture is not simply a feature of local parties which lack computer facilities since personal introductions had never been an important recruitment channel in their organisations, even in pre-computer days.

Notes and References

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2. Norton, P. and Aughey, A. Conservatives and Conservatism, London, Temple Smith, 1981, p.213.
3. Butler, D.E. The British General Election of 1955, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., p.107.
4. Report of the Committee on Financial Aid to Political Parties (The Houghton Committee), Cmnd 6601, London, HMSO, 1976, p.5.

5. Labour Party, personal communication, 6 March 1987. The Labour Party was preparing membership figures for the year ending 31 December 1986 and 300,000 was an approximation based on figures then available. At that time, the Labour Party calculated its individual membership by taking the cards ordered by constituency Labour parties and deducting the number of returned cards.
6. Social Democratic Party (SDP), personal communication, 10 March 1987. The SDP had 68000 members in 1982. After the 1983 General Election, it fell to 43000.
7. Liberal Party, personal communication, 4 April 1987.
8. Norton, P. and Aughey, A. op.cit., p.213.
9. Between 1950 and 1966, the chapters on constituency campaigns in the British General Elections series focussed on a small number of seats which were used as 'case studies'. These yield snippets of membership information. In 1951 "a Midland borough constituency" had 6000 members (Butler, D.E. The British General Election of 1951, London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1951, p.174). Four years later, the Barons' Court Conservative Association "had a nominal membership of 5000" (Butler, D.E. The British General Election of 1955, London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1955, p.123). In 1964 Basingstoke housed "6000 subscribing members" (Butler, D.E. and King, A. The British General Election of 1964, London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., p.256). In general, these figures appear to bear out the high 1950s estimates of average Association membership.
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11. Constituency Fund Raising Unit, Money Matters, Autumn 1981, p.1.
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34. Ibid.
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41. Resource Management, Fileplan Plus Integrated Constituency System (Computer Pack leaflet), undated.
42. Conservative Central Office, Constituency Bureau Service (Computer Pack leaflet), undated.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Conservative Central Office, Conservative Newslines, November 1984, p.3.

47. Conservative Central Office, Conservative Newslines, March 1985, p.8.
48. Ibid.
49. The Times, 5 October 1985, p.5.
50. The impact of these by-election defeats in fostering a concern for Association organisational capacity should not be under-estimated. Reference to these defeats was constantly made by interviewees, especially those from the Central Party.
51. Conservative Central Office, Conservative Newslines, March 1985, p.8.
52. Ibid.
53. Conservative Central Office, Conservative Newslines, May 1988, p.1.
54. Ibid.
55. 104th Conservative Conference, Conference Handbook, 1987.
56. Drucker, P. The Practice of Management, London, Heinemann, 1955.
57. An Association's quota is calculated by measuring the Conservative vote as a percentage of all votes cast and reading off the percentage against a scale which yields a 'pence per vote' figure. The quota is calculated by multiplying the Conservative vote by this 'pence per vote' reading. The development of the quota scheme and its application to the sample Associations employed in this study is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3:

MONEY

Central Policies, Prescriptions and Practices

Politics costs money and adequate financial resources at both the central and local levels are important to all parties. The Conservative Party has a sophisticated fund-raising machine which, in addition to raising funds centrally, seeks to encourage local parties to realise their full financial potential. An appreciation of the way this central fund-raising machine has evolved and works today is essential to an understanding of the central policies, prescriptions and practices which provide the context of Association finances.

Pinto-Duschinsky identifies three stages in the evolution of British political finance

"...(1) the aristocratic era which lasted until the general election of 1880; (2) the plutocratic era which was established by the 1890s and continued (for the Conservative and Liberal Parties) until after the First World War; and (3) the modern era" (1)

Political spending was high in both the aristocratic and plutocratic periods. During the aristocratic period candidates spent lavishly, ingratiating themselves with the electorate. Using estimates provided by Hanham (2), Pinto-Duschinsky notes that during the aristocratic period the cost of standing for Parliament was equivalent to "about £20,000 a year... for county constituencies and half that amount for boroughs in February 1980 values"(3). The aristocratic period was brought to an end by increases in the size of the electorate, the Ballot Act of 1872 which introduced secret voting and, most importantly, the Corrupt and Illegal Practices (Prevention) Act of 1883 which placed limits on election expenditure. Thus restrained, political spending fell in terms of cost per vote. Nevertheless, spending remained high during the plutocratic period which was characterised by the reliance of both the Conservative and Liberal parties on donations by wealthy industrialists, which were often made in exchange for honours (4). During the Parliamentary cycle 1874-80 at the end of the aristocratic period, total Conservative

expenditure was about £1,050,000. By the 1906-10 cycle, well into the plutocratic period, expenditure had risen to £1,885,000 but when changes in purchasing power are taken into account, it is clear that expenditure during these two periods "remained at approximately the same level" (5).

However both the balance and type of expenditure was changing. Up until 1880, the central Party had spent little or nothing on national campaigns and about £20,000 - £30,000 per election on central subsidies to candidates. During the plutocratic period, the value and potential of nationally organised advertising and propaganda campaigns was increasingly recognised and the Party even began direct mail operations in the 1920s aimed at selected groups (6), thus anticipating the privatisation-linked direct mailings of the 1980s (see Chapter 2) by over fifty years. In addition, subsidies provided by Central Office to constituency Associations grew in importance. The growth in subsidies was directly related to the consolidation of party politics in the Twentieth Century and the consequent need to promote candidates even in unwinnable seats. The increase in central subsidies began at the very start of the plutocratic period. Thus, "The £20,000 - £30,000 that had normally been given ... to candidates in elections up to 1880 grew to £60,000 - £80,000 by the 1890s" (7)

Although the Conservative Party was reducing its reliance on the donations of individual industrialists in the later inter-War years, full emancipation was only achieved after 1945 when the modern era of political finance began. After 1945 the Conservative Party was faced for the first time by a majority Labour government. Given the economic conditions and stringencies of the time the central Party had little prospect of raising the sums it needed from individual donors (8). As a consequence, it put in train a series of financial reforms designed to (i) exploit institutional sources of finance (especially in the provinces) and (ii) encourage the constituencies to give financial support to the central Party in its by now vital national campaigning role. These reforms are most often associated with Lord Woolton, Chairman of Party Organisation from October 1946 to July 1955 but, without denigrating Lord Woolton's contribution, it is clear that the groundwork for these reforms was laid in the war years and even earlier, under the two previous Chairmen, Sir Thomas Dugdale and the Rt. Hon. Ralph Assheton (9).

Shortly before the outbreak of war, a Treasurers' Department had been set up in Central Office "to deal with the collection of funds for Headquarters and the giving of advice where requested to Area

Councils and constituencies in organising their own financial methods and procedures" (10). The creation of the Treasurers' Department marks the start of a close concern on the part of Central Office with the fund-raising capacity and financial viability of Associations which continues undiminished today. Following the creation of the Treasurers' Department, a Special Finance Committee was established in 1943 to examine in detail how Party income, especially central Party income, could be maximised when war ended. Such an enquiry was needed because "it was becoming necessary to find a larger number of contributors, a job the Party Chairmen and Treasurers could not carry out without help (11). One of the Committee's principal conclusions was that there should be "closer financial co-operation between the Centre and the Areas" (12) a line of reasoning which led, in 1946, to the establishment of the Board of Finance (CBF) which is still a vital part of the Party's fund-raising machinery. It consisted of the Party's treasurers who were normally backbench MPs or prominent figures who were expected to solicit donations, area treasurers and up to five co-opted members (13).

The Board employed a paid representative in each area with the task of soliciting provincial donations, often following up and developing contacts provided by Area Treasurers and other Party members in the regions. Central Office was aware that the extension of central fund-raising into the localities could be construed as 'trespassing' on the financial prerogatives of Associations. The charge was countered by the claim that money so raised "would not normally be obtained by or go to the constituencies" (14). Mackenzie has interpreted this as indicating the CBF's role is to

"... approach well-to-do party members and sympathisers throughout the Provincial Areas who can be prevailed upon to make a somewhat larger contribution to the finances of the central organisation and the Provincial Areas than they would perhaps be willing to make as members of their local constituency association" (15).

This statement is rather misleading since it tends to suggest that donations are essentially personal and individual. However, whilst personal contact is vitally important the CBF is an organisation devoted to exploiting mostly institutional sources of finance. As Pinto-Duschinsky has noted, the organisation was established at a time when "institutional sources of support had become (or were becoming) the

mainstay of both major parties at the national level" (16). The CBF provided the machinery for tapping such sources more effectively.

The CBF still consists of the Party Treasurers (although these are now unlikely to be MPs), Area Treasurers and a fluctuating number of co-opted members. In 1988 all the co-opted members were industrialists. Although it began life as a sub-committee of the Executive Committee of the National Union it is, in the words of a senior Central Office official, "no longer regarded in that way". It is, in fact, an effectively free-standing body, though very closely associated with and linked to the Treasurers' Department. Indeed, the two are often confused even by Party members. Nevertheless, the Treasurers' Department and the CBF are organisationally and functionally distinct in that the Treasurers' Department tends, as one interviewee put it, "to concentrate on the constituency side of finance whilst the CBF canvasses for donations". Another interviewee suggested that it would be constitutionally correct to regard the CBF as being ultimately responsible to the Leader, who appoints the national Treasurers, although for practical purposes this oversight lies with the Party Chairman who is kept informed of fund-raising and the Party's financial position. Despite the fact that the CBF is no longer regarded as a sub-committee of the Executive of the National Union, strong links are maintained with the Party's voluntary wing. In 1988, three Area Treasurers - all of whom are members of the CBF - were also members of the National Union's F and GP Committee.

The creation of the CBF was closely linked to another post-war financial reform, the introduction of the quota system under which Associations make payments to Central Office to support its work. The Special Finance Committee which recommended the creation of the CBF also observed that each and every constituency "should regard it as an obligation of honour to contribute to the party in accordance with its ability to pay" (17). In 1947, the Party Conference considered a resolution stating "That this conference considers that constituency associations should be asked to accept some responsibility for contributing to the central funds of the party" (18). In part, this resolution was designed to support

Lord Woolton's fighting fund appeal for £1 million but also to encourage debate on how best "to place.... the financial structure of the party on a permanently satisfactory footing" (19).

As a result of this debate, the Executive Committee of the National Union set up two sub-committees. The task of the first (Sub-committee A) was to examine party finance. The other (Sub-committee B) was asked to review an allied topic which had long-vexed Party Chairmen and which had been raised at the 1947 Conference - the practice of some Associations of requiring substantial donations of potential candidates - thereby effectively barring candidates without private means and, it was argued, reducing Associations' fund-raising capacity and ability. A third Sub-committee on the employment of agents was also set up as part of the comprehensive review of financial and organisational issues inspired by Lord Woolton.

The Executive Committee appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe to review and report on the conclusions of the three sub-committees. In its report (20), the Maxwell-Fyfe Committee agreed with Sub-Committee A's conclusion that constituency Associations should contribute to the funds of the Central Party, thus endorsing the long-mooted concept of a quota system. As the Maxwell-Fyfe Committee observed, funds were urgently needed to plug the "... gap of some £200,000 a year... between the annual income of the Party at the centre and the sum which it ought to be able to spend". (21) The system recommended by the Maxwell-Fyfe Committee had two important features. Firstly, it was voluntary, "no sanctions should be applied against an association that fails to reach its quota, except encouragement to do better next time". (22) Secondly, a flat-rate contribution was avoided. Constituencies were to be assessed on the basis of electoral performance. These are still key features of the quota system today. Every constituency is vigorously encouraged to meet its quota but overt sanctions are not applied. Lists are circulated showing which constituencies have paid what toward their quota and the annual Conference handbook contains a nationwide listing, constituency by constituency, of assessments and final payments for the last "quota year" which runs from April to April. The idea is, of course, to foster a spirit of competition and to encourage payments from those Association which find comparisons invidious. In addition, a variety of awards are granted to Associations achieving or exceeding quota targets over a number of years (23).

The quota formula is still designed to yield higher payments from stronger seats, although the basis of the calculation has changed. The formula as introduced measured Conservative strength against the principal opposition vote. However, the rise of third parties in the 1970s made the original formula inappropriate. As Central Office has observed, the formula "took no account of the proliferation of other opponents in recent years" (24) and it was amended on 1 April 1981 on the recommendation of a Quota Review Committee set up by the CBF (25).

The new formula takes account of all opposition votes. The Conservative vote as a percentage of all votes cast at the last General Election is calculated and the resulting percentage figure is then matched against a table yielding a 'pence per Conservative vote' figure. There is a minimum quota. The Review Committee recommended that the then minimum of £200 be increased to £400. In 1988 the minimum was £635. Once set, quota targets can and are frequently adjusted by means of percentage increases added to all constituency quotas including the minimum. This means assessments change from year to year as the following examples, selected at random, illustrate.

Constituency	1984	1985	1986	1987
	£	£	£	£
Aylesbury	5650	5740	5740	6314
Sheffield Brightside	500	550	550	605
Brigg and Cleethorpes	2900	3625	4334	4767
Cardiff West	700	875	1315	1447
Richmond (Yorks)	6717	6960	6960	7656

Table 3.1: Quota Assessments in Five Constituencies, 1984-1987 Inclusive.

The cumulative impact of this practice is considerable. For instance, in 1984, the total assessments for Yorkshire, Wales and Wessex regions were £102,486, £45,817 and £223,343 respectively (26). By 1987 the assessments had increased to £123,741 (Yorkshire), £52,790 (Wales) and £260,018 (Wessex) (27).

When the quota system was established it was agreed

"That when an area collector of the central board of finance received a contribution, the first £10 (later the first £50 and from 1977/78, the first £100) was credited toward the quota of the constituency in which the contribution was made. The credit was intended to represent the maximum that the constituency treasurer would probably have received had he been soliciting the money for the local party". (28)

Until 1984 inclusive, Conference handbooks showed the amount each Constituency had actually contributed toward its quota target and a 'total amount' figure. Any differences between these two columns was due to 'CBF credits' as they were called. The 'total amount' figure was used to calculate percentage of target achieved. From 1985 sums actually contributed and total amounts were still shown but only the former was employed to calculate percentages of target achieved. In effect constituencies were no longer credited with CBF credits. Finally the CBF credit system was abolished in the run-up to the 1987 General Election. A Central Office informant explained that

"... it was administratively arduous. You must remember credits were intended to ease the way for CBF representatives into constituencies and make them feel they hadn't lost anything. Actually, they were getting credits for nothing. When it came to an end, nobody said a word."

An agent in a non-participating Association who read the draft of this chapter said that he had been wondering why his constituency was no longer receiving credits and that the reason "nobody said a word" was that "we were not informed".

Major sums are raised annually by means of the quota system, though it does not form the bulk of central Party income (29). Table 3.2 below shows the total quota target figure, actual cash payments, the percentage of targets achieved when CBF credits are excluded and CBF credits for the five years, 1984-1988 inclusive.

	Target	Actual Payments	% Target Achieved	CBF Credits	Total Credits
	£	£		£	£
1984	1757133	852922	48.54	266812	1119734
1985	1771584	891673	50.50	128815	1020488
1986	1794328	930191	52.00	145369	1075560
1987	1973912	1119733	56.81	144984	1164717
1988	2071485	1291710	62.34	-	1291710

Table 3.2: Quota Targets, Payments and CBF Credits 1984-1988 Inclusive.

Table 3.2 shows that total quota assessments rose by about £314,000 in the four year period. Despite this increase, the percentage of target achieved by actual cash contributions rose from 48.54 per cent in 1984 to 56.81 per cent in 1987, notwithstanding the proximity of a General Election or, perhaps, because of it. The trend toward higher average quota payments persisted into 1988 when, overall, constituencies achieved 62.34 per cent of an increased target.

The quota formula is designed to distribute the financial burden according to electoral success. Associations with a large share of the poll are asked to pay more than those with a smaller share. In other words, the formula assumes that the capacity of Associations to pay is directly proportional to their electoral performance. The relationship between finance and electoral environment is, of course, the subject of this chapter and will be examined later both generally and in relation to quota payments. However, some preliminary observations can be made on the relationship between constituencies' electoral status and their quota payments since, as mentioned previously, comprehensive constituency-by-constituency lists of payments are published in the annual Conference handbooks. These show each constituency's quota target and, since 1985, performance in relation to targets based on actual payments made. Moreover, the performance of the more electorally successful Associations can be compared with that of less successful ones, since Conservative held seats are distinguished by bold

type. Table 3.3 below shows the percentage of quota target achieved by Conservative held constituencies and Associations in seats held by other parties for the four years 1985-88 inclusive. Payments are analysed into seven 'percentage of target' columns ranging from 'nil' to '100+ per cent'. Each column shows the number of seats making payments at that level. The numbers are also shown as a percentage of total Conservative held and other held seats. The percentages are in brackets. The total number of assessed seats changes very slightly from year to year since a few are grouped for quota assessment purposes. The seat total was 629 in 1985, 627 in 1986, 626 in 1987 and 629 again in 1988.

PERCENTAGES OF TARGET

	Nil	1 24	25 49	50 74	75 99	100	100+
<u>1985</u>							
Con. Seats	66 (16.84)	126 (32.16)	57 (14.53)	30 (7.65)	34 (8.68)	28 (7.14)	51 (13.00)
Other	59 (24.91)	57 (24.04)	33 (13.92)	10 (4.20)	14 (5.90)	42 (17.74)	22 (9.28)
<u>1986</u>							
Con. Seats	66 (17.16)	119 (30.86)	56 (14.55)	30 (7.88)	25 (6.49)	31 (8.06)	58 (15.08)
Others	58 (23.97)	62 (25.63)	30 (12.38)	18 (7.44)	11 (4.55)	30 (12.39)	33 (13.64)
<u>1987</u>							
Con. Seats	62 (15.95)	124 (31.86)	47 (12.09)	28 (7.19)	19 (4.88)	41 (10.54)	68 (17.49)
Others	58 (24.56)	75 (31.63)	26 (10.94)	18 (7.58)	3 (1.25)	33 (13.91)	24 (10.13)
<u>1988</u>							
Con. Seats	36 (10.19)	106 (30.05)	45 (12.75)	22 (6.23)	5 (1.42)	43 (12.18)	96 (27.18)
Others	47 (17.03)	102 (36.95)	32 (11.59)	10 (3.63)	5 (1.81)	42 (15.22)	38 (13.77)

Table 3.3: Percentage of Quota Target Achieved by Associations in England, Wales and Scotland (Exclusive of CBF Credits), 1985-1988.

Table 3.3 has a number of interesting features. Firstly, the percentage of target achieved by both Conservative held and other held seats ranges from 'nil' to '100+ per cent' with substantial

numbers of seats in each 'percentage column'. However, seats are not evenly distributed between the 'percentage columns'. In each of the years, very roughly, about half the seats in Conservative held and other held categories, either made no payment or payments up to 25 per cent of target. Again, very roughly about one quarter of Conservative held and other held seats achieved 100 per cent or more of target. Nevertheless, there are some differences between Conservative held seats and other held seats. A consistently higher percentage of the latter pay nothing at all, although in terms of absolute numbers more Conservative held seats make 'nil' payments. On the other hand, a greater proportion of other held seats make 100 per cent payments although, in numerical terms, the numbers of Conservative held and other held seats achieving target is very similar in both 1986 and 1988. Furthermore, the record of other held seats in the '100+ per cent' category is respectable. In each of the four years, more Conservative held seats made payments in excess of 100 per cent but, as a percentage of category, these seats were only marginally ahead of other held seats in 1985 and 1986 although the gap widened in 1987 and 1988. Nevertheless, even in 1988, almost 14 per cent of other held seats exceeded quota target.

Quota assessments are linked to electoral success - the larger an Association's share of the poll, the higher the quota assessment. However, Table 3.3 does not reveal a simple correlation between electoral success broadly defined and quota payments by Associations. The data can be explained in several ways. Firstly, and most obviously, it may be that ability to pay does not vary in a crude and proportionate way with electoral success. Secondly, the level of Associations' quota payments may be affected by other factors, especially their readiness to accord priority to what are, after all, voluntary payments. Thus, particular attention was paid not only to participating Associations' financial situation but also to the priority they accorded quota payments. The factors affecting the level of quota payments made by participating Associations are analysed in detail later in this chapter.

Quota payments represent money raised by Associations but not spent by them in their localities. However, by far the greatest proportion of funds is both raised and spent within constituencies. Local Associations do not normally submit copies of their accounts to Central Office but, according to well-informed sources, the sum raised by Associations in the year 1988-1989, exclusive of quota payments, "was about £10 million". This is a global figure which, it is claimed, includes most of the money raised

at branch level. In the past, most of the money raised by an Association's branches was retained by them, principally to pay for local government campaigns. Increasingly, such campaigns are funded by Associations themselves, in order to provide consistency in literature and approach and to save money with bulk printing orders. Branch shares of this expenditure are paid for with monies remitted to the central Association and which appear in its accounts. Thus, only a very small proportion of Associations' total cash resources fail to find their way into central accounts. In 1982, the Constituency Fund Raising Unit estimated the total annual income of Associations (exclusive of quota payments) to be £7.5 million (30). Thus, Associations appear to have increased their income by 25 per cent between 1982 and 1988. With 633 seats in England, Wales and Scotland, the £10 million yields an approximate average of £15,800 'internal finance' per seat. If the total 1988 quota payment is added in, the average income per seat becomes £17,800.

At the beginning of the 1980s the Constituency Fund Raising Unit suggested that an income of £31,571 was desirable for the average seat (31). In 1986 the Unit noted that "a marginal or Conservative held seat needs a minimum of £37,500, to be a fully effective political unit" (32). In exhorting Associations to maximise income it stressed:

"... top constituencies have set themselves income targets of £75,000 for 1986. Growing numbers of successful Associations will break the £50,000 income barrier this year. Many well-organised, high membership constituencies will top £40,000" (33)

By 1989, the figure of £37,500 had, according to an interviewee, been increased to £50,000. However, this was the central Party's estimate in respect of a rural safe seat. According to the same interviewee, two such seats had recently broken the £100,000 annual income barrier and "a substantial number" were reaching or exceeding £50,000 per year. Less well-endowed Associations (suburban areas were specifically mentioned) "might be managing on £30,000 a year". At the other end of the scale entirely, some inner-city seats "have an annual budget of no more than a couple of thousand". Clearly, any estimate of average Association income hides very wide fluctuations indeed and the differences are broadly attributed by Party managers to electoral environment.

Generally speaking the fund-raising capacity of local Conservative parties is considerable and is largely the deliberate result of measures introduced by Central Office after World War Two. These measures, which included the quota system, sought to stimulate Associations' fund-raising capacity by (i) increasing direct financial demands on them and (ii) removing subsidies. The quota system requires Associations to contribute to the upkeep and support of the central organisation whilst, at the same time, starving them of the industrial contributions now received by the CBF. Other measures which increased financial pressure on local parties included a ban on candidates making contributions to their election funds and severely limiting the subscriptions which candidates and sitting Members could pay to their Associations (34). Hitherto, wealthy candidates and incumbents had been free to virtually purchase themselves a seat - a practice which removed any incentive for their local parties to be financially active. Lord Woolton had little doubt that reform of the old system was vital, observing in his 'Memoirs' that "the organisation of the party was weakest in those places where a wealthy candidate had made it unnecessary for the members to trouble to collect small subscriptions". (35)

Finally, central subsidies to Associations which had grown during the plutocratic period of political finance, were sharply reduced. In 1901-10, grants totalled £10,311 or 14 per cent of Central Office's total routine expenditure (36). In 1925, grants amounted to £26,941 which, again, constituted 14 per cent of routine expenditure (37). In contrast

"... a study of the parliamentary cycle leading up the general election of 1970 has suggested that financial grants to constituencies by Central Office between April 1966 and June 1970 totalled only about £200,000 - that is about 4 per cent of Central Office expenditure" (38).

The increasingly trivial scale of constituency grants can be gauged from the fact that, in the non-election years 1966-1967, seventy-nine grants were made averaging £472 each. Only ten were made to Associations in Conservative-held seats (39). In 1970, an election year, six per cent of Central Office campaign expenditure was made up of grants to constituencies (40). By 1970 grants had fallen to two per cent of precampaign and campaign expenditure (41). By 1987 they had fallen even lower. In that election year, the Party's national organisation spent a total of £9,028,000. Grants to constituencies totalled a mere £137,000 or 1.5 per cent (42). Direct grants are now miniscule but the central Party

argues that central expenditure in general and quota income in particular provides substitute benefits.

In 1983, it stated that

"Seventy nine pence of every pound spent by Central Office goes into services which support constituency activities. A further 8p goes into the important national publicity and media operations. And only a small proportion - 13p in the pound - is spend on the more specialised political research and Parliamentary services". (43)

This argument is, of course, perfectly legitimate but it is not one which always impresses Association officers.

Faced with major financial demands, engineered in large part by the central party which denies them direct subsidies, Associations which seek to fulfil their quotas and maintain an active local presence are perforce obliged to give considerable attention to fund-raising. The subject is, of course, closely related to membership issues on which Central Office provides much detailed advice and support (see Chapter 2). However, guidance on fund-raising 'proper' by means of social events of every kind is also made available. For instance, a guide to fund-raising specially written for Associations is available (44) and both 'Money Matters' and 'Conservative Newslines', (the Party newspaper) regularly carry fund-raising features and act as vehicles for disseminating information on financially rewarding projects of every kind. A survey of these two publications covering a six month period (March - August 1987) identified a total of 179 separate items on auctions, sponsored events, race-meetings (on video) dances, buffets, coffee mornings, meals and other social events of every conceivable kind.

The kinds of events reported in 'Money Matters' and 'Conservative Newslines' range in size from the very small from the very large indeed. The first edition of 'Money Matters' carried news of a 'brunch' organised by a Nottingham Association in an Italian restaurant which raised £100. (45) In 1986 the Beaconsfield Association described as "one of the largest fund-raising Associations in the country... budgeting for an income of £100,000 next year" ran a 'men only' dinner with amateur boxers entertaining the guests at the meal and, on the same night, a 'women only' fashion parade (46). In 1982, the South Oxfordshire Conservative Association established a Conservative Wine Society. A firm of wine importers agreed to offer a selection of wines to members at discount prices with the

Association being paid a commission on sales turnover (47). The ladies of Blackpool North assembled a recipe book - 'Tory Tastes' - which made a profit in excess of £1,000 (48). The Lincoln Association stages an annual 'Pony Express' on Carholme Racecourse. In 1984 it netted a profit of "over £1100" (49). In 1987, the Bridgewater Association's Christmas Fayre raised £2,000 (50). The Somerton Frome Conservative Association's Summer Ball raised enough money to purchase a computer (51). Since 1982, the Constituency Fund Raising Unit has distributed an annual 'Fund Raising Pack' at Conference time containing guidance on fund-raising and publicising successful initiatives of this kind from around the constituencies.

Of course, not all non-membership income comes from social events and Associations are encouraged to exploit other sources of income. Desk diaries and Year Books, in which advertising space is sold to local businesses, are an important source of income for very many Associations although selling space is said to entail a lot of hard work. One Association known to the author has solved the difficulty of selling advertising space to local businesses by getting a sympathetic sales representative to approach potential advertisers on his rounds. As an advertising medium, Association diaries and Year Books are of strictly limited value - a fact which many subscribers recognise. However, they are a method by which businesses can make, in effect, a non-taxable donation to their local Conservative Association.

Regular draws are also a feature of most Associations. Depending on the number of subscribers these are known as 100, 200 or even 300 clubs. For an annual sum, subscribers (usually active or semi-active members of their Associations) have a chance to win a major prize once or twice a year and smaller sums each week. A 200 club in a non-participating Association known to the author has a typical prize structure. A first prize of £500, a second prize of £150, a third prize of £75 and five fourth prizes of spirits are drawn once a year. In addition, a weekly prize of £10 is also drawn. Profits from such draws are not insubstantial. The law does not permit Associations to give back in prizes more than 50 per cent of receipts and, in the example quoted, the local Party is currently netting an annual profit of over £1,000.

Other sources of Association income are the recently introduced Blue Rosette scheme and the much older Conservative Supporters Club (CSC). An interesting feature of both these schemes is that they are, essentially, joint centre-local fund-raising exercises. Blue Rosette is a direct mail order operation

run by Central Office with commission on sales going to Associations. It was launched in December 1986 to provide "a service to our members and Associations as well as creating additional funds for the Party" (52). A catalogue offers products including stick pins with the party logo (enamel £1.75 and 'gold colour' £2.75), tea mugs emblazoned with 'Tory Tea', 'Blue Rosette Casual Wear' (jogging suit with logo £12.95) 'Rosette Perfume' ("very sophisticated feminine fragrance"), and a tenth anniversary plate "to honour the greatest leader of our time", costing £49.50. The most expensive item (£395) in the 1988 catalogue was a Party logo brooch in "sapphires, diamond and barquette rubies set in 18 carat gold" (53). Brochures are either sent by Blue Rosette to addresses supplied by Associations or distributed by local parties. Associations receive a commission of 5 per cent on all goods sold in their constituencies after a minimum turnover of £500. Associations are free to purchase "all brochure items at a 10 per cent discount with diaries and Christmas cards at special prices" (54). They can then re-sell these products if they wish. The launch of Blue Rosette was followed within a month "by the sale of over £100,000 worth of products and the distribution to constituencies of over half a million brochures and order forms" (55).

The Blue Rosette operation is linked to the 'Membership Plus' package outlined in Chapter 2. In addition to other benefits, 'Membership Plus' subscribers receive quarterly mailings of Blue Rosette literature and the Blue Rosette organisation attends to "all the administration (of 'Membership Plus') so freeing the local office resources for other political activity" (56). In 1988, Blue Rosette extended its role vis-a-vis membership-related matters with the institution of its 'Bulldog Club'. For £35, members receive a medal commemorating the 1987 General Election victory, a Countdown card and directory (see Chapter 2), a membership card with a hotline number ("your direct line to important developments of (sic) Conservative Party policy") plus a promise of "regular, exclusive briefings, sent direct to you in your own home, giving the Party Chairman's view of current progress and planning" (57). With subscribers' permission £10 of each £35 subscribed to the Bulldog Club is passed on by Blue Rosette to the appropriate local Association.

As a fund-raising exercise, Blue Rosette is designed to benefit both the central Party and local Associations but it is, as yet, a relatively small-scale operation compared with another collaborative fund-raising exercise - CSC. It is worth looking in some detail at the workings of this scheme, not only

because it has raised one and a quarter million pounds over the last fifteen years but because it was found to be of central importance in several of the participating Associations with subscribers forming a pool of 'quasi members', most of whom do not appear in Associations' membership lists. The CSC is registered to promote lotteries designed to help Conservative Associations improve their income. It is now fifteen years old and has proved successful in assisting local parties to broaden their financial base and in the words of one informant "end the situation where a small number of active members struggle to raise funds by taking money out of each other's pockets".

There are two main lottery draws each year, one on Derby Day and one at Christmas. The first prize in each draw is £2,000 with second, third and fourth prizes of £500, £250 and £100 respectively. There is also a range of consolation prizes. However, a purchaser's ticket also participates in a series of fourteen weekly draws following each of the main events. The first, second and third prizes for these draws are £200, £100 and £50 respectively. Tickets for each series of fifteen draws cost 50 p each and are offered in books of five costing £2.50. Associations and the central Party both benefit from constituency sales of CSC lottery tickets with Associations keeping 75 per cent of the proceeds and the lottery organisers 25 per cent to cover prizes and expenses. Until 1983, all receipts were remitted to the lottery organiser who is currently (1988) the Constituency Finance Adviser in the Constituency Fund Raising Unit, who then returned an Association's share. However, Associations now retain their share and send 25 per cent of the proceeds plus counterfoils to the organisers. A total of 150 constituencies are currently participating in the CSC and, since its inception, local parties have benefited by £971,000. This figure was expected to pass £1M by the end of 1987.

Some Associations generate very substantial amounts from lottery sales. In the 1984 Derby Draw, the Suffolk Coastal Association sold tickets to the value of £6,518. In the 1985 Christmas Draw, Ruislip Northwood sold tickets to the value of £5,670, Beaconsfield, £5,302 and Bromley Ravensbourne £5,127 (58). Suffolk Coastal Association's record was broken in the 1986 Christmas Draw when Croyden South sold £7,012 worth of tickets and "Beaconsfield more than doubled their previous best with an astonishing £11,083" (59).

The Constituency Fund Raising Unit offers comprehensive advice on how to achieve the best results from the lottery. It recommends that £5 worth of lottery tickets (two books) should be sent by post to

members and to householders identified on canvass returns as Conservative supporters. It is essential that non-member households are included in any sales drive since the whole point of the exercise is to tap new sources of financial support and the CSC has found that Conservative supporters who do not wish to join the Party will help by purchasing lottery tickets and selling them among their family and friends.

Posting the books to members and supporters costs money but is recommended, since experience shows that it is often difficult to organise a simultaneous delivery with voluntary helpers, some of whom may keep the books on the back seats of their cars for several weeks. A white stamped envelope for delivery is preferred to a franked manilla which may be identified by recipients as a circular or bill. The Conservative Fund Raising Unit advises Associations to enclose pre-addressed but not pre-paid envelopes with the lottery books since this is likely to encourage non-sellers to return unsold books at Associations' expense. Experience shows that a member or supporter who is willing to help the Party raise money seldom begrudges the price of a second class stamp. In addition to a pre-addressed envelope, some Associations provide a list of local addresses at which monies and counterfoils may be delivered. Although the system involves sending money through the post there is seldom a problem with coins, since the vast majority of purchasers sell the two complete books and return either a cheque or a note.

The two lottery books are always sent with a covering letter and the Constituency Fund Raising Unit emphasises that a letter asking for support for the cause will produce far greater sales than a letter which simply promotes the lottery. Associations are advised to send books out in good time for both the draws which means the first week in March for the Derby Draw and the first week in October for the Christmas Draw. These dates allow recipients time to sell tickets and return cash and counterfoils and for Associations to send out a reminder letter two or three weeks before the major draws. The Conservative Fund Raising Unit regards reminder letters as essential as they have a marked impact on returns.

Responses vary with between 5 per cent and 25 per cent of recipient households purchasing/selling the books. A number of factors seem to account for the varying response rate across constituencies. The organisation of the delivery plays an important part. Good quality envelopes and notepaper create the

right kind of impression. The style, content and timing of both the covering letter and reminder letter are important. Secondly, there does appear to be some difference between constituencies in the North and those in the Midlands and the South. An examination of returned counterfoils has shown that the great majority of sales are made within recipients' households and households in poorer areas may find it difficult to afford two £5 'flutters' a year. Nevertheless, the level of response even in such areas can be high and raise very worthwhile amounts. Although 'take-up' will vary between 5 per cent and 25 per cent this only affects the amount of profit Associations can expect to make and not whether a profit will be made at all. The only prerequisite for making some profit from the modest to the substantial is the existence of some canvass records on which to base the first mailing. A response at the very low end of the 'take-up' range can almost always be improved on with better organisation, canvass data and presentation, and because interest in the lottery tends to increase the longer it runs. The CSC emphasise that only 'positive refusals' i.e. those who take the trouble to return full books or otherwise indicate their displeasure at being included in the mailing, should be removed from lists for future draws. In the Unit's experience, 'negative refusals' do not indicate a principled and permanent unwillingness to participate in the lottery and many will eventually purchase either regularly or occasionally if they go on receiving the books. 'Positive refusals' tend to be made for one of two reasons. Committed non-Conservatives who have been wrongly included in a canvas may react strongly to being sent lottery tickets and this in turn can upset constituency organisers. One South Western constituency which promoted a lottery received "30-40 very rude letters" on their first mailing and officers were tempted to discontinue the exercise until it was pointed out to them that, when viewed against the £4,000 plus they had raised, the hostility was hardly important especially since it was articulated by political opponents. As with other kinds of active constituency work, polite Conservatives who are perhaps used to their own closeted company may be over-sensitive to the inevitable hostility they encounter. The second reason for an 'positive refusal' is a principled objection to lotteries. The organisers of the CSC recommend that, in such cases, Associations should apologise to the offended recipient but point out that had the local Party more active workers, recourse to lotteries would not be necessary. Such an approach can sometimes elicit a donation or result in a new member being recruited.

Even low response rates contrast favourably with the results of membership drives conducted by Associations or by the central Party. In the run-up to the 1983 General Election, a letter from the Party Chairman Cecil Parkinson to identified supporters in marginal constituencies elicited only a 1 per cent - 3 per cent response rate. This figure is commensurate with constituency experience. Membership drives conducted by Associations through newsletter or other literature seldom yield more than a 2 per cent response rate even when the drive is aimed at identified supporters. If it covers all households, it is likely to be lower. According to its organisers, the comparative success of the CSC is that lottery supporters are not being asked to make a commitment but to help the Party by enjoying a "flutter". In other words, they are getting something out of the transaction.

The CSC lottery does help to recruit new members and active helpers. Most constituencies find that some purchasers always come forward and express an interest in becoming more actively involved with their local Association. However, the chief value of the lottery is that it provides a regular source of income from a pool of identified supporters who constitute a kind of unofficial, 'quasi membership' sometimes worth more financially than the body of regular 'signed up' members. As one non-participating Chairman put it "I'd rather have a couple of hundred regular lottery supporters than 500 members most of whom don't pay much or do much either". The same Chairman made the interesting point that the lottery provides a stimulus to canvassing, "It encourages us to canvass and that's not just at election time... we know the more people we canvass the more lottery tickets we're going to sell eventually".

The CSC has recently extended its activities with the establishment of the Conservative Supporters Holiday Club in 1988. When the initiative was launched it was described as adding "a new dimension to Association organisation, and finance" (60). Membership of the club is £10 per year and out of each subscription, Associations receive £7.50 and the Holiday Club retains £2.50. Members participate in regular free lotteries and prizes include a new car, holiday for two, a trip of Concorde for two, 100 free villa holidays in Europe, cash prizes and holiday travel vouchers. Total annual prize value is £53,000. Leaflets publicising the Holiday Club are supplied free to Associations for inclusion in mail shots to members and identified supporters. Clearly, like the CSC draw from which it has sprung, the Holiday

Club is hoping to stimulate the interest of Conservative-inclined voters who need an inducement to contribute to Party funds.

The array of fund-raising activities and initiatives found in Constituencies is certainly impressive. The success of these activities and initiatives can be gauged from the fact that

"... it is often overlooked that most money in the Conservative Party (well over two thirds and sometimes as much as 80 per cent of the total) is raised locally." (61)

The central Party's post-war strategy of forcing Associations to develop their fund-raising potential has paid dividends. However, exhortations to raise money are supplemented by detailed advice on what proportions of income should be drawn from where and how it should be spent. Perhaps the most detailed advice on both income and expenditure is the pamphlet 'Financing an Association' published by the Conservative Fund-Raising Unit early in the 1980s, which is essentially a set of model income and expenditure accounts. It was this publication which suggested that an income of £31,571 was desirable for the 'average' constituency (see above) and this is the figure on which the model income and expenditure accounts are based.

The average constituency was arrived at by taking the average electorate for English constituencies and applying the actual voting percentages for England from the May 1979 General Election. This exercise yielded a hypothetical constituency of 66,297 in which the Conservatives polled 23,750 votes (47.2 per cent), Labour 18,467 (36.7 per cent), Liberals 7,498 (14.9 per cent) and Others 604 (1.2 per cent). In terms of the definitions adopted in this study, this hypothetical, 'average' constituency just qualifies as a safe seat since the Conservative majority amounts to 10.5 per cent of the total poll. The income and expenditure figures for this 'average' constituency are £31,571 and £28,209 respectively. However, it is stressed that

"... different constituencies will produce variations, some much higher, others lower, on the figures shown - these are merely presented as a guide - however they do help to illustrate the need for proper budgets." (62)

Perhaps more significant than the total amounts employed in the model accounts, are the income and expenditure headings and the proportion of total budget each represents. These headings and proportions offer a general guide to the pattern of income and expenditure which the central Party thinks desirable and would like to see followed within Associations. Table 3.4 below shows the headings employed in the income budget and the percentage of budget each represents.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Percentage of Budget</u>
Donations	21.5
Branch Quotas	57.5
Conservative Clubs	2.5
Projects	18.5
	<hr/>
	100.0
	<hr/>

Table 3.4: Suggested Income Headings as Proportions of Budget.

Source: Financing An Association, Conservative Fund Raising Unit, undated, p. 14.

Table 3.4 has four income headings. One - 'Conservative Clubs' - is negligible (63). Of the other three items, 'Branch Quotas' is deemed the most important financially with well over half of an Associations' income expected to come from this source. Branch quotas are financial targets for branches met out of their membership income and social events. Branches include not just geographically-based ward branches but also functional branches such as the Women's Advisory Committee and the Young Conservatives. It is explained that branch quotas are arrived at by adding together a membership quota target and a fund-raising quota target. Membership quota targets are based on the Conservative vote in the ward. No formula is supplied for calculating a fund-raising quota target although it is made clear that this should be linked to the level of ward membership. Thus, fund-

raising quota targets move up and down according to membership levels in the examples provided. Two examples from the ten given will illustrate the recommended method of calculating branch quotas. Ward I with an electorate of 6,491 has 1,363 (21 per cent) Conservative voters. A relatively weak ward of this kind is assigned a 10 per cent membership target and a low average subscription target of £1, resulting in a membership branch quota of £136. This is added to a fund-raising quota target of £128 to yield a branch quota of £264. In contrast, Ward F with an electorate of 10,971 has 6,473 Conservative voters. Since Conservative support is much stronger in this ward, it is assigned a 35 per cent membership target and an average subscription target of £2.80. The result is a membership branch quota of £6,342. The fund-raising quota target for Ward F is £1,900 giving a total branch quota of £8,242 (64).

'Donations' are next in importance with just over one fifth of income expected to come from this source. The heading includes income from three sources (i) individual subscribers and donors whose cash is not credited to branches (ii) diaries and Year Books and (iii) industrial lunches (at which businessmen are solicited for donations). Finally, 'Projects' are expected to net just under one fifth of an Association's income. The items shown under this heading are essentially Association - wide activities and events of a social nature including such things as race nights, annual balls, bazarrs and 200 clubs.

Associations are urged to set themselves an overall income target which is at least 10 per cent above projected expenditure. They are strongly advised never to plan for a deficit. An expenditure budget is provided side by side with the income budget to give Associations an indication of the kinds of expenditures for which they should carefully plan and their relative importance. The expenditure budget headings are shown below in Table 3.5 as proportions of total expenditure.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Percentage of Budget</u>
Personnel	47.1
Administration	13.0
Establishment	14.6
Political Activities	12.4
Euro Constituency	1.4
National Quota	8.4
Interests and Bank Charges	1.3
General	1.8
	<hr/>
	100.0
	<hr/>

Table 3.5: Suggested Expenditure Headings as Proportion of Budget.

Source: Financing An Association Conservative Fund-Raising Unit, undated, p.11.

The major item in Table 3.5 is 'Personnel'. This heading covers major expenditure on an agent's salary and associated costs plus a secretary. The 'Establishment' heading is second in importance though it comes quite some way behind 'Personnel' as a proportion of total expenditure. This heading covers such items as rent and rates, gas and electricity and repairs and renewals. 'Administration' which covers printing and stationery, postage and equipment costs amounts to 13 per cent of the expenditure budget. 'Political Activities' amounts to 12.4 per cent of budget or about one eighth of total expenditure. This heading covers publicity and advertising and local government elections which now occur virtually every year. It does not include General Election expenditure. Fifth in importance is the 8.4 per cent projected expenditure reserved for the annual national quota payment. The other headings are negligible.

The analysis of income and expenditure outlined in 'Financing An Association' is not intended to be definitive. The headings and proportions summarised in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 above are offered as guidelines to encourage Association officers - particularly Treasurers - to plan and monitor their organisations' income and expenditure carefully. Party officials made it clear that, in their opinion, Association Treasurers are too often regarded by both themselves and others as simply book keepers and they fail to involve themselves in the development of fund-raising and financial planning. The model accounts are designed primarily to remedy this situation. But, even as guidelines, they do provide a rough measure against which to set the income and expenditure of Associations participating in this study although, clearly, major variations are to be expected, especially in respect of those participating Associations which do not have an agent. Does income and expenditure in the participating Associations approximate to the headings and proportions outlined above? Are there significant differences? If so, do these appear to be linked to environmental category?

Summary

The Conservative Party places great importance on fund-raising at both the national and local level. In the immediate post-war period the Party developed both fund-raising machinery and a complementary fund-raising philosophy which are still operational. A core aim of the philosophy has involved the self-conscious promotion of measures, by the central Party, designed to promote Associations' financial independence and fund-raising capacity. This has been done by denying them direct financial support and increasing financial demands on them.

The quota system is an important part of this strategy and the annual assessments provide quantifiable targets against which Associations' performance can be measured. Some data on the performance of Associations in different electoral environments is already available in the lists of payments itemised in the back of each annual Conference handbook since these discriminate between Conservative held and other held seats. An analysis of payments over a number of years was outlined in Table 3.3. This showed no simple correlation between electoral success broadly defined and quota payments by Associations, despite the fact that the system is based on the electoral performance of local parties. The quota performance of participating Associations in the four environmental categories employed in

this study, is analysed in the second half of this chapter together with an analysis of other possible factors influencing payment levels.

Local parties are constantly encouraged to develop fund-raising initiatives and activities of all kinds. These include social events and schemes such as 200 clubs, the new Conservative Supporters Holiday Club, Blue Rosette and the now long-established CSC. These last three are, in effect, joint centre-local enterprises raising money for both constituencies and the central Party. The CSC draw is perhaps particularly significant because it can create a valuable pool of 'quasi-members' for Associations whose names do not appear on conventional membership registers.

The Party is prepared to recommend income levels which it regards as appropriate to well-run Associations although it clearly recognises that wide variations, linked to electoral environment, will be found. Detailed advice is available to Associations not only on how much to raise and how to raise it but how to make appropriate financial plans. This advice appears to be stimulated, at least in part, by a belief that some Treasurers are simply book keepers and fail to develop a pivotal planning and initiating role for themselves. These targets, exhortations and guidelines provide the backcloth against which the finances of participating Associations located in different electoral environments can be measured, compared and analysed.

Money: Local Patterns

Associations' income is derived from a variety of sources. Expenditures are made under a number of headings. The rest of this chapter analyses the income (and some expenditure) of participating Associations and seeks to establish whether any such variations as may be found can be linked to electoral environment. The figures employed are derived from the annual accounts of participating Associations for the last complete financial year before the interviews with Chairmen took place. All Chairmen were asked whether their last set of financial accounts contained any special features or exceptional figures. All agreed that they were, in fact, 'average' and some corroboration for this claim was contained in the accounts themselves insofar as they frequently contained comparative figures for the previous year. The exception was money raised specifically for the May 1987 General Election and dealt with later in this chapter under miscellaneous income.

Income is examined in much greater detail than is expenditure, the analysis of which is limited to quota payments. This is because the major items of expenditure identified by the central Party (see Table 3.5) are more conveniently and appropriately reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5 which examine the organisational features of participating Associations, and their political activities. In any case, income is a more central financial issue than expenditure since the latter is dependent on the former which it cannot exceed unless an Association is running a deficit. None of the participating Associations were running a deficit. The accounts do not all cover the same period since the financial year varied from Association to Association, although April - April was the most usual. Fourteen sets of accounts are for financial years ending in the period before the General Election of June 1987. The remainder are for financial years ending after the General Election. Thus the accounts of six Associations include the General Election period which stimulates fund-raising activities. However, it should be noted that this is perhaps less significant than it may appear at first since those Associations whose accounts do not span the General Election were in a high anticipatory state of financial readiness. On the other hand the very fact that the finances of all participating Associations were geared up to the General Election suggests that the figures presented below may not be typical of a non-election year. Comparison with a 'non General Election year' would have been instructive but it was difficult enough to obtain the previous year's accounts from all participating Associations. Moreover, information from other years would have been distorted by the local election campaigns which occur more or less each year in some but not all constituencies. However, whether the figures are 'typical' or not, a comparison of finances in the different political categories will shed light on the nature and extent of any environmental variations.

Total Income

The total annual income of the participating Associations was found to vary widely. Their income figures are listed in Table 3.6 below.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 25389	F 18642	K 9614	P 6607
B 24963	G 20461	L 11614	Q 4311
C 57641	H 22111	M 16500	R 3116
D 26108	I 43962	N 7815	S 1705
E 21835	J 19200	O 14151	T 846

Table 3.6: Total Income of Associations in Last Financial Year

The most financially successful Association (C) had an income of £57641. The least successful Association (T) had an income amounting to only £846. Once again, the data displayed in Table 3.6 shows considerable overlap between the electoral categories. Once again, a gradient is discernible which can be highlighted by calculating the mean and median averages for each electoral category. These averages are displayed in Table 3.7 below.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	£	£	£	£
Mean Av.	31187	24875	11938	3317
Median Av.	24963	20461	11614	3116

Table 3.7: Associations' Income - Mean and Median Averages

Clearly, income levels among the participating Associations fluctuates according to electoral environment. At £31,187, the mean average of safe seats is about ten times greater than that found in the unwinnable category. On the mean average figures, the 'gap' between the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories is about £5000 and this figure does not change substantially when the median average is calculated. Once again, a distinction between the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories is evident. Seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category have, in turn, an income level approximately four times greater than that found for unwinnable seats. In absolute money terms the median average income 'gap' between seats in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories is less than half that found between other categories. The income gradient then falls sharply as the electoral

environment worsens. The total income of all participating Associations amounts to £356,580. This yields an average income for participating Associations of £17,829. This cannot be extrapolated as a national average since the sample is drawn from distinct political categories rather than from the whole range of Associations. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that it is remarkably close to the average £17,800 income calculated by Central Office on the basis of £10M 'internal finance' plus quota payments. None of the income figures took any of the interviewees by surprise. As one interviewee put it:

"It's just about what I would have expected. Look, there's quite a lot of variation between individual seats (points to C, I, M) but, by and large, you can see the differences between what you've called 'electoral categories'. Mind you, it does you good to be reminded how little some poor devils have to get by on. These seats here (points to Associations S and T) how do they manage? Did they tell you? I think some of us forget what they have to put up with and how little they've got to manage on. It would do some of us good to have a spell in Associations like that. That's an idea - what we want is a bit of job-swapping so that everyone gets to know how the other half lives!"

Further confirmation of Central Office calculations and statements comes from Tables 3.6 and 3.7. It was observed earlier that Central Office noted in 1986 that a number of successful Associations were "breaking the £50,000 income barrier" although it was admitted that this figure applied to safe rural seats. Association C is such a seat, located in the true blue Home Counties. It had broken through this 'barrier' two years previously and Association officers confidently expected to report an income in excess of £60,000 at the next AGM. However, other safe seats failed to match this performance. Associations A, B, D and E were found to have a mean average income of £24,573, less than the £30,000 or so which a Central Office informant suggested was the typical income level in suburban areas (see above). In fact, Associations A, B, D and E are all located outside the Home Counties and although they are substantially rural, they do have important suburban components. These figures suggest that it is only the 'creme de la creme' of safe seats which can expect to garner very substantial incomes of the kind publicised by Central Office.

Income accruing to seats in the two marginal categories is, however, well short of the £37,500 which the Constituency Fund-Raising Unit suggested was necessary for marginal or Conservative held seat "to be a fully effective political unit". Association I has an income well in excess of this figure but the average for the remaining Associations (F, G, H and J) amounts to £20,148, about 54 per cent of 'target'. The mean average figure for Marginal (Other Held) seats is even lower, amounting as it does to £11,938. This is only 31 per cent of 'target'. Whether this income shortfall does, in fact, mean that these marginal seats are less than "fully effective" will be examined later in Chapter 5. For the moment, it is necessary simply to note Central Office statements on income levels must be carefully divided into the descriptive and the prescriptive. Figures presented in this section strongly suggest the Central Office estimates of total income are very accurate. However, the prescribed income targets seem to be based on a small number of particularly successful Associations with, perhaps, something added by way of extra exhortation. Whilst agreeing that some Associations meet and even exceed the various income levels promoted by Central Office, interviewees (particularly Chairmen) readily agreed that most do not.

Levels of income clearly vary according to electoral category. From which sources is income derived and do these sources also reflect environmental circumstances? These questions are addressed in the next three sections which analyse the main sources of the participating Associations' income.

Subscription Income

Most Associations receive at least some subscription income centrally from individuals who, for a variety of reasons, prefer to subscribe to their Associations direct rather than via its branches. An analysis of the membership records of one participating Association revealed thirty one such members. Four were people who had once lived in the constituency but although they had moved away, they continued to subscribe, as the Chairman proudly put it, "out of loyalty". These special cases were dealt with centrally so that the Treasurer could write an annual "thank you" letter which was much appreciated. The other twenty seven lived in the constituency. Nine of these appeared to have been people who had not been canvassed, but had themselves contacted the Association requesting

membership. Their names had never been allocated to the appropriate branches but had been placed on a central list. The Treasurer wrote at renewal time or, when appropriate, called personally to collect subscriptions. It was difficult to see why these subscribers had been treated in this way. The Chairman's rather vague view was "it was probably something historical". Perhaps because these people had come forward of their own volition and their subscriptions were larger than the average for that Association, someone had felt they were 'special'. The other eighteen were members of a now defunct branch whose renewals had been transferred to the centre. A similar situation was found to apply in most other Associations.

However, while some subscriptions often go direct to Associations, the greater part of such income filters its way up to Associations' coffers and, hence, central accounts via branch remittances to central funds. As emphasised in the first part of this Chapter, Associations are urged to regularise and codify this process with branch quotas which, in effect, set branches financial targets based on membership numbers, average subscription levels and an expected level of social activity. The extent to which this advice is heeded and branches are set quotas is examined later. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that, however branch payments are organised, they include both membership income and cash raised from social events. This is true even where the central Association has a role in membership recruitment and renewal, perhaps through a computer facility (see Chapter 2). In such cases, money raised is credited to the branches and will then be remitted back to the Association along with proceeds of fund raising. Thus, membership income - apart from any sums received and dealt with centrally - is not readily identifiable in most accounts. The participating Associations were no exception. All showed sums remitted from the branches but in no case was branch membership income separated out.

However, it is possible to establish such income. Tables 2.2 and 2.8 in Chapter 2 set out the numbers of paid-up members in all the participating Associations and the average subscription levels. Together, these tables yield a total membership income figure which can then be set against Associations' total income (see Table 3.6 above) to establish the extent to which membership income is important. Table 3.8 below shows total membership income for each Association and the figure in brackets shows this income as a proportion of total receipts.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 4400 (17.33)	F 800 (4.29)	K 450 (4.68)	P 1260 (19.08)
B 3200 (12.82)	G 1225 (5.98)	L 500 (4.30)	Q 840 (19.49)
C 29640 (51.54)	H 3038 (13.73)	M 101 (0.61)	R 506 (16.23)
D 4770 (18.28)	I 11900 (27.10)	N 1350 (17.30)	S 100 (5.86)
E 4396 (20.60)	J 1200 (6.25)	O 4000 (28.32)	T 70 (8.27)

Table 3.8: Total Membership Income as a Percentage of Total Income.

Table 3.8 shows that membership subscriptions as a proportion of total income were found to vary wildly from a 'high' of 51.54 per cent (Association C) to an amazing 'low' of 0.61 per cent (Association M). Nevertheless a pattern is, once again, discernible as Table 3.9 below demonstrates. This shows means and median average income levels for each electoral category plus (in brackets) the percentage of total income these figures represent.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	£	£	£	£
Mean Ave.	9281 (24.13)	3632 (11.47)	1280 (11.04)	555 (13.79)
Median Ave.	4396 (18.28)	1225 (6.25)	500 (4.68)	506 (16.23)

Table 3.9 Total Membership Income as Percentage of Total Income - Mean and Median Averages.

These figures are interesting. They show subscription income declining, in absolute terms, across the Safe, Marginal (Con. Held), Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories. This reflects the fall in membership and income levels already charted in Tables 2.3 and 2.5. However, when expressed as a proportion of total income, another picture emerges. Table 3.9 shows that subscription income, as a

proportion of total income, is largest in the most hospitable environmental category. Thereafter, it falls to a median average of only 6.25 per cent for Marginal (Con. Held) seats. Another fall, much smaller this time, can be observed in the Marginal (Other Held) category. However, subscription income as a proportion of total income, rises again for seats in the least hospitable environment. Here, subscription income as a proportion of total income rises to a mean average of 13.79 per cent and a median average of 16.23 per cent. Clearly, subscription income is relatively more important in both the Safe and Unwinnable categories. Seats in these two polar environments raise proportionately less income from other sources than do seats in the two marginal categories.

It was emphasised earlier that the central Party has long placed considerable emphasis on fund-raising of all kinds and the Associations themselves have a reputation as formidable fund-raising machines. The next section examines an important aspect of fund-raising activities - branch social events - and seeks to establish how much is raised from such events and its relative importance 'vis-a-vis' total income accruing to seats in the four electoral environments.

Income from Branch Social Events

Like membership income, cash raised from social events has both a central and a branch component. However, the balance is different. Most local parties have a programme of Association-wide social events attended and supported by active members of all branches plus, of course, guests and any of the more 'passive' membership who can be attracted. By definition, these Association-wide events raise larger sums of money than the social events organised by the branches. A Christmas dance or bazaar will raise more than, say, a branch coffee morning or whist drive. However, whilst dances or bazaars raise larger sums they are also less frequent.

Association accounts do not show money raised from social events as a single global figure. The proceeds of branch level social events are, like membership income, buried in the remittances made by branches to the centre. Nevertheless, the figures can be extracted. In the previous section, each Association's total membership income was identified (see Table 3.8). Branch social income can be calculated if this figure (less any membership income received by the centre) is deducted from the total

of branch remittances shown in Association accounts. This assumes, of course, that branch income and, hence, remittances to the centre is composed entirely of membership subscriptions and cash raised from social events. However, such an assumption is not unwarranted. Branches seldom, if ever, have sources of income other than these unless it be a few pounds bank interest. Certainly, Chairmen looked blank when asked if their branches had any other sources of income. As one said, shrugging, 'What else could they have?'

For the purposes of this calculation branch income was held to include amounts remitted to the centre from the Women's Committee and Young Conservatives, where such organisations existed. Both these bodies carry out valuable fund-raising activities in many Associations. Women's Committees are renowned for their fund-raising success. The formula for calculating income accruing to each Association from branch fund-raising events was thus

(Branch remittances plus any amounts remitted by the Women's Committee and Young Conservatives) minus (Total membership income minus any membership income remitted to the centre).

However, it should be noted that this formula assumes that every penny raised is remitted to the centre. It thus fails to take account of (i) money raised and spent by branches and (ii) cash balances remaining in branch bank accounts at the financial year-end. However, it was emphasised in the first part of this chapter, that only a very small proportion of an Association's total income fails to find its way into its central accounts now that campaign expenditure is normally borne by the central organisation. Chairmen confirmed that local government campaign expenditure was, indeed, met out of central funds and that, as a consequence, branch expenditures are usually low. Some money would be kept each year-end by branches as a 'float' but these amounts would normally be in the £25-£50 range. All in all, the formula appears well-designed to yield a good indication of total branch social income.

Income raised by participating Associations from branch social events is shown in Table 3.10 below. The figures in brackets are branch social income expressed as a percentage of the total income enjoyed by that Association. Total income figures were presented in Table 3.6.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 11600 (45.70)	F 4143 (22.27)	K 2711 (28.24)	P 2151 (32.57)
B 10960 (43.91)	G 3906 (19.12)	L 2496 (21.50)	Q 2002 (46.51)
C 22300 (38.75)	H 7411 (32.55)	M 751 (4.55)	R 1611 (51.80)
D 13611 (52.35)	I 17620 (40.16)	N 2516 (32.15)	S 812 (47.61)
E 9281 (42.55)	J 6930 (36.10)	O 5211 (36.90)	T 388 (45.87)

Table 3.10: Branch Social Income as Percentage of Total Income.

Table 3.10 shows the extent to which participating Associations in all electoral environments are dependent on branch fund-raising. In Association D, 52.35 per cent of all income is raised in the branches from social events. All the branches in this Association have printed programmes of events and, following the interview, the Chairman kindly supplied three as examples. Between them, they contained twenty eight events covering a period of eighteen weeks. Each branch had some kind of event every ten days or so. They included talks (at which collections would be made), strawberry suppers, regular whist drives (with entrance fee), regular bingo games (again, with an entrance fee charged), 'bring and buy' sales, bazaars, pic and pea suppers, a November 5th bonfire party and, in the case of one particularly large and active branch, a race night - which raised £437. Table 3.11 below shows the mean and median branch social income averages for each electoral category. The figures in brackets show branch social income as a proportion of total receipts.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	£	£	£	£
Mean Ave.	13550 (44.65)	8002 (30.24)	2677 (24.66)	1394 (44.87)
Median Ave.	11600 (43.91)	6930 (33.55)	2516 (28.24)	1611 (45.87)

Table 3.11: Branch Social Income as a Percentage of Total Income - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 3.10 shows that, like subscription income, branch social income declines in absolute terms from electoral category to electoral category.

Income levels derived from branch social events in the participating Associations point up an important issue. Chapter 2 identified eight seats which appeared to display a well-developed corporate attitude toward, and concern over, membership-related issues. These were Associations A, C, D, E, H, I, J and O. These seats all have high levels of income from branch social events. The link between a high level of corporate concern for membership and membership-related issues and successful branch fund-raising is significant. Firstly, all these Associations have high membership levels (for their respective environments) and, as already emphasised, a strong membership which can support social events is a valuable asset and a prerequisite of success in this fund-raising area. The second point is perhaps less obvious and concerns organisation culture or 'attitude'. It was suggested in Chapter 2 that a broad, corporate concern for membership-related issues is indicative of an outward, proactive stance toward an Association's electoral environment. Socialising, especially at branch level is, by contrast, an essentially introverted and relatively 'private' activity. However, Associations A, C, D, E, H, I, J and O have achieved a profitable balance between outward-looking activities like membership recruitment and more introverted, socially-oriented activities. Clearly, it is possible to do both kinds of activities and do both well. An organisational culture which is outward-looking and proactive in respect of membership-related issues does not preclude successful branch fund-raising nor do activities of this kind necessarily reduce the salience of broader 'political' objectives. When looked at in this way, the reliance of seats in the Unwinnable category on branch social events assumes a new significance. These seats generally accord membership and membership-related issues low visibility and priority (see Chapter 2). At the same time, they raise a substantial proportion of their meagre resources from branch social events - further evidence of an introverted stance *'vis a vis'* their inhospitable electoral environment.

Branch social income plus membership income correspond to the 'Branch Quota' item in Table 3.4 above. The figures in Table 3.4 extracted from 'Financing an Association', indicate that the Central Party expects over half an Association's income (57.5 per cent) to come from its branches. This was found to be the situation in twelve of the twenty participating Associations. As a mean average, the

proportion of total income, branch membership and social income accounted for 68.78 per cent of income in the Safe category and 41.71 per cent and 35.70 per cent in the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories. It rose again to 58.66 per cent for unwinnable seats (see Tables 3.9 and 3.11).

Interestingly, none of the participating Associations operated a fully comprehensive quota system in respect of branch remittances. Some Associations (A, C, E, H, I) set quota targets for some of their branches but these were clearly regarded as approximate and open to negotiation and adjustment throughout the financial year. Their approach *'vis-a-vis'* other branches was more flexible still with them being left to remit money raised as and when it became available. No formal quota target was set against which progress could be monitored. However, Chairmen emphasised that informal 'targets' existed insofar as everyone concerned was aware, roughly, what the branch was 'worth'. The reasons for this mixed approach to branch quotas in Associations A, C, E, H and I were difficult to establish but the situation seemed to be the result of history ('it's always been done this way'), diplomacy (some branches resent 'being told what to do') and deliberate strategy (people reach a target and then 'sit back'). By and large 'diplomacy' seemed the predominant reason, a fact which emphasises the generally delicate and negotiated relationships apparently existing everywhere between central officers and Association branches. In the other Associations no attempt was made to establish branch quotas. Here, the accent was exclusively on unofficial norms and the negotiation of 'acceptable' payments - a process extending over the financial year and governed by branch resources and the centre's financial needs. One Chairman (N) described the delicate process thus

"They (the branches) don't like to be told what to give or to be set what you call targets. We work it out between us as we go along. I think they like to think they are doing us a favour."

Clearly, the organisational culture in many of the participating Associations militates against the kind of financial planning which the central Party would like to see. It appears that this culture, whilst present everywhere, is strongest in the less hospitable environments where no formal branch quota arrangements were found.

The last two sections have examined the amount of income raised by Associations from (i) membership subscriptions and (ii) branch social events. Both the level of income and its relative importance to total revenue has been established in respect of both individual Associations and their electoral environments. Income from subscriptions and branch social events has been shown to decline in absolute terms across all four electoral categories. This is hardly surprising, given the membership gradient demonstrated in Chapter 2. A decline in branch social income has also been demonstrated. This fall seems clearly linked to membership levels in different electoral environments. The less members a seat possesses, the less successful its branch fund-raising.

However, the relative importance of these components of income was found to vary in a less straightforward way. Subscription and branch social income was found to be relatively more important in the Safe and Unwinnable categories where it constituted 68.76 per cent and 58.65 per cent of total income. In the two marginal categories, subscription and branch social income comprised a smaller proportion of total income - 41.51 per cent and 35.71 per cent. Clearly, marginal seats of both the Con. Held and Other Held varieties are generally more reliant on other sources of income than safe or unwinnable seats. The other sources of income available to Associations are analysed in the next section.

Other Sources of Income

Associations derive a considerable proportion of their income from sources other than subscriptions and branch social events. Varied though these sources are they fall under three headings:

- (i) centrally organised social events
- (ii) other centrally organised fund-raising initiatives
- (iii) miscellaneous.

These sources of income will be examined in turn. The earlier section emphasised that income from fund-raising is derived from both branch events and centrally organised programmes. The questionnaire sought information on the number of Association-wide events held in the previous twelve months. The replies are summarised in Table 3.12 below.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
A 8	F 10	K 6	P 4
B 7	G 10	L 6	Q 5
C 6	H 8	M 4	R 3
D 7	I 12	N 6	S 2
E 6	J 9	O 7	T 2

Table 3.12 Numbers of Centrally Organised Fund-Raising Events in the Previous Twelve Months.

As Table 3.12 makes clear, centrally organised social events of all kinds are relatively low in number whatever the electoral environment. They are far fewer in number than branch social events. For instance, Association B with seven centrally organised events had had "over 60" branch social events in the previous twelve months. Association I with twelve centrally organised events had mounted "well over 100" branch fund-raising events in the previous twelve months. The reasons for this disparity are not difficult to establish. Associations - whatever their environment - are clearly limited in the number of Association-wide events they can organise. By their very nature, they need more organising and, in any case, it is both unwise and unprofitable to schedule them too frequently since there is a limit to the support they can command.

The mean annual average number of events is 6.8 in the Safe category indicating an event once every one and a half to two months. This is a very similar figure to that found in the Marginal (Other Held) category (5.8) where the rate of events is about one every two months. However, Associations in Conservative-held marginals hold significantly more events - 9.8 or about one every five to six weeks. The rate (3.2) is much lower among seats in the Unwinnable category, with centrally organised events occurring only once every four months or so. Clearly, seats in the more favourable marginal environment are particularly active fund-raisers at the Association-level, as far as numbers of events are concerned. Such numbers are not, of course, a reliable indicator of the financial importance of such events but the figures are not unimportant. They represent occasions when Association members can come together and meet as a single group. They are an important means of fostering a sense of corporate identity and common purpose and it is perhaps significant that they are particularly

numerous in the Marginal (Con. Held) category where Associations are under special pressure to function as a successful political unit.

What do the numbers of centrally organised events outlined in Table 3.12 above mean in terms of revenue and how important is the revenue from such events as a proportion of total income? Income from individual events such as bazaars, race nights, 'Bring n' Buy' sales and so on is normally shown separately in an Association's accounts. This was the case for all the participating Associations which enabled both the data provided in the questionnaire to be checked and total revenue to be computed. The receipts from centrally organised events of all kinds are summarised in Table 3.13 below. The figures in brackets show the income from central social events as a proportion of each Association's total revenue.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 3614 (14.23)	F 2112 (11.33)	K 2815 (29.32)	P 886 (13.42)
B 3190 (12.78)	G 3800 (18.58)	L 2914 (25.12)	Q 1012 (23.52)
C 3100 (5.37)	H 1801 (8.14)	M 1111 (6.73)	R 781 (25.38)
D 3111 (11.91)	I 4310 (9.80)	N 1916 (24.57)	S 217 (12.73)
E 2716 (12.43)	J 3190 (16.61)	O 1111 (7.85)	T 190 (22.47)

Table 3.13: Central Social Income as a Percentage of Total Income.

Table 3.13 shows income from Association-wide events ranging from a 'high' of £4,310 in Association I to a 'low' of £190 in Association T. As a percentage of total income, revenue from Association-wide social events is lowest in Association C (5.37 per cent) and highest in Association K which had, as the Chairman explained

"... quite a tradition of fund-raising. We've got a very active fund-raising committee and there's usually something pretty good being planned all the time."

Again, the situation in individual Associations varied widely with seats in both the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories raising more from this source than seats in adjacent, more hospitable environments. However, there is a pattern to this form of income which can be seen more clearly in Table 3.14 below which shows the mean and median central social income averages for each electoral category. The figures in brackets show central social income as a proportion of total receipts enjoyed by that electoral category.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	£	£	£	£
Mean Av.	3146 (13.83)	3042 (12.89)	1973 (18.71)	617 (19.50)
Median Av.	3111 (12.43)	3190 (11.33)	1916 (24.57)	781 (22.47)

Table 3.14: Central Social Income as a Percentage of Total Income - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 3.14 shows that, as an absolute amount, income from centrally organised social events is virtually identical in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. Seats in the Safe category may hold rather less fund raising events than do the neighbouring marginals but they clearly make up for this by raising more per event. Thereafter central social income declines, falling to a median average of £1916 in the Marginal (Other Held) category and £781 in the Unwinnable category.

However, social income as a proportion of total income increases in importance in the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories. Seats in the former category hold, roughly, as many central social events as do safe seats and the income derived from these events clearly goes some way toward compensating for their generally low subscription and branch social income.

Central social income though sharply reduced is a substantial component of total income in the Unwinnable category. Clearly, seats in this category are heavily reliant on income of this sort. However, it should be stressed that although such income is important, the average number of centrally

organised social events is lower than elsewhere. This fact underlines again the apparent introversion and fragmentation noted above in respect of branch fund raising in Unwinnable seats (see 'Income from Branch Social Events'). Despite the obvious advantages, members in unwinnable seats seem reluctant to pool their fund-raising efforts in Association-wide social activities.

Revenue from centrally organised social events is supplemented by income from many other kinds of initiatives emanating from, and organised by, 'the centre'. These initiatives include '200 clubs', diaries, Year Books, industrial lunches, patrons' clubs, donations, participation in the CSC Draw, Blue Rosette sales and the like. Fertile fund-raising ideas abound. For instance, Association A produces and sells a calendar on which local businesses purchase advertising space. The calendars are A2 in size and adverts are carried in panels around the margin. The production costs average £200-£400 for 500 depending on the design and detail. The word 'Conservative' does not appear anywhere on the calendar which both encourages advertisers and facilitates its sale to sympathisers in pubs, clubs, shops and premises of all kinds. After deductions for costs, £1000 is a good average profit although it can be larger. In 1986, Luton raised £2000 through sales of a calendar. The CSC draw, the details of which were explained in the first half of this chapter, is a popular fund-raising method and can be very profitable if well-organised.

The range of initiatives varies enormously and it is not possible to detail the amounts raised by each Association and each electoral category from, say, Year Books, industrial lunches, the CSC draw and all the other kinds of central fund-raising initiatives found in the participating Associations. Instead, all this kind of income was extracted from Association accounts and aggregated. Donation income which could be clearly identified as 'regular' and unconnected with the General Election of 1987 was included. The resulting figures are detailed in Table 3.15 below. Particularly significant or interesting components of this income are identified in the ensuing discussion. As with other sources of income, the figures in brackets show income from assorted central initiatives as a proportion of total income.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 4482 (17.66)	F 3793 (20.35)	K 982 (10.20)	P 488 (7.39)
B 4963 (19.92)	G 3602 (17.60)	L 1030 (8.87)	Q 353 (8.19)
C 961 (1.66)	H 3168 (14.34)	M 403 (2.44)	R 201 (6.45)
D 2635 (10.09)	I 3875 (8.81)	N 1138 (14.57)	S 142 (8.33)
E 2633 (12.06)	J 3022 (15.74)	O 2814 (19.88)	T 60 (7.09)

Table 3.15: Income from Central Initiatives as a Percentage of Total Income.

Table 3.15 shows income from centrally organised fund-raising initiatives of all kinds (other than social events) ranging from £4963 (Association B) to £60 (Association T) with every kind of figure in between. Interestingly, Association C which has particularly high income from membership dues (see Table 3.8) and whose branch social activities are extremely profitable (see Table 3.10) derives very little revenue from either centrally organised social events (5.37 per cent - see Table 3.13) or from centrally promoted initiatives of the kind covered in Table 3.15. When the data was compiled, the author contacted the Chairman again for further information on the situation in Association C. He explained that it was conscious policy to devolve major responsibility for fund-raising onto the branches and to provide 'back-up' facilities and services to support their activities. With this back up, branches in Association C regularly combine forces to promote quite major events at the Association HQ. As the Chairman said "... they get together regularly and put on big 'docs'... we print tickets, provide publicity and so on." There is, therefore, a vigorous programme of 'quasi-central' fund-raising events in this Association. In addition, some of the particularly active branches are also involved in the kinds of initiatives reviewed in this section. This situation explains the very low figures shown in Table 3.13 and 3.15. The Chairman of Association C was anxious to emphasise the extent of central involvement in branch fund-raising events and it was obvious that such involvement was, indeed, important and that

the branch endeavours were, at least in part, the product of central encouragement and support. In other words, the centre was not as inactive in the fund-raising area as Tables 3.13 and 3.15 suggest. Nevertheless, the resulting income accrues to the branches in whose name and under whose aegis events take place. This situation goes a long way toward explaining the very high figure for branch social events (£22,300) shown in Table 3.10.

Table 3.16 below shows mean and median income averages derived from centrally organised initiatives of the kind reviewed in this section.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	£	£	£	£
Mean Av.	3134 (12.27)	3495(15.36)	1273 (11.19)	248 (7.45)
Median Av.	2635 (12.06)	3602 (17.60)	1030 (8.87)	201 (7.09)

Table 3.16: Income From Central Initiatives as a Percentage of Total Income - Mean and Median Averages.

Tables 3.15 and 3.16 have several significant features. Firstly, it is clear that, as a group, seats in the Marginal (Con. Held) category raise more from centrally organised initiatives than seats in any other electoral environment. Most of these seats generate income from most or all of the activities and initiatives listed earlier - '200 clubs', diaries, Year Books, industrial lunches, patrons' clubs, donations, the CSC draw (particularly important in F, G, and I) and Blue Rosette sales (small though apparently growing). Table 3.12 showed that seats in this category held more centrally organised social events than did seats in any other electoral environment and Tables 3.13 and 3.14 showed them raising as much revenue from this type of event as safe seats. Tables 3.15 and 3.16 provide further evidence of the success of centre-led fund-raising initiatives in the Marginal (Con. Held) category. This is an important finding. These initiatives are essentially entrepreneurial. They involve Associations in searching for and actively seeking to exploit fund-raising possibilities not just among and between their own members but outside in the local environment. Seats in the Marginal (Con. Held) category may have less members and lower overall income levels than safe seats but the evidence suggests a

marginally more proactive stance vis-a-vis their electoral environment. Taken with the role of the centre in generating income from social events, these findings suggest a more 'focussed' and tightly knit organisation than seems to be the case elsewhere. Interestingly, the evidence of Tables 3.15 and 3.16 suggest that this is the case in respect of Association (G) which was found to lack a corporate concern for membership related issues (see Chapter 2). This indicates that an Association can possess a corporate attitude on one subject and not another. Association G gives more cooperative care and attention to central fund-raising of both the social and entrepreneurial kind (and its Chairman is proud of his organisation's financial achievements) than it does to membership-related issues. There is a parallel here with the situation in Association branches. Several Chairmen emphasised that some of their branches were 'membership branches' whilst others were 'fund raising branches'. In other words, some branches tended to be much better at one activity than another. This appears to be the case with Associations.

The kinds of expenditure examined so far in this section (centrally organised social events and other central initiatives) correspond to the 'Donations' and 'Projects' items in Table 3.4. 'Donations' covers income from three sources (i) individual subscribers and donors whose cash is not credited to branches, (ii) diaries and Year Books and (iii) industrial lunches. 'Projects' include Association-wide social events. These headings indicate that the central Party expects 21.5 per cent of total revenue to come from 'donations' and 18.5 per cent from 'projects'. In other words, it is suggested that about 40 per cent or two-fifths of an average Association's income should come from these sources. In fact, as a mean average, the proportion of total income deriving from 'projects' and 'donations' accounted for 26.10 per cent of total income in the Safe category and 28.25 per cent among Conservative held marginal seats. It rose to a mean average of 30.62 among other held marginals and fell to 26.95 in the Unwinnable category (see Tables 3.15 and 3.16. Only Association K, with 39.52 per cent of income coming from these sources, 'hits' the central target.

However, donations (*i.e.* sums subscribed by local businesses and individuals) proved difficult to handle and it may be that the 'donations' and 'projects' income accruing to participating Associations has been understated. Some Chairmen were unwilling to talk about global items appearing in their accounts as 'donations' or 'fighting fund balances'. Some were willing to talk

about this aspect of their finances but were unable to say exactly how much of such money was paid regularly and how much represented special payments made for the General Election. In the end, only those sums which could be clearly identified as regular were included in Tables 3.15 and 3.16. A not inconsiderable balance has been included under miscellaneous income (see below). It thus proved difficult to get a clear picture of a particularly interesting topic - the role played by local businesses and well-to-do individuals in the routine finances of Associations. From the information which was obtained it seems that donation income is usually made up of quite small amounts since large companies prefer to subscribe through the CBF. Though not large, regular donation income can be quite substantial. It was established that, in two Associations which asked not to be identified in any way, regular donation income amounts to about £800 and £1300. Regular donation income appears rare in the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories where only some very small amounts could be identified for inclusion in Tables 3.15 and 3.16.

Finally, miscellaneous sources of income. The amount of miscellaneous income accruing to participating Associations is displayed in Table 3.17 below. Miscellaneous income as a proportion of total income is shown in brackets.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
£	£	£	£
A 1293 (6.08)	F 7794 (41.76)	K 2656 (27.56)	P 1822 (27.54)
B 2650 (11.57)	G 7928 (38.72)	L 4674 (40.21)	Q 104 (2.29)
C 1640 (2.68)	H 6693 (31.24)	M 14234 (85.67)	R 17 (0.14)
D 1981 (7.37)	I 6257 (14.13)	N 8095 (11.41)	S 434 (25.43)
E 2809 (12.36)	J 4858 (26.30)	O 1015 (7.05)	T 138 (16.30)

Table 3.17: Miscellaneous Income as a Percentage of Total Income.

Table 3.17 shows that miscellaneous sources of income were found to be important in a substantial number of Associations scattered across all four electoral categories but were especially significant in the two marginal environments. This is confirmed by the mean and median averages for miscellaneous income which are shown in Table 3.18 below.

	Safe £	Marginal (Con. Held) £	Marginal (Other Held) £	Unwinnable £
Mean Av.	1286 (8.01)	6706 (30.43)	4694 (34.36)	503 (14.34)
Median Av.	1981 (7.37)	6693 (31.24)	2656 (27.56)	138 (16.30)

Table 3.18: Income from Miscellaneous Sources as a Percentage of Total Income - Mean and Median Averages.

Miscellaneous income was found to be derived from a number of sources. Apart from a host of trivial amounts (collections at meetings, sale of office equipment, insurance premium refunds, etc) miscellaneous income was composed of (i) payments from MPs, (ii) income from property, (iii) income from investments, (iv) income from Conservative clubs and, finally, subscriptions, donations and other payments apparently connected with the May 1987 General Election.

Association F received £1514 from its MP as a "contribution to constituency assistance and the running of the Association's office". A similar payments amounting to £1587 was received by Association G. These appear to be regular, annual payments to the Associations concerned. Association G also realised £1878 on room lettings and smaller sums from room hire accrued to Associations H (£938), L (£385), N (£263) and F (£211). Association F not only lets rooms on a casual basis to any groups needing a meeting place but also leases part of its substantial and well-situated premises as a shop. For the year ending 31st December 1986, this yielded an income of £2340 (£45 per week).

Bank and building society interest was found to be substantial in a number of Associations. In Associations G, H and I it amounted to £823, £440 and £273 respectively. In Association E building society interest was £891. The previous year it had been £3198 but the Association had transferred a substantial proportion of its very large liquid assets to Treasury stock. Interest on the stock for the year

covered by the accounts was £1415. The extent and size of bank and building society interest and dividends came as a surprise to some interviewees who suspected it was atypical. However, the large sums on deposit may not be so unusual as they seem. In several cases, they were the result of property sales which are becoming increasingly common as Associations move to more compact, often less expensive premises (see Chapter 4). Some Associations, particularly in the South, have very considerable cash reserves and investment holdings. One of the richest has assets of over £1M in its balance sheet, the result of very successful land investment in the 1950s. Financial planning may not be most Associations' forte but they are, obviously, careful and prudent organisations. Indeed, it was clear that Chairmen took inordinate pride in the size of investments which were seen as a sign of organisational virility.

Conservative clubs were another important source of income. Seventeen of the twenty participating Associations have at least one Conservative club in their locality and some have two or three. One (P) has seven. Most Conservative clubs make payments to their local Associations on a regular or intermittent basis and the clubs in the participating Associations' constituencies are no exception. Fifteen of the seventeen Associations with clubs received donations ranging in size from £150 (B, C and F) to £1000 (E). The total donated by clubs was £6677, which is an average of £445 per Association. However, the local party which derived the greatest benefit from its local club was Association M which, unusually, owns the club premises and hence receives rent. The author was asked to keep the exact amount confidential but it did account for by far the greatest proportion of the £14234 miscellaneous income enjoyed by this Association (see Table 3.17). The balance of miscellaneous income was made up of donations. The greater part of this income has been included under the miscellaneous heading since it was very difficult to establish what proportion of this income was in any way regular and what related specifically to the May 1987 General Election.

Clearly, miscellaneous income is more important as a component of total income than Table 3.4 suggests. The only miscellaneous income item covered by Table 3.4 is 'Conservative clubs' (2.5 per cent). But Tables 3.17 and 3.18 show that miscellaneous income is substantial even when the distorting effect of atypical General Election donations is allowed for. When these are stripped out, miscellaneous income amounted to £4015 (Safe), £12940 (Marginal (Con. Held)), £16827 (Marginal

(Other Held)) and £700 (Unwinnable). The very high figures in the two marginal categories are largely accounted for by Associations F and G with their investment and rental incomes and Association M which derives by far the greater part of its annual income from rent paid by the Conservative club.

Much of the miscellaneous income identified in this section is clearly derived from assets which are more prevalent the more hospitable the electoral environment. Associations in more favourable environments have, as has been shown, the wherewithall to generate substantial cash balances and, hence, ensuing interest and dividends. They have also (see Chapter 4) the property which can be exploited. It is significant that, if Association M is discounted, seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category generate a total miscellaneous income of only £2772 whilst those in the Unwinnable category are in receipt of even less miscellaneous income - £730.

This section has reviewed three further components of income - central social events, entrepreneurial initiatives and miscellaneous receipts. Income from these sources is important in all electoral environments. However, it is relatively more important in the two marginal categories. Conservative held marginals rely more than other seats on entrepreneurial and miscellaneous income. Both these sources of income have an 'environmental dimension'. These seats inhabit a challenging environment but appear generally ready and able to respond and proactively experiment with money-raising opportunities and exploit any assets (such as property) which they possess. Central social income was found to be particularly significant in the Marginal (Other Held) category. These seats appear to be less engaged with their environment although, where possible, they do exploit any assets they may possess. With other sources of income (subscription, branch social and entrepreneurial/miscellaneous) generally low and/or difficult to exploit, these seats appear to promote centrally organised social events by way of compensation.

Quota Expenditure

As noted earlier, the major items of expenditure identified by the central Party (see Table 3.5) are more conveniently and appropriately reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5 which examine the organisational features of participating Associations and their political activities. However, this final section is

devoted to one item of expenditure which is constantly the subject of central exhortation - constituency quotas. The origins and workings of this system have been dealt with in detail in the first half of this chapter, which also presented data on the payment record of Associations in recent years (see Table 3.3).

Full details of the participating Associations quota assessments and payment records cannot be provided since this would enable their identities to be easily established. Instead, each Association's assessments and payments for the last five years (1983-1988) was listed and the percentage of total target achieved calculated. Thus, an Association paying its quota in full for each of the five years scores 100 per cent whilst any failing to pay anything in any year scores, of course, 0 per cent. This method does not allow variations in payment levels to be tracked and analysed but it does provide an overall, birds-eye-view of an Association's quota payments. The result of this exercise are set out in Table 3.19 below.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
%	%	%	%
A 64	F 66	K 49	P 170
B 45	G 45	L 0	Q 90
C 100	H 0	M 16	R 43
D 130	I 18	N 18	S 8
E 33	J 10	O 114	T 100

Table 3.19: Percentage of Overall Quota Achieved, 1983-1988.

Table 3.19 shows that payment levels vary widely from Association to Association and electoral category to electoral category. Table 3.3 showed the same kind of wide variations in payments. The discussion of the data contained in Table 3.3 suggested that these variations could be explained (i) if

ability to pay does not vary with electoral success or (ii) if Association's quota payments are affected by other factors, especially their readiness to accord priority and importance to what are, in the last analysis, voluntary payments. This chapter has found Association income declining the less hospitable the electoral environment, a situation which is assumed in the quota formula. However, income variations within electoral categories are marked and an assessment which is affordable by one Association in a particular environment may be burdensome to another in the same kind of electoral situation. For instance, Association N and O have very similar year-by-year assessments but the overall income of Association O is almost twice that of N (see Table 3.6). The Chairman of Association N complained that his organisation could not afford to pay even a proportion of its quota. As Table 3.19 shows, this Association's payments over the five year period amount to only 18 per cent of target. However, central Party interviewees with whom this kind of complaint was discussed, pointed out that the problem lies with the Associations concerned and not the formula. The formula assumes that similar electoral environments indicate similar resources and, hence, a similar ability to pay. However, Association N has just over half of O's membership (see Table 2.2), its average subscription level is about half of that enjoyed by Association O (see Table 2.8) and, finally, membership as a percentage of the Conservative 1983 General Election vote is 3.65 per cent compared with 6.80 per cent in O (see Table 2.4).

Thus, overall income levels do appear to have some bearing on decisions about quota payments. However, the major influence on these seems to be largely attitudinal. Some Associations (or, rather, Chairmen since they appear to be the determining factor) are prepared to accord top priority to quota payments. Others are not. Positive and negative attitudes were found in all electoral categories. The Chairmen of Association D said that, in his opinion, Associations "have a duty to pay their quota" whilst the Chairmen of H, M and S thought it was money which could be better employed by their own organisations. They expressed doubts about the quality of Central Office services which quota payments support. This kind of scepticism also surfaced in the comments of other Chairmen whose Associations had better payment records.

Quota payments listed in Table 3.19 vary by electoral category. The average quota payments are 74 per cent (Safe), 28 per cent (Marginal (Con. Held)), 39 per cent (Marginal (Other Held)) and 82 per cent

(Unwinnable). In individual cases, the decision to pay the quota or any portion thereof may be governed by specifically financial considerations but these averages are best explained by the variations in attitude toward the whole quota issue. Most Chairmen from safe seats felt that their organisations had a duty to pay the quota or at least a substantial proportion of it. Their secure position and favourable finances clearly makes opposition to payment relatively more difficult to justify and sustain. The Chairmen of Association E was the exception. He was clearly opposed to allocating Association finances to quota payment and was quite unmoved by the argument that it helped others.

The payment record in the Marginal (Con. Held) category is generally poor. These Associations have less income than safe seats but the low payment levels do not appear to be linked to this situation. Most Chairmen from this category thought their quotas "affordable". Rather, the low payment levels are the result of certain attitudes clearly fostered by the environment. Chairmen stressed that they needed every penny to fight their electoral corner. Of course, seats of this type are the ones most likely to benefit from Central Office's advice and services. However, this consideration appeared to cut little ice with Chairmen. As the Chairman of Association G observed, "I can't see the point of paying money to Central Office only to have it come back to us much later with their cut taken out".

The overall payment level (39 per cent) is higher for the Marginal (Other Held) category. Chairmen from Associations in this category (with the exception of Association N) displayed a rather more positive and favourable attitude toward quota payments. Unlike their colleagues in the Marginal (Con. Held) category, several Chairmen felt they had a lot to gain from quota payments. The Chairman of O was especially enthusiastic. It may be that some Association officers in this kind of electoral environment are more inclined to see their fortunes as linked to the Party's organisational effort generally than are their colleagues in Marginal (Con. Held) category. As the Chairman of Association O put it

... you've got to support Central Office. If it gets it right we all benefit. You can't go it alone leastways that's how I see it and I try to persuade my Executive that way."

However, too much should not be made of this point. More importantly, Chairmen in three out of the five Marginal (Other Held) seats did not expect to win at the next, or indeed any, General Election.

Their perceptions and the reasons for them are crucial to an understanding of the distinction of the two marginal environments which have been demonstrated thus far (and which will be found in future chapters). The reasons for their pessimism are analysed in Chapter 6 which reviews the links between electoral environment and Associations' characteristics. For the moment, it is sufficient to observe that, given this perception, a number of Chairmen in the Marginal (Other Held) category felt that quota payments were the best way of - in the words of one - "serving the cause".

This attitude was found to be stronger and even more overt among Chairmen from the Unwinnable category. In seats of this type, both Association officers and their membership know perfectly well that they have no chance of winning. For activists in this position, quota payments represent a way of expressing their loyalty and advancing the Conservative cause. If they cannot win, at least they can help others to do so. This was the view spontaneously expressed by the Chairmen of Associations P, Q, R and T. As the Chairman of the most impoverished Association in the entire sample (T) put it "We can't do anything here except keep the flag flying we hope our money can do a bit of good somewhere else".

Although the sample is very small, the findings regarding quota payments appear to indicate significant environmental influence. Payment levels are mixed throughout and across the four environmental categories but some broad issues and trends are discernible. The formula is designed to yield higher assessments in electorally successful Associations and lower assessments in less favourable constituencies. However, the resources of Associations in similar electoral environments can vary quite considerably and some Associations clearly find the demands of the quota system onerous and difficult to meet. However, by and large, decisions on quota payments appear to be more the result of attitudes which vary from electoral category to electoral category. Association officers in safe seats which often have substantial resources, do not feel under threat from their electoral environment. The substantial balances make it easy to pay the quota or a substantial portion of it and a sense of duty encourages most Chairmen to do so. However, some Chairmen (like some Chairmen everywhere) display a principled opposition to payment believing that the money is either 'wasted' or could be put to better, more immediate use, by the Association itself. Chairmen in Marginal (Conservative Held) seats appear to demonstrate the greatest resistance to quota payments. Time and again, they spoke of

needing the money themselves to use it in ways they felt fit in order to carry the electoral battle forward. There is some slight evidence that Chairmen in the Marginal (Other Held) category had a more favourable view of Central Office's services and the uses to which quota revenue is put by the central Party. There was less 'fighting talk' among Chairmen from this category than among those marginals with Conservative MPs. It appears that officers in this type of seat are more hesitant about their organisations' ability to fight the electoral battle on their own - hence the more favourable view of Central Office. However, these are only impressions. More importantly, three Chairmen in this category were adamant that their seats were, in fact, unwinnable. In this kind of situation, particular sentiments and views clearly come into play. Where there is no chance of winning, or no perceived chance of winning, Chairmen (and officers and members) are prone to reinterpret their function as being to support the wider Party in its efforts to win. These kinds of sentiments were clearly at work in the Marginal (Other Held) category. There were even more strongly articulated by Chairmen from unwinnable seats.

Summary

This chapter has shown that, whilst there is considerable overlap between electoral categories, overall income levels declined the less hospitable the electoral environment. Once again, a distinction is evident between Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) seats. Associations in the former category were found to enjoy an income roughly double that accruing to the latter. Thereafter, the income gradient declines sharply. Unwinnable seats have an average income of less than one-third that found in the neighbouring Marginal (Other Held) category.

Safe seats were found to have overall income levels at the bottom end of the £30,000 - £50,000 range recommended by the central Party. However, only one marginal seat (Association I) reached the £37,500 'target' with the central Party suggested is needed if this kind of seat is to be "fully effective". It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Central Office income targets are not based on average performances by Associations but represent Central Office aspirations. The overall average income level among the participating Associations (£17829) is remarkably close to the £17800 which results

from taking the Party's estimate of £10M for 'internal finance', adding quota payments and dividing by the number of Associations. However, the average income of participating Associations may be somewhat overstated in this study since it includes donations from local businesses and well-to-do individuals, some of which was made especially for the May 1987 General Election. Some Associations receive some donation income in other years but it proved very difficult to get a clear picture of the situation. However, such donations appear to be relatively small since most big organisations subscribe to the central Party through the CBF. Regular donation income appears to be a virtual prerequisite of seats in the two more hospitable electoral environments.

The components of income were described in detail. Associations in all four electoral environments were found to draw their income from a similar range of sources. No one source or sources totally dominates an electoral category or is completely absent. In absolute terms, income from subscriptions and branch social events was found to decline across the electoral categories. This is not surprising since a clear membership gradient has already been demonstrated (see Chapter 2) and income from branch social activity is clearly linked to membership levels. The absolute level of central social, entrepreneurial and miscellaneous income followed a less clear pattern. As an absolute amount, central social income was the same in both the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. Entrepreneurial and miscellaneous income was found to be highest among Conservative held marginals.

Variations in the relative importance of the different components of income were charted. Too much should not be made of these, since the sample is small but the findings are, perhaps, not entirely unexpected. Fund-raising is shaped by resources, opportunities and options available to an Association and these appear to vary from environment to environment.

Central social, entrepreneurial and miscellaneous income was found to be important in the safe seats. However, these seats raise the greater part of their income from membership subscriptions and branch social events, a situation which reflects their generally higher membership and subscription levels. As a proportion of total income, membership and branch social income is lower in the two marginal categories. Seats in the Marginal (Con. Held) category make up for this with particularly high levels of miscellaneous and entrepreneurial income, indicating an active engagement with their challenging

environment. Significantly, the number of centrally organised social events was found to be very high. This is interesting and may reflect (and help to sustain) a heightened sense of corporate purpose generated by the environment. Not all the Conservative held marginal seats with their high rate of centrally organised social events are those displaying a corporate concern for membership related issues. This seems to indicate that 'corporateness' is not simply a quality floating in the 'organisational air' but has to be expressed and made manifest around particular issues - membership, fund-raising, and so on.

Seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category make up the shortfall in membership and branch social income with income from centrally organised social events. This situation appears to be directly linked to their low subscription and membership levels and restricted entrepreneurial opportunities.

The opportunity to exploit entrepreneurial sources of income was even more restricted in the Unwinnable category where miscellaneous income is also generally low because of lack of assets and the opportunities to exploit them. Branch social income dominates fund-raising in this electoral environment. Almost half of all income accruing to such seats is raised in their branches. Centrally organised fund-raising is important but numbers of events are low and it does appear that members in such seats are not particularly corporately inclined 'vis-a-vis' fund-raising, preferring to socialise and fund-raise in their branches. Branch fund-raising is an essentially introverted activity, but successful fund-raising is not incompatible with a proactive and outward looking organisational stance as the Associations which are both successful branch fund-raisers and have a strong corporate approach to membership issues demonstrate. However, the importance of branch social income in unwinnable seats plus the very low number of centrally organised social events is a further indication of organisational introversion in this electoral environment.

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21. Interim and Final Reports of the Committee on Party Organisation, 1948 and 1949, (the Maxwell Fyfe Report), London, 1949, p. 16.
22. Quoted in Hoffman, *op cit.*, p. 99.
23. Awards are granted to Associations achieving continuously good quota performance by paying their quota target in full over a number of years. The awards available for continuous achievement are:
 - 5 years: Blue Diploma signed by the Party Chairman and Treasurers
 - 10 years: Gold Diploma signed by the Party Chairman and Treasurers

15 years: An inscribed gavel

20 years: The Chairman's letter signed and framed

25 years: The Leader's letter signed and framed

35 years: The Leader's letter with silver ribbon signed and framed

50 years: The Leader's letter with gold ribbon signed and framed

In 1987/88 eleven constituencies qualified for the Blue Diploma, four received the inscribed gavel, five were awarded the Chairman's letter signed and framed and two (Wansbeck and North Dorset) achieved the Leader's letter with silver ribbon signed and framed. 105th Conservative Conference, Conference Handbook, p.166.

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For further information on clubs' donations to Associations see: Tether, P. Clubs: A Neglected Aspect of Conservative Organisation, University of Hull, Department of Politics, Hull Papers in Politics, No. 42, November 1988.

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CHAPTER 4

STRUCTURE

Central Policies, Prescriptions and Practices

Organisational structure is "a means of obtaining the objectives and goals of an organisation" (1). This definition has been elaborated by Pugh and Hickson who highlight the possibility of having different structural arrangements

"All organisations have to make provision for continuing activities directed towards the achievement of aims. Regularities in activities such as task allocation, supervision and coordination are developed. Such regularities constitute the organisation's structure, and the fact that these activities can be arranged in various ways means that organisations can have differing structures." (2).

This chapter examines the policies, prescriptions and practices relating to 'task allocation, supervision and coordination' within (i) Conservative Associations generally and (ii) the participating Associations. The principal focus of attention is Associations' geographical and functional branch arrangements but the chapter also looks at constituency agents and Associations' property holdings. Agents exercise an important enabling and coordinating function, whilst property is a major resource which has implications for organisational structure.

The basic structure of Conservative Associations is simple and well-established, having been developed in the late Nineteenth Century. As indicated in Chapter 1, the first recognisably modern Conservative Associations appeared after the 1832 Reform Act. The Act introduced the first electoral roll and it required voters to register a claim to the franchise. However, these Associations were "self-perpetuating oligarchies" (3). They lacked any kind of representative principle.

Such a principle was not introduced until after the Conservative Party was rejected by the electorate in the General Election of 1880. This shock defeat, followed rapidly by Disraeli's death, opened a Pandora's Box of organisational issues which had their roots in the changing balance of social forces within the Party. Despite the recent defeat, urban conservatism was on the march. In the larger boroughs "the Conservative share of the polls since 1868 had gone up from 37.5 per cent to 44.3 per cent in twelve years" (4). The representatives of suburban Conservatism created Associations which were "more middle class in composition and less pliable" (5) than the

'traditional' organisations. In particular, these representatives resented being dominated by the recently established National Union which was "largely cooptative and unrepresentative" (6). Their grievances were exploited by Lord Randolph Churchill and other members of the so-called Fourth Party in their well-known if complex dispute with Lord Salisbury. Whatever Lord Randolph's aims, the new men in the constituencies simply sought recognition by the Party and to be taken seriously. Above all, they desired efficient and local organisation.

The struggle between the new social forces and the 'Old Identity' was made urgent in the minds of the representatives of urban Conservatism by the manifest success of Liberal organisation in 1880. Sometimes copying the famous Birmingham example, sometimes developing and refining their own rules and practices, local Liberal organisations had created powerful pyramidal electoral machines based on branches in municipal wards and polling districts, each of which sent representatives to a central Executive Committee. This kind of organisation

"... provided a framework within which all sections of the Party could work together and within which nearly all the local leaders, whig, moderate or radical, could be found a place" (7).

The eventual settlement of the dispute between the Fourth Party and Lord Salisbury gave the representatives of middle-class urban Conservatism what they sought "recognition and a voice in organisational matters" (8). At the local level, the new men soon

"... built up Associations... quite as representative and popular as those on the Liberal side, though usually less pretentious and after 1885 there was little to chose between the local organisations of the two parties." (9).

Advice on the structure and proper conduct of Conservative Associations is provided by Central Office and has been available from the earliest days of the modern, representative constituency organisation. Until recently, this advice has taken the form of a variety of handbooks, part of an on-going and regularly up-dated 'Organisation Series'. In 1986, the material was consolidated in one publication entitled Your Party: A Campaign Guide (10). Its raison d'être was explained in the following terms

"For many years, Central Office has produced a range of booklets in the 'Organisation Series', designed to help Associations to build and run efficient constituencies and branch organisations. There has been a widespread demand in the Party for a new booklet pulling together the ideas in the original series, plus a wide range of new ideas and techniques. 'Your Party' is the result" (11).

Your Party has eight short chapters entitled (i) Campaigning Politically, (ii) Communications, (iii) Running a Branch, (iv) Running an Association, (v) Building up Membership, (vi) Finance, (vii) Running an Election Campaign and (viii) How Your Party Works. The publication stresses that the ward or polling district branch is the basic unit of every Association and

".... that it is at branch level that the Conservative Party comes directly in touch with electors.... it is here that elections are fought and won" (12).

To win elections, branches must create an organisation, build up membership, raise money, communicate effectively and campaign on behalf of the party.

Branches are run by elected committees comprising a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and up to twenty or so members depending on the size and geography of the area concerned. The Model Rules stipulate that each ward or polling district branch shall elect two representatives - one male and one female - to the Association's Executive Council (13). However, dividing representation between the sexes in this way is unusual and most branches restrict themselves to simply electing two representatives, regardless of sex, to their Executive Council. Another common variation on the Model Rules is to supplement representation according to branch strength. Thus, the rules of several participating Associations were found to give branches an additional representative for, in one case, every thirty branch members over 100 and, in the other, every fifty branch members over 100.

As Your Party stresses, branches are the building blocks of Conservative Associations. In order to maintain an organisational presence throughout a constituency, an Association must have branches covering each local government ward and branches are always located in the electoral units of 'first-tier' local authorities. Since April 1986, local government in England, Wales and Scotland is divided into two tiers each of which has different governmental responsibilities. The first layer is made up of (i) London boroughs, (ii) metropolitan boroughs and (iii) district councils. The second layer (above the district councils only), is made up of county councils (England and Wales) and regional councils (Scotland). Thus, branch organisation in the Conservative Party is based on local government wards in the London boroughs, the metropolitan boroughs and the district councils. The electoral units which go to make up county and regional councils will usually contain a number of wards and parts of wards and, hence, election campaigns therein will be a collaborative effort involving constituent ward branches.

Central prescriptions speak of the need for branches in every local government ward and, where possible, the polling districts into which they are divided. However, branch arrangements vary from constituency to constituency and are largely dependent on geography. In urban areas, polling district branches are now rare and constituencies are urged to establish branches in each ward. Outside the major conurbations, this situation is less simple. In rural areas the typical branch structure is based on the larger villages, each of which is likely to be a polling district in its own right. Often smaller and more compact towns might also be served by a single branch even though they may have a number of wards. Alternatively, a mixed arrangement might be found with separate branches in some wards and one branch covering the remainder. Roughly, the larger and more substantial the town, the more the branch arrangements will tend toward the urban ward-by-ward model.

Geographical branches provide an Association with its basic framework but to these have been added a variety of organisational vehicles, attached to the core structure at different points in the Party's history to accommodate special interests and concerns. These include women, the Young Conservatives (YC), the Conservative Trade Unionists (CTU), the Conservative Political Centre (CPC) and Political Committees. The organisational arrangements and prescriptions for each of these groups will be briefly reviewed.

Women are tremendously important in the running of the Conservative Party. Indeed, it has been claimed that over a million of its members are women (14). Their importance in the Party pre-dates the granting of the vote

"Central Office records show that at a 1904 by-election in Oswestry, no fewer than 26 women's branches turned out to assist the party's candidate." (15).

The reference to separate women's branches is interesting and highlights the fact that specific and separate organisational provision for women existed long before the granting of the franchise. The Model Rules still offer Associations the possibility of setting up separate sections for women at branch level

"Where it is considered advisable, men's and women's sections may be formed, which shall be responsible for carrying out such duties as may be delegated to them including the responsibility for raising and controlling their own funds subject to any directions of the Executive Council and the payment of an agreed quota to the funds of the branch." (16)

This kind of arrangement survives in some branches today although it is becoming common for men and women to be regarded as members of one undivided branch. The reasons for this are not difficult to establish. Separate women's sections are difficult to maintain where branch members are not numerous and it is perhaps not surprising that they are particularly unusual in northern seats, urban areas and inner-city constituencies.

However, separate organisational arrangements for women exist above branch level in the Women's Constituency Committee made up of representatives from the branches. These representatives are elected by women's sections (where they exist) or by whole branches (if they have no sections). The election of representatives from 'whole branches' may or may not be restricted to its female members.

The functions of a Women's Constituency Committee are various and are closely defined by the Party. These include

- (i) Organising a political programme for all women members,
- (ii) Assisting with the recruiting and training of workers for election campaigns,
- (iii) Carrying out any propaganda work and social or money raising activities delegated to it by the Executive Council,
- (iv) Considering political matters which might especially affect women and keeping in touch with local women's organisations,
- (v) Advising the Executive Council on the foregoing matters. (17).

Interestingly, Your Party adds a further function which is to "encourage suitable women to put their names forward as potential Parliamentary or Local Government candidates" (18). This is a reflection of the growing concern within the Party generally, and its women's organisation in particular that women are grossly under-represented both as MPs and as candidates (19). However, interviewees agreed that, in practice, the most important role of a Women's Constituency Committee was fund raising. This was emphasised in the previous chapter.

Women are an organisational mainstay of the Conservative Party. Equally famous are the YCs. Like women, the YCs are accommodated at constituency level in separate branches. The YC's antecedents reach back to 1906 and the establishment of the Junior Imperial and Constitutional League which was created "with the object of giving scope and direction to the political activities of young persons" (20). Its growth was checked by the Great War but was resumed thereafter, a major factor in the organisation's subsequent expansion being the admission of young women, necessitated by the Representation of the People Acts of 1918 and 1928. As a result of its growth, divisional councils were created in 1929, grouped into federations coterminous with the Provincial Areas. Membership of the League was recruited from among young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five. It had its own publication, The Imp, an Annual Speaking Competition for the Sir Robert Horne Trophy and a competitive sports programme with a cup presented by the Earl of Derby. The League was designed not only

to encourage and inculcate Conservative principles but also to act as a recruiting ground for senior organisations in the Party. It had a junior adjunct, the Young Britons, created in 1925, which performed the same function vis-a-vis the League.

The Conservative Party's Junior and Imperial League was transformed into the Young Conservatives in 1945 although the Young Britons continued as a discrete organisation into the 1950s (21). The name change in 1945 was part of a deliberate attempt to revivify the Party's youth wing and give it more appeal. A National Central Committee of the Young Conservatives was set up in July 1946. In addition

"... the Young Conservatives were given representation on all the major committees of the party and although most of these privileges had already been enjoyed by their predecessors, the 'Imps', the YCs held a more integral position in practice" (22).

In the early 1950s the YCs claimed a national membership of about 150,000. By 1968 numbers had fallen to an estimated 50,000 and "according to party documents the membership in 1978 was down to 27,500 spread over some 750 or more branches" (23). Kelly states only that the current membership is "over 10,000" (24). However, all these figures have to be treated with caution. It is only recently, with the introduction of what one interviewee called 'active internal democracy' (which requires branches to register with the Youth Department at Central Office) have any firm figures emerged. The Youth Department now estimates YC membership at 6,500 spread over about 300 branches.

The Department acknowledges a steady decline in numbers since the early 1960s although it believes figures have now steadied and there may even "have recently been a very slight increase". Chairmen (several of whom had actually been 'Imps' or Young Britons) and others interviewed attributed this decline to profound social changes, in particular the emergence of a youth culture and the expansion of higher education. Many alternative attractions are now available for young people with money in their pockets and, often, their own transport. Table tennis and beetle drives hold little appeal. These same social changes have rendered the YCs famous 'marriage bureau' function redundant. Expanded opportunities in higher education have taken many young people away from home just at the time when they might, once, have become involved with their local Association. Of course, some of these do become active in Conservative politics at college or university. The Conservative Collegiate Forum has about 6,500 members so membership of the Party's total youth movement is approximately 13,000. Nevertheless, although YC numbers have declined considerably in the last twenty-five years, they are still

important especially as a source of candidates. Recent work by the Youth Department indicates that at the local government elections in 1988, several hundred candidates were Young Conservatives or members of the Conservative Collegiate Forum. In the local elections of May 1990, three of Milton Keynes' seventeen candidates were YCs.

In the constituencies, YCs (now young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty) are, in theory, organised in ward or polling district branches. According to the Model Rules representatives from YC ward or polling district branches form "a constituency committee (or council) consisting of not less than one representative from each Young Conservative branch." (25). However, in practice, numbers of YCs in constituencies are generally too low to support separate ward-based branches. Two branches in a constituency are "rare" whilst three is "exceptional". In consequence, YCs are almost universally organised in a single, distinct constituency branch located above ward level.

YC branches have a number of aims which are carefully spelt out. These are to

- (i) Encourage the recruitment of other young people,
- (ii) Play a full part in electioneering,
- (iii) Participate in the work of other community, youth and pressure groups,
- (iv) Spread the Conservative message to other youth organisations,
- (v) Take an active part in local government. (26)

As with women, the importance of establishing links with other organisations is heavily emphasised.

Conservative Associations make separate organisational provision for both women and young people. Another group for which such provision is made are Conservative Trade Unionists (CTU). Efforts by the Party to organise Conservative working-class support reach back deep into the Nineteenth Century and reference has already been made in Chapter 1 to the Operatives' Societies, Working Men's Conservative Associations and clubs established to harness this support. These are comparatively well-known initiatives but the antecedents of the modern movement are more directly located in later and sometimes much more obscure attempts to organise Conservative trade unionists which began in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.

The focus for these attempts was Lancashire "an area where Conservative working class support was perhaps of greater importance than in any other part of the country" (27). Attempts to harness trade union support were stimulated particularly by trade union identification firstly with the liberals and, later, with the Labour Party through affiliation to the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). Affiliation to the LRC posed a major threat to the Party in Lancashire since it meant that the unions could now be used to spread anti-Conservative propaganda. Moreover

"It presented the further prospect that Conservatives within the unions would henceforth be obliged to contribute to the Labour cause. Prior to the 1913 Act it was impossible to 'contract out' and consequently the only way a Conservative could be relieved from political contribution was either by leaving his union or by reversing the policy of his society or branch. This clearly placed a premium on collective action" (28).

An early attempt to harness trade union support was the Conservative Labour Union formed out of a number of miners' clubs in the Wigan area in protest at the growing association between the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation and the Liberal Party. Although it survived for only a few years, the experiment was important since it established the concept of 'non-political trade unionism', which underpins the CTU today. The Conservative Labour Union did not sponsor Conservative candidates. Rather, it sought to dissuade miners from identifying with any political party. This body was followed by the establishment, in 1904, of the National Conservative Labour Party (NCLP) which was based in Lancashire but had branches in West Yorkshire and Cheshire. It appears to have been formed by its members as a new 'Labour Party' without official Conservative encouragement or support. However, relations between the NCLP and the Conservative Party soon became close and "by 1910 (it) had Balfour as its President and had been afforded direct representation at the annual conference of the National Union" (29). Renamed the Unionist Labour Party, it survived until 1919.

A more successful initiative which provided the model for the organisation of working-class trade unionists between the Wars began, in contradistinction to the developments described above, inside the Conservative Party. The Lancashire Provincial Council established a Trade Union Sub-committee before the First World War and, in 1919, the Provincial Council promoted the establishment of Constituency Labour Committees linked to Associations. Under the threat of Labour advances (its share of the popular vote increased from 8 per cent in 1910 to 22.2 per cent in 1918) this initiative was rapidly taken up by constituencies outside Lancashire eventually giving rise to the Unionist Labour Movement. Labour Committees were established not only at constituency but also at provincial and national levels. It was stipulated that they should be made up of wage earners. However, it

is clear that in many constituencies, middle-class members dominated the Committees. The function of Labour Committees was essentially advisory. At constituency level

"The Labour Advisory Sub-committee advises the Executive Council on the Trade Union and Cooperative Society Movements, and on any topic of special interest of wage-earners" (30).

After World War Two, the Unionist Labour Movement (like the YCs) was 're-packaged' to make it more effective in the changed political circumstances. The unions were once again growing in power politically and industrially. The 'equivalent of the CTUs' National Committee first emerged in 1947" (31). But the revamped movement was only fully established in 1951 as part of the "Moncktonian desire to build better relations with the trade union movement and to repair the damage done during the inter-war years" (32).

In 1986 the movement claimed 70,000 members (33) but in the absence of any kind of national registration system of the sort now in place for the YCs (see above), this claim must be treated with some caution. Nevertheless, it does seem that the movement gained significant numbers of new recruits partly because of the 'militant' trade unionism of the 1960s and 1970s and partly because, with the change of leadership in 1975, the Conservative Party put a great deal of effort into building up the CTU.

Your Party indicates that the central aims of the CTU are to

- (i) Explain and publicise the Party's industrial policy within the Unions,
- (ii) Encourage Trade Unionists to take an active part in their local Conservative Associations,
- (iii) Encourage Trade Unionists who are supporters to become subscribing members of the Party,
- (iv) Encourage non-socialists to contract out of the political levy. (34)

At constituency level, CTU members are, where possible, organised in interest groups which elect a CTU Constituency Committee. A CTU Constituency Committee can, if members so wish, operate as an individual committee or it can agree to operate jointly with one or more adjacent CTU Committees to form a CTU Joint Constituency Committee. Whether Committees are based in one constituency or several, the purpose is the same, "to coordinate activities in an area and provide information on employment and industrial matters for the Party locally and nationally" (35). A CTU Constituency Committee is a committee of the Executive Council established under Model Rule 4(b) (i). However, interestingly, the Model Rules do not specifically mention CTU Constituency Committees or make any reference to their constitutional position at the local level. In

particular, it is striking that CTU Constituency Committees are not among the bodies and groups which the Model Rules suggest should be represented on Executive Councils. This situation goes some way toward confirming Greenwood's (36) claim that from the beginning the Conservative Party has sought to corral working-class support in distinct organisational units which can be kept at arm's length.

This is not true of Associations' specifically political organs. Conservative Associations are frequently perceived, implicitly or explicitly, as primarily social organisations which adopt a clear political role only at election time. Indeed, they were described thus to the author by a Central Office interviewee! However, as the next chapter will show, campaigning activity is becoming a much less intermittent process. This development is particularly associated with attempts to emulate the Liberal's approach to 'community politics'. However, the Conservative Party has two organs designed to foster and develop political awareness and interest at the local level. These are the Political Committee and the Conservative Political Centre (CPC).

The former is the more recent development and has its roots (like the 'community politics' approach) in the increasing volatility of the electorate evident from the early 1970s. In July 1970 the Executive Committee of the National Union established a Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Chelmer. Its terms of reference were

"To carry out an investigation into the extent, if any, to which the Conservative Party in all its aspects outside Parliament might be made more democratic" (37).

Two reasons were given for this initiative, one 'internal' and the other 'external'. The Preface to the ensuing Chelmer Report noted at some length that the National Union has survived social and political upheavals without major changes in purpose and structure. However, the Preface also observed that times are changing and that

"Intrinsically a structure designed to organise workers to win elections, may not necessarily be the best to reflect and channel the undoubted current increased interest in political discussion and involvement in policy formation shown by Party members" (38).

According to the Report, ways must be found to harness members' political interests and aspirations but another very important reason is offered to justify change in a Party which has "rightly never believed in changes for changes sake" (39). This is that

"... if both major political parties are losing the 'traditional' voter upon which formerly they could count, then there is a need for the Party to become involved in attracting all people to its cause and to be a visibly influential channel for the expression of public opinion" (40).

In other words, the decline of traditional allegiances means that there is a need for the Party to adopt a more political, campaigning and proactive stance vis-a-vis the electorate. Of course, both the 'internal' and the 'external' arguments adduced by the Chelmer Report to justify its proposals were linked insofar as changes in outlook and aspirations were held to be affecting both party members and the wider electorate. The Chelmer Report recommended a number of changes to the Party's structures and procedures. These included inter alia more direct constituency representation on the Executive Committee of the National Union, enhancing the role of Associations in local government politics and activity and the creation of a National Conservative Association to replace the National Union which would have a new committee structure broadly divided into committees with (i) a management and administrative function and (ii) those with a political role.

Norton and Aughey (41) emphasise that these proposals came to little and this is certainly true of the more radical recommendations affecting the higher levels of the Party but one + recommendation was adopted. The Report emphasised that

"... members should be encouraged to play a more significant part in the political work of the Party.... The Committee proposes that at each level of the National Union Constitution, there should be one body which will commit itself principally to political matters" (42).

This body is the Political Committee which is now found in some Associations, though not at any other level of the National Union. Curiously, Your Party which places great emphasis on campaigning and communicating, makes no reference whatsoever to the Political Committee but its constitution and role is specified in some detail in the Model Rules. These indicate that a Political Committee should comprise the officers of the Association and members from the Executive Council, specialist committees and political clubs, supper clubs and the like (43). Technically, a Political Committee is a committee established by the Executive Council under Model Rule 4(a)(i). Under the Model Rules members of a Political Committee become members of the Executive Council.

The powers and duties of Political Committees are identified in the Model Rules and chief amongst these is the task of exercising "overall general responsibility for stimulating political activity in the constituency" (44). This is to be done by arranging debates and discussion meetings and, interestingly, encouraging liaison between an

Association and Conservative groups on local authorities in the constituency. This, of course, meets one of the Chelmer Report's concerns. A Political Committee is expected to take the lead in recommending to the Executive Council the setting up of any specialist, politically-orientated groups (such as the CTU) which could contribute to its work. Political Committees are clearly intended to have a leading, coordinating role in respect of political activity within Associations. In keeping with this approach, the Model Rules give Political Committees a general, supervisory role vis-a-vis an older device for fostering political discussion and awareness - the CPC.

The CPC was established in October 1945 and, like the YCs and CTU, it was essentially a revival, extension and refurbishment of a pre-War institution - in this case the Central Education Department. The CPC was largely the brain child of R. A. Butler who was determined that the Party should develop the policies and arguments that would enable it to debate effectively and to challenge socialism's intellectual credentials. The CPC then, as now, organised a range of lectures and courses and eventually developed an important publishing facility which provides a ready means for the dissemination of ideas and policy proposals. However, the core of the CPC's activities is the Contact Programme. Under this programme, monthly or sometimes bi-monthly briefs on topics of concern and interest are issued to CPC discussion groups in the constituencies. The recommended size of groups is eight to twelve persons and considerable emphasis is placed on representativeness, since it is deemed important that groups reflect different shades of opinion within the local Party. Topics for discussion are decided by the Director of the CPC in consultation with other senior figures, particularly members of the Advisory Committee on Policy on which the CPC's Director sits as an ex-officio member. Main findings from the subsequent reports submitted by CPC groups in the constituencies

"... are collated and summarised; these summaries are then circulated to the party leader, the party chairman, the relevant ministers, National Union and Central Office officials and subsequently the discussion groups themselves. After deliberation, a considered reply is prepared by the Minister and this is then circulated (with the summary) to the discussion groups." (45)

The key issue in any evaluation of the CPC is posed by Aughey

"How far is the process of consultation one of 'selling' a predetermined policy or does the expression of opinion form certain parameters which can shape the eventual commitment which the leadership may make?" (46).

In other words, is the CPC a 'top down' or 'bottom up' institution? Aughey argues that far from seeking direct influence over policy, most activists in the Conservative Party are loyal and expect the Leader to lead. The problem is not to choke off controversy but rather to stimulate an interest in, and knowledge of, political issues.

Thus, whilst the CPC does keep the centre informed of views on the periphery, its main function is to "inform the rank and file of where the party is going or, indeed, has gone." (47). The author of this study is a past member of a CPC group and agrees with this assessment. Even a cursory glance at CPC briefs will reveal that they are, primarily, educative and are intended to inform and encourage discussion of policy ideas from above rather than stimulate open debate and, perhaps, challenge. In the process, the CPC groups act as a sounding board, ensuring that Party leaders do not get too far out of step with their followers. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that the Contact Programme implies a centre waiting to be given policy direction and a periphery anxious to supply it.

In 1971 there were approximately 350-400 groups submitting reports from the constituencies, with a total number of participants ranging from 3000-4000 (48). In the early 1980s, the Party claimed that the number of groups had risen to 500-600, involving the participation of 4500-6500 members (49). In the period January/February 1990, 438 discussion groups met to debate the allotted topic. A total of 3884 members attended - an average of nine per group. CPC groups are larger, better organised and more common in the South of England than in the North, Scotland and Wales, reflecting the distribution of electoral support. However, the presence and quality of CPC groups appears also to depend on the priorities inside constituencies and, particularly, the Chairman's and/or agent's encouragement (50). Abstract and theoretical discussions of policy and politics has little appeal for the majority and the alleged dependence on 'official favour' and/or the support of an agent

"... indicates that the CPC too often has a somewhat passive role - it depends on the 'apparat'. Indeed, there are many constituencies where CPC activities are still considered an organisational luxury - the icing on the cake of money-raising and canvassing" (51).

This study provides some opportunity to test these claims.

Your Party sets out the aims and objectives of constituency CPCs. These are

- (i) To seek out and influence local opinion-formers and bring them into contact with regular CPC activities,
- (ii) Encourage writing and discussion on issues likely to have a political electoral impact,
- (iii) Help all sections of the Party persuade the electorate to support Conservative policies,
- (iv) Ensure the closest possible liaison between the Party nationally and its active supporters in the country,
- (v) Take part in the regular CPC Discussion Programme. (52)

CPC groups are established by Executive Councils under Model Rule 4(b)(i). The Model Rules do not give CPC groups specific representation on Executive Councils. However, groups will be 'virtually' represented if a Political Committee exists. Membership of a Political Committee and a discussion group will certainly overlap and all members of the former become, under the Model Rules, members of the Executive Council.

The Party is adamant that the organisational efficiency and political effectiveness of Associations are immeasurably enhanced by the presence of a full-time professional agent. The profession has its origins in the registration of voters following the introduction of the first electoral register in 1832. This gave an important impetus to local political organisation since the initiative in respect of registration lay with the voter. This fact, combined with complex and various qualifications attaching to the franchise, led to the establishment of Revising Barristers' Courts where claims to the vote - supported or opposed by the rival local political organisations - could be heard. Solicitors were thus early established as vital adjuncts to the business of politics in the localities, where they found employment not only in the area of registration but also the conduct and organisation of elections themselves.

Registration arrangements of the kind instituted in 1832 continued into the Twentieth Century although the importance of registration as an issue declined from the early 1850s. This was partly due to the split over the Corn Laws which destroyed the organisation built up by Peel. However, more importantly, the gradual introduction of a more uniform franchise, the post-1868 growth in the electorate and the secret ballot all tended to make registration a less contentious issue. However, the role of the solicitor agent was re-established by the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act 1833 which, by setting limits to election expenditure, made election law a vital consideration (53).

The growing importance of the agent's role led, in 1895, to the establishment of the Society of Conservative and Unionist Agents although several regional groupings of agents had been set up some years previously. More followed and these regional unions of agents were to remain more important than the national Society until the 1930s. The establishment of the Society marked the first stage on the road to full professionalisation although this was not achieved for some considerable time. For this to occur, part-time solicitor agents had to be replaced by whole-time agents and entry to the occupation controlled by examination. The replacement of part-time solicitor agents "earning a living provided by two-thirds law and one-third politics" (54) with full-time agents was a slow process. However, the growing importance of the agent's role

"... opened the eyes of others to the possibilities of a newly-born professional career. Slowly and gradually men sought for this employment - slowly and gradually men were being appointed as whole-time professional Party Agents" (55).

However, it was not until 1910 or thereabouts that "the majority of posts in the constituencies were held by whole-time agents" (56). Entrance by examination took even longer to achieve. This was finally introduced in 1932 when it was no longer possible to ignore the warnings of people like Sir Herbert Blain, then Principal Agent, who noted that "the thing you have to face is what is happening in certain constituencies, where friends and relatives are put in as agents without the slightest qualification for the post" (57).

All applicants go through a preliminary process involving (i) a day with an agent and (ii) two days of exams/interviews designed to assess a candidate's political knowledge, arithmetic and basic communication skills. Once this hurdle is successfully completed, candidates undertake an induction course of six months. They are assigned to constituencies where they work alongside experienced professional agents. During the six months they undertake a correspondence course and the work is marked by the supervising agent and then sent on to Central Office for scrutiny. During this period, trainees attend a ten day intermediate course. Once they have passed the Intermediate examination, they are 'one-star' agents and can apply for a seat. Those passing the Intermediate examination at Grade 1 are expected to take the final examination within one year whilst those passing the Intermediate Examination at Grade 2 are given 18 months to complete the second part of their training. All trainees must then take another correspondence course and a residential course. 'One star' agents are expected to undertake more constituency work supervised by a qualified agent. Successful completion of the Final examination confers full professional status.

A substantial number of constituencies which cannot afford trained agents employ constituency organisers. These are essentially "up-graded secretaries". They are not regarded by Central Office as substitutes for trained agents. Their role is to provide (i) enhanced administrative support (ii) a focus for the organisation of Association activities and (iii) a point of contact for Central Office and other constituencies. Constituency organisers are, as might be expected, far more common in less hospitable electoral environments. In June 1990, Yorkshire Area had fourteen organisers whilst the South East had only four. They are common in Scotland. Constituency organisers are often encouraged to up-grade themselves and become fully trained agents. In June 1990, Yorkshire Area had two qualified agents who had been organisers. The high cost of housing in some areas

makes it difficult for Associations to attract agents. The solution is to recruit someone locally and put them through the training process. Often, local recruits of this kind start off as constituency organisers.

During training, trainees are paid an allowance by Conservative Central Office. Each case is considered individually with needs and commitments being taken into account. However, a training allowance never exceeds the salary of a Intermediate Certificate holder which, in 1990, was £10,000 and this is a maximum allowance and not a norm. On passing the Final Examination, the salary was between £10,500 - £11,750. Progress after this is dependent on initiative and successful experience. A few constituency agents at the very top of their profession earn up to £20,000.

Considerable emphasis is placed in recruitment literature on the wide and demanding range of activities and skills demanded of the professional agent which include *inter alia* acting as auditor, wages clerk, financial adviser, publicity adviser, conference organiser, speaker, branch boundaries expert, registration expert and training officer. In addition, an agent is expected

"To have the discretion and financial stability to liaise with Cabinet Ministers, Shadow Ministers, MPs of all types, bank managers, social sophisticates of all classes" (58).

Increasing importance is being placed on the agent as a campaigning resource but there are some signs that this is not a role easily adopted by some older agents. Training was, and to some extent continues to be, heavily legalistic (not suprisingly given the origins of the profession) and some agents find it difficult to give politics priority. This tendency has been noted in respect of the CPC which, it has been said, does not always receive the support and 'protection' of constituency agents necessary to its success (59).

Agents occupy an awkward organisational position comparable in some respects with foreman and first-line supervisors suspended uneasily between management and the shop floor. To whom do they 'belong' and where do their first loyalties lie? Both Central Office and the constituencies tend to see agents as 'theirs' and this can create difficulties. From the interviews carried out for this study it is clear that, for most agents, the conflict is resolved in favour of the constituency. This is understandable but it is no guarantee of harmony. An agent's situation *vis-a-vis* his or her Association provides the potential for tensions and difficulties. Agents are paid employees in organisations of volunteers whose efforts pay their salaries. At the same time, they are expected to organise, lead and direct their employers. Interestingly, recruitment literature draws specific attention to the

potential for conflict and misunderstanding in the agent-Association relationship. Specifically, the profession is said to need

"... a code to defend its members against unwitting exploitation... there are three main problems... First, voluntary associations do not always remember that their paid employees are not voluntary as well. Secondly, the possible desirable qualities and accomplishments of a good agent outnumber those of any other occupation I can think of. Expert fund-raiser, skilled administrator, diplomatic, possessed of a sound political judgement, infinitely patient, an encourager and a reconciler and capable of a good platform speech. No-one can meet all these demands and no-one is equally good with all age groups in a constituency. Thirdly, there is often sharp competition for the agent's time" (60).

Agents are regarded as vital, "the best argument for agents is to look carefully at an Association who (sic) who hasn't had an agent for some years" (61). According to Central Office informants, Associations tend to take a short-term view of financial problems and to identify an agent's salary as either an immediate and substantial saving or an expense they cannot afford. This, so the central argument goes, encourages a spiral of financial and organisational decline. Central Office is emphatic that "no Association can hope to succeed without the services of a full-time capable agent" (62). Agents are needed to give professional impetus and underpinning to fund-raising and electioneering. People are an Association's "natural resource" but they need to be "trained, organised and channelled in the right direction" (63). Clearly, there is something in these arguments but Associations, preoccupied as always with money, can and do sometimes see things differently.

Nevertheless, a considerable number of Conservative seats are able to employ an agent. At the General Election in 1987, the Party

"... had about 300 full-time agents and by the time of the election had full-time agents in all but two of their target seats. An indication of the comparative strength of the two parties is that in the 58 constituencies in the West Midlands, Labour had 2 full-time agents while the Conservatives had 33 (64)".

In June 1990 there were 360 qualified/trainee agents available to the Party. This figure was made up of 287 trained agents in constituencies, twenty trainees working with agents plus twenty-eight people who had successfully completed the preliminary examination/induction course and were ready to start training in September 1990. Another forty-five trained agents were working in Central Office and Area Offices. Respondents and interviewees all agreed that constituency agents are overwhelmingly concentrated in more hospitable electoral environments. As one Central Office informant put it "not all of them are in safe seats but

most of them are in the safer ones." This means that it is precisely those seats most in need of an agent which are least likely to have one.

Not all agents are employed by an individual constituency since some are responsible for two or more seats. For instance, some urban areas still possess Conservative Federations - umbrella bodies serving a compact and contiguous group of constituencies - which may employ a Federation Agent. However, Federations are now neither popular nor common having generally failed to arrest the Party's decline in urban areas (65). Much more usual are less formal arrangements where the services of an agent are divided between constituencies and costs shared in due proportion.

Finally, property. This is a topic which is becoming increasingly important in discussions of local efficiency and effectiveness. Nine out of ten Associations have an office. Nationally, 50 per cent of Associations own their own office, 30 per cent rent office space, 10 per cent occupy free occupation (in Conservative clubs) and a final 10 per cent have no office at all (66). The Party emphasises that politics, not property management, should be the central concern of Associations. Nevertheless, in order to do the first well, the second has to be given careful attention. Offices must be well-located. They must also be attractive in order to convey the right impression and well-organised and appointed if they are to do their job properly. However, according to Central Office, not all Association offices meet these requirements.... "in many constituencies they (offices) are far from impressive" (67). It is difficult to quarrel with this claim. Many Association offices are located in old, large properties acquired scores of years ago on sites which are not now central or convenient. Rented and free offices may be equally unprepossessing and inconvenient and some are graphically described by the Party as "seedy back streets walk-ups" and "back rooms in drinking clubs" (i.e. Conservative clubs!) (68).

The answer to the problem of badly sited, sometimes inordinately expensive and inappropriate premises is (i) a systematic review of property needs and (ii) investment in adequate premises which can supply an active Association (which includes, of course, an agent) with all the facilities it requires. Local officers are explicitly warned against half-way measures such as attempting to defray the cost of inappropriate premises with lettings.... "we are not dance hall managers" (69). Interestingly, this stricture is, apparently, widely ignored as the analysis of sources of income in Chapter 3 has shown.

In order to help Associations undertake the root and branch review of property requirements urged on them by Central Office, specialist advice from within the Party is now available. In 1986, a number of Central Office staff and sympathetic professionals established the National Property Advisory Committee (NPAC) to encourage "a proper appreciation of the use, cost and value of property" (70). Launched with the whole-hearted backing of the National Union, the initiative aims to help constituencies release funds at present tied down in unsuitable property or swallowed up in maintenance costs. The NPAC has produced a booklet (71) and established Regional Property Advisory Committees (RPACs). Each RPAC has a panel of experts including valuers, solicitors, surveyors and accountants, ready to guide constituencies in tackling their property problems.

Summary

Central Office statements make it clear that active, efficient and effective Associations should have a range of organisational resources. To encourage the development of these resources, the Party provides Associations with detailed advice on organisational structure and process and spells out key objectives for local workers and members.

Associations are, in outline, relatively simple structures. The basic and oldest organisational unit is the geographically based branch located at polling district or local government ward level. The branch structure is intended to bring Associations into contact with all parts of their constituencies and provide decentralised platforms for fund-raising activity and electioneering. In rural areas, some branches are found at polling district level since these are often coterminous with villages. Polling district branches are now seldom found in urban areas.

Over the years, organisational arrangements designed to accommodate a variety of different groups, have been grafted onto the core geographically-based structure. These groups include women, the YCs and the CTU. Organisational provision for these groups is not new and was established early in the Twentieth Century although the YC and CTU movements were reconceptualised and refurbished in the post-War reconstruction of the Party.

Some branches in some constituencies have separate women's sections which send representatives to a Women's Constituency Committee. Where separate women's sections at branch level are not thought appropriate or where branch membership is too small, the whole branch votes for representatives. In theory, the YCs could be organised in separate branches at polling district or ward level. In practice, membership is too low for such arrangements to be possible although there are a few constituencies with two or three YC branches. Normally, YCs will be found grouped in one central branch. The CTU is always organised in this way.

Women, YCs and the CTU are urged to take their political role seriously and to promote the Conservative message, particularly among other women's organisations, youth groups and in the work place. However, other specific and focussed provision is made inside Associations for 'doing politics'. The oldest device is the CPC. Like the YC and CTU movements, the CPC was established during the post-War reconstruction of the Party under the initiative and guidance of R.A. Butler. It is a network of discussion groups whose responses to prepared briefs are collated by Central Office and circulated inside the Party to managers, Ministers (or Shadow Ministers) and other policy-makers. The CPC is a device designed to open-up two-way communication about policy and politics inside the Party though opinions differ as to whether the 'bottom-up' or the 'top-down' function is the most important. In contrast, Political Committees are designed to provide a focus for discussing, planning and monitoring political activity within constituencies. They are the result of concern expressed at the start of the 1970s that the Party in general, and local Associations in particular were not meeting the challenge posed by a volatile electorate and a more active, concerned and informed membership.

The central Party is emphatic that an Association's organisational and financial potential can only be exploited to the full if it employs a professional agent. Central Office also argues strongly that agents, officers and voluntary workers require a well-sited, well-appointed and convenient premise. Nine out of ten Association do have an office of some kind whether it be freehold, rented or located in a Conservative Club. However, many offices are regarded by Central Office as below standard and steps have recently been taken to provide expert professional help at both national and regional levels to those Association wishing to improve facilities and, hopefully, thereby release funds tied up in old properties with high maintainance costs.

Associations are expected to exploit their human and material resources. Guidance is provided on the organisational structures and supports which the central Party believes are necessary to create strong local parties. To what extent are these structures and supports found at the local level? Do any vary by electoral

environment and if so, how? These questions are addressed in the second half of this chapter which reviews the organisational and other resources identified above.

Resources: Local Patterns

The self-administered questionnaires and subsequent interviews elicited much data on Associations' organisational resources. The remainder of this chapter is divided into sections corresponding with the organisational resources reviewed earlier. The exceptions are the CPC and Political Committees. These are dealt with together in one section since they are both designed to encourage, focus and coordinate political thinking and debate within Associations.

Branch Structures

It was emphasised earlier that branches are Associations' basic building blocks. They are the means by which fund-raising and electoral work is sub-divided and contact with voters maintained. The questionnaire sought comprehensive information on the branch structure on each participating Association with the aim of seeing whether the number of branches (and hence constituency 'coverage') varied from electoral environment to electoral environment.

However, calculating 'coverage' was not always easy. As expected, some rural wards had several branches based in village polling districts. However, some branches in some urban areas posed more of a problem in calculating 'coverage'. Branches in urban areas frequently spanned two or even more local government wards. From interviews it became clear that many 'jumbo branches' of this kind were, in essence, single ward branches that had been given responsibility for neighbouring wards which lacked a branch of their own. The 'home ward' was generally the strongest in political terms whilst wards that had been 'tacked on' were generally poor in terms of Conservative prospects. Several Chairmen noted that if a 'subsidiary ward' was won or even if it began to look winnable, then a separate branch ward would probably be established.

The practice of creating 'jumbo branches' considerably increased branch 'coverage'. However, Chairmen confirmed that, in the majority of cases, the 'home ward' was the organisational centre of gravity and the real object of attention where committee members were concerned. Duties vis-a-vis 'subsidiary wards' usually consisted, as one Chairman put it, "of going through the motions at election time". Thus, in calculating branch

'coverage' the subsidiary responsibilities of most 'jumbo branches' in urban areas were ignored. Branch 'coverage' achieved by the twenty participating Associations is shown below in Table 4.1.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
%		%		%		%	
A	94.38	F	72.72	K	50.00	P	30.00
B	100.00	G	81.24	L	40.90	Q	30.00
C	94.55	H	75.00	M	37.50	R	22.57
D	92.82	I	83.33	N	50.00	S	11.11
E	85.94	J	50.00	O	50.00	T	10.00

Table 4.1: Percentage of Constituencies Covered by Branch Organisation.

Table 4.1 shows branch 'coverage' ranging from 100 per cent (B) to 10 per cent (T). Association T has ten local government wards and only one of these is covered by a branch (if certain subsidiary responsibilities are excluded). Average 'coverage' achieved by seats in each environmental category is shown in Table 4.2 below.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	%	%	%	%
Mean Av.	93.37	72.35	45.68	20.73
Median Av.	94.28	75.00	50.00	22.57

Table 4.2 Percentage of Constituencies covered by Branch Organisation - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 4.2 shows a steep and clear gradient in both mean and median average terms across the electoral categories. Crudely, branch coverage declines by 20-25 per cent from category to category. Coverage, which nudges an average of a little less than 100 per cent in safe seats falls to approximately 20 per cent in unwinnable seats.

Branch coverage is clearly linked to membership numbers which, as Chapter 2 has shown, decline the less hospitable the electoral environment. If members are not available, branches cannot be established and maintained. The fewer the members, the fewer the branches. However, to be even more precise, branch 'coverage' is linked not just simply to membership numbers but to the number of activists found inside a local party. It is activists who make the organisational wheels go round inside an Association. Activists are the people who are committed to the cause, who are prepared to turn out regularly for committee meetings, organise social events and carry out essential, unglamorous system-maintenance activities.

The questionnaire sought data on activist numbers within each Association. The preamble to Q.22 of the questionnaire carefully spelt out a distinction between activists and the rest of an Association's membership

"By no means all of an Association's subscribing membership is likely to take an active part in the organisation and running of political and social events. Only some will be 'familiar faces' ready to take on the responsibility of maintaining branch and other committees"

Chairmen understood the distinction being made which was, in fact, fundamental to their thinking about membership and membership-related issues. They were able to estimate with apparently considerable accuracy the core number of committed activists who regularly carry the main organisational burden and around whom branches, committees and groups revolve. Other members can and do attend branches, committees and groups but it is the activists who make them happen and who have the largest share of the work. The data on numbers of activists in each Association is summarised below in Table 4.3. The table shows the total number of activists claimed by each constituency and, in brackets, activists as a percentage of the total membership. The total membership figures on which the percentage figures in brackets are based are taken from Table 2.2.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
	%		%		%		%
A	100 (9.10)	F	52 (13.00)	K	45 (15.00)	P	15 (14.28)
B	100 (12.50)	G	50 (14.28)	L	30 (15.00)	Q	25 (12.50)
C	480 (9.07)	H	66 (7.60)	M	28 (13.86)	R	25 (9.88)
D	110 (12.22)	I	130 (7.59)	N	50 (8.33)	S	6 (12.00)
E	120 (12.28)	J	65 (16.26)	O	120 (12.00)	T	10 (14.28)

Table 4.3: Association Activists as a Proportion of Total Membership.

Table 4.3 shows that, in absolute terms, numbers of activists per Association falls the less hospitable the environment. The average number of activists in the four electoral categories is 182 (Safe), seventy-three (Marginal (Con. Held)), fifty-five (Marginal (Other Held)) and sixteen (Unwinnable). Clearly, as overall membership declines so do the numbers of activists available to establish and run branches - Associations' basic organisational units.

However, the most interesting feature of Table 4.3 is the remarkably consistent proportion of activists to total membership. The highest proportion of activists is found in Association J where they amount to 16.26 per cent of the total membership. However, the range is small since the lowest proportion is 7.60 per cent found in Association H. Thus, the proportion of activists to total membership ranges from slightly less than one in ten to

rather more than one in ten. The consistency of the proportions can be seen in Table 4.4 below which shows activists as a percentage of total membership by electoral category.

	Safe %	Marginal (Con. Held) %	Marginal (Other Held) %	Unwinnable %
Mean Av.	11.03	11.74	12.83	12.58
Median Av.	12.28	13.00	13.86	12.00

Table 4.4: Activists as a Proportion of the Total Membership - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 4.4 shows that, whatever the electoral environment, only approximately one in ten of those individuals willing to become members of their local Conservative Association are likely to be sufficiently motivated to become a regularly active member involved in initiating, organising and running the day-to-day workings of their local party.

Interviewees were unable to comment on the generalisability of the remarkably consistent proportions of activists to total membership found across the twenty participating Associations although they were able to agree that activists always constituted a relatively small group of members. However, one senior Central Official did observe

"The 10-15 per cent you've found would seem about right in my experience. You'll get what you call the 'passive members'... they generally don't do anything except some will maybe support social events. Then there's a few people round the edge who maybe give some help and support on some occasions. Then there's the real activists who run the Association. Yes, I'd say that's about right if an Association had a 1000 members I'd expect to have 100 or 150 active people making the thing work."

If the proportion of activists to total membership shown in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 is at all constant, Associations in less hospitable environments labour under a major handicap when it comes to establishing and maintaining branches. Constituencies vary in terms of the electoral units they contain but they do not vary very much. Associations with low membership levels cannot hope to achieve the numbers needed to create and maintain a comprehensive branch structure if (i) total membership levels are low and (ii) if only one member in ten or thereabouts is likely to be an activist.

Women's Branches and Committees

The first part of this chapter emphasised the importance of women in the Conservative Party, especially in the all-important matter of fund-raising. It was explained that separate organisational provision for women is a long-standing feature of the Party's local organisation. The focus of this separate provision is the Women's Constituency Committee elected by women's sections in the branches or by whole branches where there are no sections. The questionnaire sought information as to whether any Association branches had separate women's sections and, if so, how many. Data on Women's Constituency Committees was also obtained from interviews with Association Chairmen and others. Table 4.5 below shows which Associations possess (i) branches with women's sections (Ss) and, if so, how many such sections there are and (ii) the presence or otherwise of Women's Constituency Committees (C)

Safe			Marginal (Con. Held)			Marginal (Other Held)			Unwinnable		
	Ss	C		Ss	C		Ss	C		Ss	C
A	4	Yes	F	1	Yes	K	0	Yes	P		0No
B	2	Yes	G	0	No	L	0	No	Q	0	Yes
C	6	Yes	H	3	Yes	M	0	No	R	0	Yes
D	0	Yes	I	3	Yes	N	1	Yes	S		0No
E	2	Yes	J	0	Yes	O	1	Yes	T	0	No

Table 4.5: Women's Sections and Women's Constituency Committees.

Table 4.5 shows that a number of Associations had a number of branches with women's sections. These Associations were overwhelmingly located in more hospitable electoral environments. A total of fourteen women's sections were found in the safe seats; seven in the Marginal (Con. Held) category, just two in the Marginal (Other Held) category and none in the unwinnable seats. The reason for this is, once again, membership levels in general and activist levels in particular. Where these are buoyant or even respectable, branches can 'afford' a women's section. Where they are low, separate women's sections become inappropriate and even unhelpful.

Women's Constituency Committees were, on the other hand, found to be far more common. Fourteen participating Associations were found to have a Committee providing a separate organisational base and representation for women. Of those which did not have a Women's Constituency Committee, one was a Conservative held marginal, two were other held marginals and three were unwinnable seats. One of the obvious

reasons for the presence of Women's Constituency Committees in so many of the participating Associations is the importance of women activists in local parties in all kinds of environments. This is partly a matter of numbers. Chairmen were asked to estimate how many of the core activists (identified in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4) were women. Answers were too general to permit detailed summary but it was clear that, generally, female activists outnumber their male counterparts. The most common ratio mentioned was approximately 2:1. Clearly, an organisational device serving the majority of involved members is likely to be popular with that membership. However, it is not just a matter of numbers. Chairmen and other officers and Party officials were at one in recognising the importance of women members in fund-raising (see Chapter 3). The Women's Constituency Committee is seen by them as a vital platform for a vital activity. As one Chairman said with a Voltairean flourish "if the Women's Constituency Committee did not exist, I think I'd invent it!". For him and many other officers the function of a Women's Constituency Committee was not to pursue the policy and propaganda aims and objectives identified by the Central Party but to make money. Thus, Women's Constituency Committees are important to both women members and Association officers. Moreover, since they are central bodies they are tenable even when branch numbers can no longer support separate women's sections. It is only when the total membership becomes very small indeed that Women's Constituency Committees become impossible to establish and maintain. This was clearly the case in the other held marginal and unwinnable seats which lacked a Committee.

Women's Committees are common but they are not universal, as Table 4.5 demonstrates. This has led to the recent practice of grouping constituencies for the purpose of representation at Area level and beyond. This ensures that representation is not 'wasted'.

Young Conservatives

The questionnaire sought information on YC branches in the participating Associations. Data was collected both on the presence of branches and, where these existed, approximate membership numbers. Table 4.6 below shows numbers of YC branches and, in brackets, total membership figures for constituencies.

Safe			Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable				
A	1	(10)	F	0	-	K	1	(8)	P	0	-
B	1	(18)	G	1	(20)	L	0	-	Q	0	-
C	2	(45)	H	0	-	M	0	-	R	0	-
D	0	-	I	2	(25)	N	0	-	S	0	-
E	1	(20)	J	1	(22)	O	1	(15)	T	0	-

Table 4.6: YC Branches and Membership Levels.

As Table 4.6 shows, the twenty participating Associations possessed a total of eleven YC branches. Branches were distributed unevenly. Five branches were located in the Safe category, four in the Marginal (Con. Held) category and two in the Marginal (Other Held) category. There were no YC branches in the Unwinnable category. Membership in the different electoral environments amounted to ninety-three (Safe), sixty-seven (Marginal (Con. Held)) and twenty-three (Marginal (Other Held)). Overall, the average membership level of a YC branch was seventeen. This is roughly in line with the figure implied by the central Party's claim that, nationally, YC membership amounts to around 6,500 spread over 300 branches. These figures yield an average branch membership of about twenty-two. The number of branches in the twenty participating Associations is also what one would expect, given a national figure of 300. This indicates that, very roughly, one Association in two has a YC branch. This is borne out by Table 4.6. However, the branches are distributed unevenly between the electoral categories, being overwhelmingly located in the more hospitable environments. This came as no surprise to interviewees, all of whom agreed that YC branches are usually found in more promising seats.

Several Chairmen emphasised that YC branches, once established, often attract some support from neighbouring constituencies without a YC organisation of their own. This means that cross-constituency movement and involvement is not uncommon. Indeed, with the decline of the YC movement, branches based on groups of Associations rather than individual constituencies are increasingly being promoted as conscious policy. The patchy nature of YC branch distribution is confirmed by the practice of grouping constituencies for the purpose of YC representation at Area level and beyond. As mentioned earlier, this practice is also adopted in respect of the Party's women's organisation.

Chairmen without YC branches were asked whether they had sought to encourage them in their Associations. Their answers were interesting. Without exception all believed a YC branch would be an asset and many complained about an ageing membership and the lack of 'new blood'. Worries of this kind were especially pronounced among Chairmen from unwinnable seats. However, they emphasised that there was little they could do about their worries. The Chairman of Association P summed up the general feeling of senior officers in this least hospitable environment.

"... I suppose that some young people in our area who vote Conservative but what can I do? I can't drag them off the street and make them form a branch. We did have a couple of people a few years ago and we thought they might get something going.... they brought a few friends in a couple of times..... but they drifted off in the end."

Clearly, the YC movement suffers from a general lack of appeal for a variety of socio-economic reasons outlined earlier in this chapter. These have seriously eroded numbers even in more hospitable environments. Nevertheless, in these environments, there are still young people willing to come forward and, even if one constituency cannot support a branch, several can. This is not the case in the less hospitable environments as Table 4.6 makes very clear.

Conservative Trade Unionists

The questionnaire sought to establish whether any participating Associations possessed a CTU Constituency Committee but only one Association (P) was found to have a body of this kind. However, subsequent interviews with Chairman indicated that, contrary to the organisational prescriptions in the Model Rules and Your Party, the presence of a CTU Constituency Committee is not the only indicator of an Association's involvement with this area of Party work. This was confirmed by the Party's professional CTU organisers, who explained that the structure of the movement had undergone considerable change since 1979.

Between 1979 and 1984 or thereabouts, the CTU was heavily involved in advising the Party on, and helping to promote, trade union reform. By the mid-1980s legislation was in place and emphasis shifted to (i) helping make the new legislation work and (ii) setting up machinery to funnel advice and views from the industrial grass-roots into the highest levels of the Party, especially in respect of its privatisation.

The former involves identifying and supporting moderate candidates in union elections or advancing the candidature of CTU members. The CTU now has members on, *inter alia*, the National Executive of both the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) and the Civil and Professional Salaried Association (CPSA). Great weight is attached to CTU initiatives to influence electoral outcomes within trade unions. At the same time, the movement is expanding its advisory role developed during the tranche of trades union legislation and this is being achieved through the establishment of a series of national specialist advisory groups. A number of such groups (such as a Media Group and an Energy Group) have always existed but as rather loose affairs open to any CTU members from the Provincial Areas who were interested. Since the mid-1980s the party has sought to encourage their more systematic development as a source of policy advice. A National Specialist Group Organiser has been appointed. There are currently (March 1990) seven national groups with another two planned. Representation has been codified to avoid the kind of in-balance found, for instance, in the unreformed Media Group where virtually every member was from the South East. With two representatives from each Provincial Area and three co-optees, maximum membership of a national specialist group is twenty-seven. A parallel, specialist group structure is being encouraged at Area level. Again, some Areas have always had some specialist groups but these are being expanded, developed and integrated into the national group organisation. The national specialist advisory groups provide forums for policy debate and are making an important contribution to Party thinking in a number of areas. For instance, the Energy Group contains a number of miners who have produced a document examining the issue of the privatisation of coal from the workers' perspective. The authors have had a meeting with the Minister for Coal, Tony Baldry M.P.

The new emphasis on monitoring and influencing the electoral process inside unions and the systematic creation of active, national specialist groups has tended to shift the focus of CTU activity and organisation away from the constituencies. Some constituencies have active CTU Constituency Committees. These provide the Party with a valuable focus for trade union interests in some localities. However, the CTU organisation is now only loosely rooted in the constituencies and is developing a national structure which provides it with rapid and ready access to policy-makers at the very top of the Party. Evidence of this process is provided by the growth of Joint CTU Committees which are becoming increasingly common. However, these do not necessarily bring together the members of individual CTU Constituency Committees as the formal prescriptions suggest. Rather, they are umbrella bodies providing an organisational platform for members from any constituencies in an area who are

interested in CTU work. CTU Constituency Committees have always attracted interested members from neighbouring seats; these flexible Joint Committees encourage this tendency.

Whilst not possessing a CTU Constituency Committee themselves, five Associations (exclusive of P) claimed members active in the CTU movement. These were Associations L, M, Q and T. Exact details proved difficult to obtain but it appeared that, in all cases, interested members had gravitated to Joint Committees active in their area. Small though the sample is, this finding suggests the CTU organisation is at its most active in less promising areas. This was emphatically confirmed by interviewees. Following the 1987 General election, the Conservative Party held twenty-one of the fifty-one seats in the Yorkshire Area. In March 1990, Yorkshire Area had twelve CTU Constituency Committees of which only two were located in Conservative-held seats. One of the most active groups is in Rother Valley, one of the safest Labour constituencies in the country. The conurbation of Leeds (four constituencies; two Labour and two Conservative) is covered by a Joint Committee. Constituency and Joint Committees are not unknown in safe seats although there was widespread agreement that they are much less common. They are not, apparently, encouraged by having a branch quota demanded of them; a practice deplored by national organisers.

Several interviewees stressed that CTU members are a mainstay of some Associations in electorally challenging areas. As one organiser put it "they're actively involved, they're fighters, they have to be or they wouldn't be in this business!". Perhaps not unsurprisingly, given their interests, skills and temperament, CTU members are frequently council candidates in hopeless seats.

Throughout this study, gradients in respect of membership, finance and other organisational features have been identified. These gradients have declined the less hospitable the electoral environment. CTU organisation and activity runs counter to this trend. The reasons are obvious. Trade union issues, questions and attitudes are more relevant and 'visible' in less promising seats. Members with a knowledge of, and interest in, trades union matters are, by definition, more likely to be found in Barnsley than in Bath.

CPC Groups and Political Committees

The questionnaire sought to establish whether participating Associations possessed CPC groups and/or Political Committees and these topics were subsequently discussed with Chairmen. Some initial difficulty was encountered in establishing the situation vis-a-vis CPC groups, since a number of questionnaires were not entirely clear as to whether a group was actually in operation. One questionnaire noted "not at the moment" whilst another claimed a group but added that "it had not met for some time". Another spoke of a group being "planned". The reasons for such comments became clear in subsequent discussions with Chairmen. It is, in fact, not uncommon for CPC groups to form, dissolve and reform, depending on the attitude of officers and agents and the presence of enthusiasts around whom groups coalesce. In the end, ambiguities in responses were overcome by establishing, at the interviews, whether groups were currently active - 'active' being defined as having met to discuss the latest CPC brief. The data on CPC groups is presented in Table 4.7 below. Numbers of CPC groups in individual constituencies are shown in brackets.

Safe			Marginal (Con. Held)			Marginal (Other Held)			Unwinnable		
A	Yes	(1)	F	Yes	(1)	K	No		P		No
B	Yes	(1)	G	No		L	No		Q	No	
C	Yes	(3)	H	Yes	(1)	M	No		R	Yes	(1)
D	No		I	Yes	(2)	N	Yes	(1)	S		No
E	Yes	(1)	J	Yes	(1)	O	Yes	(1)	T	No	

Table 4.7: CPC Groups.

Table 4.7 shows that eleven Associations out of the twenty possessed CPC groups and two out of the eleven (Associations C and I) had three groups and two groups respectively. This yields a total of fourteen groups. Extrapolation of these figures yields a national total of approximately 370 groups - a figure well in line with the 438 groups known to have submitted reports in January/February 1990. Attendance was estimated by Chairman at between five and fifteen members per group meeting. Taking ten as the average, CPC meetings in the participating Associations appear to attract approximately 140 activists interested in policy issues and debates.

The two Associations with more than one group (Associations C and I) are, significantly, the two Associations with the largest overall membership (see Table 2.2). However, geographical considerations as well as overall

membership levels are a factor in Association C, where the size of the constituency makes a number of CPC groups particularly convenient.

Table 4.7 shows that numbers of CPC groups vary by electoral environment. There are six CPC Groups in the Safe category. The Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories have five and two groups respectively, whilst only one unwinnable seats was found to possess a group. This did not come as a surprise to respondents and interviewees. Like many other Associations' activities, a CPC group requires interested activists. Activists constitute only a proportion of the total membership in an Association (see Table 4.4) and only some of these are likely to be interested in CPC activities. Thus, whilst the presence or absence of a CPC group is partly linked to the presence or absence of official encouragement and support, it does appear to have much to do with membership/activist levels.

It is also important to note which Associations were found to possess CPC groups or, conversely, which did not. All the Associations with CPC Groups were identified in Chapter 2 as displaying some evidence of concern in respect of an important 'political' issue - membership (see Section 'Membership as a Corporate Issue'). None of the Associations which appeared to lack a corporate concern for membership and membership-related issues (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) were found to possess CPC groups. The uniform lack of CPC groups in these constituencies appears to be further evidence of an introverted, 'non-political' stance. As Chapter 2 emphasised, these seats are all 'branch only' organisations and (with the exception of G) are located in the less hospitable electoral environments.

The questionnaire and interviews also sought data on Political Committees which provide a focus for essentially 'external' political activities - as opposed to the CPC which is a platform for 'internal' policy debates. The disposition of Political Committees in the twenty participating Associations is displayed in Table 4.8 below.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	No	F	No	K	No	P	No
B	Yes	G	No	L	No	Q	No
C	Yes	H	No	M	No	R	Yes
D	No	I	Yes	N	Yes	S	No
E	No	J	No	O	No	T	No

Table 4.8: Political Committees.

Political Committees were found in five Associations or one quarter of the sample. This suggests that nationally there are about 180 Associations with Political Committees. However, this extrapolation proved impossible to confirm as figures on numbers of Political Committees are not available. The general feeling amongst informed interviewees was that the proportion suggested by Table 4.8 was probably "on the low side" and that, nationally, "maybe half" Associations possessed Committees. Chairmen tended to define the functions of Political Committees in terms of current preoccupations and issues such as, *inter alia*, "sorting out a newsletter campaign" (Association B), "looking at telephone canvassing" (Association C), "getting ready for the General Election" (Association I), "organising recruitment activities" (Association N) and "preparing canvassing records" (Association R).

Clearly, where they exist, Committees are acting as a focus for thinking about, and planning for, local political issues and activities. However, insofar as Political Committee activities could be discerned, they generally failed to meet the more specific prescriptions outlined by the central Party. These call for Political Committees to take the lead in arranging debates and discussion meetings. None of the Political Committees in the Associations undertook this kind of work, which was regarded by Chairmen as a CPC-type function. Political Committees are also supposed to take the lead in promoting liaison between Associations and Conservative groups on local authorities. Only one Association (B) fulfilled this function by making all local government councillors *ex-officio* members of its Committee. In addition Political Committees are supposed to take the lead in recommending to Executive Councils the setting up of any specialist politically-oriented groups such as the CTU which could contribute to a Committee's work. Only one Association (C) possessed both CTU links and a Political Committee and the former had been forged by enthusiastic individuals. None of the other Associations with CTU links were found to have a Political Committee and, moreover, none of the Political Committees which were identified had, apparently, considered encouraging CTU activity or involvement. The CTU is not deliberately marginalised but the specialist nature of its members' interests and their increasingly national orientation appear to place it outside the mainstream constituency organisation and its concerns.

Table 4.8 shows little variation between the different electoral environments. There are two Political Committees in safe seats (B and C). In each of the other three electoral categories, there is an Association (I, N and R) with a Political Committee. However, although Political Committees do not appear to vary markedly by electoral environment, it is important to note which Associations possess Committees and which do not. It was noted

earlier that all CPC groups were found in Associations which had been identified in Chapter 2 as having some degree of corporate concern for membership-related issues and that no groups were found in those Associations (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) which, it has been suggested, lack such concern. The same was found to be true of Political Committees. All were located in Associations demonstrating some degree of corporate concern for membership-related issues. None of the 'branch-only' Associations had a Political Committee. It is suggested that this is further evidence of an introverted and 'non-political' culture in those organisations.

Agents

The first section of this Chapter emphasised the importance which the central Party places on agents as organisers, able to give direction and purpose to the activities of, it is alleged, enthusiastic but untrained volunteers. Data on the distribution of agents was obtained from both the questionnaire and interviewees. Table 4.9 below shows (i) which Associations were the sole employer of a professional agent, (ii) which shared a professionally trained agent with another constituent or constituencies and (iii) which possessed an Organiser (Agent = A, Joint Agent = JA and Organiser = O).

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	A	F	A	K	-	P	-
B	A	G	A	L	JA	Q	JA
C	A	H	O	M	-	R	JA
D	A	I	A	N	O	S	-
E	A	J	-	O	A	T	-

Table 4.9: Agents and Constituency Organisers.

Table 4.9 shows that ten of the participating Associations had their own full-time professional agent whilst another three could draw on the services of a joint appointment. Eight of the ten Associations with their own agents were in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. The other two were other held marginals. The three joint appointments were all located in the less-hospitable categories. Two seats (H and N) possessed organisers. As far as the sample is concerned, agents of any kind and organisers become less common the less hospitable the electoral environment. The majority of agents that were found in less promising seats were joint appointments. Both the total number of agents found in the sample Associations and their distribution accord well with the national picture outlined earlier in this chapter. There, it was explained that the Conservative Party currently has enough trained agents for about half the seats in the country but that the majority of appointments

are concentrated in the better kind of seat. Interviewees agreed that the general picture conveyed by Table 4.9 was accurate although a number regretted the situation in the marginal categories. Several informants thought that constituency organisers are rather more common in less favoured seats than Table 4.9 suggests.

Associations H and N both employ a constituency organiser. The organiser in Association H is currently undergoing training whilst the organiser in Association N is trained. Both are long-standing members of the respective Associations. The organiser in Association H is an ex-Chairman of the Association whilst the organiser in Association N is a past-Chairman of the YCs and Women's Constituency Committee. One of the Associations with a joint appointment (L) is part of a Federation serviced by a Federation Agent. Associations Q and R are not part of a formally constituted Federation although the joint arrangements are similar. Association Q is part of a large group of city-constituencies and an agent based in an outlying Conservative marginal provides them with certain help and support. Association R has negotiated a package with a neighbouring marginal seat which lacks a premise. The agent for the neighbouring constituency works from Association R's HQ. Association R also contributes to the agent's salary. In return, it is entitled to fourteen hours of the agent's time per week.

Agents obviously have an important role to play in ensuring organisational vigour and countering any tendencies to introversion. Of the seven 'branch only' Associations (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) which appear to have an introverted and 'non-political' culture, three (G, L and Q) benefit from an agent's services. However, it is perhaps significant that only one (G) has its own full-time worker. The services supplied to Associations L and Q are part-time, limited and appear to be mostly restricted to elections and electioneering. The agents concerned have little scope or opportunity to influence day-to-day culture and activities in these two seats. Association G, on the other hand, does have its own full-time agent. Data from the interviews and other informants suggest that the situation may be the result of what were described as "a legalistic agent and a succession of unambitious Chairmen".

Chairmen from seats which possess their own agent or which could draw on the services of an agent, confirmed their importance. Chairmen were asked to identify their most important function and, significantly, fund-raising was mentioned by over half the respondents. Agents have, in effect, to ensure that their local organisations are effective fund-raisers in order to make sure they are paid! It is, therefore, hardly surprising that they have a central role in stimulating, supporting and organising fund-raising events including the promotion of

entrepreneurial initiatives such as Year Books, calendars, '200 Clubs' and the like where much hinges on their efforts. When pressed, several Chairmen from the Marginal (Con. Held) category identified a number of specific fund-raising initiatives which their agents were promoting. This goes some way toward confirming the importance of this kind of entrepreneurial activity in this kind of seat (see Chapter 3, 'Other Sources of Income').

Associations without an agent tended to regret the situation but were not impressed by Central Office arguments that an agent was necessary to prevent a spiral of organisational decline. Chairmen from Associations in the two less hospitable environments simply said they could not afford one given their income levels. They unanimously rejected the argument that low levels of income were a direct consequence of not having an agent. The Chairman of Association S summed up the general feeling on that particular argument when he said "that's a good example of Central Office manipulating an argument to suit themselves".

Central Office informants were prepared to concede that his scepticism was to some degree justified. However, they emphasised that the argument was intended for those seats with real political and financial potential. The sample contained two seats (J and M) which fitted this description. Both are located in marginal environments and both have a reasonably substantial income level. However, neither Chairman was enthusiastic at the prospect of employing an agent. The Chairman of Association J said that he and his officers were proud of their Association which was "a financial success". An agent would "severely deplete our resources". However, it was learnt from another source that considerable disagreement exists within this Association on the subject and that, shortly after the interview, a constituency organiser was appointed. The Chairman of Association M dismissed the possibility of employing an agent with the words "we're never going to win this constituency, why should we bother?".

Concern over costs is understandable. Table 3.5 indicated that the central Party's model accounts allocated 47.1 per cent under 'Personnel' *i.e.* agent's salary and associated costs including secretarial help. Table 4.10 shows the actual costs to participating Associations of (i) employing an agent or constituency organiser or (ii) making a joint arrangement to share an agent's services with another constituency or constituencies. Figures in brackets show cost as a percentage of total income taken from Table 3.5.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable					
A	17096	(67.34)	F	14208	(76.21)	K	-	P	-		
B	14028	(56.94)	G	14270	(69.78)	L	3111	(26.80)	Q	500	(11.59)
C	19805	(34.36)	H	6304	(28.57)	M	-	(R	1050	(33.78)
D	15211	(60.16)	I	18250	(41.66)	N	3509	(44.90)	S	-	(33.78)
E	15705	(71.94)	J	-		O	12602	(89.28)	T	-	

Table 4.10: Agent and Constituency Organiser Costs as Proportion of Association Income.

As a percentage of total income costs range from 11.59 per cent (Q) to 89.28 per cent (O). Variations in arrangements make variations in costs inevitable. However, the costs of full-time, individually employed professional agents amounts to 63.07 per cent a figure somewhat in excess of the Central Office estimates. The proportion of income devoted to both agents and organisers is 58.15 per cent in safe seats, 54.05 per cent and 53.66 per cent in the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories respectively and 45.37 per cent in unwinnable seats. The small decline in costs as a proportion of income across the electoral categories is due to the presence of organisers and joint arrangements which are a feature of the less hospitable environment. These are less expensive substitutes for full-time, wholly committed and professionally trained agents. Nevertheless, even so, expenditure as a proportion of income remains high in both the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories. A professional, full-time agent will cost much the same whatever the environment. Clearly the reduced income levels in less favoured seats (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7) make it impossible for most seats in less promising environments to employ an agent.

Premises

Data was sought on which Associations possessed premises and, where they did, a description of the property was asked for i.e. physical details and whether it was freehold or rented. All constituencies with the exception of Associations Q, S and T were found to possess HQ premises providing a physical base in the form of freehold or rented property. Those seats without property are all located in very difficult inner-city areas. Associations with HQ property thus amounted to 85 per cent of the sample. According to the central Party, 90 per cent of Associations have HQ premises of one sort or another.

Interestingly, a small number of Associations were found to possess more than one property. Two safe seats (A and C) and one Marginal (Con. Held) (J) had smaller properties serving as the base for a branch or branches. Association A had, in addition to its HQ premise, a small cottage-type property in an outlying village.

Association C had a small, purpose-built office-cum-meeting room and a shop front located in two small market towns in the Constituencies. Association J had a very small shop-front in a large village. Thus, whilst three unwinnable seats lacked any property whatsoever, a few Associations all located in more hospitable electoral environments, possessed more than one property. The ensuing discussion is concerned only with HQ property.

Nationally, 50 per cent of Associations own their own office, another 30 per cent rent office space whilst 10 per cent have rent-free accommodation in Conservative clubs. Tenure amongst the participating Associations is displayed in Table 4.11 below (Freehold = F, Rented = R and Cc = Conservative club).

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	F	F	F	K	R	P	Cc
B	Cc	G	F	L	F	Q	-
C	F	H	F	M	F	R	F
D	Cc	I	R	N	F	S	-
E	F	J	F	O	F	T	-

Table 4.11: Association Premises - Type of Tenure.

Table 4.11 shows that twelve Associations (60 per cent) possessed freehold premises, two (10 per cent) rented office space and three (15 per cent) had offices located in Conservative clubs. Association M's offices are located in a Conservative club. However, it is identified in Table 4.11 as possessing freehold property, since the Association, unusually, owns the club premises and receives rent. Tenure data from the sample does not mirror the national proportions although the discrepancy is not great, considering the size of the sample. It certainly confirms the predominance of freehold property. There are no obvious variations in type of tenure from environment to environment nor did interviewees believe that any such variation existed.

The type of freehold property was found to vary considerably. It included detached or semi-detached houses (Associations A, C and H), terraced properties (Associations N, O and R), shop-fronted premises (E, F and L) and small suites of meeting rooms and offices in converted stabling and cottage premises (Associations G and J). However, the variation was from seat to seat, not environment to environment. If anything, there appeared to be a slight tendency for less favoured seats to possess the larger properties - a legacy of earlier times when they were the hub of active and important urban organisations.

Contrary to central advice, a number of Associations rented out rooms to augment their income. Chapter 3 identified five Associations receiving income from property lettings. These were Associations G (£1,878), H (£938), L (£385), N (£263) and F (£211 + £2,340 for shop rental). Without exception, Chairmen regarded the exploitation of property in this way as sensible and profitable use of assets. The Chairman from Association H was even considering converting the top floor of his Association's HQ (a large detached house) into three bedsitters. Central Office warnings against being drawn into this kind of activity were generally dismissed. As the Chairman of Association N put it "we need money and we'll get it where we can".

However, interviews did provide evidence that the process of property evaluation and rationalisation, urged by the central Party, is being heeded in some seats. In 1986, Association E decided it could no longer afford a large Victorian property which had served as the Association's HQ for forty-three years. This had been sold to a developer. The sum raised had paid for the Association's present shop-fronted premise, leaving a substantial surplus to be invested. The last set of accounts from Association E showed £891 building society interest and £1,415 Treasury stock interest.

Association E was not the only constituency to have sold property. In 1985, Association G had disposed of a similar large and ill-sited premise and had used the proceeds to buy and convert an old stabling block which now contains two large meeting rooms and offices. The surplus balance is profitably employed at a building society to yield £823 interest in the last set of accounts.

Shortly before the interview with its Chairman, Association I had disposed of cramped, freehold accommodation. These premises had lost even the merit of being convenient, following boundary changes. A detailed review of its property requirements (assisted by the central Party) led Association I to sell this property and establish its HQ in a shop-fronted rented property on a main street. It was hinted that the property is rented on favourable terms from a supporter.

Chairmen were at one in emphasising the importance of having property both as a basis for political and social events and to provide an organisational focus and sense of identity. Clearly, property is widely seen as Association officers as having a 'cultural' as well as financial aspect. Indeed, Chairmen from Association Q, S and T all identified the loss of organisational cohesion and identity as the main price they paid for being without a property. In these Associations, the Executive and branches hold political meetings and social events in

members' houses, hired rooms in schools and libraries and even quiet public bars. As the Chairman from Association T said "it's all unsatisfactory, it's inconvenient and acts as a disincentive for people to get together, but what can we do?". It is probable that the lack of central premises is a major factor in the generally low number of centrally organised events which Chapter 3 noted was a feature of Associations in this category.

Premises are convenient, they foster a sense of 'belonging' and can be exploited to yield additional income. Nevertheless, they represent a heavy charge on Associations' income. Table 3.5 in Chapter 3 indicated that the central Party expects that, on average, 14.6 per cent of Associations' expenditure is likely to be taken up with establishment costs - rent and rates, gas and electricity, repairs and renewals. An analysis of establishment costs in those Associations with either freehold or rented property is presented in Table 4.12 below. The figures in brackets show total establishment costs as a percentage of total Association income. Total Association income is taken from Table 3.6. The establishment costs of Associations located rent-free in Conservative clubs have been omitted.

Safe			Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable			
A	2906	(11.44)	F	2600	(13.94)	K	3666	(38.16)	P	CLUB
B	CLUB		G	2009	(9.8)	L	2790	(24.03)	Q	N/A
C	3609	(6.26)	H	3116	(14.09)	M	2119	(12.84)	R	2111 (67.75)
D	CLUB		I	5560	(12.65)	N	1616	(20.70)	S	N/A
E	3811	(17.45)	J	2400	(12.5)	O	1060	(7.49)	T	

Table 4.12: Establishment Costs as a Proportion of Association Income.

Overall, the proportion of Association income consumed by establishment costs is 19.22 per cent. This proportion is rather more than the 14.6 shown in Table 3.5 but not excessively so. However, establishment costs as a proportion of income do vary by electoral environment. Premises vary in size from seat to seat but overall, they do not vary greatly in size from environment to environment. Thus, maintenance costs tend to be roughly similar. However, as Tables 3.6 and 3.7 show, income does vary by electoral environment and this means that the burden of establishment costs becomes progressively greater in the less promising categories. Overall, establishment costs represent 11.71 per cent of income in the Safe category. They rise to 12.95 per cent in the Marginal (Con. Held) category. Thereafter, establishment costs as a proportion of total income rise sharply to 20.64 per cent in the Marginal (Other Held) category whilst, in the one unwinnable seat (R) with property, the proportion reaches 67.75 per cent. Property confers a number of organisational and financial benefits. It also imposes considerable costs. These are borne with relative ease by Associations with substantial income but they

are a major burden to Associations in the least hospitable environments. The Chairman of Association R spoke of his officers and members as "running very hard indeed just to stand still" in respect of his Association's premise. Selling up had occasionally been mooted but the loss of a meeting place and base for political and social activities was seen as too great a cost. Moving to another premise was not seen as a viable proposition, "we wouldn't make anything on a move". Keeping the Association property intact appeared to be a point of honour with the Chairman and officers of Association R. Indeed, the Treasurer told the author that "we'll keep it going... if we let it go we'd be letting the Party down". The Treasurer had just received a bill for £270, the cost of repairing damage done by vandals.

Summary

This chapter has focused on the structure, broadly defined, of the participating Associations. In outline, an Association's structure is simple consisting as it does of ward or polling district branches and a central representative body - the Executive Committee. However, over the years, a variety of groups and interests have been accommodated by the creation of additional branches and committees for women, the YCs and the CTU movement. Political Committees and CPC groups have also been established to provide a focus for members' 'external' and 'internal' political interests and concerns.

These possible component of the organisational structure in the participating Associations were reviewed in turn. Agents and premises were included in the review. Agents are expected to promote organisational development and encourage, facilitate and coordinate the activities of volunteers who, ultimately, make the structure work. Premises influence structure since they provide members with an organisational base.

Broadly, it was found that Associations' organisational structure becomes more attenuated the less hospitable the electoral environment and data was presented showing that branch 'coverage' declined across the categories employed in this study as did Women's Constituency Committees and YC branches. However, only five Associations were found to possess a Political Committee which thus proved relatively uncommon whatever the environment. Interestingly, none of the seven 'branch only' Associations (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) which appear to lack a corporate concern for membership issues (see Chapter 2) possessed either a CPC group or a Political Committee. It was suggested that this is further evidence of an introverted 'non-political' culture in these

Associations which, with the exception of Association G, are all located in the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories.

The only aspect of organisational structure which was not adversely affected by less promising electoral circumstances was the CTU. Organisational evidence of CTU activity in the sample Associations was largely limited to less promising seats. This is not surprising given the focus of CTU concerns and the fact that members involved with, and interested in, trade union matters are likely to be more common in such seats. The fact that only a few constituencies demonstrated evidence of CTU contacts and involvement should not be interpreted as evidence that the organisation is unimportant. Emphasis within the CTU is now on building up Area and national subject groups, not constituency groups. It is thus creating a national structure only loosely linked as certain points to constituencies mainly through flexible, Joint (but not really Joint) CTU Committees.

Associations with their own agents were found to be almost exclusively located in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. The only exception was Association O - an other held marginal. Two Associations were found to possess constituency organisers although informants suggested that they are rather *more common* in less favoured seats than Table 4.9 indicates. However, it must be remembered that constituency organisers are not a substitute for a professionally trained agent. Rather, as the first half of this chapter stressed, they are essentially an enhanced administrative resource. Three Associations in the two less favoured categories were found to receive varying degrees of support from an agent under joint arrangements made with another constituency or constituencies. This kind of agreement is not uncommon among seats which cannot (or will not) afford an agent of their own. Data presented in Table 4.10 indicated that the cost of employing an agent is clearly prohibitive in less favoured seats. Interviewees confirmed the importance of agents. A good agent will help maintain organisational vigour and 'openness'. In this respect, it is surely significant that only one of the introverted, 'branch only' Associations could draw on the services of its own full-time professional agent.

The majority of seats were found to possess premises although three lacked property of any kind. Premises were clearly seen by Chairmen as an important facility conferring financial, organisational and cultural benefits thus confirming the appropriateness of including the topic in this chapter. Neither the type/size of property nor the kind of tenure was found to vary markedly from environment to environment. The only important distinction was between those Associations which possessed property and those which did not. The latter were unwinnables, all located in hostile inner-city environments.

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CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Central Policies, Prescriptions and Practices

This chapter examines the nature and extent of political activity in the participating Associations both between elections and at election times. Of course, in one sense, all activity in all Associations is ultimately 'political', since politics is their raison d'être. A coffee morning that raises cash for an Association is a 'political activity' since it encourages a sense of common purpose and helps to sustain the organisation financially. The same is true if members decorate a meeting room. An Association is 'doing politics' rather more obviously if it undertakes a membership drive (see Chapter 2) or its Women's Committee, YCs, CTUs or Political Committee undertakes the kinds of activity called for by the central Party (see Chapter 4). However, the political activity described and analysed in this Chapter is limited, in a common-sense way, to those initiatives and aspects of organisation intended to influence electoral opinion and increase voter support for the Conservative Party. In other words, it examines Associations as campaigning organisation. A number of key political/campaigning activities have been selected for review. These are (i) postal and proxy voter registration, (ii) inter-election newsletters, (iii) communication with and through the media, (iv) the distribution of leaflets in conjunction with Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs), (v) canvassing, (vi) candidate selection and (vii) election literature.

Postal votes and proxy votes (voting on someone's behalf either in person or by means of a postal vote) are regarded as very important by the central Party

"At both parliamentary and local government elections a number of candidates are elected by a small majority. Where this happens the postal and proxy votes can make all the difference between winning and losing the seats, because this means substantial numbers of electors can record their votes who would otherwise be physically unable to do so. Postal ballot papers are generally received through the post several days before polling day. The personal impact is greater and electors are less likely to be prevented from voting by outside circumstances. As a result the proportion of votes actually used by postal voters is high. From the point of view of the Party it is well worth the effort involved to build up a substantial postal and proxy supporters list." (1).

Evidence suggests that the central Party is correct in emphasising the importance of such votes. Reference was made in Chapter 1 (p.3) to the importance of postal votes in one non-participating Association (Dover) and it has been estimated that postal vote organisation is worth at least five or six seats to the Conservative Party (2).

The importance of postal and proxy votes is growing since recent legislation has extended the grounds on which such votes may be granted. Prior to 1 January 1988 postal and proxy voting rights were restricted to certain very specific and tightly defined groups of electors. In total, eleven categories of elector qualified for a postal or proxy vote (3) but the vast majority of applicants fell into four main groups

(i) Voters incapacitated by reason of ill-health and infirmity. These voters must have their condition certified by a medical or Christian Science practitioner although electoral registration officers can accept forms signed by some other person or even unsigned if they are satisfied the application is bona fide. Once registered, voters who are permanently incapacitated retain their postal or proxy vote for all elections. Voters who are temporarily incapacitated can vote by post for a limited period which will be stated on the certificate (signed by a medical or Christian Science practitioner) that is submitted along with the application form.

(ii) Voters whose work takes them away from home. Examples of possible voters in this category include train crews, lorry drivers and sales representatives. Electors such as service personnel, merchant seamen and contractors, whose work takes them outside the United Kingdom can vote by proxy. Postal and proxy votes for electors whose job takes them away from home remain valid until cancelled.

(iii) Voters who cannot get to their polling station because of religious observance. Applications on these grounds must be signed by a Minister of the applicant's religious demonination certifying the nature and times of the religious observances and that the applicant is bound to observe them. Postal votes granted on the grounds of religious observance are only valid for particular local or parliamentary elections.

(iv) Voters who move to a new address. Such voters are entitled to vote by post at parliamentary elections only for as long as they remain registered at their old address. Since electoral registers are renewed annually, this period cannot exceed twelve months.

On the 1 January 1987, an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1980 extended postal voting rights to everyone who cannot reasonably be expected to vote in person. This includes voters away from home on polling day due to holidays or for personal concerns unconnected with their jobs. There were a number of reasons for this important change. Firstly, the qualifications as outlined above were intended to be restrictive but agents of all parties have long exploited the provisions of postal and proxy vote legislation to the limit, especially in respect of absence from home in the course of work. Voters going on holiday and away on polling day who

could claim that their work did, indeed, occasionally involve some travel, have long been recruited by agents ready to seize on the occasional conference or meeting 20 miles up the road as proof of their qualification for a postal vote. There was a general recognition that the system was being abused. Secondly, it was also recognised that changed social conditions were creating a genuine problem. Very large numbers of people now take holidays, especially foreign holiday (4) and they were effectively disenfranchised especially if a local or parliamentary election occurred during the Summer months. Finally, the Conservative Party saw distinct electoral advantage in bringing as many absent voters as possible to the polls via a postal ballot since (i) it believes its organisation vis-a-vis postal votes is superior to that of other parties and (ii) that more Conservative than other voters are likely to avail themselves of the facility. It is widely believed in the Party that Conservative voters demonstrate a greater determination to vote than do supporters of other parties - a belief for which there is little evidence (5). In other words, the Conservative Party believes that whilst every party will lose votes from having supporters on holiday, the Conservative Party will lose less.

Other important changes have also been made to the postal and proxy vote system. In October 1986 the franchise was extended to Britons who had been living abroad for up to five years. In 1989 this period was extended to twenty years. The Party has established a Conservatives Abroad Department to help organise this new and potentially very large electorate. A form requesting help in identifying expatriate sympathisers is available from the Department for distribution to Party members and supporters in the UK (6). Under this legislation, expatriate voters cast their votes in parliamentary elections in the constituency in which they were last registered. Electoral registration officers check the bona fides of overseas voters by reference to past electoral registers. This checking can be arduous, especially if applicants are vague as to the time they last lived in the constituency. Overseas voters must reapply for their vote each year but electoral registration officers are obliged to send them reminders to do so.

Since ballot papers cannot be sent out of the country, expatriots have to have their votes cast by a proxy. In many cases, they nominate a proxy of their own such as a friend or relative living in the UK. If the proxy voters lives in the constituency in which the expatriot is registered, the proxy will vote in person (unless he or she qualifies for a postal vote in their own right). If they live outside the constituency in which the expatriot voter is registered, the proxy votes by post. However, not every overseas voter can nominate their own proxy especially those who have been away for many years. A week in politics may be a long time, but twenty years is even longer. In such cases,

the Party nominates trusted and vetted proxies, identified by the Conservatives Abroad Department (7). Every UK citizen is entitled to cast proxy votes on behalf of a close family member and up to two other individuals in each 'separate election'. In electoral law, each contest in each parliamentary constituency at a General Election counts as a 'separate election'. This raises the fascinating possibility of an officially appointed Conservative proxy wielding 1300 postal votes on behalf of expatriots (650 constituency x2)!

Of course, not all those applying for a postal or proxy vote are identified and recruited by political parties but the great majority certainly are. In the Conservative Party, the 'Objects' to which Associations subscribe when they affiliate to the National Union spell out a general duty in respect of such votes

"To watch the revision of the constituency register of electors in the interests of the Party and to take steps to ensure that all supporters who are qualified are in a position to record their votes" (8).

Identification and registration may be made through personal knowledge and contact. Central Office supplies a small leaflet (9) requesting members and supporters to supply the name, address and brief details of any likely Conservative voter who may need a postal or proxy vote on any of the grounds applying to UK residents. The form is to be returned to "your local Conservative Headquarters for action" (10). An election campaign will identify more such voters. Some will ring in and ask for help with registration whilst others will be identified through canvassing.

Associations are advised on the steps that must be taken to exploit postal and proxy votes to the full.

"With the new legislation giving more and more people the right to vote by post (such votes) are becoming increasingly important. Between elections, Association and Branch Postal Votes Officers should be identifying supporters who are eligible for postal votes and making sure they are registered. Once an election is called, there is little time to be lost. The search for postal and proxy voters must be intensified. The last date for applications will occur soon after the official campaign starts.

- (i) Supply supporters with application forms and give advice and help where needed.
- (ii) Collect and check completed forms making sure accompanying certificates are signed.
- (iii) Send forms to Absent Votes Officer or Agent for details to be entered in constituency records.
- (iv) Application forms are then lodged with the Electoral Registration Officer of the Local Authority.

- (v) During the campaign, election literature and a special letter from the candidate must be sent to all postal and proxy voters." (11).

There is no such thing as an average postal and proxy vote. Levels vary from constituency to constituency according to its socio-economic make-up and, crucially, the effort put into this area of political activity by the local parties. In August 1990, electoral registration officers in ten constituencies (not included in this study) were contacted by telephone and asked for the number of postal and proxy voters on the register for the 1987 General Election. These figures were readily available since they formed part of the official records of ballot papers issued and cast. The figures were

Constituency	Total Postal/Proxy Votes G.E. 1987
Beverley	1152
Bournemouth East	361
Bournemouth West	626
Fulham	2379
Hammersmith	1123
Hull East	1026
Hull North	674
Hull West	534
Westminster North	922
Westminster South	858

The average is 965 votes. At the same time, electoral registration officers were asked about the numbers of overseas voters seeking registration in their constituency. In all cases numbers had, until very recently, been low; "about half a dozen on the last register" and "just a handful" were typical comments. However, the situation is changing rapidly and there is evidence that the Conservatives Abroad Department's advertising and recruitment campaign, carried out in English language newspapers around the world, has been very successful. The electoral registration officers were able to supply numbers of 'pending' overseas voters whose applications had been received, scrutinised and were awaiting compilation of the October 1990 register. Only a very few of these were voters seeking re-registration. All the others were new applicants. The numbers were

Constituency	Number of Overseas Applications	Comments
Beverley	75	"coming in every week"
Bournemouth East	72	-
Bournemouth West	131	-
Fulham	120	"it's getting to be hard work"
Hammersmith	89	-
Hull East)		
Hull North)	75	"About 75 in the three
Hull West)		constituencies at the moment
		but applications are coming in
		every week"
Westminster North	130	"up a lot from about twenty"
Westminster South	78	-

The average number of overseas votes in the ten constituencies waiting to go on the new register was thus seventy four. This is slightly less than a tenth of the average number of UK postal and proxy votes in these constituencies. However, it must be remembered that these are the applications that have been checked and scrutinised. Officers emphasised that they had a back-log of applications to be checked and that applications were arriving virtually daily.

Another area of vital, outward-looking activity falls under the heading of 'communication'. Throughout the 1980s the importance of communication - with the media, the electorate and special groups has dominated the centre's advice to the periphery on campaigning issues. Communication has been the core theme of the three major centre-inspired public relations programmes undertaken by the party in the 1980s - Impact '80s, the Grass Roots Campaign and Campaign '88.

Impact '80s was a comprehensive public relations initiative launched in the Winter of 1980-81. It was clearly designed to set the campaigning tone of the decade and it can be seen as an attempt to encourage Associations to adopt a more determined, professional and aggressive style of campaigning. Associations were urged to promote the Conservative cause in a more vigorous and pro-active way. This meant improving contacts in the local community and enhancing presentational skills. A central feature was the provision of advice and art work

for the production of regular local newsletters known then and since as 'In-Touch' Newsletters. The Grass Roots Campaign (see Chapter 2, p. 47) was essentially an attempt to maintain the momentum of Impact '80s after the General Election of 1983. It was launched (as are all such campaigns) at the Party Conference in 1984 by the then Chairman, John Selwyn Gummer, M.P. Campaign '88 (see Chapter 2, p.48) was essentially a recruiting programme but the emphasis was on personal contact. Campaign '88 was launched at the Conference by the then Party Chairman, Peter Brooke, M.P. Like the Grass Roots Campaign, it was intended to ensure that organisational effort was maintained in the wake of yet another General Election victory in 1987. The Party is currently (August 1990) in the middle of another Central Office-inspired programme designed to improve local organisation for the next General Election expected in 1991 or 1992. The emphasis on 'communication' running through this cycle of programmes is clearly attributable to changing electoral conditions. Traditional political allegiances had begun to break down in the 1970s and the rise of third parties attested to a growing electoral volatility. Indeed, it was not until after the 1987 General Election and the break-up of the Alliance that the threat from third parties to the post-War two-party system has appeared to recede. The importance of recognising and responding to the breakdown of in traditional allegiances was spelt out in the Chelmer Report which was instrumental in establishing Political Committees (see Chapter 4, 'Political Committees'). The Liberals had successfully exploited the new electoral volatility with their 'community politics' approach which emphasised the importance of local issues, local involvement and local action (12). The debt to the Liberal Party's successful style was frankly admitted (13). Moreover, the need to revitalise local and often very 'traditional' organisations was made particularly urgent by the loss, at the beginning of the 1980s, of some apparently safe seats, a development which help stimulate the now on-going national audit (see Chapter 2, pp. 47-48).

The jewel in the communications crown is the 'In-Touch' Newsletter. This is designed as a vehicle for tailor-made, relevant presentations to local electorates. It is modelled on the highly successful 'Focus' newsletter developed by the Liberals as part of their 'community politics' approach.

A typical 'In-Touch' newsletter will be one sheet of A4 containing a number of short items and cartoons culled from national artwork packs ('National Artwork for Local Use' (14)) short pieces on issues of local interest, a recruitment form and, finally, a feedback form (typically headed 'Tell Us What You Think' or somesuch).

Information derived from feedback slips is then used as a basis for action by local councillors, petitions, press publicity and so on.

Specific advice is given on the format and style of 'In-Touch' newsletters. Constituencies are advised to

- (i) Keep each story brief and simple
- (ii) Make it local as well as topical and promote action
- (iii) Use big type
- (iv) Use cartoons and illustrations
- (v) Leave plenty of white space on the page
- (vi) Use stories that keep names of councillors, MP, MEP and prospective candidates before the electorate
- (vii) Make sure it gets delivered (15)

The production of a regular newsletter demands a certain level of material, financial and human resources. A constituency must either have its own desk-top publishing/printing facility or the resources to pay for printing and, crucially, enough deliverers to ensure that it goes through all the intended letter boxes. According to the Party's Print and Distribution Centre at Reading approximately two-thirds of constituencies are on its art-work mailing list.

An 'In-Touch' newsletter is intended to be local and the normal area of distribution will be a ward. Thus, different branches in different wards will usually produce their own newsletter though the Central Association may help with design, production, financial subsidies or delivery. However, although central advice constantly emphasises the need for 'In-Touch' newsletters to be local, it is interesting to note that the artwork packs contain material on national issues. For example, a supplementary artwork pack, dealing with the NHS, was issued in 1987. It provided

"Regional information to help localised national stories and also extra illustrations, feature frames and cartoons as well as useful headlines" (16)

The artwork contained very short, easy-to-read boxed and headed pieces on inter alia numbers of patients treated, screening, nursery education, staff increases and reductions in waiting lists. Thus, 'In-Touch' newsletters enable the centre to respond to issues of topical concern and to present its case directly to a whole series of local electorates.

'In-Touch' newsletters are regarded as important communication devices. However, it is stressed that communication involves a host of other activities including press contacts, press releases, letters to editors, participation in local radio 'phone-ins, advertising and posters (17). Public relations, broadly defined, is an agent's responsibility but Central Office prescriptions make it clear that branches can appoint a Media Officer (18). Advice on cultivating press contacts is provided. This includes getting to know local newspaper editors, reporters and photographers; finding out what kind of stories they are interested in and reading local papers in order to get acquainted with their style (19). Similar guidance on press releases is provided. Pointers include typing in double-spacing, making each sentence a separate paragraph and putting the most important point of the story at the beginning (20).

Associations are urged to set up letter writing panels in order to ensure that the Conservative case is regularly put before the electorate

"... thousands of people read the letters column in local papers. We must make sure we use the opportunity of letters columns to put across the Conservative point of view." (21)

Letter writing panels are advised to keep press cuttings, monitor local issues, prepare draft letters and find people prepared to write and send them (22). The central Party even provides sample letters

"Dear Sir,

As a rate payer, I am writing to say how pleasantly surprised I have been by the quality of our refuse collection since it was privatised. The refuse collectors are pleasant and courteous. They never miss a collection and don't leave any mess.

Best of all we're not going to have to suffer a massive rates increase for once."
(23)

One of the most interesting campaigning/communication initiatives was introduced by Norman Tebbit, M.P. when he was Party Chairman. In the run-up to the 1987 General Election, Central Office produced leaflets to support and complement five Conservative Party Broadcasts (PPBs). These are broadcast approximately once a quarter. Associations were asked to distribute these supporting leaflets as soon as possible after each PPB, preferably the same evening. Associations were invited to 'contract' to distribute a certain number of leaflets in respect of each PPB. This exercise was discontinued before the start of the General Election campaign and has not been revived since though it may be used in the run-up to the General Election expected in 1991 or 1992.

Canvassing is basic to 'doing politics'. It is most often associated with election campaigns but it can be undertaken at any time and, since some local election is unlikely to be more than twelve months away, canvassing records will always be useful.

Canvassing is normally carried out using cards on which sheets from the electoral register have been pasted up. During an election campaign, canvassers will simply be interested in voting intentions and these will be marked in the appropriate column on the card. However, inter-election (or, perhaps more properly, pre-election) canvassing will often be linked with membership recruitment. Not only will electors be asked which party they support but obviously enthusiastic supporters will be asked if they would like to become members. This cannot be done during a parliamentary election campaign. Associations as legal entities are dissolved for the duration of a parliamentary campaign and thus cannot accept subscriptions.

So-called survey canvassing is a relatively sophisticated form of inter- or pre-election canvassing which links the traditional aim of canvassing with membership recruitment in an overall approach deliberately designed to be more oblique than the usual bald enquiry regarding voting intentions. Survey canvassing is carried out on a pad of forms supplied by Central Office. The canvasser simply says that he/she is carrying out a survey in the neighbourhood and would like to ask a few questions about political issues. The voter is then asked what they consider to be the most important national issue and the most important local issue. Only then will they be asked which party they usually support. If the answer to these questions indicate that the voter is a Conservative supporter, the canvasser may (if the level of support warrants it) make it known that he/she is carrying out the survey on behalf of the Conservative Party and ask whether the voter is interested in becoming a member.

Canvassing has traditionally been time-consuming, door-to-door exercise and every activist in every party has his or her stories to tell concerning those fleeting moments on the doorsteps of the political nation. However, telephone canvassing is becoming increasingly common since it is not affected by inclement weather and dark nights although it is more likely to be undertaken during parliamentary election campaigns because of the cost of installing lines and sufficient numbers of telephones for canvassers.

The Conservative Party has researched the accuracy of telephone canvassing as compared with the personal approach on doorsteps. The latter can be reasonably accurate if the canvasser is shrewd and experienced and is not, as one agent put it, "a nice lady anxious to fill her card with blue ticks". However, the Party believes that its

research shows that telephone canvassing is not only quicker but generally superior in that it elicits more accurate information regarding voting intentions. This may be because a telephone call is not as intrusive or intimidating as a personal visit by a canvasser. Canvassing in any form is not a selling exercise ("don't get into arguments.... opponents may deliberately try and keep you talking to waste your time" (24)) but the effectiveness of the 'phone as a medium of communication has been underlined by the Office of Fair Trading which has examined its effectiveness as a selling tool (25). A special handbook giving guidance on telephone canvassing is available from Central Office (26). It contains scripts for canvassers to follow and the memorable advice to smile whilst talking.

At election time inter-election canvas records (whether survey canvassing returns or the more traditional cards) will be employed although it is normal to call back on pledges to check and confirm their continuing support. However, inter-election records are very unlikely to be so complete as to warrant no new canvassing of voting intentions in the ward, county division or parliamentary constituency.

Identifying supporters through a canvass is only the first stage in a major exercise designed to maximise the Party's vote. The canvass will identify some supporters who are ill or are going away on work or holiday or moving and they will require postal or proxy votes (see above). The names and addresses of other electors who have pledged their votes will be typed up on National Cash Register (NCR) slips which have a number of carbonised copies. Each slip will refer to part of a street or road and will show the polling station at which electors in that particular area vote.

On polling day, the identity of voters going to polling stations is checked by party workers known as 'tellers'. Tellers work shifts outside each polling station and it is their job to ask each voter for their electoral number as they enter the polling station to vote. The great majority of voters are able to supply this number since they usually bring with them the official card from the constituency's electoral registration officer which notifies them of where to vote. This card carries their electoral number. No-one is under any obligation to supply tellers with their electoral number but few refuse. Many voters appear to think that tellers are part of the official 'machinery' despite the fact that they will usually be wearing their party's colour. Tellers have no status in law and must remain outside the polling station.

Slips with the lists of electoral numbers will be periodically collected from tellers and the names of supporters who have voted will be crossed off the NCR slips pinned out on tables in the Committee Room. As the day wears on a number of supporters will not have voted. Starting in the late afternoon/tea-time, the top copy of each slip will be torn off and given to workers who will call on electors who have not been crossed off and urge them to vote. This is the 'pulling out' stage of the process and 'pullers out' usually work in pairs - one driving and one calling at houses. 'Pullers out' will offer to take voters to their polling stations. The process of telling, crossing off and 'pulling out' continues up to the close of poll and is more frenetic the later it becomes, since time is running out and the 'pullers out' are attempting to persuade what are, by definition, the most lukewarm of their supporters to turn out and vote.

Full details of how to organise an election canvass are supplied by the central Party (27) but every activist is familiar with the system which has been a core part of local electioneering since the modern electoral system took shape.

A full canvass of a constituency at a General Election or of all the wards/division at a local government election is unusual. Canvassing, even if done at speed by skilled and confident workers is a very labour-intensive activity and even compact, urban constituencies are large places. The number of households in a constituency is normally about 60 per cent of its total electorate. Thus, a constituency with an electorate of 70,000 will contain approximately 42,000 households. By-elections in constituencies or ward/divisions are rather different. At by-elections, parties will normally augment their local workers with activists brought in from outside, a system known in the Conservative Party as 'mutual aid'. In these circumstances, with parties fighting for a seat (in the full glare of national publicity if the contest is in a parliamentary constituency), full canvasses are not only possible but may be undertaken several times.

However, time and the number of activists available are not the only considerations governing the extent of a canvass. A canvassing programme will usually be shaped by some strategic considerations. Is it better to get a strong turn-out at 'our best stations' or to leave them to look after themselves and concentrate on encouraging 'our people' in weaker areas? These kinds of arguments are heard in every Committee Room at every election. Combative activists will want to carry the battle into enemy territory in the belief that this will make their rivals anxious and tie down their canvassing forces on what is, to them, home ground. Other more cautious workers will argue that this only 'stirs up the opposition' and promotes turn-out in less friendly areas. Sometimes such

arguments are based less on some analysis of the pros and cons of a particular canvassing strategy designed to maximise votes, than a belief that it is important to 'show the flag' to supporters and opponents alike, an attitude which emphasises the ritualistic element of local electioneering. At the end of the day, canvassing strategy is, in the author's experience, decided by negotiation. Since all the rival arguments are equally good (or equally bad), final canvassing decisions will represent a mixture of views and, crucially, the size and disposition of available man and woman power. Some canvassers may be reluctant to work anywhere but in their own ward.

However, it is important to note that debates over strategy are a direct consequence of limited resources. Since these resources are limited some prioritisation must be made, some canvassing strategy must be devised. If an Association had sufficient man and woman power to canvass the whole constituency, most arguments of the kind outlined above would not occur. As the Chairmen of Association (E) said "the ideal would be to canvass everyone".

Canvassing is a central campaigning activity but before it, or any other electioneering activity can begin, candidates must be selected. At a General Election, finding a candidate is unlikely to be a problem even in the most unpromising of seats. There are always potential candidates seeking to establish their credentials by fighting such seats in the hope of obtaining a better constituency next time. Local elections are different. Here, parties must regularly find candidates to stand in every ward and county division. The number of wards and county divisions in a constituency will vary but it is seldom less than about eight and four respectively. Where a party is strong, many candidates will be sitting councillors. Where it is weak it may have to recruit up to a dozen candidates ready and willing to take part in a hopeless contest. Challengers put up for the sake of appearances are, in effect, 'paper candidates' and the election effort on their behalf is seldom vigorous. They are not expected to treat the contest as anything other than it is, a more or less foregone conclusion. However, even 'paper candidates' must be prepared to be formally adopted, have their names and pictures put before the electorate and possibly take part in some canvassing and delivery activities.

An election campaign will consist of a number of activities designed to (i) publicise the candidate(s), (ii) identify supporters and (iii) promote and publicise the Party's message. Promotion of both the candidate and the message will be sought through posters, lapel and car-stickers, public meetings and debates, 'phone-ins, media coverage and visits by the candidate(s) to workplaces. The candidate(s) may also meet or correspond with representatives of particular groups many of which use the opportunity of an election (especially a parliamentary

election) to elicit the views of the contestants (28). Generally speaking, most of these activities will be found at a parliamentary election where they will be arranged and/or organised by the candidate's agent (29). The range of activities is likely to be less at a local government election.

However, whatever the nature of an election, the absolutely basic and central activity is the composition, preparation and delivery of the election address which traditionally goes to at least every household in each ward or the constituency and often each voter. At an election the address is by far the largest component in an Association's printing and stationery budget. Until recently this budget amounted, in turn, to 60 per cent words or thereabouts of legal maximum expenditure. However, rising paper costs in the last two years mean that printing and stationery is now likely to average nearer 70 per cent of legal maximum expenditure.

At local elections, the election address has to be delivered by hand by party workers or, sometimes, specialist delivery agencies are hired to do some or all of the work. At a General Election, each parliamentary candidate has one free delivery by the Post Office.

The election message from the candidate(s) can be enveloped and addressed by party workers. This is now unusual in local government contests but traditionalist believe that an enveloped and personally addressed message has presentational benefits and is, moreover, 'election etiquette' especially for parliamentary elections. However, younger agents and Party workers argue that the time and money involved could be better used elsewhere.

The cost of the election address and the other usual printing and stationery items consume a substantial proportion of the legal maximum election budget. Restrictions on campaign expenditure make it generally difficult to undertake much more than 'traditional' activities. However, some innovation is occurring in respect of leaflets and election newsletters. Throughout a local government or parliamentary election campaign, Central Office now supplies all constituencies with a daily, continuous stream of artwork consisting of short paragraphs of text, cartoons and headings dealing with campaign issues as they emerge and on which the central Party wishes to attack or defend. This artwork can be used to produce leaflets for different areas and/or different groups or newsletters containing a number of different items. The latter are simply an election variant of the 'In-Touch' newsletter (see above). Locally produced leaflets and election newsletters are tending to oust election leaflets from Central Office although some major 'lines' continue to be available, especially at General Elections.

Summary

Associations have political goals so everything they do is 'political'. However some activities, since they are intended to directly influence voter support are more political than others.

Associations are obliged by virtue of the 'Objects' to which they subscribe on affiliation to the National Union, to ensure that all supporters who are qualified to vote are able to do so. This injunction covers electors requiring a postal or proxy vote. Such voters are important and can decide a contest. Their importance is growing since the grounds of qualification have been extended to holiday-makers and expatriots. The Associations are advised to appoint both Association and Branch Postal Votes Officers. Detailed advice on how to identify and register such voters is available although Associations have only a limited role in relation to the expatriate vote. Its organisation is largely in the hands of the Conservatives Abroad Department.

The major theme of the 1980s has been 'communication'. Starting with Impact '80s, a series of centrally-inspired campaigns have sought to keep Associations organisationally active and adopt a more professional and outward-looking public relations stance. This emphasis on communication is clearly the result of challenging electoral circumstances including the rise of third parties and increasing electoral volatility.

The importance of establishing good, productive relationships with the media is emphasised. Detailed advice is given on how to cultivate such relationships and get the best out of them. An agent is expected to act as an Association's Press Officer but branches can also appoint someone to this post. Letter-writing panels are advocated as a means of keeping Party's case before the local electorate.

However, the most important of the communication initiatives is 'In-Touch' newsletter which has a format and style owing much to the Liberal Party's 'Focus' newsletter - a centre-piece of its 'community politics' approach. 'In-Touch' newsletters are made-up with artwork supplied by Central Office. The usual area of distribution is the local government ward or, perhaps, some area thereof. Thus, an 'In-Touch' newsletter is usually designed by members of a ward branch committee but help from the centre with design, finance and delivery is normal. These newsletters are designed to be primarily local but items dealing with national issues are

included in the artwork packs. Evidence suggests that approximately two-thirds of all constituencies in Great Britain produce newsletters if not regularly, then at least occasionally.

Canvassing is a key campaigning activity. It is designed to identify supporters and maximise the vote at election time. Canvassing has traditionally been a labour-intensive, doorstep activity but telephone canvassing is becoming more common. Canvassing can be undertaken not only at elections but between elections. If undertaken between elections, the aim will usually be not only to identify supporters but recruit new members. This cannot be done during election campaigns. Survey canvassing is a sophisticated form of inter-election canvassing with a recruitment dimension.

Identifying supporters (on the 'phone or doorsteps) is only the first stage in maximising the potential vote. On polling day, tellers must record voters going to the polls so that supporters can be eliminated from lists of pledged voters and supporters who have not voted encouraged to cast their ballot.

Election campaigns require candidates. These are not difficult to recruit at parliamentary elections since there are many aspiring M.P.s wanting to gain experience. However, finding a regular slate of candidates for local government elections can be a problem, especially when the electoral environment is dominated by another party. In such circumstances, many of the candidates promoted will be 'paper candidates' but, nevertheless, even these must be willing to undertake some work and endure some public exposure.

Election campaigns consist of a number of activities designed to promote the candidate, identify supporters and present a party's case. In addition to canvassing, publicity will be sought through posters, badges, meetings, debates, media coverage and visits by the candidate(s) to workplaces. The candidate(s) may also meet with representatives of the particular groups. Local government elections are generally more low-key and less diverse than parliamentary elections.

Printing and stationery is the largest single item of election expenditure. Printing and stationery budgets usually consume about 60 per cent - 70 per cent of maximum permitted expenditure. Within the printing and stationery budget, the majority will be expended on the election address. Getting the candidate(s) election address to all electors in a ward/county division/parliamentary constituency is not an option. It is regarded as the key duty.

At local government elections, addresses have to be hand-delivered although a commercial agency might be used. If so, the costs of the paid delivery must, of course, come out of the permitted budget. At General Elections, a free delivery by the Post Office is available.

Constraints on election expenditure mean that, at the local level, all parties are generally limited in their campaigning activities. The cost of essential, 'traditional' activities leaves little for extravagance or experimentation. However, some innovation is discernible in the use by Associations of special election artwork packs supplied by Central Office. These supply appropriate material on election issues - sometimes issues which are arising on a day-to-day basis. The artwork can be used to produce leaflets or election newsletters which are, in effect, specialised productions of the 'In-Touch' inter-election newsletters.

Political Activity: Local Patterns

The questionnaire sought data on the various political activities reviewed in the first half of this chapter i.e. postal/proxy vote organisation, the production of 'In-Touch' newsletters, communication with and through the media, PPB support leaflets, inter-election canvassing and election literature. These subjects were also discussed further at interviews with Chairmen.

The extent and nature of political activity in the twenty participating Associations in respect of these topics is reviewed below. The aim is, of course, to establish whether any variations existed between groups of seats and the different electoral environments. Sub-headings follow the topic order employed in the first half of this chapter and comprise (i) Postal and Proxy Votes (ii) Communication ('In-Touch' newsletters, press officers and letter writing panels) and (iii) Electioneering (candidate selection, canvassing and literature production and distribution). Finally (ii) costs of political activity in the participating Associations are examined.

Postal and Proxy Votes

Each Association Chairman was asked in the questionnaire whether his organisation had any special machinery and/or systematic approach to the identification and registration of postal and proxy votes such as an Association Postal Vote Officer and/or branch postal vote officers and/or regular campaigns. In some cases, the answers were not clear but any ambiguities were clarified at the interview. Central Office prescriptions emphasise that

both an Association and its constituent ward branches should possess postal vote officers. The position in the participating Associations in respect of these posts is outlined below in Table 5.1 (Association Postal Vote Officer = A; a branch officer = b; where appropriate, the number of branches with a postal vote officer is shown in brackets).

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	-	F	-	K	b(1)	P	-
B	-	G	-	L	-	Q	-
C	Ab(2)	H	-	M	-	R	b(i)
D	-	I	Ab(6)	N	A	S	-
E	-	J	-	O	-	T	-

Table 5.1: Postal Vote Machinery.

Table 5.1 shows that in the twenty participating Associations, recommended postal and proxy vote organisation was generally conspicuous by its absence. Two Associations (C and I) had both an Association Postal Vote Officer and a number of branch officers. Two branches in Association C had appointees in place at the time of the interview whereas Association I had six. One Association (N) had an Association Postal Vote Officer only and two (K and R) both had an officer in one branch.

Clearly, Central Office recommendations regarding postal and proxy vote organisation are generally ignored. It might be expected that such organisation would at least be more developed in the marginal environment where every vote counts. However, there was no evidence from the pattern of appointments that Associations in marginal environments do, in fact, take special pains to maximise their postal and proxy vote. The exception was Association I which is highly organised 'flagship marginal' where "postal vote organisation is a tradition really".

Not surprisingly, those Associations with some postal vote machinery undertook a number of specific activities designed to maximise the vote. Two Associations (C and N) had distributed the Central Office leaflet designed to identify potential voters (see above) to members and supporters within the previous twelve months. Approximately 2,500 were distributed in Association C and about 350 in Association N. The Chairmen of Association C estimated that about seventy voters had been ultimately registered as a result of this distribution. The number in Association N was much lower - "probably a dozen or so". It should be noted that Association C had the largest membership of all the participating Associations (see Table 2.2). The number of potential contacts with elderly relatives, neighbours and friends is clearly very large. Interestingly, Association I had

adapted the leaflet so that it could also be filled out for someone requesting a vote for themselves. The amended leaflet was then regularly reproduced in branch 'In-Touch' newsletters. This move had provoked some initial opposition from members who feared that it would remind potential opponents of their right to a postal or proxy vote and might even be used by them to request postal votes from other parties. There is no way of knowing whether it has, in fact, been so used but the Chairman and Agent doubted it. Most newsletters are distributed in Conservative-held wards or in 'good areas' of other wards. Anyone returning the 'In-Touch' form is dealt with by the branch concerned so it was difficult to estimate how many had been registered via this route. The Chairman thought that it was "probably over a hundred".

Chairmen from all Associations with some postal vote machinery claimed that some special canvassing did occasionally take place in order to identify potential and proxy voters. Private residential homes and council property for the elderly were frequently mentioned. One branch in Association K has a considerable proportion of such voters and "realises the importance of postal votes". However, it was clear from interviews that postal vote campaigning is relatively infrequent even in Associations with the appropriate machinery. Between elections, registration of such voters usually occurs as a by-product of membership drives and inter-election canvassing which, as the Chairman of Association I noted, "is another reason why these are important". Such activities will inevitably identify some postal and proxy voters. Chairmen from all Association claimed a trickle of postal votes from such activities but it seems likely that those organisations with some special machinery are in a better position to ensure that the vote is eventually registered. As the Chairman of Association (I) put it "when it is everyone's responsibility, it's no-ones".

Special postal and proxy vote machinery was not common in the participating Associations. However, Chairmen from all environments emphasised that temporary Association and branch appointments are usually made for election campaigns, especially parliamentary campaigns. Canvassing during a campaign is intended not only to identify supporters but also those in need of further help such as lifts and postal or proxy votes. Voters who need a postal or proxy vote because of anything other than permanent incapacity or regular travel generally cannot be identified and recruited until the campaign period. However, it is important to note that the extent of postal and proxy vote recruitment during a campaign will be linked directly to the amount of canvassing undertaken. The more extensive the canvassing, the more such voters will be identified and registered. Moreover, canvassers do

not have the whole of the campaign to identify postal and proxy voters. Applications must be received by the thirteenth day from the declaration of poll (Sundays are dies non).

The questionnaire sought information on the number of postal and proxy votes currently on each Association's 'books'. All postal and proxy votes registered for an election are held on a separate register by each constituency's electoral registration officer. Once the register is closed thirteen working days into the campaign, it will be used by the parties for the delivery of election addresses and, normally, special letters. However, Associations will usually keep a register of postal and proxy vote supporters although not all entries will be current since not all postal and proxy votes are issued for all elections (see above). A disproportionate number of entries will have died since the list will, by its very nature, contain many elderly and inform voters. Nevertheless, the number of known registered Conservative postal and proxy votes at the last election is interesting since the level of the vote is heavily dependent on an Association's efforts. Data on known Conservative postal and proxy voters is presented below in Table 5.2 but it should be emphasised that that figures are not directly comparable. Data for nine Associations is taken from the questionnaires and refers to the last local government election in the constituency. However, eleven interviews took place after the 1987 General Election and, in these cases, up-data data from the General Election campaign was obtained. This undoubtedly distorts the figures to some degree though it should be noted that in theory at least all elections - including comprehensive local government campaigns - should stimulate postal and proxy vote activity.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	750	F	110	K	75	P	-
B	190	G	35	L	60	Q	-
C	1800	H	180	M	30	R	20
D	800	I	2200	N	20	S	-
E	530	J	125	O	175	T	-

Table 5.2: Conservative Postal and Proxy Votes Known at Last Election

Table 5.2 shows the number of known Conservative postal and proxy votes is highest in the Safe category and declines thereafter. Indeed, only one unwinnable seat (R) was able to provide a figure. The decline in postal and proxy vote support from category to category is clearly illustrated in Table 5.3 below which shows the mean and median average Conservative postal and proxy vote support for each electoral vote category.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	814	530	108	4
Median Av	750	125	75	-

Table 5.3: Conservative Postal and Proxy Votes Known at Last Election - Mean and Median Averages.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 have a number of interesting features. Firstly, those Associations with some postal and proxy vote machinery have more such votes than other seats. Association C which has an Association Postal Vote Officer and two branch officers has 1800 votes. This is considerably higher than its nearest rival in the Safe category, Association D which has 800 votes. Association I in the Marginal (Con. Held) category with an Association Postal Vote Officer and six branch officers has 2200 votes. This is over eleven times more than Association H (180 votes). Association N in the Marginal (Other Held) category with an Association Postal Vote Officer has 200 votes compared with Association O (175 votes). In the Unwinnable category, only one Association (R) could claim any postal and proxy vote at all. This Association had one ward which has a branch postal vote officer. According to the Chairman, all the constituency's known Conservative postal and proxy vote support has been organised by this branch. In other words, appropriate permanent machinery does appear to help focus attention on the postal and proxy vote issue and help maximise it. Appointments at election times are not enough.

Secondly, although many seats in all four electoral categories apparently fail to maximise the potential vote, Tables 5.2 and 5.3 suggest that there is a variation, from environment to environment, in the potential vote. Most seats in each environmental category have more postal and proxy votes than most seats in the adjacent, less hospitable category. The distinction between the Marginal (Other Held) and Unwinnable categories is absolute since there is no overlap whatsoever in both levels. Even if postal and proxy vote levels were maximised in every seats, proportionate differences are likely to remain. Two Chairmen (Associations I and R) pointed out that such votes are basically a function of overall electoral support. If this is high, there will be more postal and proxy votes. If it is low, there will be less.

Thirdly, voters have to be found by activists undertaking special campaigns, recruitment drives and inter-election or election canvassing. The number of activists available to undertake such activities declines across the electoral environments (see Chapter 4, 'Branch Structures'). Thus, proxy vote levels across the electoral categories is

due partly to a 'natural' decline and partly to the decreasing ability of Associations to identify and register such votes.

The recent extension of postal voting to holiday-makers and expatriates had had little impact on postal and proxy vote organisation and activity at the time the questionnaires were completed and the interviewees carried out. Developments concerning the expatriate vote were viewed with interest but the topic was regarded as a matter for Central Office - which indeed it largely is. Nevertheless, one Association (I) was considering purchasing a quantity of the Central Office leaflet designed to help identify such voters. Holiday-makers were generally seen as simply another category of possible postal voters and there seemed to be little appreciation of the potential numbers and the work which registering such voters may involve. This is likely to change as the implications of the reform become more widely understood by officers and, especially, branch workers. Interestingly, Association I had held briefing sessions on the changes vis-a-vis holiday-makers for all branch committee members and the Agent and Chairman were intending to (i) publicise the new facility in newsletters and (ii) issue guidance to canvassers on a standard enquiry concerning holiday absences.

Several non-constituency interviewees thought that extending the grounds on which postal votes may be granted is likely to stimulate constituency postal vote organisation. The developments in Association I goes some way toward confirming this claim. However, it must be remembered that this is a constituency which already has a well-developed postal and proxy vote organisation and whose officers and members possess a keen sense of the electoral importance of such votes. Seats without these advantages may take longer to respond to the changes.

Communication

Chairmen were asked in the Questionnaire whether their Associations possessed a Press Officer. None of the participating Associations had a Press Officer nor, as subsequent interviews made clear, did any of their constituent branches.

The general feeling of interviewees from all kinds of seats was that public relations, broadly defined, was an agent's responsibility. Discussions with Chairmen from seats drawing on the services of a professionally trained agent (see Table 4.9) confirmed that they were, indeed, held responsible for this kind of activity. All contact with

the media usually takes place through them. It is difficult to be precise but the same did not appear to be true of organising secretaries who, at least in this sample, were seen as lacking the professional (and hence trusted) status necessary to conduct relationships with the media.

Constituencies without a professionally trained agent (or with a constituency organiser) had not felt any need to appoint a Press Officer. Respondents argued that, if necessary, one of their officers (probably the Chairman or Secretary) would take on this role. They emphasised that links with the media become most important at election time and that, at election time, there will be an agent (or agents) responsible for any public relations which may be necessary. Chairmen from constituencies with agents made much the same point, claiming that normally there was little opportunity and/or need for their agents to be involved in public relations between elections.

This widespread claim is interesting, conveying as it does a naive and reactive view of public relations. No Chairman demonstrated an enthusiastic understanding of the need to 'make news' and to find ways of continually advertising their organisation's presence so that the media would come to them for news, views, responses and events such as 'phone-ins. Central advice clearly presumes a generally low level of presentational skill vis-a-vis with the media consisting as it does of very basic advice on cultivating contacts, constructing press releases and so-on (see above). Interviews tended to confirm this estimate and suggest that the participating Associations have generally failed to develop the kind of close and continuing relationships with the media envisaged in the Central Party's advice and prescriptions. Such links as there were, appear to be largely restricted to election time when agents were expected to act as conduits for unexceptional and largely routine information.

Some confirmation that relationships with the media were generally under-developed were supplied by the fact that no sample Association possessed a letter-writing panel even though letters to the press are, as the Central Party emphasises, a cost-effective way of publicising the Party's views. Of course, as many Chairmen noted, 'Conservative letters' did appear in their local papers and some of these were written by members. Nevertheless, no Association had thought it worthwhile to develop the kind of simple machinery outlined in Your Party (see above). Indeed, Chairmen were not aware of central advice on the topic. When it was drawn to their attention, they were generally sceptical. It is not entirely clear why this should be so since one letter can reach more people than can usually be leafleted but three main types of reservation emerged.

Firstly, several perceptive Chairmen noted, quite correctly, that an effective and telling letter is usually quite difficult to compose and that not everyone likely to volunteer for service on a panel would necessarily be competent to take on the task. One Chairman (D) making this point mentioned a member who is an enthusiastic letter-writer to the local paper but whose letters "are strings of awful cliches and catch phrases that go on forever.... it is a bit of an embarrassment really." The answer to this problem (if indeed it is one) is for any letters to be composed by several trusted and able people and the panel to be essentially a bank of correspondents whose names are employed in turn. This is the system used in the one Association known to the author which has a letter-writing panel, although this arrangement has been adopted there more for speed than because of any doubts over the capacity of members to produce effective letters.

Secondly, some Chairmen were nervous of uncontrolled 'exposure' in the local press. Associations are voluntary organisations and officers are often wary of being drawn into controversy by relatively autonomous members making unauthorised statements, responses and challenges. That is why the content of branch leaflets, newsletters and so on is usually quietly vetted. The answer to such worries is, of course, to have any letters produced by a panel cleared, perhaps by an officer member. Interestingly, this kind of worry clearly had an anti-media undercurrent in that two Chairmen expressing this kind of concern felt that the press might be only too pleased to print a controversial or unhelpful letter to embarrass the Party. This distrust of the media became overt in the third objection to letter-writing panels.

A number of Chairmen (mostly from the unwinnable category) felt that the local press was "hostile", "doesn't print Conservative letters" and is "Labour-biased". One Chairman (S) expressed this view with some force

"... in this town he (the local editor) knows which side his bread's buttered on.
It's a Labour town and we've got a Labour paper. We leave well alone".

Similar doubts and reservations about the media generally were expressed by a number of Chairmen who clearly thought that it was often biased against them. Significantly, a number of interviews took place after the US Air Force on Libya which led to the then Party Chairman, Norman Tebbit, M.P. criticising the BBC's reporting of the event. Subsequently, a Media Monitoring Unit was established by Central Office to identify instances of alleged media bias. Thus, at the time, Party-media relationships were a sensitive issue but the Libyan affair had clearly not generated a passing distrust. Rather, it had exacerbated an existing distrust particularly evident in unwinnable seats.

The questionnaire sought data on the number of inter-election 'In-Touch' newsletters produced in each constituency in the previous twelve months, the organisation of newsletter production and the usual area of distribution. In many cases, copies of past 'In-Touch' newsletters were included, as requested, with the returned questionnaire. Data from the questionnaires was checked with the Chairmen at interview when further information was sought on their views on newsletters and the delivery programme in each constituency.

Table 5.4 below shows the numbers of separate editions of 'In-Touch' newsletters produced in the previous twelve months in each constituency.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	6	F	4	K	3	P	-
B	14	G	1	L	-	Q	1
C	9	H	8	M	-	R	-
D	12	I	2	N	1	S	-
E	6	J	5	O	4	T	-

Table 5.4: Number of 'In-Touch' Newsletters Produced in Previous Twelve Months.

Table 5.4 shows that between them, the participating Associations produced ninety-six newsletters, an average of almost five per constituency. Clearly, Central Office attempts to encourage regular newsletter production is one component of its 'communicate or die' message which has got through to the periphery. However, distribution was found to be heavily skewed in favour of the more hospitable environments. Table 5.5 below, which shows the mean and median average newsletter production for each electoral category, illustrates this clearly.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	9.4	8.0	1.6	0.2
Median Av	9.0	5.0	3.0	-

Table 5.5: 'In-Touch' Newsletters Produced in Previous Twelve Months - Mean and Median Averages.

Newsletter production was found to be highest in the Safe category. It was also relatively high in the Conservative held marginals (though the mean average is pushed up by the twenty-two newsletters produced by Association I). Thereafter, average production levels decline very sharply with only one 'In-Touch' newsletter being produced in an unwinnable seat. Only two seats characterised in Chapter 2 as 'branch only' and

subsequently described as displaying evidence of organisational introversion, were found to have produced newsletters. Association G and Association Q had each produced one 'In-Touch' edition.

Data from the questionnaire confirmed that newsletter production was usually a collaborative effort involving ward branches and the central Association. Respondents were asked to briefly describe the usual arrangements underpinning newsletter design and production and the following are typical answers.

"Publications Committee led by the Chairmen helps with design and content."

"Newsletters produced centrally 3/4 times a year. Content written by branches, layout done centrally. Central funds help subsidise as does advertising."

"Branches do most of it but the CPC helps them and we sometimes give a central subsidy."

Information from the questionnaire confirms that the ward is the normal area of distribution for each edition of an 'In-Touch' newsletter. However, three Association which have produced a newsletter in the previous twelve months describe the normal area of distribution as "less than a full ward". These were Association K, O and Q.

The number of 'In-Touch' newsletters produced in each constituency does not, of course, say anything about coverage 'on the ground'. For instance, Association D with twelve newsletters in the previous year, may distribute one a month in one ward or one every two months in two wards and so on. Data on newsletter coverage was sought during the interviews. Table 5.6 below is a rough estimate of the proportion of households in each constituency receiving a newsletter in the previous twelve months. Since the usual period between deliveries appeared to be eight-twelve months, some wards in some seats had received two newsletters. One ward, in Association H, had received five. Newsletter coverage in Table 5.6 below has been calculated on the basis of wards/part-wards receiving a newsletter. Two assumptions have been made in the calculations. Firstly, it has been assumed that wards in the sample Associations are roughly equal in population. This is a reasonable assumption since electoral units of all kinds should be broadly comparable in terms of their electorates. This is not always achieved and there are some quite large variations, especially in respect of parliamentary constituencies. Nevertheless, within a parliamentary constituency, the electorates of wards and divisions are usually roughly equal in size. Secondly, deliveries of less than one ward (see above) have been calculated at 50 per cent of households. This too is a reasonable assumption, constituting as it did the average estimate of area of delivery in those three seats (K, O and Q) reporting less than one ward coverage for their newsletters. Thus, on the basis of the first assumption, a seat with ten wards of which two had each received a newsletter, would yield a

newsletter coverage of 20 per cent. If a seat with ten wards had produced a newsletter distributed in only a part of one ward, the newsletter coverage would be 5 per cent. However, it is important to emphasise that the data in Table 5.6 below only approximate despite the general applicability of the assumptions outlined above. Not all Chairmen could recall with complete accuracy which wards had made deliveries in the previous twelve months.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
	%		%		%		%
A	28	F	15	K	6	P	-
B	66	G	5	L	-	Q	4
C	40	H	33	M	-	R	-
D	80	I	75	N	8	S	-
E	3	J	12	O	25	T	-

Table 5.6: Percentage of Households Receiving Newsletter(s) in Previous Twelve Months

Table 5.6 shows newsletter coverage declining across the electoral categories. It is highest among safe seats and lowest in unwinable seats. The gradient can be seen in Table 5.7 below which shows the mean and median averages of newsletter coverage by electoral category.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
	%	%	%	%
Mean Av	48.4	28.0	6.8	0.8
Median Av	40.0	15.0	8.0	-

Table 5.7: Households Receiving Newsletter(s) in Previous Twelve Months - Mean and Median Averages.

Tables 5.6 and 5.7 shows coverage declining the less hospitable the electoral environment. The fewer the newsletters produced the smaller the distribution area. On the face of it, this is an unexceptional conclusion but it is not inevitable. If only two or three wards in Associations in the more hospitable categories were producing newsletters, then coverage in these seats would have been much lower and the gradient more shallow. In fact, Tables 5.6 and 5.7 confirm that a substantial number of branches in such seats produce newsletters and deliver them to a substantial proportion of households in their constituencies. For example, Association B has eighteen local government wards and six had not received a newsletter in the previous twelve months. Of the twelve which had, ten had received one newsletter and two wards had received two each (thus yielding the 66 per cent coverage shown for this Association in Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 and 5.7 indicate that a substantial number of ward branches in participating Associations located in the more hospitable environments were actively engaged in newsletter production and distribution. This activity varies from environment to environment and the variation is clearly linked to the gradient in membership numbers (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). Associations with more members have more helpers to produce and distribute newsletters and more money to finance this important activity.

However, if the hypothesis advanced in previous chapters concerning the apparently introverted 'branch only' Associations has any validity, lack of people and money is not necessarily the whole story, at least in these seats. If these Associations (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) are generally lacking a proactive, campaigning stance vis-a-vis their local environments, activities such as the production and distribution of newsletters will have little appeal. It was noted earlier that only two Associations in this group (G and Q) had produced a newsletter. Chairmen from this group of seats consistently explained the lack of 'In-Touch' activity in their constituencies by reference to a lack of human and material resources. This lack cannot be gainsayed but it may be aggravated by an unhelpful organisational apathy toward their respective environments. At interview, Chairmen from all seats were asked about their attitude towards the 'In-Touch' concept and the general utility of newsletters. All Chairmen said, in various ways, that they approved of newsletters which were clearly a useful campaigning tool.

One Chairman (E) said

".... if you want to win you've got to get onto the pavements, show that you are there and stay there.... just like them (other parties). You can do that with newsletters."

Chairmen from 'branch only' seats shared these sentiments but when pressed on the point that, despite problems with resources, more could possibly be done, some scepticism did eventually emerge. The Chairmen of Associations M, Q and T all thought that although newsletters were useful, they wouldn't really make any difference in their seats. The Chairmen of Association Q elaborated on this point

"I know some seats produce lots of them but really what's the point here? X branch produces one sometimes and I suppose it does a bit of good. At least our supporters will know we're out there but I bet most of them are never read. They probably go straight into the dustbin."

Reference was made earlier in this chapter to the initiative devised under the Party Chairmanship of Norman Tebbit, M.P., in which leaflets in support of Conservative Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs) were distributed by

local parties. In the scheme, local parties agreed to purchase a regular number of leaflets and distribute these along with each PPB.

The questionnaire sought data on (i) whether an Association had been involved in this distribution scheme and (ii) the number of leaflets distributed in respect of each PPB. The responses are detailed in Table 5.8 below.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	3000	F	500	K	-	P	-
B	3000	G	800	L	-	Q	-
C	5000	H	1500	M	-	R	-
D	-	I	10000	N	200	S	-
E	1000	J	1000	O	1000	T	-

Table 5.8: PPB Support Leaflets Distributed per Broadcast

Table 5.8 shows that between them, participating Associations distributed 17,000 support leaflets at each broadcast. An average 2,400 leaflets were distributed in each safe seat. The average in the Marginal (Con. Held) category was 2,960, largely thanks to Association I which distributed the huge figure of 10,000 leaflets after every broadcast.... "we nearly broke our back doing it... some were put out late but we did it in the end". The average falls to only 240 among other held marginals whilst not a single leaflet was distributed by an Association in the unwinnable category.

As Table 5.8 shows, virtually every seat in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories undertook to purchase and deliver leaflets. One exception was Association D whose Chairman said that, largely because of 'In-Touch' deliveries man/woman power was not available at the time. Only two seats in the Marginal (Other held) category delivered leaflets and one (N) was for a mere 200 leaflets per PPB.

Electioneering

This final section examines three key election activities; candidate selection, canvassing and literature production and distribution.

The questionnaire sought data on local government candidate selection. It was assumed that even unpromising constituencies would not have any difficulties in recruiting parliamentary candidates, since there are always a

large pool of hopefuls anxious to take the first step on the ladder to a 'real' contest. In fact, no constituency had encountered any difficulty in this area. However, it was hypothesised that regular local election requiring slates of candidates may pose problems.

Chairmen were given five statements to chose from concerning the selection of local government candidates and, by numbering these, responses can be presented in tabular form. The five statements and the value allocated to each were

Usually very difficult (1)

Often quite difficult (2)

Sometimes difficult (3)

Occasionally difficult (4)

Never difficult (5)

The responses are charted in Table 5.9 below.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	5	F	3	K	2	P	1
B	5	G	2	L	2	Q	1
C	5	H	3	M	2	R	2
D	4	I	4	N	3	S	1
E	3	J	4	O	4	T	1

Table 5.9: Degree of Difficulty in Recruiting Local Government Candidates

Table 5.9 shows that only three seats (A, B and C) never encountered real difficulties in recruiting local government candidates. All other seats encountered some degree of difficulty ranging from 'occasionally difficult' to 'very difficult'. Difficulty in recruiting local government candidates clearly increases the less hospitable the environment. This is illustrated in Table 5.10 below which presents the values in Table 5.9 as mean and median averages for each electoral category. The higher the number, the less difficulty encountered; the lower the number, the greater the difficulty in recruiting local government candidates.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	4.4	3.2	2.6	1.2
Median Av	5.0	3.0	2.0	1.0

Table 5.10: Degree of Difficulty in Recruiting Local Government Candidates - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 5.10 shows a clear gradient between electoral categories. The more promising the electoral environment, the easier it becomes to find the regular slates of candidates needed for local government elections. There are two explanations for this. Firstly, the better the seat the more members (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3) and, hence, potential candidates. Secondly, the better the seat the more local government candidates will be existing councillors. For instance, Association B at the time of interview held thirty-nine of the forty-six district council seats in its constituency. At the other extreme, Association T held none of the twenty-eight local government seats in its area. Seats in the Unwinnable category reported major problems in recruiting candidates including "having to lean on members" (Association S) and pressing members' wives into electoral service (Association P). The fact that these participants in the key democratic activity are simply 'paper candidates' with no expectation of winning does not, apparently, lessen their usual reluctance. Once selected, the general fear is of an electoral upset which could precipitate them into office. Interestingly, two Chairmen (Associations M and T) recalled the time when many such candidates were elected by the exceptional pro-Conservative swing of 1969. In both these Associations, Conservatives won control of district authorities for the first time in living memory. This created major difficulties

"... we have no experience of governing and what's more, half our members never expected and certainly didn't want to be where they were"

Difficulties with candidate recruitment are not always surmountable. Five Associations recorded seven uncontested seats at the last set of local elections. In the case of three seats the failure was voluntary

Association D "Local branches refused to oppose friendly independence". (two seats).

Association K "Tactically we felt we could make in roads into a strong socialist area fielding two candidates if we only fought one." (one seat).

However, the reasons for not contesting the other four local government seats were involuntary

Association P "no willing candidates, I (the Chairman) was going to stand but the company I work for wouldn't let me." (one seat)

Association T "Hopeless seats coupled with difficulty in finding candidates."
(three seats).

The four cases of an involuntary acquiescence in an opposition 'walk-over' all occurred in the unwinnable category.

Canvassing is a key electioneering activity, the aim of which is to identify supporters and maximise their turn-out. As explained earlier, some canvassing may be undertaken between campaigns or in the run-up to a campaign, although most will occur during the campaign itself. The questionnaires and interviews indicated that at least some inter-election canvassing had taken place in most constituencies. This activity was largely stimulated by the likelihood of a General Election. Some of the recruitment campaigns detailed in Table 2.11 had involved the soliciting of voters' intentions; survey canvassing had been undertaken in three seats (H, I and K) and canvassing teams had been active in many branches.

However, what really matters is not when the canvassing is done but its final extent. The more extensive the data on voters' intentions, the greater the number of supporters who can be subsequently monitored at the polls and, if necessary, 'pulled out'. Strategists may argue which areas in a ward or constituency should be canvassed but such debates, as pointed out earlier, are usually the result of having limited resources. In an ideal world, all voters intentions should be canvassed.

The questionnaire sought data on canvassing. Firstly, Chairmen were asked to estimate how much of a hypothetical marginal ward in a constituency would be canvassed in a by-election. This example was chosen to present a 'best case' scenario. A by-election enables all of an Association's resources to be focussed on one contest, whilst the marginal nature of the seat may be thought likely to encourage a major organisational effort.

Chairmen were given a number of options to chose from and by allocating values to these options, it is possible to present their responses in tabular form. The options and the vales were

All the ward (5)

Most of the ward (4)

Some of the ward (3)

A Little of the ward (2)

None (1)

The responses are presented in Table 5.11 below. The higher the numbers in Table 5.11, the greater the estimated extent of likely canvassing the lower the number, the lower the estimate.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	5	F	4	K	4	P	3
B	5	G	3	L	3	Q	2
C	5	H	4	M	3	Q	2
D	5	I	5	N	4	S	1
E	5	J	5	O	4	T	2

Table 5.11: Estimated Extent of By-Election Canvassing a Marginal Ward.

Table 5.11 shows that all the safe seats and two in the Marginal (Con. Held) category expected to fully canvass a hypothetical marginal ward in a by-election. Thereafter, expectations decline. Chairmen from two unwinnable seats (R and S) thought they would only be able to canvass "a little of the ward". The decline is illustrated in Table 5.12 below which presents the mean and median average responses by electoral category.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	5.0	4.2	3.6	1.8
Median Av	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0

Table 5.12: Estimated Extent of By-Election Canvassing in a Marginal Ward - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 5.12 confirms that, even in the 'best case' scenario, the ability to fully canvass the hypothetical ward declines steadily across the four electoral environments.

A similar exercise was undertaken in respect of a General Election. Each Chairman was asked to estimate, on the basis of past experience, how much of their constituency is usually canvassed at a General Election. Such an election is, of course, far more challenging from a canvassing point of view than a by-election in a ward even if some preparatory inter-election canvassing has been done. Again, Chairmen were offered a choice of statements to which numerical values were subsequently attached, thus enabling the responses to be presented in tabular form. The statements and values were

- All the constituency (5)
 Most of the constituency (4)
 Some of the Constituency (3)
 A little of the Constituency (2)
 None (1)

The responses are presented in Table 5.13 below. The higher the number, the greater the estimated extent of canvassing at a General Election. The lower the number, the lower the estimate.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	4	F	3	K	3	P	2
B	4	G	2	L	2	Q	1
C	3	H	3	M	2	R	2
D	3	I	4	N	2	S	1
E	4	J	3	O	3	T	1

Table 5.13: Estimated Extent of General Election Canvassing.

Table 5.13 indicates that no Chairmen could forecast a 100 per cent canvass in a General Election. Associations in three safe seats (A, B and C) are, according to their Chairmen, capable of canvassing "most" of their constituencies at a General Election although two (C, D) can only manage "some". Expected canvassing becomes less extensive the less hospitable the environment as Table 5.14 below demonstrates. This presents the mean and median average responses by electoral category.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	3.6	3.0	2.4	1.2
Median Av	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0

Table 5.14: Estimated Extent of General Election Canvassing - Mean and Median Averages.

Data on canvassing presented in Tables 5.10, 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13 are crude. Categories ("most", "some" etc) are not specified and are, of course, open to interpretation. They give only the very roughest indication of geographical area/households canvassed. Nevertheless, the tables do indicate a consistent decline in 'canvassing capacity' across the electoral environments. This situation is clearly linked to the general decline in membership numbers (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3) and ward branches (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2), the less hospitable the

electoral environment. Clearly, the less members an Association possesses and the more attenuated its infrastructure, the less canvassing it can do.

Further corroboration of this decline in 'canvassing capacity' was obtained from the questionnaire which also sought information on the subsequent use of canvassing data. As explained earlier in this chapter, canvassing is a virtually pointless exercise unless tellers are appointed on polling day to record who casts their vote. Only then can laggard supporters be chased and, hopefully, the vote maximised.

Chairmen were asked in the questionnaire for (i) numbers of polling stations in their constituencies and (ii) how many were manned by tellers during the last local government election. The aim was to make a more exact estimate of the 'canvassing potential' in the sample constituencies.

Polling stations serve polling districts of which there will be a number in each local government ward. Polling districts are, where possible, roughly equal in terms of the electorate they serve. The number of manned stations is, therefore, an indication of the proportion of a constituency's electorate which has been canvassed. For instance, if a constituency has fifty polling stations and tellers are on duty in twenty-five, approximately 50 per cent is likely to have been canvassed. This assumes, of course, that not only are polling districts roughly equal in terms of their electorates, but also that all the polling districts with manned stations have been completely canvassed. This will not always be true since a party may canvass only an area in a polling district, subsequently monitoring its pledges with tellers at the appropriate station. However, in most cases, a polling district will be the 'unit of canvassing'. Anything less tends to make the canvassing exercise too fragmented. Moreover, although it is now unusual for parties to maintain polling district branches (there were none in the sample Associations) the polling district/station remains important in electioneering. Activists are keenly aware of which stations yield what support and the polling district still tends to be the unit of canvassing endeavour.

The questionnaire specified the last local government elections, because the organisational arrangements pertaining then were likely to be more easily recalled than those at the last General Election. In addition, a full local government election is a comprehensive affair with contests in all seats. It therefore requires constituency-wide mobilisation and in many ways its organisational effects are comparable to a General Election.

Usable constituency-wide data on the total number of polling stations and telling arrangements at the last local government election were not obtainable from Association K and N since these are split between local

authorities which hold elections at different times. Polling stations and telling data from the other eighteen Associations is presented in Table 5.15 below (S = total number of polling stations, T = stations with tellers and the figure in brackets is T as a percentage of S).

	Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
	S.	T.	S.	T.	S.	T.	S.	T.
A	151.79	(52.32)	F 62.25	(40.32)	K -	-	P 38.4	(10.52)
B	45.35	(77.82)	G 43.12	(27.93)	L 35.8	(22.85)	Q 25.3	(12.00)
C	98.60	(61.23)	H 38.18	(47.39)	M -	-	R 41.2	(4.87)
D	58.45	(77.53)	I 40.35	(87.71)	N 35.11	(31.44)	S 33.1	(3.03)
E	63.48	(76.21)	J 28.22	(78.74)	O 26.5	(19.23)	T 27.1	(3.70)

Table 5.15: Polling Stations Monitored at 1987 General Election.

Table 5.15 shows the total number of polling stations declining across the electoral categories because of the broad change from largely rural seats with scattered communities to compact urban seats. If the proportion of manned polling stations is an indication of how much canvassing had been done in each constituency, Association I achieved the greatest coverage (thirty-five manned stations out of a total of forty - 87.71 per cent coverage) whilst, at the other extreme, Association S had the least (one manned station out of thirty-three - 3.03 per cent coverage). The decline in coverage is charted in Table 5.16 below which shows mean and median average coverage by electoral coverage.

	Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
Mean Av	69.04	56.41	24.50	6.82
Median av	76.21	47.39	22.85	4.87

Table 5.16: Canvassing Coverage Based on Polling Station Data - Mean and Median Averages.

Polling station and telling data presented in Tables 5.15 and 5.16 confirmed the more impressionistic data presented in Tables 5.11, 5.12, 5.13 and 5.14. 'Canvassing potential' does indeed decline from category to category. Interestingly, Table 5.16 indicates an approximate 25 per cent reduction in the canvassing effort from one environment to another. Safe seats generally appear able to canvass about 70-75 per cent of their

constituency; the Conservative marginals approximately 50 per cent and other held marginals 25 per cent. Unwinnable seats can only manage 5 per cent or thereabouts.

Interviewees from outside the participating Associations found the canvassing data in the Tables presented above generally credible although several thought the figures for seats in the Safe category were somewhat on the high side.

It is important to emphasise that, as with newsletter (see above), lack of manpower is probably not the whole story behind the decline in canvassing activity in less hospitable environments. Chairmen from a number of less favoured seats clearly saw canvassing less as a practical activity and more as a flag-flying exercise. As the Chairman of Association P put it

"... it doesn't matter how much canvassing you do.... it's not going to get us anywhere. We do some in our best areas just to show our supporters and Labour that we're there."

Clearly, this kind of attitude is likely to drive canvassing activity, already restricted by lack of resources, down further and the emphasis on canvassing as a symbolic activity can result in increasingly ritualistic electioneering. An example of this is supplied by a non-participating Association known to the author. This Association is situated in a safe Labour seat in a major conurbation. At the General Election of 1987, no canvassing whatsoever was done because of shrinking, elderly membership and widespread resignation in the face of overwhelming Labour strength. However, throughout polling day members, wearing their rosettes, acted as tellers at one polling station conveniently near the Association's HQ. Electoral numbers were collected from voters and brought back to a committee room bereft of any records to check them against - the ultimate in economical, symbolic electioneering.

During a local or parliamentary election, each party seeks to publicise their candidate(s) and its political 'message'. Some publicity will be obtained through the local media - press, radio and television - but the majority will be sought by the parties themselves through leaflets of various kinds and, of course, the election address. It was noted earlier in this Chapter, printing and stationery is usually the largest item in an election budget and, within this budget, the election address is the single largest expenditure.

Data on campaign material was obtained from the questionnaire and Chairmen. In addition, the official Return of Election Expenses filed by agents for and on behalf of the Conservative candidates in the 1987 General Election was obtained from the Acting Returning Officer in each of the sample constituencies.

The information contained in these Returns is examined in greater detail in the succeeding and final section of this chapter. However, as far as printing and stationery is concerned, it can be noted that this was indeed the major item in all returns and that, within this sum, the election address was the largest single item. This is illustrated in Table 5.17 below which shows (i) printing and stationery as a percentage of the total spent and (ii) the election address as a percentage of the printing and stationery budget (PS = Printing and Stationery; EA = Election Address).

	Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable				
	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%			
A	58	30	F	67	51	K	67	68	P	76	85
B	55	42	G	76	73	L	79	68	Q	73	76
C	63	66	H	59	69	M	77	75	R	89	85
D	58	53	I	63	55	N	60	51	S	84	88
E	67	48	J	58	54	O	77	63	T	85	88

Table 5.17: Printing and Stationery and Election Address Expenditure.

Table 5.17 shows printing and stationery as a proportion of total expenditure, ranging from 55 per cent (B) to 79 per cent (L). The proportion of the printing and stationery budget taken up by the election address is lowest in Association A where it amounts to 30 per cent. It is highest in Associations S and T where it reaches 88 per cent.

Table 5.18 below presents the mean and median averages for printing and stationery (as a proportion of total budget) and election address expenditure (as a proportion of printing and stationery) by electoral category.

	Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%	PS%	EA%
Mean Av	60.2	47.8	64.6	60.4	72.0	65.0	81.4	84.4
Median Av	58.0	48.0	59.0	55.0	77.0	68.0	84.0	85.0

Table 5.18: Printing and Stationery and Election Address Expenditure - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 5.18 shows clear differences by electoral environment. In the 1987 General Election, printing and stationery as a proportion of total expenditure in the sample constituencies increased steadily the less hospitable the environment. The mean and median average printing and stationery expenditure is around 60 per cent of total budget in the Safe category but rises to a little more than 80 per cent of total expenditure in unwinnable seats. A similar gradient is visible in respect of election address expenditure as a proportion of printing and stationery. This too rises steadily from around 48 per cent in safe seats to 85 per cent or thereabouts in the Unwinnable category.

The explanation for this, borne out by a full analysis of the Returns of Election Expenditure, is two-fold. Firstly, seats in more hospitable environments spend more on other electioneering activities, than do seats in less hospitable environments. As a result, printing and stationery costs in the more hospitable environments constitute a smaller proportion of total election expenditure. Secondly, within their printing and stationery budgets, seats in more hospitable environments tend to spend on a greater range of items. Conversely, seats in less promising environments spend on fewer items and, hence, the cost of election addresses comes to dominate printing and stationery budgets.

Analysis of Returns of Election Expenditure revealed that, in the 1987 General Election, spending in the more favoured seats covered such things as the hire of public halls and committee rooms, postage, special telephone arrangements, secretarial support, car van and coach hire (the hire of coaches cost £600 in Association D), photo sessions, press advertising (a major item in Associations A, C, E, H and I) and hire of local poster sites. Some expenditure of this kind did appear in the Returns from less promising environments but was never significant. In addition, fees to election agents were always higher in more favourable environments. Associations as legal entities are suspended for the duration of a campaign (see above). When an Association is reconstituted, professional agents are paid the salary due to them for the period of the campaign. However, they are also paid a 'bonus' for professional services rendered to the candidate during the campaign. This payment is a recognition of the agent's total responsibility for the proper conduct of the campaign and the legal responsibilities involved. The 'bonus' comes out of election funds and is always declared in the Return of Election Expenses. The 'bonus' for professionally trained agents is 10 per cent of maximum permitted election expenditure. Less cannot be paid since, although it has not been tested, 'skimping' could theoretically leave a candidate open to charges that he/she had unfairly maximised expenditure by not paying the accepted sum. Seats

with professionally trained agents qualifying for a 10 per cent 'bonus' are predominantly located in more hospitable environments (see Table 4.19) and their payments in the Returns were between £400 and £600. On the other hand, payments to agents appointed for the General Election campaign in other less favoured seats were as low as £75 and £100. These appointees were amateurs and the same 'rules' do not apply to them.

Within the printing and stationery budgets, seats in better environments spent on a greater range of items. Election addresses were an important component of printing and stationery expenditure in these seats but spending on other items was significant. These included a variety of posters, leaflets on different topics, special letters to special groups, 'sorry you were out' calling cards, election newsletters (produced by Associations B, D, E, I and J) and Central Office leaflets. The range of items in less favoured seats was not so extensive. No seat in the Marginal (Other Held) or Unwinnable categories produced election newsletters. Three Associations (N, O and Q) did distribute special leaflets but these were restricted in number. Only two seats (N and P) purchased Central Office leaflets.

Clearly, if publicity literature is any guide, campaigns in more favoured seats tend to be more varied in terms of the materials employed than campaigns in less favoured seats where the election address dominates the printing and stationery budgets and where, in turn, these budgets dominate total expenditure. Chairmen from such seats confirmed the trends charted in Tables 5.17 and 5.18. As one Chairman (T) said

"... why pour out cash on loads of stuff... it is not going to do any good. We get the address out... that's the main thing."

Spending on Politics

Data was collected on overall political expenditure in respect of the 1987 General Election and inter-election expenditure on political activity. The former was readily available in the shape of the Return of Election Expenses filed on behalf of the Conservative candidate in each of the sample seats. Information on inter-election expenditure was culled from the annual accounts provided by the participating Associations.

Total expenditure figures were readily available from the Return of Election Expenses since all the items are totalled and presented on a summary sheet. Each participating Association's total declared expenditure for the 1987 General Election is listed below in Table 5.19. Returns are destroyed after two years so the information provided below cannot compromise Associations' anonymity.

Table 5.19 also shows, in brackets, what proportion this expenditure represents of the legally maximum permitted expenditure in force for the 1987 General Election (see above). This was calculated for each Association's electorate from the 1988 edition of Dodds Parliamentary Companion which provides details of the size of each constituency's electorate at the last parliamentary election.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	5610 (90%)	F	4063 (79%)	K	3811 (76%)	P	2967 (73%)
B	5449 (89%)	G	4901 (85%)	L	4632 (71%)	Q	3706 (76%)
C	5781 (95%)	H	5485 (95%)	M	3660 (75%)	R	2522 (68%)
D	5596 (88%)	I	5429 (94%)	N	3996 (72%)	S	2902 (73%)
E	5039 (86%)	J	4926 (93%)	O	4621 (81%)	T	2653 (68%)

Table 5.19: Total Expenditure General Election 1987

Table 5.19 shows absolute expenditure levels ranging from £5781 (B) to £2522 (R). More significantly, actual expenditure as a percentage of maximum permitted expenditure is as high as 95 per cent in associations C and H but falls to 68 per cent in Associations O and T. It is interesting to note, that expenditures in the Unwinnable category are high in relation to constituency income in the last complete year's set of accounts (see Table 3.6). In two cases election expenditure exceeds the last years income total (Associations S and T). Some extra income from fighting fund appeals and so on is used to fund elections but it should be remembered that in this kind of inhospitable environment, fund-raising is very largely devoted to accruing resources for electioneering and that such Associations usually lack other, major demands on their income such as agents and property (see Tables 4.9 and 4.11). Variations across the environments are highlighted in Table 5.20 below which shows the mean and median General Election expenditures by electoral category.

	Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
Mean Av	5495	(89.6)	4960	(89.2)	4144	(75.0)	2950	(71.6)
Median Av	5596	(89.0)	4926	(93.0)	3996	(75.0)	2902	(73.0)

Table 5.20: Total Expenditure General Election 1987 - Mean and Median Averages

Table 5.20 shows absolute expenditure on the 1987 General Election declining across the categories. Perhaps the most significant figures are those showing expenditure as a proportion of the permitted maximum. This is relatively high - around 90 per cent - in both the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories. However, it falls to 75 per cent in the Marginal (Other Held). Another small decline of several percentage points occurs in the unwinnable seats. Clearly, seats in the less favoured environments did not spend as much of their 'allowance' as did safe and Conservative-held marginal seats. This finding complements the trends regarding printing and stationery expenditures outlined above. There it was noted that not only did expenditure on election addresses increase as a proportion of the printing and stationery budget in the less hospitable environments (indicating that little in the way of other materials was employed) but that printing and stationery budgets also increased as a proportion of total expenditure (indicating less in the way of other election activities). The expenditure figures in Tables 5.19 and 5.20 support this conclusion. It should be particularly noted that expenditure proportions in the marginal seats do not suggest that Associations in these seats generally made any special financial efforts in respect of the 1987 General Election. Conservative-held marginals spent as great a proportion of their permitted maximum as safe seats but, on the evidence of Table 5.20, this still left an unexploited margin of 5-10 per cent (about £300-£600 in an average seat). Seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category only spent, on average, three-quarters of the permitted maximum. Data was also collected on inter-election political spending. Central guidance on political expenditure indicates that 12.4 per cent of an Association's total annual expenditure should be devoted to 'political activities' (exclusive of campaigning) (see Table 3.5). This is one-eighth or thereabouts of a local party's annual budget. Checking wider-election political expenditure in the sample Associations proved difficult. This was partly due to the cursory nature of some Association's annual accounts and problems with indirect costs. Expenses on such things as telephone, postage, general stationery and so on it, of course, necessary if political work is to be carried out and several Chairmen were insistent that these 'hidden costs' were an important component of political activity. However, it is clear from Table 3.5 that such costs are accommodated under their appropriate headings and 'political activity' includes only obviously direct costs. Thus, in the end and with the help of Chairmen, estimates of inter-election political expenditure direct costs were drawn up including only such things as costs associated with postal vote organisation, 'In-touch' newsletters, other leaflets which Associations may have produced, membership material (such as membership books) and purchases from Central Office of such things

as leaflets, posters, training videos, handbooks and art-work. The direct costs of political activity are charted in Table 5.21 below. Figures in brackets show costs as a percentage of total income which is taken from Table 3.6.

Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
A	2611 (10.28)	F	1800 (9.66)	K	900 (9.36)	P	160 (2.42)
B	3406 (13.66)	G	602 (2.94)	L	500 (4.30)	Q	111 (2.57)
C	6500 (11.28)	H	1905 (8.61)	M	1050 (6.36)	R	145 (4.65)
D	1800 (6.89)	I	4800 (10.91)	N	567 (7.25)	S	22 (1.29)
E	3000 (13.75)	J	1200 (6.25)	O	1200 (8.48)	T	16 (1.89)

Table 5.21: Inter-Election Expenditure on Political Activity.

Table 5.21 shows that sums directly and unequivocally attributable to political activity are highest in absolute terms in the Safe environment and lowest in the Unwinnable category. This decline parallels falling Association income levels charted in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. However, expenditure on political activity as a proportion of total income also declines across the electoral categories as demonstrated in Table 5.22 below. This shows the mean and median average spending on political activity by electoral environment.

	Safe		Marginal (Con. Held)		Marginal (Other Held)		Unwinnable	
Mean Av	3463	(11.17)	2061	(7.67)	834	(7.19)	90	(2.56)
Median Av	3000	(11.28)	1800	(8.61)	900	(7.29)	111	(2.42)

Table 5.22: Inter-Election Political Activity - Mean and Median Averages.

Table 5.22 confirms the decline in absolute amounts spend on inter-election political activity which falls by roughly £1000 for each electoral category. Expenditure as a proportion of total income also declines. At around 11 per cent in the Safe category, it is very near to the central 'target' (12.4 per cent). Thereafter, it falls in both the marginal categories to a 'plateau' of approximately 7-8 per cent. In the Unwinnable category, the mean and median average expenditure on political activity falls again to 2.56 per cent and 2.42 per cent respectively. Not only do seats in less hospitable environments spend less on political activity but what they do spend is a smaller proportion of their total income.

Tables 5.19 and 5.20 are important both for what they do and do not show. Firstly, it is interesting to note that the seven 'branch only' Associations (G, L, M, P, Q, S and T) all show low levels of spending on inter-election political activity. Secondly, there is no 'bulge' in the proportion of expenditure devoted to inter-election political activity in the two marginal environments where it might be thought that electoral incentives would encourage such activity. It will be recalled that a similar situation was found in respect of membership in the marginal environments (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). Here again, it would seem likely that the need and incentive to recruit members would be particularly marked in marginal environments but the membership figures presented in Chapter 2 did not indicate the presence of any special efforts in this direction.

Summary

A number of key inter-election and election activities have been reviewed with the aim of establishing whether these vary by environment and, if so, how.

Central Office puts considerable emphasis on the importance of postal and proxy vote organisation. However, only five of the sample Associations, located across all environments, were found to possess permanent organisation of the kind recommended although all Associations do appoint Postal Vote Officers at election time. Some indication of the importance of having permanent machinery was afforded by Table 5.2 which showed that Associations with such machinery had the largest number of postal and proxy votes on their registers.

'Communication' has been a major theme of the various campaigns mounted by Central Office during the 1980s. Despite continual exhortation to develop a more professional and proactive stance vis-a-vis the media, none of the sample Associations was found to have either a Press Officer or a letter-writing panel. Professional agents were expected to handle PR between elections. PR was conceived of as essentially an electioneering activity by Chairmen from all seats. Discussions on letter-writing panels revealed a distrust of the media especially in unwinnable seats.

The main component of the communication exercise - 'In-Touch' newsletters - proved to be generally common and were widely accepted as important. However, it was found that numbers of editions and areas delivered declined across the electoral categories. This decline in newsletter production and distribution can be largely

attributed to a decline in members and money across the categories but some Chairmen from less hospitable environments were also sceptical of the usefulness of the newsletters in their electoral situation.

Figures for PPB support leaflet deliveries indicated that almost all leaflets delivered by sample Associations were distributed by local parties in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories.

Further marked declines across the electoral categories were found in respect of indicators of electioneering activity. Recruiting candidates for local government elections was found to become more difficult the less hospitable the environment. In some unwinnable seats, this had led to local parties failing to contest ward elections and allowing an opposition 'walk-over'. Canvassing is a key electioneering activity for local parties. Estimates of the amount of canvassing likely to be done at a local and a parliamentary election were presented. In both cases, Chairmen's estimates declined across the electoral categories. Chairmen's canvassing estimates were broadly confirmed by an analysis of polling station telling undertaken at the last local government elections in eighteen of the twenty sample Associations.

The sharp decline in the extent of canvassing across the electoral categories is (like 'In-Touch' production and distribution) clearly linked to a decline in resources especially man and woman power. However, here again, some degree of 'defeatism' is probably also involved. Comments from some Chairmen from unwinnable seats suggest that sometimes limited canvassing is undertaken for symbolic rather than practical reasons.

Data on campaign materials and activities confirmed that the election address was the largest item of expenditure in printing and stationery budgets which, in turn, dominate election spending. However, printing and stationery budgets as a proportion of total expenditure increased across the electoral categories. This indicates a reduction in spending on other activities in less promising environments. Within printing and stationery budgets, the proportion consumed by election address expenditure also increased in less hospitable seats indicating that seats in these environments also generally spend less on other kinds of literature and materials.

This conclusion was confirmed by an analysis of 1987 General Election expenditure which found that the proportion of maximum permitted expenditure actually spent varied by electoral category. It was high in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories and lowest in the unwinnable seats.

A similar decline was found in respect of inter-election expenditure on political activity. Data indicated that seats in the Safe category spent about 12 per cent of their income on political activities. This is almost exactly the centrally recommended figure. However, seats in the Unwinnable environment spent only 2 - 2.5 per cent.

Notes and References

1. Postal and Proxy Votes: A Handbook for Conservative Party Workers, Conservative Central Office, undated, p. 1.
2. Butler, D and Pinto-Duschinsky, M, The British General Election of 1970, The Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1971, pp. 331-334.
3. The eleven categories are:
 - (i) the physically incapacitated (either permanently or temporarily)
 - (ii) those way at work inside and outside the U.K. (and accompanying wives or husbands)
 - (iii) removals
 - (iv) those unable to vote because of journey by sea or air
 - (v) those unable to vote because of religious observance
 - (vi) service reservists inside and outside the U.K.
 - (vii) service personnel (and accompanying wives or husbands)
 - (viii) Crown Servants outside the U.K. (and accompanying wives or husbands)
 - (ix) proxies themselves entitled to vote by post
 - (x) proxies whose addresses are in different local government areas from electors
 - (xi) candidates.
4. The total number of overseas holidays taken by U.K. residents trebled between 1976 and 1988 to reach 21 million holidays, see Central Statistical Office, Social Trends 20 (1990 Edition), London, HMSO, 1990, p. 160.
5. The most important political variable affecting the individual voter's propensity to turn out in elections is strength of party identification. The proportion of supporters prepared to identify 'very strongly' with one of the main parties has fallen. In 1964, 48 per cent of Conservatives and 51 per cent of Labour supporters identified 'very strongly' with their respective parties. By 1979, the figures were 24 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. This was a major fall for both parties but especially for the Conservative Party. On the other hand, some aspects of differential turnout probably do assist the Party. The more people there are in a constituency with professional or managerial occupations, the higher the turnout tends to be. Labour has made electoral inroads into this group but the Conservative affiliation is still dominant. Four factors associated with poor turnout - being young, single, living in private rented accommodation and being residentially mobile - provide the Party with a 'negative bonus' if it is assumed that such voters are less likely to be Conservative. For a discussion of these issues see Denver, D. Elections and Voting Behaviour in Britain, Contemporary Political Studies Series, London, Philip

Allen, 1989, pp. 114-119 and Moran, M. Politics and Society in Britain: An Introduction (Second Edition) Macmillan, Basingstoke and London, 1989, pp. 59-86.

6. Help Find Britons Abroad (leaflet) Conservative Central Office, undated.
7. An Offer From the Conservative Party... (leaflet) Conservative Central Office, undated. The form offers the expatriate voter three options one of which he/she must sign. The statements accompanying each option read:
 - Option 1 I enclose my application form to register as an overseas elector. I have made an appointment of a proxy on Part 6 and that too is enclosed. Please forward the whole form to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer for my last UK registered address below.
 - Option 2 I enclose my application form to register as an overseas elector. I have retained Part 6 of the form which deals with the appointment of a proxy as my friend/relative has still to advise me of his/her willingness to act. Please forward the form to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer for my last UK registered address below.
 - Option 3 I enclose my application form to register as an overseas elector. I have left my proxy application form blank.

Please find a reliable and qualified elector to act as my proxy and vote Conservative on my behalf. Please advise me of his/her name and address.
8. Conservative Central Office, Model Rules for Constituency, Branch and European Constituency Councils (Revised 1982), London, p.2.
9. Postal Votes Win Elections: Help Find a Postal Voter (leaflet), Conservative Central Office, undated.
10. Ibid.
11. Hart, C. Your Party: A Campaign Guide, Conservative Central Office, undated, p. 52.
12. Chegwin, P. Responding to the Competition, Association of Liberal Councillors Booklet N^o 16, undated.
13. The Times, 5 October 1985, p. 5.
14. This slogan has appeared on a number of national artwork packs.
15. Hart, C. op. cit., p. 10.
16. Letter from Ronald Bell, Training Officer Campaigning Dept., Conservative Central Office to M.P.s adopted candidates and constituency agents (England), 9 April 1987.
17. Hart, C. op. cit., p. 9.
18. Ibid., p. 17.
19. Ibid., p. 10.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., p. 11.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 46.
25. Office of Fair Trading, Selling by Telephone, London, 1984.
26. Conservative Central Office, Saving Your Feet: The Art of Telephone Contact, undated.
27. Hart, C op. cit., pp. 51-54.
28. At election time, candidates receive letters from organisations in which they are invited to state their opinions on a subject answer a questionnaire or agree/disagree with a variety of statements. A General Election will bring shoals of such letters from national organisations or their local branches. They are far fewer at local government elections. Candidates are happy to answer those to which a 'Party line' applies. Others are dealt with circumspectly and Central Office will frequently supply a set of model answers so that all candidates can make the same response.
29. All elections require an agent who is the person legally responsible for the proper conduct of the campaign and for ensuring that expenditures are both legal and fall within the prescribed limits. If an Association does not employ its own professional agent, someone must be appointed to the position. An agent can be responsible for a number of parliamentary elections in different constituencies at a General Election but this would be very unusual. However, at local government elections, one agent is often appointed for a number of candidates.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study has sought to identify whether variations in electoral environments, specified in Chapter 1, had any effect on the membership, finances, structure and political activities of a sample of twenty Conservative Associations and, if so, the kinds of effects involved and the reasons for them.

The literature on organisations as systems stresses the internal inter-connectedness of organisational life. It also stresses that, as 'open systems' organisations are necessarily linked to, and interact with, their environments which supply organisations with the very stuff of their existence - material and human resources, opportunities, challenges and problems. On the basis of this literature, it was hypothesised that variations between Associations in different kinds of electoral environments would exist although the nature of any possible variations were not specified.

Of course, measurement of anything requires a fixed standard against which comparisons can be made. In this study, the standard of comparison has been supplied by the many policies, prescriptions and practices promulgated by Conservative Central Office which seek to give operational content to Associations' organisational life. Thus, as earlier chapters have demonstrated, specifications concerning membership levels, finance, organisational structure and political activities are both available and vigorously promoted by the centre.

The conclusions to be drawn from the data which are presented in this study are two-fold and are discussed below. These address (i) the general issue of variation by electoral environment and (ii) the extent to which different environments encourage or inhibit the enhancement of resources.

Variations by Electoral Environment

Data presented in Chapters 2-5 confirm that the sample Associations do vary by electoral environment in respect of each of the major features examined - membership, finance, structure and political activities. This variation is not rigid and, as has been stressed throughout, overlap between the

categories is sometimes extensive. Nevertheless, overall, clear gradients across the electoral categories have been generally demonstrated. Thus, it has been consistently shown that, as a group, safe seats have the most members, the highest subscription levels, the largest income, the most extensive and varied organisational apparatus and do more and spend more (in both absolute and relative terms) where inter-election political activities and electioneering are concerned. Conversely, unwinnable seats have the least members, the lowest subscription levels, the smallest income, the most attenuated organisational apparatus and are the least active in relation to inter-election political activities and electioneering, on which they spend relatively less than Associations in other environments. In between these two 'polar environments', gradients in respect of all the major indicators of organisational life employed in this study fall, with varying rates of descent, across the two marginal categories.

There are, of course, some exceptions. For instance, CTU organisation was found to be more developed in unwinnable seats (see pp. 170-172) than elsewhere, because of the nature of its task and organisational goals. Association membership as a percentage of the 'Quota Equivalent' membership target promoted by Campaign '88 (see Table 2.6) fluctuates because of the nature of the Quota formula. However, these are exceptions which prove the general rule.

Nevertheless, whilst the safest seats come nearest to fulfilling central prescriptions regarding 'goal content' they seldom fully attain them. Thus, no safe seat came anywhere near the recommended membership target of 25 per cent of the Conservative vote at the last General Election (see Table 2.4). Only one safe seat (C) reached the oft-quoted £50,000 per annum income target (see Table 3.6). Again, only one safe seat (B) was found to have a branch organisation covering 100 per cent of the constituency (see Table 4.1). Leaving the CTU aside, only two safe seats (B and C) were found to possess the full complement of subsidiary structures urged by Central Office - Women's Committees, YC branches, CPC groups and Political Committees. Thus, in the light of central prescriptions, only Associations B and C can be regarded as approximate models of thriving and well-organised Associations. Clearly, whilst central policies, prescriptions and practices are useful as a measure of comparison, they do often tend to represent goals obtainable by only a few Associations and to be based on the exceptional performance of a handful of the most favoured seats. Of course, in providing recommendations and advice, Central Office is faced with an extremely difficult task. The organisational potential of

Associations in different environments is clearly so varied that no one set of prescriptions can realistically apply to them all. On the other hand, too overt a recognition of these differences could lead to a confusion of standards and compromise the element of exhortation and challenge offered in current prescriptions. Nevertheless, from the Party's point of view, it would probably be helpful to make some key distinctions in its prescriptions between major groups of Associations in respect of such things as membership, money and organisational structure. Too much unrealistic exhortation clearly contributes to the jaundiced and sceptical view of the centre and its advice which was regularly displayed by interviewees from less hospitable environments.

This study has confirmed that Associations do vary by electoral environment in respect of membership, income, organisational structure and political activities and that this variation takes the shape of a decline in all the indicators, the less hospitable the environment. The question then, of course, is why does electoral variation take the shape charted in this study, especially when other possible impacts seem equally if not more plausible? For instance, where safe seats are concerned, it might be supposed that, as suggested in Chapter 2, 'safeness' would encourage organisational indifference toward the environment since it can be relied on to provide the desired outcomes with appropriate but minimal interventions by Associations at election time. Similarly, it would not be unreasonable to expect that marginal seats of both the Conservative held and other held variety would be stimulated by the promise of electoral success and exhibit a special vigour in relation to membership, income generation, political activities and so on. The explanation is that an environment not only offers the electoral opportunity or challenge but it also provides the resources which an Association requires to perform its tasks and the level and nature of resources varies from environment to environment.

Virtually all an Association's resources must be obtained from its local environment. The centre does offer help and advice but very little in the way of material assistance is available. For instance, it was noted in Chapter 3 that central subventions are minimal, because of the conscious post-War policy of forcing Associations to exploit their own financial potential.

The key environmental variation in resources is membership. In safe seats there are, by definition, more committed Conservatives prepared to join and work for their local Association. Associations in such seats do not 'create' these members through some process of conversion or 'hard work'. Rather, the

socio-economic profile of a safe seat is such that members are more numerous and more readily available than elsewhere. More members mean more money not just through more subscriptions (which will be higher than elsewhere - see Table 2.8) but because there are more people available to plan and execute fund-raising events. Moreover, the sympathetic environment will yield a greater number of supporters prepared to attend such events and help make them a financial success. Similarly, more members mean a more developed organisational structure and more activists to undertake political work of all kinds. The reverse is true in unwinnable seats. There, Conservative support is relatively weak and middle-class activists and organisers are few on the ground. There are thus few people sufficiently committed, motivated and skilled to make a local party work effectively. Fewer members mean less money both from subscriptions and social events, an organisational structure pared to a minimum and little political activity. In between the unequivocally safe and indisputably unwinnable seats, the gradients which have been demonstrated mark a progressive decline in resources across the marginal categories.

The most appropriate analogy is that of a continuum on which all constituencies are located according to their socio-economic characteristics. Reference has been made in Chapter 1 (see p.15) to 'cluster analysis' which groups constituencies according to their socio-economic characteristics. Most clusters are dominated by one party, partly because social homogeneity and political hegemony go hand in hand and partly because the 'first past the post' electoral system suppresses dissentient voting. These clusters merge into a continuum of political opportunity shaped by socio-economics factors although, of course, the implications of the continuum are different for the major parties. Those socio-economic features which favour the Conservatives are precisely those which are inimical to the Labour Party. Only in the middle of the continuum are clusters found with socio-economic features sufficiently mixed and inconclusive to make seats vulnerable and open to capture on the relatively small swings that characterise General Elections.

Participating associations were included in this study on the basis of 1983 General Election outcomes, not their socio-economic profiles or cluster membership. Nevertheless, the four electoral categories or environments employed in this study necessarily represent sections of this continuum although most seats in most categories actually belong to different clusters. The gradients demonstrated in previous

chapters decline across the categories because of the gradual underlying change from favourable to unfavourable socio-economic configurations. Each set of configurations defines the limits of political opportunity and also the potential resources available to Associations located in this or that environment. The data presented in this study indicates that political success (or failure) and organisational resources go roughly hand in hand; not because one determines the other but because both are linked to broad sets of socio-economic conditions which are the defining features of different environments.

This conclusion should not be taken as implying that electoral outcomes or the resources available to Associations are completely determined by socio-economic factors. Since the apparent breakdown of post-War stable party loyalty, debate has focused on the extent to which socio-economic variables (occupational class however defined, housing, trades union membership, car ownership and so on) affects voting behaviour. However, enough linkage remains to make the prediction of most electoral outcomes possible as cluster analysis demonstrates. Where resources are concerned, a particular environment only sets limits on the level of resources which can be generated; it doesn't specify these precisely. This is demonstrated by the fact that previous chapters have shown Associations in similar environments with different membership and income levels, more or less developed structures and varying degrees of political activity. Of course, it could be argued that variation within environments in constituencies' socio-economic profiles contributed to these differences and this may be true to some degree in some cases. For instance, organisation in Association I clearly benefited from the presence in the constituency of large numbers of certain occupational groups who were not present (at least in anything like the same numbers) in other Conservative held marginals. Nevertheless, it is clear that an increase in resources can be generated by Associations prepared to engage with their environment. The data on membership recruitment (see Table 2.10 and 2.11) confirms this. However, declining gradients across the electoral categories for virtually every organisational indicator which has been examined, do suggest that each environment sets general limits on what can be achieved.

It is important to note that Chairmen and other interviewees accepted that declining resources and declining political success go together and that both are linked to what was frequently referred to as either the 'character' or 'nature' of constituencies. Reference has already been made in Chapter 2 to

Chairmen's keen perception of the socio-economic differences between constituencies and the results vis-a-vis membership (see pp. 55-51). References to the importance of socio-economic differences within and between constituencies was frequently made by Chairmen during the interviews

"... you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" (Chairman, Association T, discussing difficulties in recruiting members).

"... the Council built a housing estate here to make this a Labour seat. The whole nature of the seat has changed. It's hard work just keeping afloat" (Chairman, Association L, discussing long-term electoral trends in this seat).

"... yes, that's the point, to help with mutual aid ... that's what the Patrons' Club was set up for. It's to help the marginals. Seats like that have a different character ... they can't raise the same kind of money we can. Well, if they could, they wouldn't be marginals would they? (Emphasis added), (Chairman, Association E, talking about the role of the constituency's Patrons' Club and its role in generating income for 'mutual aid').

Interestingly, most of the sample Associations had been affected in one way or another by the major redistribution of parliamentary boundaries which came into force at the 1983 General Election (see p. 17). Three constituencies were, in effect, wholly created by the redistribution. Chairmen from seats whose boundaries had been adjusted were able to talk at length about the electoral consequences of this redistribution and its consequent impact on the level of resources enjoyed by their organisations. The impact had been particularly noticeable in Association D whose Chairman observed that

"Twenty years ago this was a Labour seat, though we held it in --- the redistribution gave us rural areas as well as the town. The vote went up like nobody's business. We've doubled our membership and probably tripled our income"

Data presented in this study confirms the links between political success, the overall level of organisational resources and the socio-economic characteristics of constituencies. Associations in different electoral environments do vary and the variation takes the shape of an overall, general decline in organisational resources the less hospitable the environment. The data indicates that this decline is due to limitations which the environment places not only on political opportunity but also on the generation of resources, particularly members.

Enhancing Resources: The Influence of Environments

It was noted above that some of the variation within environments can probably be at least partly attributed to variations in the socio-economic backgrounds of Associations sharing the same electoral category. Each category is a major slice of the 'cluster continuum' and the constituencies it contains have different socio-economic profiles. Nevertheless, it was also stressed that Associations are not the passive products of their environments. The data presented in this study indicates that environments do set broad limits to the resources which can be generated but, within these broad limits, considerable scope appears to exist for Associations to enhance their resource levels through their own efforts. Other data indicates that the capacity to enhance resources varies by environment. Different electoral environments do appear to give rise to different cultures, values, assumptions and expectations, insights into which were obtained from the questionnaire and from interviews with Chairmen.

It was suggested in Chapter 1 and again above, that one possible environmental influence in safe seats would be a general lowering of incentives to work, organise and promote the Party's cause. In fact, surprise by-election defeats and the loss of some apparently safe seats in the early 1980s led to major worries over membership levels and organisational resources and help stimulate the development of the national audit (see pp. 47-48). However, none of the safe seats in this study indicated any signs of decay or introversion. Membership and income levels appeared respectable and generally comparable. Certainly, they were clearly capable of supporting a developed organisational structure and an appropriate range of political activities. Data presented in Chapter 2 show that all the safe seats demonstrated a corporate concern for membership and membership-related issues. It can, of course, be argued that still more could be done and, doubtless, this is true to some extent. However, insights into the culture of these organisations and the motivation of members do seem to confirm that participating Associations in this category were generally exploiting the opportunities provided by their environment to the full.

Safe seats appeared vigorously competitive organisations. Branches compete with one another for financial and status rewards. Not infrequent references were made during interviews to branches being anxious to fulfil and exceed last year's income level and to be seen as active and efficient units of the enterprise. Great kudos is attached to having the most members, holding the most remunerative social

events or paying the largest quota. This vigorous internal competition is clearly, to some degree at least, self-perpetuating. The larger the organisation the more competition amongst its parts and, the more competition, the larger the organisation.

Associations are voluntary organisations and 'managers' lack real sanctions which they can employ to make things happen. They must take care not to offend members' susceptibilities and sensitivities. Moreover, Associations are also decentralised bodies with a core organisation surrounded by a periphery of semi-autonomous sub-units (i.e. branches both geographical and functional). In this kind of situation, there is a clear risk of organisational fission and general lack of direction and integration. However, as far as could be ascertained, this was not a problem in the safe seats, although some Chairmen spoke wearily of the need to mollify, placate, negotiate and bargain with key individuals such as branch Chairmen. The Chairman of Association C spoke at length of a conflict with an officer of the largest branch in the constituency whom he described as "... a blue-rinsed lady who's determined to be the Queen Bee". Nevertheless, despite the potential for conflict and some actual conflict, seats seemed to be internally well-integrated, largely through the competition for status which Chairmen clearly exploited as a way of ensuring that the different parts of their organisations maintained and developed those activities essential to organisational success (recruiting members, making money and so on).

The safe seats which participated in this study were not only internally but also externally competitive. Competition with other political parties appeared to be taken seriously and data from Chapter 5, especially on newsletter production and canvassing confirmed that these seats had put considerable organisational effort into communication and electioneering. The external competition is not over who will win; there is no doubt in these seats about the political sympathies of the local electorates nor about electoral outcomes. Rather, Chairmen (and, according to them, other officers and members generally) competed to demonstrate continuing and, if possible, growing superiority. Other parties were conceived of not as genuine challenges with whom an uncertain battle must be fought, but more as interlopers who must, if possible, be totally suppressed. Pride of possession came across strongly in several statements made in the questionnaire when Chairmen were asked what aspect of their Associations they were most proud of. The answers from two Chairmen (Associations C and A) in the Safe category were revealing.

"... making this safe seat even safer (C)"

"Clearing out nearly half of the Labour members last year" (A - at the last local government election before completion of the questionnaire, the Labour Party had lost five of its thirteen district councils in the constituency)

Thus, rather than inducing organisational somnolence, the safe environment appears to generally stimulate organisational effort. Resources are readily available and internal competition over the acquisition and display of resources provides members with a potent source of gratification. Internal competition, by generating human and material resources, underpins an 'external' drive to ram home the status of the organisation to political opponents. 'Failure' is conceived of not as losing an election (which at the parliamentary level is highly unlikely) but as failing to maintain and enhance a proprietorial hold on a constituency.

Environment-linked assumptions, beliefs and expectations in the two marginal categories showed some intriguing differences and these differences help explain some of the variations in the levels of resources and activities which appear to distinguish the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) electoral categories employed in this study.

Some distinction between these categories was to be expected. The first part of this Conclusion has argued that levels of political success and resources go roughly hand in hand, since both are linked to underlying socio-economic factors. Thus, wherever the electoral swing stops on the socio-economic continuum, seats to one side held by the Party will, by definition, be marginally more 'resource-full' than seats to the other side of the pointer which it has failed to win. However, it could be hypothesised that the difference would be small for a number of reasons. Firstly, the area of the continuum where socio-economic factors are sufficiently mixed to make seats vulnerable and open to unpredictable electoral outcomes is very restricted. Seats qualifying for marginal status come from only a few clusters and do not differ markedly in socio-economic terms. In fact, a number of the participating Associations on both sides of the Conservative held and other held marginal divide came from the same clusters. Secondly, it might be thought that marginal status of either kind (Conservative held or other held) would be a powerful inducement to maximise organisational effort and electioneering. However, the gradients across the two marginal environments demonstrated in previous chapters do not convey a

picture of a compressed, relatively homogenous group of seats stimulated by challenging environments to maximise resource levels.

Some evidence that environment does act as a spur is found in respect of seats in the Marginal (Con. Held) category. Structural and procedural data on membership and membership-related issues presented in Chapter 2, indicated that, with the exception of Association G, all the seats in this category demonstrated a corporate concern for this key topic and resource (see Fig. 2.1 and 2.2). Membership recruitment in the twelve months prior to the completion of the questionnaire was found to be high. Indeed, the mean average membership change exceeded that found in the Safe category (see Tables 2.10 and 2.11). Chapter 3 demonstrated that, whilst seats in the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories raised different proportions of income from different sources, overall income levels were not too dissimilar or, putting it another way, the 'gap' between these two electoral categories was less than half that found between other categories (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7). Once past the Marginal (Con. Held) category, the income gradient was shown to fall sharply as the electoral environment worsened.

The distinctions between (i) pairs of categories (Safe/Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held)/Unwinnable) and (ii) the two marginal categories themselves, raises the interesting possibility that it is not so much the marginal environment per se which acts as a stimulus but the fact that, in Conservative held marginals, local parties have something concrete to defend. There is evidence that this is an important factor moulding the level of organisational effort and commitment in seats of this type.

When asked what aspect of their Associations they were most proud of, three Chairmen (H, I and J) emphasised the responsibility conferred not just by marginal status but by being a Conservative held marginal seat.

"Holding this seat for the Party. When the election comes, it'll be down to seats like us" (H).

"Winning!" (I).

"Having a Conservative M.P. at long last and having something to fight for" (J).

Similar sentiments emphasising the stimulation afforded by having gained the electoral prize and having to fight to hold on to it, were also made during interviews. At interview, the Chairman from Association J elaborated at some length on his answer in the questionnaire explaining:

"In some ways being a marginal and not winning is more dispiriting than never being in with a chance. If you're not in with a chance, at least you can go through the motions (at elections) and have a bit of fun. Elections in marginals are deadly serious and if you think you can win but don't, the let-down is tremendous".

It is also important to note that Chairmen from this group were sensitive to the importance of good organisation and conceived of electoral outcomes as largely their responsibility. All Chairmen were asked to give some estimate in the questionnaire of the 'extra' votes which they thought their organisations might be capable of generating at the next General Election. 'Extra' votes were defined as postal votes plus lifts plus canvassing/telling/pulling out plus any other activities specifically designed to maximise supporter turn-out. Interestingly, only half the Chairmen (ten) were prepared to hazard an estimate. Their estimates are presented below in Table 6.1.

Safe	Marginal (Con. Held)	Marginal (Other Held)	Unwinnable
A 2000	F 2000	K -	P -
B -	G -	L -	Q -
C 3000	H 2000	M -	R -
D 1500	I 5000	N 750	S -
E 1000	J 4000	O 500	T -

Table 6.1: Chairmen's Estimates of Votes Gained Through Organisation

As Table 6.1 indicates, Chairmen prepared to make an estimate were overwhelmingly located in the two most hospitable electoral categories. The average of the estimates presented in Table 6.1 above are 2625 (Safe), 3250 (Marginal (Con. Held)) and 625 (Marginal (Other Held)). It would appear the Chairmen in the two more hospitable environments had a generally optimistic perception of the electoral consequences of good organisation and believe that their organisations can substantially

influence turn-out. Chairmen from Conservative held marginals showed themselves to be particularly optimistic. What matters is not whether they are right but the fact that they conceived electoral outcomes as resting mainly in their hands since, in three of the four Conservative held marginals providing an estimate, the estimates exceeded current majorities.

It would appear that whilst available resource levels in seats qualifying as Conservative held marginals are usually less than those found in safe seats, the electoral environment has a stimulating effect on seats in this electoral category. They have something tangible to defend and conceive of electoral outcomes as something they can seriously influence.

Seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category did not, as a group, demonstrate the same optimism or level of commitment. At first sight, this was difficult to explain since, whilst lacking a Conservative M.P., they're still marginal and the prospect of victory might be thought to be equally stimulating. The solution to this problem was contained in the first question of the questionnaire which asked Chairmen to categorise their seats as either Safe, Marginal or Unwinnable. Precise distinctions were not spelt out. The intention was to check that Chairmen broadly conceived of their seats as having the same electoral status as had been assigned to them in this study. Only three Chairmen (Associations K, L and M) disagreed and these were all from seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category. In all three cases, they described their seats as 'unwinnable', despite the fact that, in their constituencies, the winning candidate's majority in 1983 was less than five per cent of the total poll.

The reasons for this divergence in assigned and self-assigned status emerged at interview. Prior to 1983, Associations K, L and M would not have qualified for marginal status under the definitions adopted in this study. However, the collapse of the Labour vote and the intervention of the Alliance had washed them up to an historic 'high' in terms of electoral performance. As a result, Chairmen and, presumably, other officers and members, did not see themselves as real 'challengers'. The 1983 General Election result was seen as atypical and their electoral position as temporary. They felt that once normal service was resumed, they would return to their historic electoral position. All three Chairmen demonstrated a keen sense of the 'electoral swing', a concept they returned to repeatedly when pressed on whether theirs was not a defeatist attitude and, possibly, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Clearly, a 'marginal culture' is not something which necessarily appears overnight with a change of electoral status. Associations N and O were, perhaps, more typical marginal challengers of the kind conceived of when this study was designed. They too had profited by the exceptional configuration of electoral forces in the 1983 General Election but, crucially, their Chairman emphasised that they were, indeed, marginals and would fight accordingly. They conceived of themselves as challengers and both Chairmen spoke of the possibility, one day, of having a Conservative M.P. Membership in both these seats was found to be much higher than in Associations K, L and M (see Table 2.2). If the exceptional income derived by Association M from its' club is discounted, Associations N and O also had the highest income levels in this category. Branch coverage in both these seats was 50 per cent (see Table 4.1), both possessed a Women's Committee (see Table 4.5) and Association O had a YC branch with 15 members (see Table 4.6). The two Associations were the only ones in this electoral category to have CPC Groups (see Table 4.7) and, finally, Association N was found to have a Political Committee (see Table 4.8). Chapter 5 has shown generally higher levels of political activity in these seats than in respect of Associations K, L and M.

Data from Associations N and O suggests that the 'gap' between the Marginal (Con. Held) and Marginal (Other Held) categories is not, perhaps, as marked as suggested by this study. Special electoral circumstances led to the inclusion of seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category whose members were, apparently, unable to adjust to the new situation. The reasons for this are certainly complex and clearly have much to do with leadership assumptions, style and the extent to which an Association is culturally and organisationally ready, willing and able to respond to a changed environment. In this connection, it is perhaps significant that two of the three 'defeatist' Associations in the Marginal (Other Held) category were introverted in 'branch only' organisations lacking a corporate approach to the key organisational resource, members.

However, whilst the difference between the two marginal categories may have been overstated, the data and arguments presented in this study indicate that, even without the inclusion of 'defeatist' Associations, some differences between these categories would have been found. If the arguments advanced above linking electoral success and resources to underlying socio-economic configurations are correct, Conservative held marginals will generally have, at least to some degree, more resources than

other held marginals. Perhaps more importantly, it is clear from earlier discussions that nothing succeeds like success and winning has an important effect on the motivation and, hence, on the degree to which available resources are exploited. As the Chairman of Association N ruefully noted when asked whether the prospect of winning served to galvanise his organisation:

"Well, yes. We keep working and hoping but a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush you know. Never mind we're going at it although another defeat will knock us back".

A strong theme to emerge from this study is the existence of a group of Associations characterised as 'branch only' organisations. These are Associations which data has been presented suggesting a lack of overall, corporate concern for membership issues (see Figs. 2.1 and 2.2). Throughout this study, Associations thus characterised were found to have less members, less income, a more attenuated organisational structure and to undertake less political activities than other seats in their category, although a comparison in the Unwinnable group was difficult since four out of the five seats were 'branch only' organisations.

The fact that introverted, 'branch only' Associations dominated the Unwinnable category, suggests that they are a reaction to, and a retreat from, hostile and unrewarding environments. The five unwinnable seats were all located in commabations. Two (P and S) were situated in very inhospitable inner-city areas dominated by militantly Left-wing councils. Chairmen from these two seats emphasised that, in addition to the general hopelessness of their political cause, had been added a fear of personal intimidation which made any attempt to recruit or canvass a matter of carefully arrangements ("we go in pairs" - Chairman, Association S) and judgements about their likely reception ("you have to pick the right streets" - Chairman, Association P). Political as well as personal intimidation is also a problem. Shortly before the interview, the members of Association S had been banned by the council from using its premises for meetings.

Associations Q, R and T were all located in medium-sized cities, dominated by a more 'traditional' Labour Party. Chairmen from these seats were less anxious about personal and political intimidation, though some concern was expressed on this score. Rather, they emphasised the difficulty of having to

accept perpetual defeat with the only bonus "an occasional council seat if we're lucky" (Chairman, Association T).

Retreat before these kinds of pressures is, perhaps, not surprising. The nature of this retreat has been charted in detail elsewhere by the author in a case-study of one inner-city Conservative Association (1). The case-study identified cultural and organisational aspects of the retreat from a hostile and unpromising environment. Data from this study revealed similar processes at work in the 'branch only' Associations.

The cultural aspect involves goal displacement. This involves the displacement of political goals by social goals throughout the organisation. By looking inward, the organisation can escape the environmental challenge and its members find consolation in congenial and known company. In this connection, it is interesting to note the importance of branch social events especially in seats in the unwinnable category. Firstly, the number of centrally organised fund-raising events in this group is low (see Table 3.12) and, secondly, income from branch social events constitutes a high proportion of total income (see Tables 3.10 and 3.11).

Goal displacement has important organisational consequences. As noted above, Associations are voluntary, decentralised organisations. Goal displacement encourages fissiparous and centrifugal tendencies and branches become more or less autonomous groupings of members who form social cliques. The delicate balance between the centre and periphery is upset. Organisational disintegration is hastened by the fact that in 'branch only' seats, the centre has little organisational 'weight' and generally lacks integrating structures which can bring members together and foster a sense of common identity *i.e.* Women's Committees, constituency YC branches and CPC Groups (see Chapter 5, especially Tables 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7). Indeed, the centre may virtually cease to exist. In Associations with very small members of activists (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4), branch officers often have to 'double up' as Association officers and put on another 'organisational hat' to go through the procedural motions of Executive Council meetings and so on. This is hardly satisfactory since it means that Associations with this kind of arrangement lack officers with an independent, global and objective view of its affairs. This kind of duplication of roles occurred in three of the four unwinnable seats (P, S and T).

It is not suggested that goal displacement and the formation of social cliques is complete in every 'branch only' Association, nor that occasional tendencies in the same direction cannot be discerned in other kinds of seats. Clearly, no retreat can be complete since the organisation must engage with its environment on certain occasions, most obviously at election time. It is possible to discriminate degrees of fragmentation and introversion. For instance, Association G is probably only a marginal case despite the fact that it lacks a corporate attitude to membership and has few central, integrating organs. However, it is argued that all the 'branch only' Associations displayed some evidence of fragmentation and introversion and that the signs of these conditions became more obvious the less hospitable the electoral environment. Perhaps the most pervasive sign was a general air of defeatism. This defeatism was found in Associations L and M, two of the three Associations which suddenly found themselves marginal after the 1983 General Election (see above). It also comes through in many of the comments made by Chairmen from unwinnable seats, when questioned about levels of political activity and electioneering (see Chapter 5).

The implications of all this for resource generation and exploitation are clear. The level of potential resources in unwinnable seats is already low because of their socio-economic and make-up. An aversion to engagement with their environment can only serve to depress the mobilisation of resources even further.

Not all seats in very unpromising situations succumb to environmental pressure, substitute goals and turn inward. Interviewees from the central Party emphasised that the condition was not endemic, though they certainly recognised and confirmed its lineaments. The example of Association R confirms that introversion in hostile environments is not inevitable. This seat had more than five times the number of members found in Association S - which had the lowest membership level in the Unwinnable category. Association R demonstrated a degree of corporate concern for membership issues and it also possessed a Women's Committee, a CPC Group and a Political Committee. Nevertheless, even if Association G is discounted as a doubtful case, the fact remains that six Associations out of ten in the less hospitable environments demonstrated some degree of introversion suggesting that features of the condition are probably widespread in seats in this kind of electoral situation. Certainly, the unwinnable

environment clearly offers few inducements to resource enhancement or maximisation and may, indeed, be the source of disincentives.

Summary

Differences in Associations' membership, finances, structure and political activities have been demonstrated and been shown to vary by electoral environment. Broadly, the variation takes the shape of a decline the less hospitable the electoral environment.

Political success (or the lack of it) and declining resources (especially the key resource - members) go together not because one influences the other but because both are linked to underlying socio-economic configurations.

These configurations set broad limits to the level of resources which Associations in different categories can generate, hence the oft-demonstrated gradients across the categories adopted in this study. However, within these categories, some scope clearly exists for Associations to enhance their resources. Evidence for this comes from variations within categories.

It has been suggested that environments differ in the extent to which they stimulate this resource enhancement. Data from seats in both the Safe and Marginal (Con. Held) categories appears to indicate that political control is a major inducement to organisational activity in these kinds of environments.

Data from other held marginals was mixed and the results confused by seats which did not agree with the electoral status assigned them in this study. Nevertheless, the prospect of winning did appear to be a significant factor in several seats in this group. The differences between the two marginal categories has probably been overstated in this study because of the nature of electoral outcomes in the 1983 General Election. Nevertheless, it was suggested that environmental inducements acting on seats in the Marginal (Other Held) category are probably generally less potent than those at work in Conservative held marginals.

Finally, evidence of organisational introversion in seats in less hospitable environments was reviewed. This introversion was attributed to a retreat from these environments which could lead, in extreme

cases, to full goal displacement, organisational fragmentation and the formation of social cliques. It was concluded that some degree of goal displacement and organisational introversion was probably a feature of many Associations in less hospitable environments. It was argued that this kind of reaction to particularly challenging environments would depress the acquisition of already limited resources still further.

References and Notes

1. Tether, P. Kingston-upon-Hull Conservative Party: A Case Study of an Urban Tory Party in Decline, University of Hull, Department of Politics, Hull Papers in Politics No. 18, April 1983.

APPENDIX 1

**Conservative Associations:
Variations by Electoral Environments**

QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR COMPLETION BY ASSOCIATION CHAIRMEN

**PHILIP TETHER
NOVEMBER 1986**

Name of Chairman

Name/Address of Association

.....

.....

SECTION I: Background Information

I would like to begin by asking you some general questions about your constituency which will help me put information from succeeding Sections into context.

1. Whichever party currently holds the parliamentary seat in which your Association is located, do you, in broad terms, consider it:

SAFE
 MARGINAL
 UNWINNABLE
 TOO DIFFICULT TO SAY
 (Please underline as appropriate)

Since 1970 the great majority of parliamentary constituencies have undergone some degree of revision. Of course, even quite minor boundary changes can have a significant electoral impact but they are unlikely to affect constituencies' sense of identity and continuity. On the other hand, major boundary revisions can affect this sense of identity (even though in some cases, 'new' constituencies may inherit an established name).

2. Do you feel that your parliamentary constituency owes its present identity to a major boundary revision implemented since 1970?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
 (Please delete as appropriate)

3. Roughly, how would you describe your parliamentary constituency?

COMPLETELY URBAN
 LARGELY URBAN
 MIXED URBAN/RURAL
 LARGELY RURAL
 COMPLETELY RURAL
 OTHER (please specify).....

(Please underline as appropriate)

Local government authorities are an important part of the pattern of political control in any area. Constituencies located in London and the now-defunct Metropolitan County Councils will have one tier of local government organisation, i.e. the London Boroughs and Metropolitan District Councils, respectively. Those located outside these areas will have two tiers of local government organisation, i.e. Non-Metropolitan District Councils and the Shire Counties.

4. What is the name and type of the local authorities which embrace your constituency?

Name of Authority

Type of Authority

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

5. How many electoral units, i.e. wards/divisions, does your constituency contain for each of the local government authorities identified in Q.4 (above)?

Name of Authority

Number of Wards/Divisions

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

6. Electoral units, i.e. wards/divisions, vary in the numbers of councillors they return. How many councillors do each kind of electoral unit identified in Q.5 (above) return?

Name of Authority

Members Returned per Ward/
Division

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

7. How many Conservative councillors from your constituency are currently to be found on the local authorities identified in Q.4?

Name of Authority

No of Conservative
Councillors from this
Constituency

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

8. How, in general terms, do you rate the Conservative-held local government seats identified in Q.7 in terms of 'safeness'? (Please insert appropriate numbers of seats next to the evaluations provided below.)

..... Conservative-held seats are very safe
 Conservative-held seats are safe
 Conservative-held seats are marginal
 Conservative-held seats are very marginal

9. Do you regard the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as a real threat at local government level in any part of your Constituency?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
 (Please delete as appropriate)

10. Do you regard the Liberals as a real threat at local government level in any part of your constituency?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW
 (Please delete as appropriate)

SECTION II: Membership

I am very interested not only in the pattern of political control in your area but in your members who make the Association work. This Section is devoted exclusively to questions about your membership and your views on their importance.

11. Approximately how many members in total does your Association currently have 'on its books'?

CURRENT ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP IS APPROXIMATELY

12. Is one subscription from a couple (i.e. Mr and Mrs, etc.) counted as two members?

YES/NO/PRACTICE VARIES
 (Please delete as appropriate)

13. How many overdue subscriptions do you estimate are likely to be outstanding at the moment?

NUMBER OF OVERDUE SUBSCRIPTIONS IS LIKELY TO BE

14. Roughly, how many new members in total do you think your Association recruited in the past 12 months?

NEW MEMBERS RECRUITED IN LAST 12 MONTHS WAS ABOUT

15. Roughly, how many existing members do you think you lost in the last 12 months due to death, removal, refusals, etc.?

NUMBER OF EXISTING MEMBERS LOST WAS ABOUT

16. How are new members usually recruited into your Association? (Listed below are a number of ways Associations can gain new members. Please rank only those which apply in descending order of importance by putting the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. next to the descriptions provided. There is provision for you to enter additional sources of recruitment if you wish.)

BY INTRODUCTION THROUGH EXISTING MEMBERS

BY RECRUITMENT SLIPS ON LITERATURE (eg newsletters)

BY SELF-REFERRAL

BY DOOR-STEP CONTACT (eg canvassing)

BY

BY

(Where applicable, please number 1, 2, 3, etc. in descending order of importance)

17. Has your Association undertaken any campaign (or campaigns) specifically designed to recruit new members during the last 12 months?

YES/NO
(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q. 20

18. What form did the campaign (or campaigns) take? (A very brief description will suffice.)

.....
.....
.....

19. Roughly, how many new members did you recruit in the campaign (or campaigns)?

NEW MEMBERS RECRUITED NUMBERED

20. Where in your Association's structure are membership records maintained?

IN THE BRANCHES
ON A CENTRAL REGISTER
IN THE BRANCHES AND ON A
CENTRAL REGISTER
OTHER (Please specify).....

.....
(Please underline as appropriate)

21. How often does your Executive (or its equivalent) receive up-to-date information on the membership situation throughout the Association?

AT EVERY MEETING
AT MOST MEETINGS
AT SOME MEETINGS
VERY OCCASIONALLY
NEVER

(Please underline as appropriate)

By no means all of an Association's total subscribing membership is likely to take an active part in the organisation and running of political and social events. Only some will be 'familiar faces', ready to take on the responsibility of maintaining branch and other committees and providing the core attendance at social and other events.

22. Roughly, how many 'activists' (e.g. 'familiar faces') does your Association currently rely on for the maintenance of its committee structure and the organisation of its political and social activities?

ROUGHLY, THE NUMBER OF ACTIVISTS IS

23. Roughly what is the average subscription paid by members to your Association?

THE AVERAGE SUBSCRIPTION IS

24. In purely cash terms, how important is subscription income in relation to your total income?

VERY IMPORTANT
IMPORTANT
FAIRLY IMPORTANT
NOT VERY IMPORTANT
UNIMPORTANT
INSIGNIFICANT

(Please underline as appropriate)

25. Does your Association offer members a credit card facility?

YES/NO
(Please delete as appropriate)

26. Do you operate any scheme designed to offer inducements to potential members (e.g. shoppers' discount cards etc.)?

YES/NO
(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.28

27. What kind of scheme do you run? (A very brief description is sufficient.)

.....
.....
.....

28. Does your Association consciously operate with any kind of membership target (e.g. perhaps a fraction of the Conservative vote at the last General Election)?

YES/NO
(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.30

29. What is this target and how is it arrived at?

.....
.....
.....

30. How are memberships renewed? (Listed below are a number of ways Associations can renew their membership. Please rank only those that apply in descending order of importance by putting the numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. next to the descriptions provided. There is provision for you to enter other methods if you wish.)

ON THE DOORSTEP.....

REMINDER LETTER(S).....

STANDING ORDERS.....

OTHER (please specify).....

.....

OTHER (please specify).....

.....

(Where applicable, please number 1, 2, 3 etc. in descending order of importance.)

SECTION III: Organisational Structure

Moving on from membership issues, this Section deals with the range of organisational resources - individuals, councils, committees and groups - which can be found on an Association's organisation chart. It seeks to establish which resources and structures are present in your local party.

31. Is your Association the sole employer of a full-time trained or trainee Agent?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF YES PLEASE GO TO Q.34

32. Does your Association share the services of full-time trained or trainee Agent with any other Association(s)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.34

33. With which Association(s) are these services shared?

(Please list)

.....
.....
.....

34. Does your Association have the benefit of any full- or part-time paid secretarial support?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.36

35. How much paid secretarial help does your Association currently receive? (A very brief description is all that is required, i.e. 'one full-time worker in Agent's office', 'two part-timers working 20 hours each in Agent's office', 'one part-timer working for 10 hours mainly assisting the Association's Secretary', etc.)

.....
.....
.....

36. Does your Association own (or have access to) a computer?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

37. Are there any Conservative Clubs in your Constituency?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.39

38. What are the formal titles and addresses of all Conservative Clubs in your Constituency?

.....
.....
.....

39. Does your Association occupy any rented/freehold property in your Constituency? (Note: This question covers premises of which a Club might be a part.)

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.41

40. Briefly, what does this property consist of? (A simple description is all that is required, i.e. 'freehold detached house with 6 rooms and club wing', 'rented offices consisting of 2 rooms', '5-roomed terrace house - upstairs let as flat', etc.)

.....
.....
.....

41. Is your Association currently part of a 'Federation'?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.43

42. Which Associations are part of this 'Federation'?

.....
.....
.....

43. Does your Association currently have a General Purposes Committee (GPC) appointed by your Executive Council (or equivalent)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

44. How many ward branches are represented on your Executive Council (or equivalent)?

NUMBER OF WARD BRANCHES REPRESENTED IS

45. Does your Association currently have a Political Committee appointed by its Executive Council (or equivalent)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

46. Excluding a Political Committee, does your Association currently have any other specialist committees appointed by its Executive Council (or its equivalent)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.48

47. What are these specialist committees?

.....
.....
.....

48. Does your Association currently have any Young Conservative (YC) branches?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.50

49. How many branches does your YC organisation encompass and what, approximately, is the total membership of all branches?

THE YC ORGANISATION HAS BRANCH/BRANCHES,
WITH A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF APPROXIMATELY

50. Do any branches in your Association currently have a women's section?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.52

51. How many branches have a women's section and what, approximately, is the total membership of all sections?

..... BRANCHES HAVE A WOMEN'S SECTION WITH A
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF APPROXIMATELY

52. Does your Association have a Conservative Trade Unionist (CTU) group?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.54

53. What, approximately, is the total membership of your CTU group?

THE CTU GROUP HAS AN APPROXIMATE MEMBERSHIP OF

54. Does your Association currently have an active Conservative Political Centre (CPC) group (or groups)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.56

55. How many CPC groups does it have and what, approximately, is the total membership of all groups?

THE ASSOCIATION HAS CPC GROUP(S)
WITH A TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF APPROXIMATELY

56. Does your Association have any anti-CND group/committee (such as a branch of the Campaign for Defence and Multilateral Disarmament)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.58 AT THE START OF THE NEXT SECTION

57. What is the title of this anti-CND group/committee and approximately how many members does it have?
 ITS TITLE IS AND IT
 HAS A MEMBERSHIP OF APPROXIMATELY

SECTION IV: Working to Win

This final Section is concerned with the all-important topic of your Association's various activities between and at elections. Because this is so important, it is by far the longest Section. If you feel any supplementary comment or additional information is required to convey a full account of your Association's activities, do please use the blank sheets which follow this Section.

58. Speaking generally, how many purely social functions have been organised by your Association in the last 12 months?

THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL EVENTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

WAS ABOUT

COPIES OF ANY PROGRAMMES DETAILING THESE FUNCTIONS WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL AND CAN BE RETURNED WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

59. In purely cash terms, how important is income from social events in relation to your total income?

VERY IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

FAIRLY IMPORTANT

NOT VERY IMPORTANT

UNIMPORTANT

INSIGNIFICANT

(Please underline as appropriate)

60. Has your Association submitted any resolutions to the Party Conference in the last three years?

NO/YES IN OCTOBER 1986

IN OCTOBER 1985

IN OCTOBER 1984

(Please delete/underline as appropriate)

61. Roughly, how many postal votes (PVs) does your Association have 'on its books' at the moment?

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PVs 'ON THE BOOKS' IS...../DON'T KNOW

(Please fill in or delete as appropriate)

62. Roughly, how many PVs has your Association registered in the past 12 months?

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PVs REGISTERED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

IS...../DON'T KNOW

(Please fill in or delete as appropriate)

63. Does your Association have any special machinery and/or systematic approach to the identification/registration of postal votes (i.e. regular campaigns, postal vote officers, etc.)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.65

64. What is the nature of the special machinery and/or systematic approach?

.....
.....
.....

65. Have any inter-election newsletters prepared by your Association been distributed in the constituency in the last 12 months?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.69

66. How many separate editions of such newsletters has your Association produced in the last 12 months? (If two branches usually distribute two editions each per year enter 4, and so on.)

NO. OF SEPARATE EDITIONS DISTRIBUTED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

67. Which part (or parts) of your Association are usually involved in the design, production and distribution of newsletters? (A very brief description is all that is required, i.e. 'the branches are totally responsible', 'the branches with a central subsidy towards printing costs', 'the Political Committee with all costs borne by central funds', etc.)

.....
.....
.....

68. What is the normal area of distribution for each edition of a newsletter?

USUALLY A FULL WARD/DIVISION

USUALLY MORE THAN A FULL WARD/DIVISION

USUALLY LESS THAN A FULL WARD/DIVISION

VARIES FROM EDITION TO EDITION

(Please underline as appropriate)

COPIES OF ANY OR ALL OF THE NEWSLETTERS DISTRIBUTED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS BY YOUR ASSOCIATION WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL AND CAN BE RETURNED WITH THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

69. Have any opposition newsletters been distributed in your constituency in the last 12 months?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.71

70. Which opposition party (or parties) distributed these newsletters?

THE LABOUR PARTY

THE LIBERAL PARTY

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

THE ALLIANCE

OTHER (please specify).....

.....

(Please underline as appropriate)

71. Do you think inter-election newsletters are a valuable campaigning tool?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

(Please delete as appropriate)

72. Does your Association have a Press Officer?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

73. Does your Association have a letter writing panel or any similar organisation designed to systematically get the Conservative viewpoint into the local press?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

74. Does your Association participate in the scheme introduced by Norman Tebbit under which Associations deliver Central Office leaflets to 'back up' Party Political Broadcasts (PPBs)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.76

75. How many leaflets has your Association 'contracted' to deliver after each PPB?

NUMBER OF LEAFLETS DELIVERED AFTER EACH PPB IS

76. Leaving aside (i) membership renewal, (ii) newsletters (if any), and (iii) PPB leaflet deliveries (if any), has there been any 'doorstep contact' between Association workers and the electors in your constituency in the last 6 months? (A very brief description is all that is required, i.e. 'several branches have monthly canvassing sessions', 'a survey of opinion on has been undertaken in part of a ward', 'two councillors with helpers regularly organise "doorstep surgeries", etc.)

.....
.....
.....
.....

77. How difficult is it for your Association to find a full slate of candidates for all the constituency's local government seats?

USUALLY VERY DIFFICULT

OFTEN QUITE DIFFICULT

SOMETIMES DIFFICULT

OCCASIONALLY DIFFICULT

NEVER DIFFICULT

(Please underline as appropriate)

78. At the last local government elections in your constituency how many seats (if any) were uncontested by the Conservative Party?

NUMBER OF SEATS UNCONTESTED WAS..... /NONE

(Please fill in/delete as appropriate)

IF NONE PLEASE GO TO Q.80

79. Why did this happen? (A very brief explanation is all that is required, i.e. 'couldn't find candidates for seats', '..... seats so hopeless - wasn't worth time/effort', 'free hand usually given to Independents in seats', etc.)

.....
.....
.....

(Please explain reasons for all uncontested seats)

80. At the last local government elections, did your Association produce any 'election newsletters' for distribution in any ward(s)/division(s) in addition to (or as a substitute for) the more traditional election address?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.82

81. How many wards/divisions received a delivery of these 'election newsletters' either in whole or in part?

NO.OF WARDS/DIVISIONS RECEIVING ELECTION NEWSLETTERS

82. Do you regard 'election newsletters' for local government elections as a useful campaigning tool?

YES/NO/DONT KNOW

(Please delete as appropriate)

83. At the last local government elections were all the wards/ divisions with a Conservative candidate fully delivered with at least one piece of Conservative literature?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF YES PLEASE GO TO Q.86

84. How many wards/divisions with a Conservative candidate were not fully delivered with at least one piece of election literature?

NUMBER OF WARDS/DIVISIONS NOT FULLY DELIVERED WAS.....

85. Why weren't all the wards/divisions with a Conservative candidate not fully delivered with at least one piece of Conservative literature? (A very brief explanation is all that is required, i.e. 'in seats candidates stood little chance - saving on costs', 'part delivered in best areas of seats', 'couldn't find the manpower to deliver - concentrated on best seats', etc.)

.....
.....
.....

(Please explain reasons for all seats not completely delivered with literature.)

86. How difficult is it for your Association to deliver, unaided, all wards/divisions with local government election literature?

IMPOSSIBLE

USUALLY VERY DIFFICULT

OFTEN QUITE DIFFICULT

SOMETIMES DIFFICULT

OCCASIONALLY DIFFICULT

NEVER A PROBLEM

(Please underline as appropriate)

87. At the last local government elections did your Association pay for the delivery of election material in any part of the constituency?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.89

88. How many wards/divisions received a paid delivery in whole or in part?

WARDS/DIVISIONS RECEIVING PAID DELIVERY WAS.....

89. Is any part of your Association covered with a delivery system based on workers/supporters doing 'their patch' when requested?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

IF NO PLEASE GO TO Q.91

90. How many wards/divisions are covered by this delivery system?

WARDS/DIVISIONS COVERED BY THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

91. If a local government bye-election in the most marginal ward in your constituency was called tomorrow how much would you expect, going on past experience, to be canvassed?

ALL THE WARD

MOST OF THE WARD

SOME OF THE WARD

A LITTLE OF THE WARD

NONE

(Please underline as appropriate)

92. If a General Election was called tomorrow how much of the constituency would you expect, going on past experience, to be canvassed?

ALL THE CONSTITUENCY

MOST OF THE CONSTITUENCY

SOME OF THE CONSTITUENCY

A LITTLE OF THE CONSTITUENCY

NONE

(Please underline as appropriate)

93. Does your Association ever employ 'survey canvassing' (in which specially designed forms seek answers to a number of questions rather than simply voting intention)?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

94. Roughly, how many polling stations are there in your constituency, and how many were manned by tellers during at least some part of the hours of polling at the last local government elections?

NO. OF STATIONS IS ABOUT AND OF THESE WERE MANNED BY TELLERS FOR AT LEAST PART OF THE DAY AT THE LAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS.

95. At the October 1986 Party Conference, how many representatives attended from your Association?

NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDING OCTOBER 1986 CONFERENCE WAS
/NONE

(Please fill in/delete as appropriate)

96. Do all your local government councillors hold regular 'surgeries'?

YES/NO

(Please delete as appropriate)

97. As Chairman, what aspect of your Association are you most proud of?

.....
.....
.....

98. As Chairman, what aspect of your Association gives you the most cause for concern?

.....
.....
.....

99. Going on past experience and your own political judgement, roughly what impact in terms of extra votes for your candidate do you think might be attributable to organisational preparation, commitment and effort at the next General Election? ('Extras' might stem from postal votes plus lifts plus canvassing/telling/pulling out' plus any other activities specifically designed to maximise supporter turn-out.)

THE NUMBER OF EXTRA VOTES WHICH I THINK ORGANISATIONAL EFFORT CAN DELIVER AT ELECTION TIME IS ABOUT /CANNOT EVEN GUESTIMATE

(Please fill in or delete as appropriate)

(Continued Over Page)

100. If, tomorrow, you had to show a foreign visitor totally ignorant of the British political system around your Association how, briefly, would you describe its aim(s)?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Signed:

CHAIRMAN,CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

Thank you very much indeed for completing this questionnaire. The time and trouble you have given is greatly appreciated. If you can enclose any programmes of social events and/or newsletters, this will be much appreciated. Shortly after receipt of your returned questionnaire, I will be in touch again to arrange an interview which will be entirely at your convenience.

Please return the questionnaire in the s.a.e. provided to:

Philip Tether
169 Victoria Avenue
Hull
North Humberside HU5 3EF.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

(Please continue onto a blank sheet if necessary)

Appendix 2

NON-CONSTITUENCY INTERVIEWEES

- Mr C. Allick, Head, Constituency Fund Raising Department, Conservative Central Office.
- Ms D. Atkinson, Deputy Training Officer, Central Office.
- Sir Joseph Barnard, Chairman Yorkshire Region.
- Ms J. Brooks, CTU National Specialist Group Organiser, Yorkshire Area Office.
- Mr V. Burge, Agent Newcastle and Member Conservative Computer Forum.
- Miss Du Pont, M.B.E. Acting Secretary, Association of Conservative Clubs.
- Sir Anthony Garner O.B.E., Director of Organisation, Conservative Central Office.
- Mr Goldie-Scott, Director, Direct Mail Department, Conservative Central Office.
- Mr G. Haywood, Agent, York, North Yorkshire.
- Miss C. Hill, Trainee Agent Shrewsbury Conservative Association.
- Sir Peter Lane J.P., F.C.A., Chairman National Union Executive Committee.
- Mr N. Lee, Chairman, Yorkshire Area Association of Conservative Clubs.
- Mr J. Lumb, Agent, Richmond, North Yorkshire.
- Mr M. Minns, YC Organiser, Youth Department, Central Office.
- Mr P. Smith, Deputy Central Office Agent, Yorkshire Area Office.
- Mr Twilley, Editor, 'Micro News', Member Conservative Computer Forum.
- Mr G. Waterman, Director, Blue Rosette Department, Conservative Central Office.

Appendix 3

English Constituencies in Categories of 'Electoral Opportunity' as at 18 July 1986

1. Held by Conservatives: Majorities 15% or more of total poll

Seat	Total Poll	Majority	Majority as % of total poll
Aldershot	56428	12218	21.7
Aldridge Brownhills	47611	12284	25.8
Altringham Sale	48196	10911	22.6
Arundel	52188	15705	30.1
Ashford	47936	13911	29.0
Aylesbury	52070	14920	28.7
Banbury	49151	13025	26.5
Basingstoke	55392	12450	22.5
Beaconsfield	47911	18300	38.2
Beckenham	41131	12670	30.8
Bedfordshire Mid	58123	17381	29.9
Bedfordshire N	53756	13894	25.8
Bedfordshire SW	57702	15731	27.3
Berkshire E	59788	16099	26.9
Beverley	55518	13869	25.0
Bexhill and Battle	45037	19776	43.9
Bexleyheath	44124	10258	23.3
Billericay	55183	14615	26.5
Birmingham Edgebaston	36474	11418	31.3
Birmingham Hall Green	43086	9373	21.8
Blaby	55668	17116	30.8

Blackpool N	40276	10152	25.2
Blackpool S	39246	10138	25.8
Boothferry	52923	17420	32.9
Bosworth	57152	17294	19.5
Bournemouth E	47104	11416	24.2
Bournemouth W	50024	13331	26.7
Braintree	56034	13441	24.0
Brent N	44115	14651	32.2
Brentford & Isleworth	51687	9387	18.2
Brentford & Ongar	50505	14202	28.1
Bridgewater	48041	10697	17.7
Bridlington	54132	16609	30.7
Brigg & Cleethorpes	57001	12189	21.4
Brighton Kemptown	43450	9378	21.5
Brighton Pavilion	41393	11132	26.9
Bristol West	51730	10178	19.7
Bromsgrove	49643	17175	34.6
Broxbourne	49851	17466	35.0
Broxtowe	53334	15078	28.3
Buckingham	48408	13968	28.9
Burton	54521	11647	21.4
Bury St Albans	52706	16122	30.6
Cambridgeshire SE	49607	13764	27.8
Cambridgeshire SW	57878	13867	24.0
Canterbury	51410	15742	30.6
Carshalton & Walling	49476	10755	21.7
Castle Point	45664	15417	33.8
Cheadle	51077	9380	18.4
Chelsea	30238	12021	39.8
Chertsey & Walton	50879	15699	30.9

Chesham & Amersham	53141	15879	29.9
Chester City	48065	9099	18.9
Chichester	55680	20117	36.1
Chingford	40904	12414	30.4
Chipping Barnet	41281	12393	30.0
Chislehurst	39676	12061	30.4
Chorley	57703	10275	17.8
Christchurch	47296	19738	41.7
Cirencester & Tewkes	59980	13827	23.1
London &			
City of Westminster	35109	13387	38.1
Colchester N	56485	15048	26.6
Colchester S & Maldon	58359	12165	20.9
Congleton	49114	8459	17.3
Cornwall SE	51236	8354	16.3
Crawley	54012	11814	21.7
Croyden Central	38775	11821	30.5
Croyden NE	42460	11627	27.4
Croyden S	45812	17440	38.1
Dartford	54695	13563	24.8
Daventry	49418	13136	26.6
Davyhulme	47983	9014	18.8
Devizes	62366	15624	25.1
Devon N	50967	8727	17.1
Devon W & Torridge	53721	12351	23.0
Dorset N	51740	11380	22.0
Dorset S	50146	15098	30.1
Dorset W	45276	13952	30.8
Dover	52693	9220	17.5
Ealing Alton	4795	10092	22.5

Eastbourne	53306	13486	25.3
Eastleigh	63514	13008	20.5
Eddisbury	53137	14846	27.9
Elmet	50551	7856	15.5
Eltham	40774	7592	18.6
Enfield N	49236	11716	23.8
Epping Forest	48439	15378	31.8
Epsom & Ewell	50866	17195	33.8
Erewash	55504	11319	20.4
Esher	45156	15192	35.2
Exeter	57307	9880	17.2
Falmouth & Cambourne	49231	11025	22.4
Fareham	53016	16316	30.8
Faversham	56231	14597	26.0
Finchley	38417	9314	24.2
Folkestone & Hythe	47870	11670	24.4
Fylde	44340	17102	38.6
Gedling	50266	14664	29.2
Gillingham	51003	10843	21.3
Gloucester	56171	12537	22.3
Gloucestershire W	59104	9652	16.3
Gosport	46467	14451	31.1
Grantham	55150	18911	34.3
Gravesham	54822	8463	15.4
Great Yarmouth	44449	11200	25.2
Guildford	54486	11824	21.7
Halesowen & Stour	58377	13316	22.8
Hampshire E	58856	18327	31.1
Hampshire NW	48923	12122	24.8
Harborough	54796	18485	33.7

Hertfordshire N	59765	9943	16.6
Hertfordshire SW	56365	12194	21.6
Hertfordshire W	60879	9576	15.7
Hertsmere	53817	14870	27.6
Hexham	41496	8308	20.1
High Peak	52883	9940	18.8
Holland with Boston	45158	11736	26.0
Honiton	53812	14769	27.5
Hornchurch	45474	9184	20.2
Horsham	59933	21785	36.4
Hove	47300	17219	36.4
Huntington	54921	20348	37.1
Ilford North	42935	11201	26.1
Kensington	31055	5101	16.4
Kent Mid	47509	12543	26.4
Kettering	47979	8586	17.9
Kingston upon Thames	40842	8872	21.7
Lancaster	41857	10636	25.4
Leeds NE	46087	8995	19.5
Leeds NW	48488	8537	17.6
Leominster	51366	9786	19.1
Lewes	50083	13904	27.8
Lincoln	54356	10286	18.9
Loughborough	54940	16180	29.5
Ludlow	47202	11303	24.0
Luton N	54018	11981	22.2
Macclesfield	54808	20679	37.7
Maidstone	51894	7226	13.9
Medway	46016	8656	18.8
Meriden	53064	15018	28.3

Milton Keynes	58669	11522	19.6
Mole Valley	48811	14718	30.2
Morecambe & Lunesdale	38832	12194	31.4
Newark	48924	14283	29.2
Newbury	53661	13038	24.3
New Forest	51464	20925	40.7
Norfolk Mid	51904	15515	29.9
Norfolk N	48554	13223	27.2
Norfolk S	56767	12135	21.4
Norfolk SW	51426	14910	29.0
Northampton N	49227	9860	20.0
Northavon	57339	12983	22.6
Old Bexley & Sidcup	37242	12718	34.2
Orpington	44641	10151	22.7
Peterborough	57909	10439	18.0
Plymouth Drake	38935	8585	22.1
Plymouth Sutton	45727	11687	25.6
Poole	52059	14429	27.7
Portsmouth N	56840	17999	31.7
Ravensbourne	43053	15512	36.0
Reading E	47521	11508	24.2
Reading W	47878	11399	23.8
Reigate	50700	16307	32.2
Ribble Valley	46069	18591	40.4
Richmond, Yorks	51677	18066	35.0
Rochford	50993	13102	25.7
Romford	38894	10574	27.2
Romsey & Waterside	53636	13690	25.5
Rossendale & Darwen	57853	8821	15.3
Rugby & Kenilworth	58183	14241	24.5

Ruislip Northwood	41119	12982	31.6
Rushcliffe	54094	20220	37.4
Rutland & Melton	55117	18353	33.2
Saffron Walden	53364	15249	28.6
St Albans	57004	8561	15.0
St Ives	47272	7859	16.6
Scarborough	51570	13929	27.0
Selby	47146	15965	33.9
Sevenoaks	52595	15706	29.9
Sheffield Hallam	39812	11774	22.2
Shipley	52026	11445	22.0
Shoreham	51386	15766	30.7
Shrewsbury & Alcham	49250	8624	17.5
Shropshire N	53320	11667	21.9
Skipton & Ripon	52016	15046	28.0
Solihull	52575	17394	33.1
Somerton & Frome	49616	9227	18.6
Southampton Test	54560	9346	17.1
Southend E	38983	10691	27.4
Southend W	48362	8033	16.6
South Hams	55651	12401	22.3
South Ribble	56281	12659	22.5
Spelthorne	51287	13506	26.3
Staffordshire Mid	52260	13880	26.6
Staffordshire Moor	55962	16566	29.6
Staffordshire South	55336	19760	35.7
Staffordshire SE	48434	10898	22.5
Stamford & Spalding	49654	11256	24.0
Stratford on Avon	55896	17917	32.1
Streatham	39268	5902	15.0

Stroud	60219	11714	19.5
Suffolk Central	56289	14731	26.2
Suffolk Coastal	53638	15622	29.1
Suffolk S	58185	11269	19.4
Surrey E	43357	15436	35.6
Surrey NW	55028	28018	38.2
Sussex Mid	57542	16744	29.1
Surbiton	33465	8749	26.1
Sutton & Cheam	46868	10264	21.9
Sutton Coalfield	48588	18984	39.1
Tatton	51089	13960	27.3
Taunton	53155	12567	23.6
Teignbridge	52302	8218	15.7
Thanet N	45863	14545	31.7
Thanet S	43402	14051	32.4
Tiverton	49470	7886	15.9
Tunbridge & Malling	54210	13520	24.9
Tunbridge Wells	53550	15126	28.3
Tynemouth	55602	9609	17.3
Upminster	47887	12814	26.8
Uxbridge	44524	12837	28.8
Wansdyke	56183	13066	23.3
Wanstead & Woodford	39442	14354	36.4
Wantage	49157	10125	20.6
Warwick & Leamington	52140	13032	25.0
Watford	54787	12006	21.9
Waveney	58678	14298	24.4
Wealden	49727	17185	34.6
Wellingborough	52596	12056	22.9
Welwyn Hatfield	57648	12246	21.2

Westbury	60558	8506	14.1
Westmorland & Lonsdale	48566	16587	34.2
Weston-super-Mare	52186	9491	18.2
Wimbledon	46429	11546	24.9
Winchester	55436	13047	23.5
Windsor & Maidenhead	55283	18203	32.9
Wirral S	96105	13838	30.0
Wirral W	45256	15151	33.5
Witney	51823	12712	24.5
Woking	56193	16237	28.9
Wokingham	54514	15698	28.8
Wolverhampton SW	49833	11520	23.1
Woodspring	55445	15132	27.3
Worcester	49307	10871	22.1
Worcestershire Mid	55365	14205	25.7
Worcestershire S	53963	11389	21.1
Worthing	53914	15253	28.3
Wycombe	50208	13197	26.3
Wyre	47050	14811	31.5
Wyre Forest	51291	8177	15.9

2. Held by Conservatives: Majorities 5% or less of Total Poll

Basildon	45287	1379	3.1
Batley & Spen	54167	870	1.6
Bradford N	46953	1602	3.4
Bristol E	48957	1789	3.7
Cannock & Burntwood	51243	2045	4.0
Chelmsford	62605	378	0.6
Derbyshire W	49644	100	0.2

Dewsbury	51573	2086	4.0
Dulwich	38039	1859	4.9
Edmonton	44638	1193	2.7
Erith & Crayford	41190	920	2.2
Feltham & Heston	54702	2148	3.9
Glanford & Scunthorpe	52894	637	1.2
Halifax	54641	1869	3.4
Hazel Grove	49127	2022	4.1
Hereford	48544	2277	4.7
Hydeburn	45940	21	0.0
Kingswood	55940	1797	3.2
Leicestershire E	49092	933	1.9
Leicestershire S	53187	7	0.0
Lewisham	42542	1909	4.5
Newcastle upon Tyne Central	44495	2228	5.0
Norwich S	48956	1712	3.5
Nottingham E	43624	1464	3.4
Nottingham N	47482	362	0.8
Oxford E	47039	1267	2.7
Penrith & Border	38080	552	1.4
Richmond & Barnes	44472	74	0.2
Sherwood	52704	658	1.3
Stevenage	52728	11755	3.3
Swindon	56968	1395	2.5
Warwickshire N	53526	2585	4.8
Westminster N	44262	1710	3.9
Wrekin	58297	1331	2.3

3. Held by Other Parties: Majorities 5% or less of Total Poll

Birmingham Erdington	37544	231	0.6
Bradford S	49425	110	0.2
Burnley	50781	770	1.5
Carlisle	41636	71	0.2
Copeland	42397	1837	4.3
Crewe & Nantwich	53592	290	0.5
Derby S	46190	421	0.9
Derbyshire NE	51676	2006	3.9
Doncaster Central	50324	2508	5.0
Durham City	49791	1973	4.0
Great Grimsby	50481	731	1.5
Greenwich	34944	1211	3.5
Ipswich	50760	1077	2.1
Isle of Wight	75347	3503	4.7
Islington S & Finsbury	37073	363	1.0
Leeds W	46617	2048	4.4
Leicestershire W	46542	1712	3.7
Mansfield	46160	2216	4.8
Newcastle-under-Lyme	40702	799	2.0
Portsmouth S	40883	1341	3.3
Sheffield Hillsborough	56137	1546	2.8
Stockton North	49438	1870	3.8
Stockton South	53201	102	0.2
Thurrock	44910	1722	3.8
Walsall S	49986	702	1.4
Walthamstow	33237	1305	3.9
West Bromwich E	41690	298	0.7
Wolverhampton NE	44777	214	0.5

4. Held by Other Parties: Majorities 15% or more of Total Poll

Ashton under Lyne	42205	7697	18.2
Barnsley Central	36522	14173	38.8
Barnsley E	36067	17492	48.5
Barnsley & Penistone	44402	10342	27.3
Berwick upon Tweed	41676	8215	19.7
Bethnal Green & Stepney	30838	6358	20.6
Birkenhead	46903	9714	20.7
Birmingham Ladybrook	37837	9030	23.9
Birmingham Small Heath	36218	15252	42.1
Birmingham Sparkbrook	32968	10548	32.0
Blaydon	47955	7222	15.1
Bolton SE	49668	8753	17.6
Bootle	51493	15139	29.4
Bolsover	47066	13848	29.4
Bow & Poplar	32003	5861	18.3
Brent S	39912	10519	26.4
Coventry NE	46391	8775	18.9
Doncaster N	50457	12711	25.2
Durham N	51789	13437	26.0
Ealing Southall	50976	11116	21.8
Easington	44374	14792	33.3
Gateshead E	47560	10322	21.7
Hackney North & Stoke New	36493	8545	23.4
Hackney S & Shore	38358	7691	20.1
Hemsworth	37263	14190	38.1
Holborn & St Pancras	43112	7259	16.2
Houghton & Washington	50619	13821	27.3

Hull E	47328	10074	21.3
Islington N	36964	5607	15.2
Jarrow	45519	13877	30.5
Knowsley N	38668	17191	44.5
Knowsley S	47858	11769	24.6
Leeds Central	39027	8222	21.1
Leigh	49108	12314	25.1
Lewisham Deptford	35912	6032	16.8
Liverpool Riverside	3844	17378	45.2
Liverpool Walton	51158	14115	27.6
Liverpool W. Derby	43838	11843	27.0
Makerfield	50985	10876	21.3
Manchester Blackley	41889	6456	15.4
Manchester Central	41906	18485	44.1
Manchester Gorton	43867	9965	22.7
Manchester Wythenshaw	42426	10684	25.2
Middlesborough	41849	9669	23.1
Newcastle upon Tyne E	42295	7492	17.7
Newham NE	38792	8059	21.9
Newham NW	27969	6918	24.7
Newham S	27016	7311	27.1
Peckham	32214	8824	27.4
Pontefract & Castle	43741	13691	31.3
Preston	46681	6978	15.0
Rochdale	47412	7587	40.8
Sheffield Heeley	52667	8365	15.9
South Shields	40996	6402	15.6
Southwark & Bermondsey	34469	5164	15.0
Stoke on Trent Central	44100	8250	18.7
Stoke on Trent North	53425	8203	15.4

Tottenham	43092	9296	21.8
Truro	54447	10480	19.2
Tyne Bridge	23367	6575	28.1
Vauxhall	39214	7780	19.8
Wallsend	54238	12514	23.1
Wansbeck	46196	7831	17.0
Wentworth	43223	15935	36.9
West Bromwich W	37247	6639	17.8
Wigan	54733	17305	31.6
Workington	44661	7128	16.0

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Appendix 4

LETTER TO ASSOCIATION CHAIRMEN INVITING PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

20 August 1986

Home: 0482-46924

Work: 0482-466235

Dear Chairman,

I am writing to you to ask for help with a research project which I am undertaking for a PhD. The project involves systematically examining the work of Conservative Associations and, in particular, tracing any connections between their structure/activities and different kinds of electoral environments. A brief outline of the proposed research is enclosed.

My supervisor is Dr Philip Norton of the Politics Department at the University of Hull. I also work at the University as a Senior Research Fellow in the Addiction Research Centre.

I am an active member of the Conservative Party in Hull and hold the following offices:

- o Vice-Chairman, West Hull Conservative Association
- o Chairman, Boothferry Ward Branch
- o Chairman, Kingston upon Hull Conservative Federation Political Committee

An Association's participation in the study would involve

- o the completion of a questionnaire by its Chairman, and
- o an interview with the Chairman.

The questionnaire is designed to explore aspects of Associations' structure and activities and covers such topics as membership, finance, inter-election activities and intra-party relationships. The interview would be devoted to issues raised by the questionnaire. It is hoped that both these two phases of data collection would be completed within the next six months.

IN ALL CASES ABSOLUTE ANONYMITY FOR PARTICIPATING ASSOCIATIONS IS ASSURED. NO ASSOCIATION WILL BE IDENTIFIED IN ANY WAY. WHERE REFERENCE TO A SPECIFIC ASSOCIATION IS NECESSARY, IT WILL BE BY MEANS OF AN ASSIGNED LETTER (A, B, C, ETC.).

I do hope that your Association will agree to participate in the study. I enclose an SAE for your reply. Alternatively, I am available at either of the two numbers below after 7 September.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP TETHER

Appendix 5

CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS: THE INFLUENCE OF ELECTORAL ENVIRONMENTS**AN OUTLINE FOR ASSOCIATION CHAIRMEN**

Although a number of studies have examined different aspects of Conservative Associations' work, no systematic analysis of what it is Associations are supposed to do, what they do and how they do it exists. Such a study is needed if anything more than general statements, founded on fragmentary evidence and a number of assumptions, are to be made about the mass organisation of a major British political party.

The thesis aims to provide that systematic analysis. It examines the structure, membership, financing, relationships and activities of a sample of Associations. Each chapter examines an aspect of Associations' work within an analytical framework designed to explore the possibility that any variations between Associations are linked to the local environment in which each is embedded.

In order to test this hypothesis a sample of Associations drawn from different electoral environments will be examined in detail by means of questionnaires to Association Officers and interviews with Association members. Key issues that emerge will be investigated further in interviews with constituency agents, Area Agents, and Central Office personnel.

Sample Associations will be partly drawn from 'polar' environments, i.e. those constituencies where the Conservative Party is solidly entrenched or is very unlikely to ever achieve parliamentary representation. They will also be drawn from 'marginal environments' where the contest is more problematical.

The aim of the study is to establish whether there are significant and regular variations in structure, membership, financing, relationships and activities between Associations in these different kinds of electoral environments.

PHILIP TETHER

June 1986

Appendix 6

LETTER TO THE CHAIRMAN OF 10 ADDITIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE 'UNWINNABLE' CATEGORY

3 December 1986

Dear Chairman,

I am writing to you to ask for help with a research project which I am undertaking for a PhD. The project involves systematically examining the work of Conservative Associations and, in particular, tracing any connections between their structure/activities and different kinds of electoral environments. A brief outline of the proposed research is enclosed.

My supervisor is Dr Philip Norton of the Politics Department at the University of Hull. I also work at the University as a Senior Research Fellow in the Addiction Research Centre.

I am an active member of the Conservative Party in Hull and hold the following offices:

- o Vice-Chairman, West Hull Conservative Association
- o Chairman, Boothferry Ward Branch
- o Chairman, Kingston upon Hull Conservative Federation Political Committee

An Association's participation in the study would involve

- o the completion of a questionnaire by its Chairman, and
- o an interview with the Chairman.

The questionnaire is designed to explore aspects of Associations' structure and activities and covers such topics as membership, finance, inter-election activities and intra-party relationships. The interview would be devoted to issues raised by the questionnaire. It is hoped that both these two phases of data collection would be completed within the next six months.

The purpose of the project is not to criticise Associations where membership might be low and activities restricted. If this is so, there will be good reasons for such a situation and one of the purposes of the proposed research is to identify them - not to allocate 'blame'.

IN ALL CASES ABSOLUTE ANONYMITY FOR PARTICIPATING ASSOCIATIONS IS ASSURED. NO ASSOCIATION WILL BE IDENTIFIED IN ANY WAY. WHERE REFERENCE TO A SPECIFIC ASSOCIATION IS NECESSARY, IT WILL BE BY MEANS OF AN ASSIGNED LETTER (A, B, C, ETC.).

I do hope that your Association will agree to participate in the study. I enclose an SAE for your reply. Alternatively, I am available at either of the two numbers below after 7 September.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP TETHER

Home: 0482-46924, Work: 0482-466235

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This study drew on a wide range of primary sources including material from the Association of Conservative Clubs, Conservative Central Office, the Conservative Political Centre, the National Union and the National Society of Conservative Agents. The bulk of this material was ephemera of various kinds - sample leaflets, price-lists, catalogues, campaigning material, information sheets and circulars. Where appropriate such items have been referenced in the text. What follows is a list of the major items only.

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