

BACKBENCH SPECIALIZATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS:

A study of organization and representative theories.

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Summary of Thesis

In view of the general lack of theoretical works on Parliament one of the major objectives of the thesis is to contribute to the understanding of legislative activity through an examination of organization and representative theories. In Part One the mutual interaction of these two diverse strands of theory is examined. In Chapter 2 the concept of specialization is studied through an analysis of theories concerned with societal and organizational division of labour. However, unlike most formal organizations studied by organization theorists legislatures are exceptional by virtue of their representative functions. The second strand of theory, examined in Chapter 3, therefore is representative theory. In the light of the examination of these theories a model of legislative specialization is developed and outlined in Part One.

Part Two of the thesis represents the first systematic attempt to establish the extent of backbench specialization in the House of Commons and to identify the key independent variables influencing the level of specialization. Chapter 5 looks at the informal dimension of specialization through an analysis of backbench activity in Debates, Questions and Early Day Motions. Chapter 6 supplements this quantitative analysis by considering the perceptions of M.P.s of their individual patterns of specialization and the general division of labour on the backbenches. The pattern of specialization at the mezzo-level of parliamentary organization - in the 'unofficial' committees of the House - is examined in Chapter 7. Finally, the pattern of formal specialization in committee is analyzed in Chapter 8.

The profile of specialization, whilst pronounced, is yet still closely circumscribed in the House of Commons, with the linkage between informal and formal subject specialisms being loose and fragmented. The contention of the thesis is that this pattern of specialization is a product of the specific mix of representative and political elements in the proximate environment of the House.

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PART ONE

Chapter 1

Parliament - Study and Context

"Parliament may be an overstudied political body, particularly if the initial premise.....that Parliament has changed little - is accepted. Thus one is loathe to recommend greatly increased research on Parliament. Studying Parliament may have reached the point of diminishing returns". (1)

That such a verdict should have been reached by an American political scientist - and an A.P.S.A. Congressional Fellow at that - is somewhat unexpected. For, in comparison with American works on the United States Congress, the academic study of the British House of Commons appears often to be under-researched, under-conceptualized and isolationist. Harris Miller may have been on firmer ground, therefore, to have argued that Parliament has been over-described rather than over-studied - in so far as much of the published material on the House has focused upon either its history (2) or on the minutiae of legislative activity (3) or both. (4) What has been notably absent is political research, that is, study which is "grounded theoretically, raises questions or focuses on problems having to do with explaining why there are variations, uniformities, or regularities in institutionalized political phenomena, and employs research strategies which, whenever feasible, lead to the construction of quantitative variables so that the maximum power of modern social research can be mobilized". (5) Indeed S.C. Patterson in his incisive review of published works on the House of Commons rightly observed that many British academics substituted illustration for systematic data, and the 'evidence' that was provided tended to be essentially epigrammatic and anecdotal. (6)

The exceptions to this general pattern of study are still rare.

Nearly two decades ago Finer, Berrington and Bartholomew paved the way for a more 'scientific' study of activity in the House with their analysis of backbench support for Early Day Motions in the 1955-59

Parliament. In an era pre-dating the widespread use of computers in the social sciences in Britain their Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-1959 did, indeed, mark an innovative and imaginative

inquiry. (7) One of the co-authors, Hugh Berrington, has subsequently extended the investigation to include the 1945-55 period (8) and has considerably advanced the methodological sophistication of the analysis of E.D.M.s. (9)

Another pioneering study was Barker and Rush's The Member of Parliament and his Information (10) which utilized interview data collected from a sample of 111 M.P.s to study the attitudes of Members towards their parliamentary duties. Whilst the statistical techniques employed by Barker and Rush did not extend beyond simple cross-tabulations and bar charts, their data did provide a systematic indication of the information dilemma of backbenchers.

Unfortunately, the analytical signposts provided by these studies have only hesitantly been followed by other British academics - mainly by post-graduate students. (11) One of whom, Philip Norton, recently went to the unusual lengths, for a British academic, of prefacing his study (into intra-party dissent in the House of Commons) with a statement of his intention to pursue "the scientific method" in this investigation. (12)

In most ways Norton's work, in its meticulous chronicling of the incidence of intra-party dissent, is an exemplary study. Yet in one specific aspect his inquiry is disappointing, in that it provides no theoretical framework for the examination of the phenomenon of intra-party dissent. A check-list of the factors encouraging and discouraging party cohesion is as near as he comes to developing a conceptual model capable of specifying the intricate influences at work in determining

levels of intra-party dissent. One consequence of the lack of theory is that Norton tends to perceive the increased incidence of dissent between 1970-74 as being essentially mono-causal:

".....We have sought to identify the dependent variable responsible for the increase in the extent and seriousness of intra-party dissent within the parliamentary Conservative Party in the Parliament of 1970-74, and our analysis has led us to the conclusion that that variable was the prime ministerial leadership of Mr. Heath". (13)

Clearly, Mr. Heath's style of leadership was unquestionably of importance (and has its own implications for the present study); yet Norton's own evidence allows for the conclusion that ideological divisions within the party, as manifested over the issues of Northern Ireland, Rhodesia, E.E.C., Immigration and Counter-inflation, were as important, if not more so, than the frustrations felt on the backbenches with Heath's style. (14) In this respect a more elaborate conceptualization of the influences at work in promoting or fragmenting party cohesion may have removed some of the ambiguities which appear in Norton's study between the 'style' and the 'content' of Heath's leadership.

But, in the light of other British studies of Parliament, Norton's substantial contribution should not be too heavily criticized; for there appears to be an endemic lack of theorizing in such works.

Whilst British academics have willingly described the workings of the House and have occasionally analyzed its function, they have rarely theorized about its role in the political system. Indeed, Patterson suspects that the "atheoretical character of studies of the House of

Commons does not seem to be accidental. Those who have studied the House seem to be uninterested in theorizing about the phenomena they are studying, as if the fact that Parliament was there and had been for a long time was itself sufficient justification for studying it". (15)

Of course, one can only speculate as to the reasons for the persistence of this atheoretical tradition in Britain, but the seminal influence of Bagehot does perhaps provide one clue. For 20th century students of Parliament in accepting, with minor updating, the categorization of parliamentary functions provided by Bagehot in The English Constitution, (16) appear also to have implicitly assented to his descriptive style. (17) Bernard Crick as one of the leading British students of Parliament asserts, for example, that "for a conceptual framework there is little need to go beyond Walter Bagehot". (18)

Indeed, in his own works, particularly in The Reform of Parliament, (19) Crick moulds his case for reform around the continuing importance of three of the functions ascribed to the House by Bagehot - namely the expressive, teaching and informing roles. But The Reform of Parliament is not simply a descriptive and analytical study it is also, as Crick readily admits himself, a work of polemic (20) - and as such stands alongside many other contemporary studies of Parliament. (21)

Many of these polemical works appear however to ignore Crick's warning that "to have ideas on reform is no substitute for knowing how things work and relate to each other" (22) and consequently several seemingly advocate reform as an end in itself.

At first sight, however, it may appear to be unjust to criticize contemporary therapeutic works for being atheoretical - precisely because they were intended to be polemical rather than conceptual. Nevertheless, because of their unwillingness to theorize about 'how things work and relate to each other' many reformist works appear to suffer from symptoms of tunnel vision. Thus the reformists' diagnosis that

the House had declined in influence over both the executive and the electorate (23) led them, not unnaturally, to seek the cure for this malaise; the remedy most commonly prescribed was an internal restructuring of the organization of the House - through more committees, improved research facilities, better secretarial assistance, re-organization of library services and re-arrangement of the timetable. Yet a conceptualization of the political environment in which these changes were to have been effected would have alerted the reformers to the inadequacy of structural reform by itself. A theoretical examination of the linkages between the executive and the legislature, of the significance of partisan competition and of the potential contradiction between the concepts of political representation and detailed parliamentary scrutiny would clearly have identified the limitations inherent within the structuralist schemes. In fact, these limitations were apparent at the time to other more perspicacious observers of Parliament, such as S.A. Walkland (24) and Nevil Johnson, (25) who argued that structural reform would only prove effective if accompanied by a fundamental transformation of political relationships in Britain. But in turn this analysis was not based upon a conceptualization of parliamentary relationships but rather represented a more rigorous and academic (in the sense of detachment from the reformist cause) assessment of existing power relationships. Unfortunately, the very unwillingness of Walkland and Johnson to conceptualize leaves them open to the charge that they are just as much captives of 'a priori assumptions' about the expected benefits of their own brand of reform as were the reformers of the 1960s prisoners of "a priori assumptions about executive supremacy". (26) In their advocacy of electoral reform the 'academic' analysts of the 1960s appear to have become the polemicists of the 1970s. Ultimately, the case of the 'electoral reform school' suffers from an absence of theory about the consequences of a fractionalization of parliamentary parties. (27)

And affirmations of hope that electoral reform may prove to be the catalyst of Parliament's rejuvenation are thus substituted instead of theoretical models of the operation of a multi-party system in the British legislature.

In view of the general lack of theoretical works on Parliament, one of the major objectives of the present study is, therefore, to contribute to the understanding of legislative activity through an examination of two diverse bodies of 'theory'. Each in their own right of vital importance to the study of legislatures, but in their mutual interaction provide probably the most profound dilemma facing legislatures in the 20th century. The first strand of theory is organization theory <sup>(28)</sup> which, despite the consistent demand for organizational reform of the House in recent years, remains a neglected area in British legislative studies. The concept of specialization provides our research focus given the general assumption that "legislatures are characterized by varying degrees of specialization as are all formal organizations", <sup>(29)</sup> and the specific contention that "the operational code of the House of Commons actually encourages specialization". <sup>(30)</sup> Thus an examination of theories concerned with societal and organizational division of labour may prove to be of value in furthering our understanding of the phenomenon of specialization: firstly, by showing the necessity of specialization in an era of complexity; secondly, by highlighting its contribution to the attainment of collective and individual goals; and finally by revealing the key problems associated with a division of labour.

Unlike most formal organizations studied by organization theorists legislatures are, however, exceptional by virtue of their very representative nature. The second strand of 'theory' to be examined, therefore, is that concerned with representation; with the linkage between

representatives and their constituents. Whether these two sets of theory are compatible; whether the organizational requisite of a division of labour can be accommodated in the performance of representative roles is, however, a matter of contention. The contradictions inherent in this interaction of theories is of crucial importance in the study of legislatures. Yet, astoundingly, this very relationship has never been fully analyzed. Chapter 3 therefore seeks to rectify this omission by examining the major theories of representation and their theoretical compatibility with a division of labour. In the light of this exercise and the experience gained from American studies (Chapter 4) a model of legislative specialization is developed and outlined in Part One of this thesis. This model is intended to serve both as an analytical tool - a representation of reality - and also as a predictive device, whereby the conditions under which specialization is promoted or hindered in legislatures can be specified. In this manner the theoretical section of this thesis may perhaps justly claim to be an innovation amongst British parliamentary studies. Like most other innovations, however, the model may appear to be somewhat rudimentary in its conceptualization. Nevertheless, the elementary nature of the model may serve to prompt further academic consideration - to either refine or to refute its premises.

Part Two of this thesis also, in its own way, marks something of an innovation in so far as it represents the first systematic attempt to establish the extent of backbench specialization in the House of Commons and to identify the key independent variables influencing the level of specialization. Whilst other studies have examined specialization on the part of specific groupings of M.P.s, most notably Opposition Frontbench Spokesmen <sup>(31)</sup> and Trade Union sponsored Members, <sup>(32)</sup> it remains true to say that "there has been no comprehensive examination of specialization in the House of Commons". <sup>(33)</sup>

Some traditionalist students may well argue that the need for such an

examination is less than essential, as specialization is such an acknowledged feature of parliamentary life that to create a profile of specialization would merely be to quantify the obvious. But this stance immediately prompts the question: what is so obvious about the nature of specialization in the Commons? Are backbenchers in both major parties, for example, equally specialized or are there discernible differences between the two? Are new recruits to the House more, or less, specialized than their more senior colleagues on the backbenches? Do 'full-time' M.P.s divide their labour in the House more unevenly than their 'part-time' colleagues? And does the level of parliamentary activity influence the level of specialization? The short answer to all of these questions is that one simply does not know, nor could one necessarily predict, the answers given the present extent of knowledge about specialization in the British House of Commons. Indeed, the pattern of informal specialization - that is specialization on the part of individual backbenchers - remains largely unknown. Quite why informal specialization should have eluded investigation is, of course, a matter of conjecture: clearly, the tedious and time consuming nature of such an enquiry, and the methodological difficulties entailed in measuring specialization are significant factors. However, perhaps of greater importance is the anti-behaviouralist bias evident in the British approach to the study of Parliament. Scepticism of the excesses of American behaviouralism and of the validity of many statistical techniques appears to predispose many British political scientists against empirical research. (34) In part such scepticism is warranted, yet, without accepting the ideology of behaviouralism nor the necessity of producing ever more incomprehensible mathematical models, it is possible to argue that only through quantitative analysis of backbench behaviour can we accurately understand how M.P.s perform their legislative duties. Only in this manner can research hypotheses be adequately tested, and perceptions about parliamentary roles be contrasted with

actual patterns of behaviour.

### The Parliamentary Environment

To ask 'how do backbenchers in the House of Commons decide upon the multifarious issues demanding their attention?' is to pose simultaneously the most elementary and yet the most profound of questions. Clearly the problems associated with decision-making have been a major concern of organization theories. Thus the ideal comprehensive rational decision-making model, for example, suggests that a backbencher, as a rational man, would, when faced with a given problem, first clarify his goals, values or objectives and then rank them in order of preference; secondly, list all the important ways of achieving these goals; thirdly, investigate all the important consequences that would follow from each of the alternative policies; fourthly, compare the consequences of each policy with his goals and ultimately choose the policy with those consequences most closely matching his goals. (35)

One essential requirement of this model is, of course, information and knowledge in order to be able to rank priorities, select alternatives and comprehend the consequences of choice. The impossibility of collecting, assessing and assimilating total information on any single issue has long been recognized as an intrinsic weakness of the rational model. This weakness is particularly compounded however by the political context of legislatures. The legislative environment is indeed such that the backbencher is never confronted solely with one issue for decision at any one time; for as government has expanded its activities, and as the populace's expectation of state intervention has increased in the 20th century, so the volume of issues arising for consideration by Members of Parliament has correspondingly increased. This cycle of proliferating workload was neatly described by the Study of Parliament Group in its evidence to the 1977-8 Select Committee on Procedure:

"More powers for Government and for subordinate public authorities means more legislation. The multiplication of regulatory schemes in social and economic affairs imposes the need for more delegated legislation and for larger administrative services. A larger and more interventionist administrative machine is likely to result in a bigger flow of complaints from constituents to Members, thus enlarging their traditional role of seeking redress of grievances. But in addition the omniscient State suggests the need for Parliament to add to its means of scrutiny and to widen the opportunities it has for investigation and report. At the same time as the powers of public authorities have grown, there has been a rapid growth in the number of bodies claiming to speak for interests affected by the powers conferred, and there has been a shift of emphasis towards consultation, negotiation and participation in the development and application of public policies. Inevitably the Member of Parliament is involved in this field too and indeed may regard it as essential to establish close ties with one or more organized interest groups. But this too means further demands on his time." (36)

But not only has there been a quantitative increase in the volume and scope of legislation there has also been a qualitative change in the nature of many of the issues confronting Parliament. The sheer technical complexity of much modern legislation is such that, even when backbenchers are supplied with relevant information, it is often

apparent that they encounter severe difficulties in comprehending the details of the matter. (37) In many instances these problems are exacerbated by the reluctance of the executive to make information available to backbenchers, (38) with the consequence that they are repeatedly asked to decide upon issues on the basis of insufficient information.

In addition the rational model is undermined still further by the simple fact that while the scope, number and complexity of issues has increased almost exponentially, the amount of time available to M.P.s in which to consider these policies has increased only incrementally. Thus despite the fact that the "House of Commons sits more often, and longer than any other Western democratic legislature" (39) backbenchers still have insufficient time to acquaint themselves with the intricacies of all policy options. Indeed, a re-arrangement of the times of sittings, so that the House would assemble before noon (40) would not in practice ameliorate the position. (41)

The comprehensive rational decision-making model, as was only to be expected, bears little relation to the world of parliamentary politics. Instead, backbenchers have been forced to adopt partial solutions to the problems of decision-making - to look to other mechanisms of choice. The 'partial-mode' of decision-making most commonly adopted in formal organizations, particularly large corporations and bureaucracies, is specialization through a division of labour. Similarly, most other legislatures have also institutionalized a formal division of labour and encouraged informal specialization on the part of their members. Most renowned in this respect is, of course, the U.S. Congress, and indeed many envious British glances have been cast at the high degree of committee specialization in the American legislature. Yet, the British House of Commons remains almost unique

in its steadfast refusal to develop a comprehensive formal division of labour and in its adherence to a set of legislative norms fashioned in the 19th century era of the 'amateur-gentleman'.

To understand why specialization as a decision-making strategy has never been wholeheartedly accepted by backbenchers individually nor, by the House as a corporate entity, requires a knowledge of the political and representative environment of the Commons. As the significance of the environmental setting of the House will be considered at length in the following chapters all that is offered here is a framework within which to develop the discussion. In brief, the contention of this thesis is simply that specialization in the House of Commons has been subverted by a combination of political and representative constraints unique to the British parliamentary setting.

Of the political elements, two above all others - the dominance of party and the pre-eminence of the executive - stand out as major impediments to the development of specialization as a backbench strategy of decision-making. The development of party organization and cohesion in the 20th century has effectively removed the 'independent' Member from the House, so that first and foremost backbenchers are now 'party men', 'party delegates'. The position of the backbencher is commonly held to have been reduced in this process "to the position of a subservient cog within the wheel of his great, disciplined mass Party": (42) whereby backbenchers are effectively shackled to the party leadership through their support of the electoral manifesto. Indeed, backbench allegiance to the respective party leaderships in the modern House has on occasion been caricatured as being mindless compliance on their part. Moreover, the high degree of intra-party cohesion has frequently been perceived, by theorists of parliamentary decline, as being mono-causal - as being dependent solely upon discipline and the whipping system. (43) What tends to be de-emphasized in these

analyses is the ideological dimension of party unity - the overarching consensus on fundamental principles within the ranks of each party. Admittedly, both major parties do display in practice considerable internal dissension, with the organization of 'factions' and 'tendencies' bearing testimony to this heterogeneity. (44) On occasion antipathy to the values of the opposing party may appear to be the main unifying factor within a party rather than any genuine intra-party consensus. Essentially, however, as Ian Gilmour notes "M.P.s have a predisposition to vote for their party, otherwise they would not be there" (45) - the predisposition arising out of some shared commitment to either 'socialism' or 'conservatism'. And it is this ideological dimension of British parliamentary parties which, far from weakening the position of the backbencher, has in fact facilitated backbench decision-making by providing one relatively cost-free mechanism of choice whereby, individually, backbenchers can begin to cope with the complexity and the volume of the demands made upon them. Ideology, or more accurately party ideology, simplifies decision-making to the extent that once the ideological/partisan implications of a measure have been established then choice for the backbencher is normally reduced to the simple decision of voting with the rest of his own party (and common values) against the opposing party (and contradictory values). The actual ideological content on any single issue may often appear minute, but the ascription of partisan cleavage to all issues is of crucial significance to decision-making in the House. Thus as Gilmour observes "deep questions of principle are seldom involved. Many votes are on amendments to bills, and the average M.P. who has not taken part in debates on the bill often has no idea what the vote is about or on which side he should vote. Party is his only mentor." (46) Conformity to the 'party line' consequently provides the backbencher with a relatively cost-free mode of decision-making, which allows him to reach a decision on any particular issue

without necessarily having a detailed understanding of the subject involved. Thus for the backbencher who is incapable of mastering the entire legislative programme, adherence to party ideology provides a simple and effective partial solution to the problems of decision-making in a complex environment. (47)

The second crucial feature of the political environment serving to undermine specialization in the British House of Commons is the nature of the relationship between the executive and the legislature.

Theorists of parliamentary decline have long recognized the dominance of the executive in the Chamber of the House as a causal factor in the demotion of the legislature from its position as a check upon the government in the mid-19th century to its present position as merely "one of the institutions through which the government operates". (48)

For, in being both 'in and of' the Commons the Government in Britain provides the legislature with centralized leadership and imposes its own hierarchical structure upon the organization of the House.

Strictly in terms of decision-making theory, the existence of authoritative leadership within the House provides yet another partial, cost-effective solution to the problem of information deficiency encountered by backbenchers. Executive leadership in the Commons may be considered to be 'authoritative' on at least two counts; firstly, in that it is 'authorized', in normal circumstances, by the majority of backbenchers voting with the Government; (49) and, secondly, in that it draws upon the 'authoritative' expertise of the bureaucracy and major organized interests within society. This claim to authority effectively differentiates the executive from non-executive Members in the House, forming a hierarchy of roles within the Chamber. This hierarchical differentiation in turn has important repercussions upon the mode of backbench decision-making - for choice again is rendered into the simple dichotomy of either accepting or rejecting the

'authoritative' claims of the executive. In practice, given the conjunction of party and executive leadership roles in the Cabinet, backbenchers are thus presented with two mutually reinforcing strategies of decision-making - voting with their own party and voting in accordance with the guidance offered by the executive. Inevitably, these two modes coalesce into an 'adversary style' of decision-making, which is characterized by government backbenchers, on the one hand, accepting both the 'party' and the 'authority' dimensions of executive policy, and by Opposition M.P.s, on the other, denying the authority of the Government's case on partisan grounds. In this manner, as Nevil Johnson observes "adversary politics becomes more than a way of conducting political argument: it becomes a mechanism of choice too". (50) A mechanism which conveniently, if over-simplistically, reduces the number of options open for backbench consideration to two mutually exclusive alternatives.

The fact that backbenchers have not enthusiastically adopted the strategy of specialization, when other less costly modes of choice are available is perhaps not surprising. But the existence of alternative mechanisms of choice in itself provides only a partial explanation for the relative under-development of specialization in the House of Commons. What also needs to be taken into account is the successful frustration of the emergence of a 'norm' of specialization by successive governments. Modern executives, on grounds of political expediency, have supported the generalist tradition on the backbenches in an effort to pre-empt detailed scrutiny of their own actions. The absence of specialist M.P.s in practice benefits the executive, for as Lord Hailsham recently pointed out "even when (the Minister) is wrong, he can usually make it look sufficiently as if he were right to get his own supporters into the lobby when the bells ring. I have been often enough myself on the giving and on the receiving end, and I must say frankly that, more

often than not, right or wrong, it is the Minister who wins the argument". (51) Indeed, it would appear that the desire to keep on 'winning the argument' becomes a consuming passion with most members of the government. Even to the extent that those Ministers who were formerly supporters of parliamentary reform through specialization, before their promotion to executive office, may become strident opponents to the extension of specialization once in the confines of the Cabinet. One extract from the diaries of Richard Crossman is particularly revealing on this point: in describing the Cabinet discussion on the proposal to introduce specialist committees as part of a procedural package of parliamentary reform he is led to comment:

"Most of these Ministers were individually as well as collectively committed to parliamentary reform. Yet after two years they've become Whitehall figures who've lost contact with Parliament. And, of course, what they're saying is pure nonsense. Ministers aren't bothered by Parliament, indeed they're hardly ever there.....the amount of time a Minister spends on the front bench or in his room in St. Stephen's is very small. The Executive rides supreme in Britain and has minimum trouble from the legislature". (52)

Opposition to the specialist committee experiment represents, however, only but the most obvious manifestation of the general executive antipathy towards specialization in the House. More subtly, and more pervasively, the executive has undermined specialization through its control of patronage in the House and through its stipulation that the requisite attributes for executive position are those of the 'intellectual-layman'. (53) Hence, in a legislature in which political careers are conceived of primarily in terms of attaining Ministerial Office,

backbenchers will tend to conform to those normative rules most likely to bring about this result. The very fact that these norms are products of executive hegemony therefore serves to perpetuate the 'philosophy of the amateur' in the House.

However, the ramifications of the executive's perpetuation of generalist norms extends beyond Westminster into other spheres of political life in Britain, particularly into Whitehall. For, if British government can be described as an 'elective dictatorship' in which "the sovereignty of Parliament has increasingly become, in practice, the sovereignty of the Commons, and the sovereignty of the Commons has increasingly become the sovereignty of the government, which, in addition to its influence in Parliament controls.....the civil service": (54) then it is predominantly a 19th century dictatorship of 'amateur-gentlemen'. In order to maintain this pivotal position at the apex of British governmental institutions, the political executive is basically dependent upon the perpetuation of generalist norms in both Westminster and Whitehall. Clearly, increased specialization in the Commons, on the one hand, would curtail the existing licence of the executive in the House; while, on the other hand, increased specialization in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy would threaten still further the ability of Ministers to control their departments. The convention of ministerial responsibility clearly establishes the principle of political control and establishes a hierarchy of decision within each department. In the 19th century, in a period of limited government, it was entirely feasible to hold a Minister personally responsible for the actions of his department as he had the capacity to oversee and personally decide upon all matters if he so wished. However, it has long been recognized that with the expansion of the scope of departmental responsibilities, particularly in the post-war period, it is no longer meaningful to speak of

individual ministerial responsibility in its original sense. (55)

Yet each central government department is still hierarchically structured in accordance with the principle that the Minister has the right of decision on all issues. In practice, the authority hierarchy within departments serves to differentiate 'policy' from 'administrative' duties, and to institutionalize a distinction between 'generalist' and 'specialist' civil servants; whilst at the same time subordinating the latter to the former. Successive British governments in their desire to exercise control over the bureaucracy have maintained the authority hierarchy within central departments, and in so doing have undermined the development of specialization within the Civil Service. As we shall see in the next chapter, the requirements of hierarchy (the differentiation between subordinate and superordinate roles and the monistic assumption that the latter is more capable of taking decisions than the former) conflict with the requirements of specialization (with the emphasis upon group decision and the horizontal interdependence of organizational units). (56)

Thus it may be argued that considerations of political expediency have led successive British governments to undermine the development of specialization both in Whitehall and Westminster. In their desire to remain at the apex of government, political executives have reinforced the bureaucratic and parliamentary authority hierarchies at the expense of the development of specialization. Hence, no government has seen fit to fully concede the case for a systematic division of labour in the Commons out of the fear of increasing parliamentary control over executive policy. However, in the absence of effective parliamentary scrutiny, the government is faced with the dilemma of exercising political control over the bureaucracy practically single-handedly. The solution adopted by Ministers to this problem has been to inculcate generalist norms within the Civil Service, so

that senior civil servants reflect the same 'intellectual-amateur' qualities of Ministers and become attuned to the political sensitivities of policy-making. In this way political control by Ministers is essentially exercised through the 'self control' of generalist civil servants socialized into an acceptance of the basic political conventions of ministerial responsibility.

Undoubtedly, therefore, the antipathy of the executive has to be considered alongside the mechanisms of choice associated with the adversary procedures of the House as a major impediment to the development of specialization within the Commons. But these features of the parliamentary environment represent only the most visible and hence the most studied obstacles to parliamentary reform and the systematization of a division of labour. Ultimately, however, a more fundamental obstacle to specialization may be encountered in the very conception of the representative role in Britain; in the inherent contradiction posed by a 19th century 'miscellaneous assembly' charged with controlling the 20th century interventionist state. Indeed, this will be our contention in Chapter 3; but, before developing this theme, let us first examine the meaning of the term 'specialization'.

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5. S.C. Patterson, 'Review Article: the British House of Commons as a focus for Political Research', British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 3, 1973, p.375.
6. ibid, p.378.
7. S.E. Finer, H. Berrington and D.J. Bartholomew, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-59, Pergamon, Oxford, 1961.
8. H. Berrington, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1945-55, Pergamon, Oxford, 1973.
9. J. Leece and H. Berrington, 'Measurement of Backbench Attitudes by Guttman Scaling of E.D.M.s: A Pilot Study 1968-69', British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1977, pp.529-541.
10. A. Barker and M. Rush, The Member of Parliament and his Information, Allen and Unwin, London, 1970.
11. See P. Norton, Intra-party dissent in the House of Commons: The Conservative Party in Government 1970-4, Ph.D Thesis, Sheffield University 1977; E. Oram, Investigative Select Committees in the 1966 House of Commons, unpublished Ph.D., Strathclyde University, 1974 - these signposts have been most avidly followed by Ph.D students in American Institutions. See, for example, M.N. Franklin, Voice of the Backbench: Patterns of Behaviour in the British House of Commons, unpublished Ph.D., Cornell University, 1970; J.J. Lynskey, Role of British Backbenchers in the Modification of Government Policy, unpublished Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 1966.
12. P. Norton, Conservative Dissidents: Dissent within the Parliamentary Conservative Party 1970-74, Temple Smith, London, 1978, pp.13-18.
13. ibid, p.254.
14. Norton fails to provide systematic evidence of the actual extent of this feeling of frustration, other than limited comments gained from interviews. Furthermore, in his discussion on the source of this frustration he places heavy emphasis upon the limited number of promotions made by Heath, but fails to analyze the movement at the P.P.S. level - the first rung of the promotion ladder.

15. S.C. Patterson, op cit, p.376.
16. W. Bagehot, The English Constitution, Fontana, Glasgow, 1963.
17. See R.H.S. Crossman's introduction, ibid, p.2. "It was in the course of describing the contemporary political scene, as he actually saw it, that he hit upon the secret of British politics....."
18. B. Crick, 'Parliament in the British Political System', in A. Kornberg and L.D. Musolf, Legislatures in Developmental Perspective, Duke University Press, North Carolina, 1970, p.33.
19. B. Crick, The Reform of Parliament, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968.
20. ibid. The first line of the preface to the 2nd edition states "Nothing dates so much as a contemporary polemic", p.ix. In the preface to the 1st edition Crick states "I would have liked to have thanked heartily and by name several officers and members of both Houses for help they have given me, but I think that in view of the somewhat polemic nature of this book, the best public thanks is, for once, a politic and evasive generality", p.xix-xx.
21. See A. Hill and A. Whichelow, What's Wrong With Parliament?, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964; more recently L. Radice, Reforming the House of Commons, Fabian Tract 448, London, 1977; R. Hornby, 'The Case for a Stronger Parliament', Round Table, No. 269, January, 1978, pp.20-24; T. Benn, 'Parliamentary Reform', Teaching Politics, Vol. 6, 1977, pp.261-266; D. Houghton, 'Has Parliament a Future', Teaching Politics, Vol. 7, 1978, pp.149-159.
22. Op cit, p.ix.
23. A thesis disputed by R. Butt in The Power of Parliament, Constable, London, 1969, 2nd ed., and by H. Fairlie, The Life of Politics, Methuen, London, 1968.
24. S.A. Walkland, 'A Liberal Comment on Recent Proposals for Parliamentary Reform', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 16, Summer, 1963, pp.338-342.
25. N. Johnson, 'Select Committees as Tools of Parliamentary Reform', in A.H. Hanson and B. Crick, The Commons in Transition, Fontana, Glasgow, 1970, pp.224-248.
26. S.A. Walkland, 'Whither the Commons', in S.A. Walkland and M. Ryle, The Commons in the Seventies, Fontana, Glasgow, 1977, p.244.
27. J. Blondel, Comparative Legislatures, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1973, pp.52-53. Blondel argues that the two factors (i) national versus sectional parties, and a simple versus fractionalized party system - have an impact on the strength of the legislature. The significance for the British legislature and the 'electoral reform school' is that "if fractionalization increases while nationalization remains constant and high, the executive may remain strong, at least until the party system is so fractionalized that combinations of majorities become numerous and interchangeable".
28. This use of the word 'theory' does not imply the existence of a single, coherent body of knowledge - more accurately we should in fact talk of organization theories.

29. A. Kornberg, Canadian Legislative Behaviour: A Study of the 25th Parliament, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, New York, 1967, p.4.
30. W.D. Muller, 'Trade Union M.P.s and Parliamentary Specialization', Political Studies, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1972, p.317.
31. R.M. Punnett, Front-Bench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973.
32. W.D. Muller, The Kept Men, Harvester, Sussex, 1977.
33. W.D. Muller, op cit, p.317.
34. Something of this scepticism shows through in B. Crick, 'Chalk Dust, Punch Card and the Polity', Political Studies, Vol. 23, Nos. 2-3, 1975, p.167, wherein he contends that the value of "the 'real researcher', the real punch-card and data man" is that "his retreat from education about the nature of politics into training in research techniques may actually force his more intelligent students into reading....."; see, for a general overview, B. Susser, 'The Behavioural Ideology: A Review and Retrospect', Political Studies, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1974, pp.271-288; for a cautionary note on the misuse of statistics by certain U.S. political scientists see 'Editorial Note', Journal of Politics, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1978, p.xi, wherein the editor comments "in cases of manuscripts involving complex quantitative methods, we like to have an additional review from a mathematician or statistician to make sure that the mathematical usages are correct (the Journal of Politics and most other social science journals have been badly burned by publishing papers in which errors resulting from gross misapplications of mathematics have been repeated over and over)".
35. This characterization of the classical model is derived from C.E. Lindblom, The Policy-Making Process, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1968, p.12; for a refinement of this model see H.A. Simon, Administrative Behaviour, Free Press, New York, 1957, 2nd ed.; and J.C. March and H.A. Simon, Organizations, Wiley, New York, 1958; for a critique of rational models see D. Braybrooke and C.E. Lindblom, A Strategy of Decision, Free Press, New York, 1963; for an overview of the debate on rational decision-making see P. Self, Administrative Theories and Politics, Allen and Unwin, London, 1972, pp.29-38; M.J. Hill, Sociology of Public Administration, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972, chapter 2; R.G.S. Brown, The Administrative Process in Britain, Methuen, London, 1970, chapter 7; see also Brian Smith's idealized version of the policy process based upon the principles of administrative rationality in Policy Making in British Government, Martin Robertson, London, 1976, pp.33-38, and chapter 8.
36. Memorandum by the academic members of the Study of Parliament Group, Appendix 1, First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, H.C.588 III, Session 1977-8, p.4.
37. There is, of course, the question of whether backbenchers wish to deal with matters of detail in the first instance. David Watt, for example, argued that "the function of investigating the details of policy is one for which few M.P.s are either temperamentally or intellectually suited. As a class, M.P.s have grass-hopper minds". The Observer, 13th August, 1978. Similarly, Dr. David Owen argued, as a backbencher, that "Parliament is never happier or the benches fuller than when it is debating generalities. It is rather frightened of detail, or specifics.....". The Guardian,

- 6th February, 1974. The unwillingness or inability of most M.P.s to consider the 'detail' of policy is most vividly illustrated in the area of public expenditure; see P. Byrne, 'The Expenditure Committee: A Preliminary Assessment', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1973-4, pp.273-286; A. Robinson, 'The House of Commons and Public Expenditure', in S.A. Walkland and M. Ryle, The Commons in the Seventies, Fontana, Glasgow, 1977, pp.129-148, Edward du Cann, H.C. Debates, Vol. 950, Col. 36, 15th May, 1978.
38. Several recent examples illustrate this point, in 1976 Harold Lever was expressly forbidden by Harold Wilson from giving evidence to the Trade and Industry Sub Committee in its investigation into the Chrysler rescue. In 1978 the Select Committee on Nationalized Industries experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining confidential papers exchanged between the Secretary of State for Industry and the Chairman of British Steel. See 1st Report from the Select Committee on Nationalized Industries, H.C. 26, Session 1977-78, 2nd Report, H.C.127, 1977-78, 5th Report, H.C.238, 1977-78; see also H.C. Debates, Vol. 941, Cols. 1859-1878, 12th January, 1978; Vol. 942, Cols. 31-44, 16th January, 1978; and Vol. 945, Cols. 1624-1754, 9th March, 1978.
39. H.C. 588 I, Session 1977-8, p.cviii.
40. As advocated by Frank Hooley and Giles Radice, see ibid, pp.158-161; see also Lisanne Radice, op cit, pp.14.-15.
41. The time spent by M.P.s on their parliamentary duties particularly by those already engaged in committee activity in the mornings, would not necessarily increase with the introduction of morning sittings. Furthermore, on the more general issue, even if the House sat for 24 hours every day, on 52 weeks of the year there would still be insufficient time for each Member to inform himself of the complexities of all public issues.
42. R. Butt, op cit, p.13.
43. This view grossly oversimplifies the complexity of the patterns of influence within parliamentary parties - for an insight into the intra-party channels of influence see R.J. Jackson, Rebels and Whips, Macmillan, London, 1968; P. Norton, op cit; J.J. Lynskey, 'The Role of British Backbenchers in the modification of Government Policy', Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 36, June, 1970, pp.333-347; J.J. Lynskey, 'Backbench Tactics and Parliamentary Party Structure', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 27, Winter, 1973-74, pp.28-37.
44. See R. Rose, 'Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain', Political Studies, Vol. 12, 1964, No. 1, pp.3-46; R. Rose, The Problems of Party Government, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, Chapter 12; P. Seyd, 'Factionalism within the Conservative Party: The Monday Club', Government and Opposition, Vol. 7, 1972, Part 4; P. Seyd, 'Fighting for the Soul of the Labour Party', New Society, 20th April, 1978, pp.122-124; P. Wilby, 'The Think Groups', New Society, 2nd October, 1975, pp.5-6.
45. I. Gilmour, The Body Politic, Hutchinson, London, 1971, p.261.
46. ibid.

47. 'Simple' that is if ideological conflict is perceived as zero-sum, that is 'socialism' (Labour) versus 'conservatism' (Conservative). However, if intra-party differences are taken into account then decision-making in accordance to 'ideology' becomes more complicated with a continuum replacing the original dichotomy, e.g. Socialist (Tribune) - Social Democratic (Manifesto) - Liberal Conservative (Bow) - Ultra Right (Monday Club). Major issues with a high 'ideological' content are likely to be perceived from the perspective of this continuum, with a subsequent possibility of intra-party dissent being pressed to open rebellion.
48. J.P. Mackintosh, The Government and Politics of Britain, Hutchinson, London, 1974, 3rd ed., p.152.
49. The conjunction of executive and party leadership in the Cabinet invariably means that the executive effectively 'self-authorizes' its own actions - by making important votes in the House matters of confidence, in the certainty that party loyalty will prevent too large a desertion of backbenchers to stave off defeat.
50. N. Johnson, 'Politics and Reform: Need we be Afraid', in S.E. Finer, Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform, Anthony Wigram, London, 1975, p.76.
51. Lord Hailsham, 'Elective Dictatorship', The Listener, 21st October, 1976, p.497.
52. R.H.S. Crossman, The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume Two, Hamilton and Cape, London, 1976, pp.130-131. (My emphasis). For an assessment of Crossman as a parliamentary reformer see Gavin Drewry, 'The Outsider and House of Commons Reform: Some Evidence from the Crossman Diaries', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1978, pp.424-435.
53. This point is developed in detail in Chapter 2. See also B.W. Headey, British Cabinet Ministers, Allen and Unwin, London, 1974, especially Chapter 4.
54. Lord Hailsham, op cit, p.497.
55. See M. Wright, 'Ministers and Civil Servants: Relations and Responsibilities', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 30, No. 3, 1977, pp.293-313.
56. See V.A. Thompson, 'Hierarchy, Specialization and Organizational Conflict', Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 5, 1961, pp.485-521; V.A. Thompson, Modern Organizations, A.A. Knopf, New York, 1961, especially chapters 3 and 4; P.J. Self, op cit, pp.21-23.

## Chapter 2

### Specialization

A logical starting point for the investigation of the phenomenon of backbench specialization is to establish a precise meaning for the word 'specialization', for there is evident confusion in its usage by British students of Parliament. However, the concern of this chapter is not merely one of semantics but, more importantly, it seeks to formulate key propositions concerning the necessity of, and the problems associated with, the concept. These propositions being drawn from a study of organization theories, in the expectation that they will provide a valuable guide to the nature of specialization in legislatures. Indeed, just such a supposition has already been adopted in the study of the American Congress and state legislatures (see Chapter 4). One of the seminal American articles on the phenomenon of legislative specialization, for example, began thus:

"Throughout American society and government, specialization in the division of labour and authority is now the rule. One would suppose, therefore, that members of legislative bodies - the persons principally charged with making authoritative decisions for society and government - would have been forced by the increasing complexity of the problems they face to devise an appropriate system of specialization". (1)

Nevertheless, the validity of such an assumption may be questioned; for there can be no guarantee that generalizations drawn from organization theory, with its primary focus upon business organizations and bureaucracies, will necessarily be applicable to representative institutions. Indeed, as the authors of the above quotation go on to

recognize - there are traditional conceptions about the functions of elected representatives which conflict with the organizational requirements of specialization. However, before developing this line of argument, it is perhaps advisable to establish exactly what we take 'specialization' to mean.

To attempt a meaningful answer it is necessary to examine the key strands of thought encompassed by organization theory. In 1931 Arthur Salz suggested that "specialization is a technical term for all those phenomena - technological, social and biological as well as economic - which are usually subsumed under the phrase division of labour". (2) But to say that specialization can be equated with division of labour raises the problem of defining the latter term. Salz himself recognized that division of labour is an ambiguous expression which is in reality complicated and multiform. J.H. Smith in the Dictionary of Social Sciences contends, however, that "though the term has not been invested with a precise scientific meaning, it should not be equated with specialization". (3) According to Smith, specialization may refer to the special characteristics of individuals, groups, economic enterprises or social institutions, whereas the division of labour is concerned with the special tasks assigned to individuals and groups. Unfortunately, he does no more than simply assert that this distinction needs to be made. Seemingly the inference to be drawn from his analysis of the successive phases in the usage of 'division of labour' is that the term should be used exclusively in its most modern sense, to mean the allocation of tasks in a given system of production. Yet Smith's definition is far too restrictive in that, in distinguishing between the 'specialization of tasks' and the 'specialization of people', he completely excludes the latter from consideration. Thus, without explanation, he rejects the adaptation of the individual to the conditions of his environment as a form of

division of labour; and only the element of work specificity is deemed to warrant this title. However, without denying that 'division of labour' is obviously concerned with the degree to which the tasks of a system are subdivided, (4) it appears somewhat strange to then argue that the term should not be equated with specialization. Rather, in the following discussion we shall treat 'specialization' and 'division of labour' as virtual synonyms. (5)

Considerable confusion can be avoided if at the outset we distinguish between the specialization of tasks and the specialization of people. The former refers to the element of work specificity and is not of major importance for our study, the latter refers to the adaptation of the individual to a complex environment and is central to our understanding of legislative behaviour.

#### Specialization of Tasks

Specialization of tasks, according to V.A. Thompson, "moves in the direction of the ever more specific, the narrowing of activities to simple, repetitive routines. It moves in the direction of the micro division of labour". (6) This fragmentation of responsibilities into simple assignments with routine duties requiring minimum skills is labelled more accurately as 'routinized division of labour' by Blau, Heydebrand and Strauffer. (7) The impact of the simplification and specialization of tasks is perhaps best typified by the factory worker in a large assembly plant tightening bolts on the same piece of machinery day in and day out. The performance of such simple routines produces little change in the individual - the person does not become specialized by virtue of performing these specialized tasks. Indeed, as long as the tasks can be narrowed down sufficiently anyone can perform them - with a little practice.

The industrial revolution is largely credited for the rise of routinized division of labour; because mechanization largely determined this pattern of specialization. As B.F. Haley explains ".....the division of labour essentially takes the form of specialization of workers in repetitive operations necessary because automation has not yet reached these processes. The division of labour in these cases is simply the labour counterpart of the specialization of machines". (8) The 'pay-off' from a routinized division of labour normally is conceived of in terms of increased 'productivity' or 'efficiency'. (9)

Off-setting the advantages of a specialization of tasks are those disadvantages which have attracted the attention of industrial sociologists upon the impact of an intensified division of labour. Such concern, however, is not new: Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations, 1776, recognized that when workers are confined to a few simple operations, they become "stupid" and "ignorant". Karl Marx later quoted Smith with bitter approval and added that the division of labour in manufacture "converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity". (10) "Thus labour in its historical development becomes the negation of its own principle, that of creative activity through which man makes himself: instead, man makes himself into an accessory of the machine". (11)

However, without becoming immersed in the problems of alienation, it is possible to see that J.H. Smith's plea that 'division of labour' should not be equated with 'specialization' is in one way valid. For, if we take the example of the factory worker, turning a particular nut on a particular component all day long, then it is plain to see that he is not a 'changed' person by virtue of his job - anyone could perform it. He is not a specialized person. On the other hand, the task of the assembly-line worker is highly specialized. Thus routinized

division of labour is simultaneously both the antithesis of personal specialization and the perfection of task specialization.

### Specialization of People

Where the prevailing technology of an organization does not allow for a routinized division of labour as described above, then the performance of less specialized work will cause the person doing the work to become specialized himself. Thus, the essential contrast between specialization of tasks and specialization of people is that, in the former, the person performing the tasks does not become specialized; whereas, in the latter, the person adapts to the conditions of his environment. The specialized person is, therefore, able to do things he could not do before and things that other people cannot do. In this respect, other people are to some extent dependent upon him, and this partial monopoly of ability provides the specialized individual with a source of power and status. But by the same token, the specialist in one sphere of social activity becomes dependent upon specialists in other spheres - with the result that a complex series of dependency relationships emerge between differing groups of specialists.

The inter-dependence of individuals within society at large was recognized at least as early as the 3rd century B.C. when Plato suggested that the division of labour arose out of the mutual needs of citizens. In his view, interdependence arose because "in the first place, no two of us are born exactly alike. We have different aptitudes, which fit us for different jobs.....Quantity and quality are more easily produced when a man specializes appropriately on a single job for which he is naturally fitted.....one man could not do more than one job or profession well". (12) Essentially, therefore, Plato held that society originated because the individual was not self

sufficient and had many needs which he could not supply himself. The implicit assumption being that individuals were different from one another and were aware of their differences before social differentiation.

Emile Durkheim, however, questioned whether in fact such an awareness of individuality could exist before the division of labour. (13) In primitive collectivist society the unity of society stemmed from its 'mechanical solidarity'. 'Mechanical solidarity' was characterized by little, if any, significant differentiation of labour and by a high degree of correspondence between individual conscience and social norms and standards. Namely, everybody performed virtually the same kinds of actions and shared essentially the same values. Modern society on the other hand is founded upon 'organic solidarity'. Its coherence depends upon the fact that individuals "are no longer similar but different, and in a certain sense.....it is precisely because the individuals are different that consensus is achieved". (14) In other words Durkheim argued that modern industrial society has lost a general consensus on norms and values, but instead has become integrated in terms of the division of labour. "Difference, as likeness, can be a cause of mutual attraction.....We are thus led to consider the division of labour in a new light. In this instance, the economic services that it can render are picayune compared to the moral effect that it produces, and its true function is to create in two or more persons a feeling of solidarity". (15) Such solidarity being essential to the continuance of society as the 'volume', the 'material density' and the 'moral density' of society increases. Social differentiation, therefore, becomes the solution to the struggle for survival.

At the micro-level, differentiation within formal organizations has also been regarded as one solution to the problem of survival as their

internal processes and their immediate environment increases in scope and complexity. Peter Blau makes the point that "formal organizations cope with the difficult problems large-scale operations create by subdividing responsibilities in numerous ways and thereby facilitating the work of any operating employee, manager, and subunit in the organization. The division of labour typifies the improvement in performance attainable through subdivision". (16) In this setting the specialized individual, through the possession of specialist skills and knowledge, is endowed with a certain status and power. Consequently his 'job satisfaction' is that much greater than the non-specialist. (17) However, the attendant problem of differentiation - faced by the organization as a corporate entity - is the co-ordination of the various specialized subunits to provide for coherent outputs.

Max Weber believed that the solution to this problem lay in the 'monocratic principle' (18) by which "the principles of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones". (19) Co-ordination is thus imposed in this structure; and 'bureaucratization' subsequently offers the "optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations" (20) whilst removing the possibilities of friction and delay stemming from the conflicts of equally powerful specialists.

This notion of Weber's reappears in the mechanistic theories of the 'scientific-management' school of organization theorists. (21) A school of thought which held the view that the objectives of any organization could only be realized through the smooth and efficient co-ordination of its subparts. The work of each sub-division and

of each individual should, therefore, be confined as far as possible to the performance of a single leading function, and the whole specialized structure should be held together by a highly organized authority hierarchy. In this hierarchy subordinates should take orders from only one superior and the 'span of control' should be rationally settled. Not surprisingly, this formulation has been heavily criticized for its authoritarian stance; but more pertinently, it may be attacked for its failure to appreciate the contradictions inherent between the needs of hierarchy and the needs of specialization. As Peter Self observes the stress upon a unified and disciplined system of authority conflicts with the use of specialized skills which "tend to complicate and weaken the construction of a hierarchical system". (22) This point is amplified by V.A. Thompson who claims that:

"This monistic formulation is based upon charismatic assumptions at various points. It is assumed that the superior, at any point in the hierarchy, is able to tell his subordinates what to do, and to guide them in doing it. That is, it is assumed that he is more capable in all of his unit's activities than any of his subordinate specialists who perform them. The concept of responsibility for results assumes the ability or capacity to determine the results (or else the responsibility is merely ritualistic). The concept of unity of command or influence denies the relevance of the non-hierarchical expertise within the organization; the hierarchy of subordinate-superior roles, the 'line of command', is sufficient. When these assumptions of superordinate ability are viewed against the background of the increasing range of

activities subordinate to hierarchical positions at successively higher stages in modern bureaucracy, the assumptions clearly leave the realm of objective reality and become charismatic". (23)

Thus the 'classical model' is dependent upon asserting the rights of superordinates to make decisions and upon ignoring their inability, in terms of the possession of specialist knowledge, to do so. The 'unity of command', the 'right of supervision', the 'right to monopolize communication' all emphasize the authority of the superior in the hierarchy, and simultaneously undermine the interactions between the various subordinate groupings of specialists. But as John Garrett rightly notes: "it is difficult to handle complex multi-functional projects in a hierarchical structure.....because no one manager can be held responsible for managing them or can see the total project in perspective; because divisions are jealous of their prerogatives and fight to maintain their status and receive recognition for their specialisms.....". (24)

### Specialization and Expertise

One consequence of the specialization of people so far assumed is that the concentration of attention upon a narrow field of interest leads to increased knowledge of that area. Most common definitions of expertise, indeed, make this link with specialist knowledge or skill; (25) and distinguish between 'intellectual' knowledge, derived from formal education and the contemplation of ideas; and practical knowledge, derived from practical experience. In either case, however, the core element of the definition remains the possession of systematized and specialized knowledge. Expertise, therefore, is the product of the process of the division of labour and thus is not a synonym for

'specialization'.

The possession of such specialist knowledge places the expert in a position of power - for he can perform duties that non-specialists cannot. As issues increase in complexity and technicality so the need for specialist knowledge in these areas correspondingly increases and the dependency of non-specialists upon the 'expert' is compounded. This process appears to be of particular significance in the political system, for the potentiality for experts to dominate lay politicians is considerable. Some forty years ago Catlin recognized the danger posed by the expansion of expertise within state bureaucracies: "the expert knowledge of civil servants, their organization and their power have grown in many countries to such a point that attention is being directed to the question how far the civil service is trespassing upon the proper field of the.....legislature". (26) In fact Weber had earlier argued that this development appeared to be inevitable as "under normal conditions, the power position of a fully developed bureaucracy is always overtowering. The 'political master' finds himself in the position of the 'dilettante' who stands opposite the 'expert', facing the trained official who stands within the management of administration.....In facing a parliament, the bureaucracy, out of a sure power instinct, fights every attempt of the parliament to gain knowledge by means of its own experts or from interest groups. The so-called right of parliamentary investigation is one of the means by which parliament seeks such knowledge. Bureaucracy naturally welcomes a poorly informed and hence a powerless parliament - at least in so far as ignorance somehow agrees with the bureaucracy's interests." (27) This does not, in practice, mean that the politician cannot restrict the degree of dependence upon the expert bureaucrat by utilizing other non-official experts and "by tending closely the conditions under which experts are used, defining

issues and assumptions, taking advantage of differences among experts, and determining the limits of expertise, but" and here lies the crunch, "as long as experts are thought to have unique access to esoteric reality, these endeavours cannot remove residues of doubt nor change the essential relationship of dependence based upon faith." (28) Indeed, the likelihood of reversing the directional flow of influence in this relationship is miniscule so long as legislators are expected to perform a wide range of miscellaneous representative duties on behalf of their constituents.

#### Specialization - Generalizations

From this brief review of several of the major strands of organizational thought upon specialization, it is possible to extract certain key generalizations:

- i). As an organization and its proximate environment increases in scope and technical complexity, then the need for a division of labour will increasingly be recognized.
- ii). In turn, as specialization develops, the mutual interdependence of specialist sub-units within the organization becomes apparent - creating the necessity of co-ordination and co-operation to ensure the attainment of organizational goals.
- iii). In complex organizations, expertise resides primarily in the lower ranks of the organizational hierarchy. "And.....it is inevitable that there tends to be conflict between authority based upon expertise and authority based upon hierarchy". (29)
- iv). For an extensive division of labour to develop - specialization

must be seen to be capable of assisting

- a). the organization to achieve its corporate goals;
  
- b). the individual members of the organization to achieve their own personal goals.

These two concerns normally, as V.A. Thompson observes, are inter-related: "it helps to think of the organization as a means to the participants' goals and the participants as means to the organization's goals". (30)

The above propositions should, in theory, be equally valid for all complex organizations - including legislatures. And the general case for applying propositions derived from organization theory to the study of legislatures, has in fact already been made by Lewis Froman:

"If we view Congress as a formal organization and use the general propositions which have been stated, with more or less validity, about formal organizations, we will be able to avoid strictly ad hoc interpretations of Congressional phenomena and, in their place substitute a somewhat organized and consistent set of empirical generalizations which have been found to be true of other formal organizations. Such propositions, used in explanation, may be quite powerful and parsimonious and aid immeasurably in understanding why Congress is as it is." (31)

However, while accepting the basic premise of Froman's argument, we should perhaps remember the special representative and political characteristics which may effectively differentiate legislatures from

most other formal organizations. Hence, traditional assumptions about the functions of representatives may invalidate some of the general propositions relating to the normal organizational strategy of specialization. Indeed, Buchanan et al have identified several long-standing suppositions about the performance of representative roles which appear to question the appropriateness of specialization in legislatures:

"It has commonly been thought proper for legislators to perform.....functions more closely related to broad policy decisions: compromise, adjustment, integration of conflicting goals and values. Related notions include the assumed omnicompetence of the legislator and its corollary, the theoretical equality of all members of the Chamber.....Indeed, legislatures have often delegated their rule-making power to independent commissions, reluctantly choosing to divest themselves of some of their authority rather than to develop the expertise necessary to maintain it." (32)

Furthermore, the electoral process in itself may undermine the foundations of specialization - in so far as the recruitment of specialists, and their continued presence in the assembly, is subject to the vagaries of electoral competition.

The general constraints are, moreover, supplemented in the British case by specific and unique features of the political environment of the House of Commons. One key constraint, already identified in the preceding chapter, is the pre-eminence of the political executive in both the organizational structure of the legislature and of the bureaucracy. Acting at the apex of the parliamentary and administrative systems the political executive has successfully defended the

requirements of hierarchy at the expense of greater specialization. Executive hegemony and the inculcation of dominant values supportive of the generalist in these subordinate institutions has further subverted the demand for specialization. But this case rests thus far on assertion; our task, therefore, remains to establish the existence of executive attitudes that are antithetical to the development of specialization and also to discover the actual effect that the maintenance of hierarchical structures has had upon the division of labour in British political institutions. Given the institutional interaction between Parliament and the bureaucracy, whereby the organizational structure of the latter is greatly affected by the requirement of working within a formal parliamentary system, then the emergence of mutual characteristics within the separate institutions is to be anticipated. Therefore, an examination of the apparent constraints operating upon the extension of specialization within the British bureaucracy may well provide more than tangential insights into the political inhibitions upon the division of labour within the legislature.

#### The need for specialization

In accordance with the first proposition of organization theory outlined above, the massive expansion of governmental activity in the 20th century precipitated the need for a wider range of specialized knowledge to be encompassed within the state bureaucracy. However, the transition from a negative, regulatory view of the functions of government, to the acceptance of positive intervention by government brought about not simply a quantitative change but also a qualitative change in the role of the civil service. The 'active state' widened the scope of administrative discretion and increased the intensity and impact of the powers exercised by civil servants in the name of

Ministers. Moreover, the 'political masters' increasingly came, as Weber predicted, to occupy the position of the 'dilettante' in relation to their more 'expert' advisers in the bureaucracy. However, our primary concern, for the moment, lies with the degree to which specialization was developed within the bureaucracy in the face of the expanded responsibilities of the interventionist state.

The numerical strength of specialist civil servants in Britain is one reflection of the bureaucracy's response to the increasing demand for personnel capable of dealing with the complex scientific, technological and industrial ventures of the modern state. In addition, the growth of administration generally has increased the need for the specialist support groups found in all large-scale business organizations, such as accountants, lawyers and statisticians. So that now there are more professional, scientific and technical civil servants than administrative and executive officers. (33) Yet, in spite of their numbers, the organizational structure of the Civil Service has secured the subordination of the specialist to the generalist, intelligent all-round administrator. The inappropriateness of this structure for modern conditions has been persistently criticized by the Institute of Professional Civil Servants. In evidence presented to the 1929-31 Tomlin Commission, (34) to the 1968 Fulton Committee (35) and most recently to the 1977 Expenditure Committee (36) the I.P.C.S. has consistently argued that the distinction between 'specialists' and 'generalists' is misleading, divisive and impedes the close team work required to efficiently discharge the duties which the Civil Service has to undertake. Other critics of the dominance of the generalist have been less restrained; W.S. Ryrie, for example, hammered home the point in his evidence to the Fulton Committee that "the complexity of present day problems means that the 19th century notion of the intelligent layman, able to turn his hand to anything, relying if

necessary on the experts but relegating them to an advisory role, is now frivolous and irresponsible. Civil Servants must know much more about the subjects they deal with. Picking up the essentials on the job is entirely inadequate." (37)

When the Fulton Committee reported in 1968 it immediately placed its finger upon this pulse of discontent with the clear statement in its opening paragraph that:

"The Home Civil Service today is still fundamentally the product of the 19th century philosophy of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. The tasks it faces are those of the second half of the 20th century. This is what we seek to remedy." (38)

The symptoms thus spotted, Fulton's diagnosis continued by outlining six main inadequacies of the organization of the Civil Service: two of which related directly to the question of specialization. Firstly, there was "the philosophy of the amateur ('generalist' or 'all-rounder') whereby the ideal administrator is still seen as the talented layman capable of taking a practical view of a wide range of problems. Secondly, this system operates at the expense of scientists, engineers, etc. who are not given the same responsibility or authority as the 'generalist'." (39) To remedy these failings the Committee suggested that the Service should develop greater professionalism both among specialists and general administrators. For the former this was to mean more training in management and the opportunity for greater responsibility and a wider career pattern; for the latter it was to entail greater specialization in particular areas of government. Furthermore, the Committee argued that more reference to the previous subjects of study undertaken by recruits into the Service should be made, in order to point out the direction of their specialization within the bureaucracy.

But this prescription by itself proved inadequate; indeed, in retrospect, many of Fulton's proposals appear to have been little more than platitudes. In particular, the Report may be criticized for not pressing the case of the specialist sufficiently strongly. In calling for fuller professionalism, the Committee accepted that "for the administrator to be expert in running the government machine is not in itself enough. He must in future also have or acquire the basic concepts and knowledge, whether social, economic, industrial or financial, relevant to his area of administration and appropriate to his level of responsibility". (40) But this allowed for the interpretation that a 'specialist veneer' could be grafted onto the traditional generalist base, rather than fully developing managerial skills on the part of specialists. Not surprisingly, in view of the dominance of the generalist at the higher levels of bureaucracy, the former interpretation was the one adopted. The specialist, therefore, is still faced with a career dilemma, for he is still required to 'cross-over' to an 'administrative' post rather than to continue with his specialism whilst developing basic managerial skills. The Civil Service Department, for its part, claims to be aware of this dilemma and attempts to make 'special provision' for the career development of specialists, yet ultimately "many of the arrangements are aimed particularly at giving opportunities to acquire broader experience and background outside a narrow specialist field". (41) But, by their very nature, these arrangements devalue specialist knowledge by insisting upon the necessity of a broad width of experience for senior civil servants.



The Civil Service 'method' has further contributed to the inhibition of specialization in the post-Fulton era by subverting its importance as a criterion in the recruitment and training of the Higher Civil Service. The new Administrative Trainee Grade, introduced in 1971

on the formation of the Administration Group (as recommended by Fulton), was originally intended to provide special training and accelerated promotion prospects to some 250-300 candidates per year. Hopes were expressed at the time that the scheme would broaden the type of recruit seeking entry to the higher echelons of the Service. Lord Crowther-Hunt still maintains that "there is a strong case for arguing that in the selection for Administrative Trainees there should in fact be a bias in favour of those who have studied subjects at University which have some relevance to the economic, social, scientific and technical problems that Civil Servants will have to handle. At the very least such people will require less post-entry training than those whose pre-entry knowledge is limited to the problems of Ancient Greece and Rome. This was one reason why Fulton recommended that, other things being equal, the relevance of an applicant's university course to the problems of modern governments have to face should be a decisive factor in the selective process". (42) However, the actual operation of the Administrative Trainee scheme reveals a bias against those entrants whose university studies may be considered to be of relevance to the problems of modern governments, (43) and in fact perpetuates the dominance of the generalist by giving the "bright young generalist... ..such an early lead that he is unlikely to be overtaken by the bright young specialist." (44)

Many of the Fulton recommendations aimed at transforming the role of the specialist consequently appear to have been still-born; partly due to their internal inconsistencies, partly due to the entrenched opposition within the bureaucracy but also, significantly for our discussion, due to the attitude of the political executive. In the first instance, the Labour Government quickly rejected, in November 1968, the majority recommendations that the 'preference for relevance' criterion should be applied in the selection process. In so doing

the possibility of greatly extending specialist knowledge within the Higher Civil Service was undermined. And a further blow to the cause of the specialist was dealt by the subsequent failure of the Government to implement the proposal aimed at establishing within each department a senior policy adviser with direct access to the Minister. In this manner, the creation of expert teams, operating under specialist control, and responsible for planning and research was effectively frustrated.

The complacency of successive British Governments has probably undervalued the development of specialization more effectively, however, than outright rejection of Fulton's proposals. Although Harold Wilson and Edward Heath both, as Prime Ministers, welcomed the recommendations made by the Committee the implementation of those proposals relating to specialization was at best only faltering. In Wilson's case the opposition of a significant section of his Cabinet to the Fulton Report curbed his own enthusiastic support for its full implementation. The strength of this opposition was noted by Richard Crossman in his diary entry for June 20th, 1968:

"He (Wilson) put his case for immediately accepting the main recommendations of the report, including the creation of a Civil Service Department. Then the Chancellor put his case against what he described as precipitate action. Denis Healey, Michael Stewart and I supported Roy and all the support Harold got was from Wedgy Benn and Peter Shore, his two hirelings. He was so upset at this point he stopped the meeting and asked that it should be resumed later". (45)

Indeed, Mr. Wilson implicitly acknowledged the constraining influence of his Cabinet colleagues, in his evidence to the 1976 Expenditure

Committee:

"Q.1931 (Mr . John Garrett): You put a lot of weight behind the Fulton Committee and your book on the 1964-70 Labour Government refers to your interest and concern about its speediest implementation.....In particular, you laid very great emphasis, when the report came out, on the open road to the top for the professionally qualified, the so-called open structure. But that has never happened. Some progress was made towards it up to 1970, but the issue was never returned to again after 1974?

(Mr. Harold Wilson): I think there was an immediate burst of activity after Fulton came out and it was very much under Prime Ministerial direction. I got the impression.....that by about 1969 it was tailing off a bit.....But with so many urgent problems at that time, I was not able to give my mind to it sufficiently..... the sheer rush and pace of Government at the present time, which has changed enormously even since 1970, has prevented as much being done on this as I think should be. I had to delegate...." (46)

Clearly, in the process of delegation, inertia overwhelmed the advance towards an open structure.

In the case of Edward Heath, however, the failure to promote specialization at the highest levels of the Service appears to have arisen out of a complacency about the existing opportunities for specialists, and also a misguided preconception about the aspirations

of specialist civil servants. Indeed, Heath's complacency on the position of the specialist appears to be at odds with his reformist reputation gained from his wider restructuring of Whitehall. (47)

Nevertheless, this complacency shone through in his evidence to the Expenditure Committee:

"Q.1870 (Mr. John Garrett):.....Some progress was made in implementation of the Fulton Report up to 1970 then, as far as I can see, it stopped. May I ask why that was?

(Mr. Edward Heath): I do not agree that it stopped.....From the point of view of the other aspects of Fulton, the question of ensuring that the chain was there for specialists to move up in the Civil Service, that is there, that is happening - perhaps not as much as some people would like to see from the figures that I have looked at, but the chain is there. Of course, it is also true that many of the specialists themselves do not want to move into the general administrative line and go up the ladder that way." (48)

But, as Lord Crowther-Hunt forcefully argued to the same committee:

"".....It is the concept of transferring across which is the weakness of the existing Civil Service, and this is why the Fulton Report recommended a unified grading structure. People say.....that it is very difficult to get scientists to become general administrators. Putting it in that way shows what is wrong. No one ever wanted scientists to become general administrators, or engineers to become general administrators. What

we wanted, and this was the whole point of the unified grading structure, was that you could come in as a scientist; you then might, after a year or two, still be doing a largely scientific job but in a quasi-administrative area, and your next job might be administering science, still in a quasi-administrative area....." (49)

The unwillingness, or inability, of Ministers to comprehend this latter point is explicable perhaps by their preconceptions about the requirements of the conventions of individual and collective ministerial responsibility and their faith in the general administrator as a positive co-ordinator of inter and intra-departmental activities. Indeed, one widely voiced criticism of the Fulton recommendations was that the Committee had failed to appreciate the significance of these conventions in shaping the Higher Civil Service. (50) Dr. R. Chapman makes the point that the Committee "criticized the cult of the generalist 'at all levels and in all parts of the Service' without appreciating or making it clear that it was criticizing the apparent lack of specialist skills in achieving objectives whilst the upper levels of the management hierarchy have always been far from amateur and, in fact, have constituted a highly developed profession for dealing with the political environment within which the management processes at all levels must be carried on". (51) In this sense the Higher Civil Service constitutes a 'specialist division' in the ministerial and parliamentary aspects of departmental business. The Association of First Division Civil Servants, as the representative organisation of the senior grades of the Service, not unnaturally supports this view:

"The Administrative Group in particular has to

apply the skills and techniques called for in a very wide variety of functions covering the processes of parliamentary government, including the preparation of legislation, and advising and briefing Ministers. Unlike many other senior administrators in the public sector they have to understand and operate within a highly sensitive and complex political machine". (52)

The crucial point is that, by this view, the Higher Civil Service is seen as having its own expertise and skills; and that its prime purpose is the manipulation of the administrative machine in the name of the Minister. In this way, as Nevil Johnson points out, ministerial responsibility has come to mean that the Minister exercises influence over his department, but has negligible influence in the department. (53) The department, therefore, requires an intermediary to function at the interface between the political sphere and the administrative sphere: (54) an intermediary who is sensitive to the political world of the Minister, who knows, in Sisson's phrase, the "Minister's mind", (55) but who also understands the intricacies of the administrative machine so as to facilitate and co-ordinate the work of the department. "Such a role", according to R.G.S. Brown, "calls for knowledge of the system and some sense of what is possible.... The most suitable candidate will often be the departmental administrator who is attuned to his Minister's views, is aware of the interests of other departments and has moved from post to post often enough to avoid an excessively narrow or specialized commitment....In short, he needs the power of 'judgement'....(which) seems likely to be distorted by excessive specialization". (56)

In this light the defence of the generalist is not merely anachronistic

but reveals an appreciation of the specific set of political circumstances within which the administrator has to operate. Thus, whereas other public bureaucracies, renowned for their specialist administrators, are also publicly accountable, (57) their responsibility has not taken the form adopted in Britain nor has the corollary of anonymity and neutrality in the public service been institutionalized. In this respect the unique convention of ministerial responsibility in Britain has propagated the specific hierarchical structures within Whitehall and has perpetuated the dominance of the generalist therein. From the outset the initial structure of the British bureaucracy left little doubt that it was the job of the generalist, working in one hierarchy, to determine policy whilst the job of the specialist was to advise and to implement policy in a separate hierarchy. Most departments still continue to operate parallel hierarchies up to the level of Under-Secretary, with most specialists remaining "in advisory positions rather than having responsibility". (58) Even where experiments with 'joint-hierarchies' have been undertaken (most notably in the Department of Transport), whereby professional and administrative duties are, theoretically, closely integrated; the practice has revealed that generalists have continued to control ministerial, parliamentary and financial aspects of a case, while specialists have continued in auxiliary and advisory roles. (59)

Undoubtedly, as P. Self notes, the functions of the generalist in this structure could be broken down into its component parts - of advice, arbitration, management and mediation, - and handled by specialists in each task. "If, however, administrators retain a large part of their present qualities and their present influence, the explanation will be their continuing usefulness to the political system. Basically the general administrator is a political phenomenon". (60) The

pre-eminence of the generalist in the centralized hierarchy of decision-making in Britain is, therefore, a reflection of political need. Above all else, the convention of ministerial responsibility requires Ministers to control and co-ordinate the actions of the departments of state to ensure coherent, positive and mutually supportive policy outputs. Co-ordination has consequently become the 'speciality' of the general administrator. Clearly, the post-entry socialization of the generalist into the normative system of the Service and into an understanding of the administrative machine as a whole is geared to the needs of co-ordination. As Hecllo and Wildavsky point out "co-ordination is facilitated by the fact that despite departmental allegiances, all officials are part of a greater civil service society. Among those at the top of the service, the bond may be particularly close. By the time they have arrived their official career paths are likely to be criss-crossed many times. Those further down may not know each other but still they know enough about each other to understand that they are dealing with 'a member of one's own group'." (61) Within this 'common society of officialdom' co-operation is enhanced by an intricate network of communication at both the informal (telephone conversations, luncheon meetings) and the formal (inter-departmental committees) levels.

However, the common society of generalists not only facilitates the process of co-ordination but also provides the potential for bureaucratic control over political initiatives. The reinforcing elitist tendencies of pre-occupational socialization - of shared socio-economic and educational backgrounds; (62) and of post-entry socialization, mentioned above, have led to persistent accusations that the Higher Civil Service in Britain has largely usurped the decision-making function of Ministers. One of the most vehement and cogent statements of this case is to be found in Brian Sedgemore's

proposed amendment to the 1977 Expenditure Committee Report:

"From the point of view of politicians most of the problems of the civil service stem from the fact that top civil servants misconceive their role in our society. They come to the civil service.....with what Balliol men used to refer to as the unconscious realisation of effortless superiority.....Their self-anointed superiority brings them almost immediately up against their obvious and almost complete lack of experience, the lack of which does not improve as much as it might with their work, experience or training. In short, there is a conflict between their superior intellect and the little that they have to offer in a practical way. There is, as should be, no role in our society for people with little to offer in a practical way but civil servants have got round this stumbling block by inventing a role for themselves. The role that they have invented for themselves is that of governing the country.....They can and do relegate Ministers to the second division." (63)

It may seem somewhat perverse, therefore, to argue in the face of this contention that the continued pre-eminence of the intellectual-amateur in the Civil Service is but one manifestation of the efforts of politicians to maintain a semblance of control over the bureaucracy. Yet the role and status of the generalist administrator can only be understood by reference to his symbiotic relationship with the intellectual-amateur Minister.

British Ministers are not renowned for their specialist knowledge of the affairs of the departments of state that they head. Clearly their parliamentary apprenticeship does not, as Richard Rose observes, "provide men with substantial knowledge of the subject matter of their department". (64) Only 11 of the 51 Cabinet appointees of Harold Wilson between 1964-1970, for example, could be regarded as having more than a rudimentary understanding of the business of the department to which they were appointed. (65) And at first sight the Conservative Cabinet of 1970 appears to have conformed to this general pattern. (66) However, Heath's appointees did display a markedly different profile to that of their predecessors in so far as most had gained some knowledge of the subject area of their department through specializing in that field as Opposition Spokesmen. Thus the Government formed in June 1970 contained 48 Ministers who had been Opposition Spokesmen at some time during the period 1964-1970; 30 of them actually holding posts in the area they had previously 'shadowed' at one stage or another. Indeed, there was a much greater carry-over of personnel and responsibilities from Opposition to Office in June 1970 than there had been with Labour in October 1964. But, even so, still over one-third of Spokesmen were assigned duties unrelated to their tasks in Opposition. Nevertheless, Heath's Cabinet was sufficiently different in its 'specialist' composition to lead Punnett to observe that the continuity between Opposition and Ministerial posts may "have been a manifestation of the 'Heath style of professionalism'". (67)

This 'style' was also apparent in the pattern of continuity in Ministerial posts between 1970-4. Of 17 Cabinet Ministers appointed in 1970, 13 were still members of the Cabinet in 1974, 6 (excluding Heath) were still incumbent in their original posts. In absolute terms there was a considerable reshuffling of portfolios, yet in

comparative terms Heath's Cabinet appears as an island of stability in the post-war turbulence of Ministerial change. Ironically, for Heath, a recent analysis of intra-party dissent in the Conservative party 1970-74, lists as a contributory factor to the increased propensity for backbenchers to dissent in this period, his unwillingness to significantly alter the composition of his Government. (68) In contrast, Labour backbenchers in the 1964-70 period must have been mesmerized by the rapidity of Wilson's Ministerial reshuffles. At the highest level, departmental Cabinet Ministers averaged only 21 months service in any single post, and on 30 occasions a Cabinet post changed hands within less than 18 months of an initial appointment. In this respect Mr. Wilson was more in tune with the post-war vogue for Ministerial reshuffles, though perhaps he did over-amplify the theme; for as Bruce Headey comments "Mr. Wilson's Ministers were required to be more versatile than even the most fervent upholder of the intelligent layman tradition could reasonably expect." (69)

Not surprisingly, in view of their own career patterns, Ministers themselves are amongst the most fervent supporters of the intelligent-layman tradition. Bruce Headey, in interview with 50 Ministers, discovered that half still held the intelligent-layman to be best suited for Ministerial office, in spite of the increase in the scope and complexity of government business. Only 29% of interviewees emphasized the necessity of specialized knowledge and even some of those thought of expertise as a desirable bonus rather than an essential qualification for office. (70) Whilst the superficial knowledge which intelligent politicians can glean through continuous immersion in the politics of Westminster and Whitehall is not to be discounted, their lack of subject expertise does appear increasingly to lead to the position wherein Ministers "have to say 'yes' to a lot of proposals because (they) have not the time or the basic knowledge

to say 'no' (to their officials)". (71) The employment of specialist political advisers by individual Ministers and the creation of collective machinery of advice, such as the Central Policy Review Staff, reflect the growing awareness of, and the first tentative steps towards redressing, the imbalance of expertise between Ministers and their officials. Ultimately, however, Ministers are still dependent upon their senior official advisers to secure the transformation of broad policy goals into realistic policy options.

In this dependency relationship it is easy to caricature the Minister as being the 'creature of his department' (72) and equally easy for the Minister to assert that this is in fact not the case. (73) Without entering into this debate about the actual degree of political control it is, however, important to specify the mechanism of control available to Ministers. Basically, Ministerial control over his department (using Johnson's distinction) is exercised through his interaction with the leading departmental officials - most notably through the Permanent Secretary. The Labour Government of 1978 clearly acknowledged the crucial importance of the Minister-Permanent Secretary relationship in its published observations on the 11th Report from the Expenditure Committee:

".....the Minister and the Permanent Secretary work together in running the affairs of the department.....and it is the general practice that the Permanent Secretary consults his Minister about all matters of major importance, whether of organization or staffing.....In practice, the Minister and the Permanent Secretary work very closely together to ensure, within the department, the responsiveness of the Civil Service to the needs and wishes of the Government

of the day". (74)

The prime advantage, for the Minister, of the hierarchical structure headed by a Permanent Secretary is that control of the department is essentially rendered into the more manageable form of control over the actions of his Permanent Secretary. (The reverse of this argument is, of course, that this structure in fact allows the Permanent Secretary to effectively foreclose Ministerial options). (75) On the whole, this symbiotic partnership does appear, with a few notable exceptions, to function remarkably smoothly. Arguably the smooth nature of this relationship is due in no small part to the unspecialized background of both partners. The non-specialist Minister, with only a skeletal personal political and specialist advisory team, is dependent upon his senior officials to translate the technicalities of departmental work into 'layman's language' and to apply the 'Minister's mind' to the numerous issues that he cannot personally supervise. Defenders of the generalist civil servant, therefore, make a virtue of their man's 'amateurism'. The epitome of their case being provided perhaps in Enoch Powell's statement that "it's important in my view that the Minister should be strictly a layman. Because in the last resort government decision is lay decision. Now, if that is so at ministerial level, there must be something which corresponds to it in the structure of a department. The Minister who has got to take the ultimate layman's decision requires the administrative lay mind applied to his problems - even though the content of the problems may be technical and professional." (76) The supporters of the generalist thus emphasize the point that the training and the "instinct" (77) of the administrator makes him sensitive to the political implications and the inherent limitations of the administrative machine, which are likely to have a bearing on

departmental policy. The generalist in this sense comes to be seen as a quasi-politician who is conscious of the political ramifications of decisions made in the name of the Minister. And so by virtue of this political nous, of the alleged commitment to working within the parameters of the "Minister's mind" - the elected politician is able to exercise influence over his department, indirectly through the self-control exercised by the higher civil servants. Thus as long as politicians and general administrators continue to match each other in respect of style and capacities then Ministers retain a simple mechanism of control over their departments.

If this view is adopted, and our contention is that successive governments have indeed accepted this case, then the promotion of specialization within the Service poses a threat to the ability of Ministers to direct the affairs of the departments of state. The spectre of the committed specialist civil servant pressing his case upon an amateur politician, without due regard to the administrative or political costs of the policy, is one that haunts both Ministers and general administrators alike. (78) Clearly, Ministers would be hard pressed to authoritatively debate the merits of a technical recommendation with a specialist committed to a specific course of action, in which case the balance of dependence would be tipped overwhelmingly in favour of the bureaucrat. However, the implicit assumption made in such an argument is that the specialist is incapable qua specialist of tempering his expertise with the requirements of the wider social and political environment. Yet the political executive in Britain appears to accept this supposition; for their continuing opposition to the full development of specialization at the highest levels of the bureaucracy seemingly is founded upon the belief that as long as the Minister is not an expert then his capacity to control his department (even minimally) is dependent upon the senior administrators

talking the same vague language. Stated at its crudest this contention holds that, for purely pragmatic reasons, the politician would prefer his senior officials to be in the dark with him (the blind leading the blind!) rather than to be led in directions that he may not wish to follow by bureaucrats guided by the light of expert knowledge. The danger in the existing arrangement is, of course, apparent - for the very smoothness of the partnership of amateurs "may have bred reliance upon both political and administrative methods of recruiting executives which are too unspecialized for modern needs". (79)

### Conclusion

It is clear, therefore, that more than a decade after the condemnation of Fulton, the concept of the generalist administrator is still the basic philosophy of the Higher Civil Service. Yet, this philosophy appears to be at odds with the first proposition derived from our study of organization theory. Although it is true that the British bureaucracy has responded to the increased scope and complexity of its political environment through greater specialization - this process has not been as extensively developed as in other bureaucracies in the Western world. The specific political context of Whitehall, particularly the requirements of ministerial responsibility and the normative predispositions of political executives, appears to have effectively undermined specialization within the Higher Civil Service. Certainly, the centralization of decision-making and the maintenance of a rigid hierarchy within departments, wherein all major decisions are funnelled upwards to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary, has frustrated deeper specialization within departments. Indeed, the requirements of authority and hierarchy have certainly predominated over those of expertise and specialization. This dominance has been attained on the strength of demands made by the convention of ministerial

responsibility for co-ordination and control of the activities of the bureaucracy. Hence the background and training of the generalist administrator socializes him into the 'common society of officialdom', into a service-wide community of amateur-gentlemen and thereby facilitates the process of co-ordination within the bureaucracy. At the same time the generalist, acting as a quasi-politician, serves the Minister as an instrument of control within his own department. Not surprisingly, therefore, Ministers for expedient reasons have tacitly, but effectively, upheld the position of the generalist civil servant against the claims of his specialist counterparts.

The significance of the preceding examination of specialization in the British bureaucracy for our purposes is that the major political influences determining the level of specialization in the Civil Service are also at work in Parliament. For the obverse of the Minister-Civil Servant relationship is, of course, that existing between the Minister and Parliament. Specialization in Parliament cannot, therefore, be considered in isolation from the division of labour in the bureaucracy. In both organizations the political executive heads the authority hierarchy, and in both, its position is dependent upon maintaining the requirements of hierarchy at the expense of the requirements of specialization. Modern executives have found the convention of ministerial responsibility to be an invaluable aid in this respect. Firstly, collective responsibility has been invoked to deny the House vital information about executive actions, and, more importantly, to enforce discipline within the majority party by treating all substantial votes as matters of confidence. (80)

Secondly, individual responsibility has served to differentiate Ministers, as the heads of departments with access to departmental repositories of information and expertise, from backbenchers who have no such access, other than through the intermediary of the Minister. - On

the basis of this differentiation Ministers claim authority, derived from their possession of superior information, to make decisions largely unhindered by backbenchers. Yet the validity of this claim can only be upheld as long as backbenchers are denied access to such information - as long as they are kept in ignorance of the options and details of policy. Hence, developing the analogy used earlier, if the Minister and his senior departmental officials are navigating in the dark, it strengthens the Minister's position considerably if the scrutineers of his progress are also blindfolded. Should the 'generalist blindfold' be removed from backbenchers then the Minister could anticipate that his task of answering for the actions of his department would become more exacting, and would require a more detailed understanding of the issues involved. On grounds of political expediency Ministers have traditionally, as we shall see later in this thesis, subverted procedural change designed to promote specialization within the House of Commons.

Thus our examination of the tenets of organization theory, and the applicability of these propositions to the peculiar political context of British government, provides a basis for the study of specialization in the House of Commons. From the propositions derived from organization theory it is possible to hypothesize that Parliament, like other formal organizations, will be subject to the pressures caused by an increase in the scope and the complexity of its proximate environment. In response to this pressure it is to be predicted that the legislative body will institute an internal division of labour; there being an obvious need for specialist knowledge to be brought to bear in the deliberation, scrutiny and legitimation of policy in Parliament. The division of labour within the House will be expected to take on a formal and an informal dimension. Formal specialization

taking the form of the macro division of labour through the committee system, and informal specialization being the division of labour on the part of each individual M.P. Furthermore, our study of organization theory leads us to predict that the institutionalization of an extensive division of labour will create problems of co-ordinating legislative activity so as to provide for a coherent and extensive overview of governmental actions.

However, there are, as our analysis of specialization in the bureaucracy revealed, crucial political impediments to the development of an extensive division of labour in British central government. In particular the pivotal position of the political executive at the apex of the bureaucratic and parliamentary authority hierarchies, and its reliance upon the maintenance of these hierarchies, provides a crucial block to an extensive division of labour. Executive hegemony within the House of Commons also effectively means that the dominant normative values in the Chamber are those perpetuated by the executive itself. Thus the generalist values of the government permeate the Commons, just as they shape the character of the Civil Service. And as long as political careers in the House are oriented towards promotion to executive office, then backbenchers will conform to those norms most likely to secure this goal. Thus, in conflict with the final proposition of organization theory outlined above, it is not at all certain that the strategy of specialization will help the British backbencher to attain the personal goal of promotion to Ministerial office. Yet, for all that these factors are of importance in modifying our expectations of an extensive division of labour in the House of Commons, they do not, perhaps, provide such a fundamental obstacle to specialization as that presented by the representative tradition in Britain. So it is to the contradictions inherent in the relationship between organization theories and representative theories

in Britain that we must now turn.

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5. Support for this view is to be found in J.L. Price, Organizational Effectiveness, R.D. Irwin, Illinois, 1968, p.16. " 'Role differentiation', 'specialization', 'fragmentation', 'segmentation' and 'fractionalization' are terms which mean approximately the same as division of labour"; in a more specifically political context D.R. Matthews, U.S. Senators and Their World, Wiley, New York, 1960, p.97: "specialization - in a word, a division of labour within the Chamber".
6. V.A. Thompson, 'Specialization' in D.L. Yarwood, The National Administrative System, Wiley, New York, 1971, p.216.
7. See P.M. Blau, W.V. Heydebrand and R.E. Stauffer, 'The Structure of Small Bureaucracies', American Sociological Review, Vol. 31, April, 1966, p.187.
8. B.F. Haley, 'Specialization and Exchange', International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. 15, Macmillan, London, p.112.
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11. E. Fischer, Marx in His Own Words, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973, p.42.
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14. R. Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. 2, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1967, p.21.
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17. See J.G. March and H.A. Simon, Organizations, John Wiley, New York, 1958, pp.76-7; pp.94-7 for a categorization of the bases of 'job satisfaction'.

18. M. Weber, 'Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft', part 3, chapter 6; reproduced in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Routledge, London, 1970, p.215.
19. ibid, p.197.
20. ibid, p.215.
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22. P.J. Self, Administrative Theories and Politics, Allen and Unwin, London, 1972, p.22.
23. V.A. Thompson, 'Hierarchy, Specialization and Organizational Conflict', Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 5, March 1961, p.497; see also A.W. Gouldner, Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy, Free Press, New York, 1954, pp.22ff for a critique of Weber's model and its inherent contradiction between the requirements of hierarchy and those of specialization.
24. J. Garrett, The Management of Government, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972, p.68.
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32. W. Buchanan, et al, op cit, p.636-637.
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35. Report from the Committee on the Civil Service, 1968, Cmnd. 3638, 1968.
36. 11th Report from the Expenditure Committee, The Civil Service, H.C.535 II, 1976-77, Vol. 2, Part One, pp.321-335.
37. W.S. Ryrie, Memorandum No. 144, Cmnd. 3638, op cit, p.1089.
38. ibid, Vol. 1, paragraph 1.
39. ibid, p.11-12. The other inadequacies being a) the present class system, b) the absence of skilled managers, c) inadequate contacts between civil servants and the rest of the community, and d) insufficient personnel management.
40. ibid, p.18.
41. 'Specialism and Career Progression in the Civil Service'. Note by the Civil Service Department, Appendix 9, H.C.535 III, op cit, p.872. (my emphasis).
42. ibid, p.1095.
43. ibid, p.1090.
44. J. Garrett, op cit, p.55.
45. R.H.S. Crossman, The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Vol. 3, Hamilton and Cape, London, 1977, p.103.
46. H.C.535 II, op cit, Q.1931, p.788, (my emphasis).
47. See, for example, E. Heath and A. Barker, 'Heath on Whitehall Reform', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1978, pp.363-390.
48. ibid, Q.1870, p.762 (my emphasis). It is interesting to note, as an aside, that John Garrett pursued a personal inquiry into the fate of the Fulton recommendations persistently throughout the wider Expenditure Committee investigation. See, for example, Q.63, 64, 1459-1462, 1497-1505, 1843-1849, 2018-2024.
49. ibid, Q.1074, p.478-479.
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56. R.G.S. Brown, The Administrative Process in Britain, Methuen, London, 1970, p.261-262.
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60. P. Self, op cit, p.182.
61. H. Heclo and A. Wildavsky, The Private Government of Public Money, Macmillan, London, 1974, p.80.
62. See P.E. Sheriff, 'Unrepresentative Bureaucracy', Sociology, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1974, pp.447-462; R.K. Kelsall, Higher Civil Servants in Britain from 1870 to the Present Day, Routledge, London, 1955; R.K. Kelsall, 'Recruitment to the higher civil service: how has the pattern changed' in P. Stanworth and A. Giddens, Elites and Power in British Society, Cambridge University Press, London, 1974, pp.170-184; Memorandum submitted by the Civil Service Commission, H.C.535 II, op cit, pp.228-249.
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66. ibid, p.93.
67. R.M. Punnett, Front-Bench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973, p.376.
68. P. Norton, Conservative Dissidents, Temple Smith, London, 1978, p.230.
69. B. Headey, op cit, p.95.
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71. Lord Crowther-Hunt, 'Whitehall - just passing through', The Listener, 16th December 1976, p.774.
72. See H.C.535 I, op cit, pp.lxxviii-lxxxii; see Lord Crowther-Hunt, ibid, p.773, who notes one Permanent Secretary at the Treasury "is believed, in an incautious moment, to have estimated that 75 per cent of the time, successive Chancellors accepted the advice he gave them".
73. see H. Wilson, H.C.535 II, op cit, Q.1943-1944, p.791.
74. The Civil Service, Government Observations on the 11th Report from the Expenditure Committee, Cmnd. 7117, 1978, pp.22-23.

75. See M.R. Gordon, 'Civil Servants, Politicians and Parties', Comparative Politics, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1971, pp.41-43; Sir E. Boyle, 'Who are the Policy Makers', Public Administration, Vol. 43, Autumn 1965, p.256 - see B. Headey for an antidote "the belief that civil servants consciously resist or go slow in the implementation of ministerial objectives is almost certainly false", op cit, p.113.
76. J.E. Powell in Whitehall and Beyond, B.B.C., London, 1964, p.52.
77. Patrick Gordon Walker claims that ministerial control is made easier by the attitude of civil servants "whose whole instinct is to obey and carry out their Minister's policy". See P. Gordon Walker, The Cabinet, Fontana, Glasgow, 1972, p.66.
78. See R.G.S. Brown, op cit, pp.261-266, for an academic's expression of these fears.
79. P. Self, op cit, p.190.
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## Chapter 3

### Representative Theories

In the study of legislatures the concept of representation is of vital importance to the comprehension of their role and behaviour. So much so that M. Cotta regards the representative role as the "most typical parliamentary function". (1) Parliamentarians themselves have long acknowledged the importance of representative theories as both a source of legitimation for their legislative actions and as a defence against the electorate's disapprobation of specific parliamentary outputs. Furthermore, the centrality of representative theories, or more specifically the conceptions held by legislators of such theories, is reflected in the common belief that the behaviour of representatives in the legislature is deeply influenced by their representative role orientations. Successive studies, following the furrow ploughed by Eulau et al in 1959, (2) have, indeed, sought to delimit the nature and determinants of these role orientations. More significantly, recent empirical analyses have attempted to explain actual legislative behaviour in terms of conceptions of representative role. (3) In so doing these studies have concentrated attention upon the elemental link of representation - the bond between the elector and his representative.

Without denying the fundamental significance of such analyses there are, nevertheless, other implications of representation for legislative behaviour worthy of examination. The significant area for present purposes is the effect that differing conceptions of representation have upon the division of labour within representative assemblies. Clearly, the first proposition of organization theory, as outlined in the preceding chapter, would appear to apply for all legislatures. Increasingly, representative assemblies are called upon to extend

their scope of activity into ever more complex and technical matters; with the attendant pressure to institute a formal division of labour. The paradox of parliamentary institutions arises, however, when they are called upon not only to develop specialization in their attempts to check executive activity, but also, are simultaneously required to represent and be responsible to 'lay' opinion and the views of the 'common man'. Whether the two requirements - that of political responsiveness and that of technical competence - can be met by the same political structure, is problematical. For an inherent contradiction may be posited between the importance of knowledge, expertise and specialization in a legislature on the one hand and, on the other, the importance of reflecting the, often, non-specific views and prejudices of the electorate. Karl Dietrich Bracher, for one, is no doubt that: "An elected representative cannot, by the nature of the thing, be equal to the many sided detailed problems with which society and bureaucracy confront him". (4)

This chapter seeks, therefore, to analyze the nature of this apparent contradiction by examining the compatibility of commonly accepted theories of representation with the propositions of organization theory. The very fact that the debate about representation in Britain has, as A.H. Birch notes, (5) been confined to a narrow range of issues, with only a few doctrines gaining widespread support, facilitates this analysis. This constriction in itself, it will be contended, may go some considerable way towards explaining the failure of the House of Commons to systematize a formal division of labour - if it can be established that the prevalent doctrines of representation are essentially antithetical to specialization. The extent to which British theories logically restrict the development of a division of labour within Parliament needs, therefore, to be established.

The obvious point of departure is a consideration of Edmund Burke's ideas on representation. Such is "the spell of the Burkean formulation of the interpretation of representation" that it is commonly held to be the "starting point of theoretical clarification". (6)

The importance of Burke's notion is that it provides a classic statement of both the 'what' and the 'how' of representation - that is, 'what' the representative should represent and 'how' he is to perform his representative duties. He also indicates the major areas of confusion in representative theory:

- i). 'what' should the representative advance - the 'interest' of his locality or that of the whole?
- ii). 'what' should he act upon - the 'interest' or the 'opinions' of his constituents?
- iii). 'how' should he perform his representative role - as a 'mandated' or as an 'independent' Parliamentarian?

Of the above dichotomies the last one has attracted most attention. This being perhaps the fundamental dichotomy in representative theory, where the question at issue distils into:

- i). Should/must the representative be bound by instructions from his constituents or principal?
- ii). should/must the representative have the freedom of choice to act as he sees best?

These represent the two poles of 'mandate' and 'independence'. Around

these two axes have been intertwined the related issues of the areal focus of representation and the interest/opinion dichotomy. However the basic issue remains the 'delegate' versus 'trustee' controversy.

### Trustee

The epitome of the trustee's case is presented in Edmund Burke's address to the Sheriffs of Bristol in 1774. So great is the importance of Burke's thought upon the subsequent discussion of representation that it is worth quoting his address at some length.

"Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect; their business unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfaction, to theirs - and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living..... Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

My worthy colleague says his will ought to be subservient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If government were a matter of will upon

any side, yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgement, and not of inclination; and what sort of reason is that in which the determination precedes the discussion, in which one set of men deliberate and another decide, and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments?

To deliver an opinion is the right of all men; that of constituents is a weighty and respectable opinion, which a representative ought always to rejoice to hear, and which he ought always most seriously to consider. But authoritative instructions, mandates issued, which a member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the clearest conviction of his judgement and conscience; these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution.

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests, which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole - where not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but

the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member, indeed; but when you have chosen him he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of Parliament. If the local constituent should have an interest or should form a hasty opinion evidently opposite to the real good of the rest of the community, the member for that place ought to be as far as any other from any endeavour to give it effect.....Your faithful friend, your devoted servant, I shall be to the end of my life: a flatterer you do not wish for....." (7)

The essence of this view is that M.P.s should not be obliged to take instructions from their constituents. Certainly a representative should keep in close touch with his constituents, but his first duty is to the interests of the nation as a whole. He must discover and enact the national interest. The way the M.P. discovers this interest of the whole community is through representation, not of people, but of 'interests'. Such interests are largely economic, e.g. a mercantile interest, a professional interest, a shipping interest or an agricultural interest. Each constituency is seen as having one interest which affects the populace and in which they 'participate'. (This allows Burke to argue his case for "virtual representation"). (8)

Such an interest "is completely independent of wishes and opinion..... this means, on the one hand, that an intelligent, honest representative can find it; and, on the other hand, that his constituents will accept it." (9) The prime objective of the representative is the promotion of the constituency interest. Thus on any issue confronting Parliament Burke held that, as public opinion is unreliable, the representative should ignore it and seek only to advance constituency interest.

'Personal representation', the representation of people's 'opinions'

is, therefore, excluded from Burke's scheme. For he believed that such representation would simply make the M.P. subservient to the opinions of his constituents. Hence the representative would act as a delegate bound by 'opinions' which, in Burke's view, were often hasty, ill-considered and biased. To prevent the Member becoming the instructed agent of his constituents it was important, therefore, that he "maintain your interest even against your opinions".

But, even if we accept Burke's view of 'what' is to be represented, (i.e. interests) it is not yet apparent 'how' constituency interests are to be amalgamated into the national interest. For in asserting that the M.P. should represent the interest of his constituency, does not this thwart the emergence of the national interest? In the quotation cited above the conflict is readily apparent:

- i) the representative is to prefer his constituents' interest to his own.
- ii) Yet "Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests".
- iii) Rather "Parliament is a deliberate assembly of one nation with one interest, that of the whole."

The clear implication of the 1774 address being that the "different and hostile" interests could not simply be summed to obtain the national interest. However, Pitkin found that in his other works Burke maintained that interests were broad, objective and additive.

Accordingly "the interests of the realm, added together, compose the interest of the realm. All the different localities and functional groupings in the nation are part of the nation, and consequently have

an interest in the welfare of the whole." (10)

Thus, each interest is but one part of the interest of the whole. Through the process of deliberation Parliament, therefore, is able to discover the national interest. Each local interest is vented in discussion. Armed with information from each interest Parliament is then able to rationalize the national interest. Every representative having heard each sectional view in the course of the complex deliberative process will discover the interest of the whole. In participating in debate, in assessing all the arguments, representatives of sectional interests can achieve consensus concerning the nature of the interest of the whole nation. (11) For Burke the end result of parliamentary deliberation is thus agreement and consensus; not a divided House where the majority prevails. What matters is not the vote of the representative but his arguments. The information utilized in his arguments will alert Parliament to the interest he represents. The transmission of information from all sections of the nation enables a rational deliberation and formulation of the interest of the whole. Hence the paramount importance of Parliament as a "deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole" (my emphasis).

What can be deduced from Burke's ideas concerning legislative specialization? An initial analysis may lead to the conclusion that all Burke's trustees are specialists. For they all have an intimate knowledge of their own constituency 'interest'. They are sent to Parliament with the knowledge of this interest to promote it in the Chamber. In this sense the trustee, as Pitkin points out, is an expert. (12) However, the distinction between expertise and specialization, made in the previous chapter, must be remembered. For, although the trustee possesses knowledge of a specific economic or corporate interest, Burke's theory does not maintain that the

representative should restrict his activity simply to the advancement of that interest. Instead, the trustee must look to the national interest. He must deliberate on all issues: he must be aware of all the arguments raised and, in the light of wide discussion, come to a reasoned verdict on the true interest of the nation. Hence the representative does not concentrate his activity upon one issue area, rather, the opposite. He is expected to participate in debate with representatives of every other interest so that all considerations will be brought to light in debate.

#### Liberal Theory of Representation

The independent status of M.P.s found support throughout the 19th century with the development of the Liberal theory of representation. The key to parliamentary representation was the independent, rational Member who mirrored the ideal (middle class) "sober, national, intelligent and honest feeling" of the electorate. (13) This agreement between Whig and Liberal theory - that representatives should not act as delegates - was reached from two differing premises: Burke, as explained above, conceived of the Commons composed of representatives of 'interests', who through deliberation would arrive at the national interest. Liberal theory, on the other hand, saw M.P.s as the representatives of rational, independent individuals rather than of corporate bodies, classes or interests. Such individuals, according to Utilitarianism, were aware of their true interest - that is what gave them pleasure. However, the individual did not necessarily know in advance exactly what would provide pleasure. Furthermore, as most men prefer their private, self-regarding interest, the job of the legislator thus is to promote the 'universal interest', the good of the whole, over the "short-lived ebullitions" of the individual. The legislature, therefore, enacts law to make it unattractive for the

individual to act contrary to the common good. Hence the individual, in obeying the law, acts in his own interest and, at the same time, furthers the interest of the whole.

Whilst the individual elector participates in the formulation of law through the election of a representative, that representative is allowed room for independent action. The M.P. is to use his wisdom and available information to promote the true interest of the people. He is to ignore hasty, ill-considered opinions of his constituents and to act in the common interest. Only if the long-term 'real' interest of the electorate is followed will maximum pleasure ensue. Thus, for example, John Stuart Mill is able to argue that "the delegation theory of representation seems to me false, and its practical operation hurtful". (14) For:

"superior powers of mind and profound study are of no use if they do not sometimes lead a person to different conclusions from those which are formed by ordinary powers of mind without study: and if it be an object to possess representatives in any intellectual respect superior to average electors, it must be countered upon that the representatives will sometimes differ in opinion from the majority of his constituents, and that when he does, his opinion will be the oftenest right of the two. It follows that the electors will not do wisely if they insist on absolute conformity to their opinions as the condition of his retaining his seat." (15)

This position adopted by Mill closely parallels Burke's belief in the independence of the representative.

The primacy of the deliberative function of the Commons brings further concord between Burke and Mill. Burke, as illustrated earlier, was able to reconcile the representation of specific interests with that of the national interest through the process of deliberation. However this very process militated against the development of specialization. No representative is able to concentrate his attention upon one subject or issue. Instead, he is expected to participate in all discussions so that the national interest may be elicited. Even though the representative of, say, the manufacturing interest is an expert, in the sense of knowing the interest of that sector, he is inhibited from specializing solely in the affairs of this interest.

Mill's representatives, on the other hand, are not considered to be experts in the Burkean sense. They do not represent identifiable economic interests. Instead their stimulus for action is the 'opinion' of their constituents. The prime purpose of a representative assembly thus becomes the airing of public opinion; "a place where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause even passionately pleaded....." (16) Parliament acts therefore as a "Congress of Opinions", "an arena in which not only the general opinion of the nation, but that of every section of it, and as far as possible of every eminent individual whom it contains, can produce itself in full light and challenge discussion; where every person in the country may count upon finding somebody who speaks his mind, as well or better than he could speak it himself....." (17) Criticism of Parliament as merely being a talking shop is, according to Mill, misplaced. "I know not how a representative body can more usefully employ itself than in talk, when the subject of talk is the great public interests of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the nation, or of an individual in whom some such body have reposed their confidence." (18) Rather Parliament

should be faulted for attempting to do "what they cannot do well - to govern and legislate", for "doing.....is the task not of a miscellaneous body, but of individuals specially trained to it." (19)

The role of the representative in such a popular assembly is to voice the opinions of his constituents on all the heterogeneous issues confronting Parliament. The representative possesses no expert knowledge of constituency interest in the Burkean sense. Neither does he concentrate his parliamentary activity upon one or a few issues. For his task is to voice and hear the opinions of the electorate on all subjects. Only through parliamentary deliberation will the "opinion which prevails in the nation make itself manifest as prevailing". (20) Thus, as with Whig theory, Liberal doctrine views Parliament as a "miscellaneous" body whose Members are expected to participate in all its debates. The deliberative function being the fundamental task of the representative assembly.

#### Delegate theory

The antithesis of the independence doctrine is that the representative should act solely on the instructions of his constituents. The obligation of the legislator is to his electors alone. In stark contrast to the Whig and Liberal view the delegate is expected not to use his independent judgement, or convictions, as criteria for decision-making. However, given the strength of support for Whig and Liberal convictions at the crucial stage of the development of British parliamentary institutions the debate on representation has tended to operate within their confines. Consequently, as Birch observes "no serious politician has suggested that representatives should be bound by specific instructions from their constituents and subject to recall if they do not follow these instructions." (21) To find any serious

discussion of delegatory theory one has to cross the Atlantic, where 'authoritative instructions' from the electorate have played a significant part in discussions on representative theory.

In America, the Colonists for the most part looked favourably upon the doctrine that a representative should be bound by a clear expression of the will of the majority of his constituents. Indeed, a proposal was made in the first Congress to include in the Bill of Rights the right to instruct representatives. Whilst this particular proposal was rejected; such provision for the instructing of legislators was included in the state constitutions of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Vermont and Massachusetts. And the Acts of Commonwealth of Virginia 1812 provided a clear statement of delegate theory. This document reasoned that the nature of representation demands the right of instruction of the representative by the constituents:

".....that representation is substituted for the direct suffrage of these people in the office of legislation. The representative, therefore, must in the nature of things, represent his own particular constituents only. He must, indeed, look on the general good of the nation; but he must look also, and specially to the interests of his particular constituents as concerned in the common weal; because the general good is but the aggregate of individual happiness. He must legislate for the whole nation, but laws are expressions of the general will; and the general will is only the result of individual wills. Fairly collected and compared: in order to which collection and comparison.....it is plain, that the representative must express the will, and speak the opinions, of the constituents that depute him." (22)

The view that the representative should act as a delegate is not confined solely to constitutional documents. Leading politicians, amongst them John C. Calhoun and Abraham Lincoln, also espoused this doctrine. Calhoun claimed that the diverse geographical interests of the U.S. would be best reflected by representatives, controlled by the electorate, acting as agents; as spokesmen for their constituents. Calhoun was sceptical of the 'common will' or 'national opinion' emerging in the legislature. For public opinion "is usually nothing more than the opinion or voice of the strongest interest, or combination of interests". (23) To safeguard minority interests (especially Southern state interests in the American Congress) Calhoun espoused his principle of the 'concurrent majority'; whereby a numerical majority was prohibited from passing laws depriving a minority of rights essential to its welfare". (24)

Abraham Lincoln similarly believed in the delegatory principle, as his electoral address of 1836 illustrates:

"If elected, I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me. While acting as their representative I shall be governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is, and upon all others I shall do what my own judgement teaches me will best advance their interests". (25)

Highlighted in this statement is the inherent problem of delegate theory - namely, ascertaining the 'opinion' of the electorate. In the first instance empirical evidence suggests that most electors are either unaware of, ignorant of, or disinterested in, the legislative issues demanding decision by their representative. Secondly, even

if constituents do form personal opinions, the chances of a single homogeneous 'will' emerging throughout the constituency is highly remote - given the diversity of opinion encapsulated within most geographical constituencies. Indeed, thirdly, the creation of even majority support for any given view within a constituency seems to be an equally remote possibility on many issues. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is often argued that "the instructed-delegate theory must be viewed as political folklore rather than as a defensible theoretical concept". (26) Such criticism is perhaps particularly apt when the delegate is claimed to be bound by the 'opinion' of his electorate - given the multi-faceted, transient nature of constituency opinion.

Sidestepping these practical limitations for the moment, delegate theory is, nevertheless, of considerable importance to the development of our theoretical model. For a close relationship between delegatory orientations and a division of labour may be posited. Indeed, if we examine the representation of 'interests' then the representative may come to consider himself to be 'bound' to the promotion of his constituents' 'interest' - where the 'interest' is objective, apparent and homogeneous. The identification of this 'interest' obviously being facilitated where a single functional interest predominates. However, homogeneity of 'interest' may also conceivably be identified where several significant interests exist - if they are compatible, if there is a 'single lowest common denominator' shared by all. In either case the existence of a homogeneous interest makes possible the instruction of the delegate - either by the direct expression of that interest by affected constituents, or by the perception of that interest held on the part of the representative. (27) Consequently, the delegate will be expected to specialize in the area of interest of his constituents. On those issues upon which he receives no direct instructions, or has no personal cognisance of constituency interest, then it is to be predicted

that the elected member will play little part in their deliberation in the legislature.

When 'opinions' rather than 'interests' are represented, then the association between representative style and legislative specialization becomes rather more intricate. Theoretically, it is feasible to contend that a delegate should receive instructions from his constituents on all the issues requiring his vote within the legislature; in which case he would not be expected to specialize. However, if the important variables of 'time' and 'human capacity' are introduced into this equation, then it becomes apparent that no representative can be expected to receive instructions from each and every constituent on each and every legislative decision. Nevertheless, he may still be required to seek instructions from his constituents on the widest possible range of issues. Even so, it may be predicted that the exact range may be remarkably limited, given the problems of eliciting 'constituency opinion' from a territorially delimited constituency which contains a multitude of differing opinions, none of which necessarily predominates over the others. In which case, the representative seeking to fulfil the delegate role must adopt a strategy capable of distilling out the essence of opinion 'back home'. To this end he is likely to come to perceive his constituency as a series of concentric circles, whereby his 'geographical' constituency is fragmented into a 're-election', a 'primary' and a 'personal' constituency. (28)

The broadest of these is naturally the territorial unit, which is likely to provide the focus and voice of instruction in direct variation with the homogeneity or heterogeneity of opinion encompassed therein. Normally, it would be anticipated that the 'geographical' constituency would be unlikely to be the source of clear, unambiguous directions for the representative.

The second circle consists of the 're-election' constituency in which the supporters of the elected member are differentiated from non-supporters. The 're-election' constituency of electoral supporters may provide a more coherent source and voice of opinion than the wider geographical constituency; but again, empirically, this narrower constituency still contains a diversity of opinion. The difficulty of determining the opinion of this constituency may be further compounded by the fact that the representative may be unsure of the nature of his support. (29)

Within the 're-election' constituency the representative may make a further distinction between his routine or temporary supporters and his strongest supporters. This latter group forms the third, and for our purposes perhaps the most important circle - the 'primary' constituency: the membership of which includes the loyalists who first recruited the representative, along with those who assisted and financed his election. Indeed, it is this circle of associates that is most likely to attract a special measure of the representative's attention, and in attending to their views he is likely to be presented with a more sharply focused range of opinion than in either of the two aforementioned circles. The 'primary' constituency may, therefore, come to act as the source of coherent instructions and, subsequently, the elected member may concentrate upon those issues deemed to be of sufficient importance by his loyal supporters for them to issue clear mandates. Within the 'primary' constituency the representative may well perceive a fourth and final circle - of friends and confidants - which Fenno labels the 'personal' constituency. (30) Whilst this group serves to advise and inform the representative, its representativeness of wider constituency opinion is necessarily limited and therefore of restricted value as a source and a voice of such opinion.

Thus the inherent weakness of delegate theory rests ultimately in the remote probability of a single, clear expression of opinion arising within any one of these 'constituencies' on any given issue. In narrowing down the perceptions of his constituency the delegate may hope to identify a specific opinion capable of directing his legislative activity. But, given the diversity of 'interest' and 'opinion' within even the 'primary' constituency, it is doubtful whether a delegate can in practice be truly mandated by his constituents on all issues. At best, as Fenno observes from the American experience, "there probably are, in every district, one or two issues on which the Congressman is constrained in his voting by the views of his re-election constituency.... But on the vast majority of votes, a Congressman can do as he wishes - provided only that he can, if and when he needs to, explain his vote to the satisfaction of interested constituents". (31) Indeed, perhaps the only means of surmounting the inherent dilemma of delegate theory is to divorce the delegate from the representation of a territorial unit and, instead, to acknowledge that clear instructions are likely to arise only from a coherent and cohesive functional constituency.

### Functional Representation

Theories of functional representation provide perhaps the clearest critique of geographical representation, and as such stand at the opposite end of the spectrum to Burke's national focus of representation. In the strict sense of the term, functional representation is used to describe specific economic groups, such as workers or employers in particular industries, or professions. (32) However, S.H. Beer widens its usage to include "any theory that finds the community divided into various strata, regards each of these strata as having a certain corporate unity and holds that they ought to be represented

in government.....The unity of such a stratum.....is seen as arising especially from objective conditions that give its members a function and are the ground for deeply rooted, continuing - even 'fixed' interests." (33)

The essence of functional representation is, therefore, that the only base for representation is a specific and functional interest, for this theory holds that the individual can never be represented, as no man can represent another, and the will of the many can never be represented by the will of one representative. In many ways this contention is analagous to Rousseau's belief that legislative representation is impossible because it means "willing for others, and no man can will for another." (34) As it is impossible for an individual representative to reflect the diverse interests of all his constituents, let alone the multifarious interests of the nation, functional theory therefore maintains that existing systems of representation, based on geographical areas, are meaningless.

In Britain the functional attack on the dominant Whig and Liberal notions of representation reached its height in the early decades of the 20th century. In the vanguard of this movement were the Guild Socialists who provided, in the opinion of one American commentator, "the sharpest statement of this current of thought". (35) However, given the variety of views propounded by Guild Socialists (36) it is difficult to discern a single statement of theory - therefore, the account of Guild Socialist ideas proffered in the following paragraphs is drawn from the works of, perhaps the most eminent of Guild Socialists, G.D.H. Cole. (37)

Existing forms of representation are, for Cole, misrepresentation "based on a totally false theory of representation". (38) Two reasons are

adduced, firstly, the theory is false in assuming that it is possible for an individual to be represented as a whole, for all purposes; instead of being represented in relation to some well defined function. Secondly, under existing parliamentary institutions, the elector is unable to exercise control over his representative: "having chosen his representative, the ordinary man has, according to that theory, nothing left to do except let other people govern him." (39)

The essence of democratic representation, for Cole, is that the elector could only be represented in relation to some particular purpose or group of purposes: "All true and democratic representation is, therefore, functional representation." (40) Thus, for each group of functions there must be separately elected groups of representatives: "True representation, therefore, like true association, is always specific and functional, and never general and inclusive." (41)

Cole's critique of parliamentary representation is thus double edged. Firstly, he questioned the territorial basis of representation and, secondly, he attacked the single omnicompetent representative assembly, which claims to represent all citizens in all things. "It is chosen to deal with anything that may turn up, quite irrespective of the fact that the different things that do turn up require different types of persons to deal with them. It.....therefore.....does everything badly, because it is not chosen to do any definite thing well." (42) "Real Democracy" would occur only when Parliament was replaced by a system of co-ordinated functional representative bodies.

To comprehend Cole's schematic institutional plan for reform it has to be remembered that his inspiration was Socialism. His abhorrence of the centralized capitalist state and its attendant liberal democratic parliamentary institutions forms the back-cloth to his Guild Socialist

reforms. In his future Socialist state Cole envisaged a host of democratic institutions based on guilds of occupations and interests. The "basic building block" (43) of this scheme was to be the workplace, which was to be, to a large extent, internally self-governing. From the workshop would be drawn managers to control the factory. The factory, in turn, was to be the basis of the larger 'democracy' of the Guild. A district Guild Committee would co-ordinate the various factories belonging to the Guild in the local area. Above the district Guilds would function a National Guild Committee whose duties would be mainly those of co-ordination, regulation and the representation of the Guild in its external relations.

The activities of the individual Guilds were to be co-ordinated by a Congress of National Guilds. This was to be the final representative body of the Industrial Guild system, performing the function of establishing and interpreting the essential principles of Guild organization and practice.

Paralleling the Guilds, Cole envisaged a series of consumer organizations. The "Co-operative Movement" and "Collective Utilities Councils" were to make representations to the Guilds on behalf of the consumers in such matters as the provision of gas, electricity, transport services etc. A "Cultural Council" to consider all goods and services offered by the Guilds of education, of dramatists, musicians, etc., would be established, as would be a "Health Council" in direct contact with the Medical Guild. Contact between all these bodies would take place at local, regional or national level. All Guilds and Councils would be members of a co-ordinating body, namely the "Commune", (44) with all inclusive Communes being organized at village, town, regional and national levels.

What Cole seeks to achieve by this arrangement is a meaningful system of representation, whereby power is decentralized throughout society and the omniscient Parliament is replaced by a series of self-governing associations. The implications for specialization are considerable. Firstly, specialization would be the norm - each occupation, each industry is to be functionally represented with the representatives of each Guild, each Council, speaking purely on behalf of its members. Each Guild providing a homogeneous economic interest capable of being represented, because, as Cole states, "it is quite possible to represent.....so much of human beings as they themselves put into associated effort for a specific purpose." (45) As the focus of representation is sharply defined the attention of the representative is concentrated upon one interest. Gone is the "muddle" of Members of Parliament "set the impossible task of being good at everything, and representing everybody in relation to every purpose." (46)

The fact that a representative acts on behalf of a functional association ensures that "not only will the representative be chosen to do a job about which he knows something, but he will be chosen by persons who know something of it too." (47) This fact removes the representative from the realms of "pure 'representation' without instructions or counsel from the electors" which approaches, in Cole's view, "false representation". (48) Does this mean, therefore, that the functional representative is to be a delegate?

The above rejection of the trustee orientation would appear to provide an affirmative answer to this question. Yet, Margaret Cole contends that although her husband did in fact use the term 'delegate' he "would never agree to having the representative bound to act in a particular way; the man who was chosen must do what he thought right". (49)

Indeed, an initial survey of Social Theory and Guild Socialism Restated

may lead one to concur with this opinion. For G.D.H. Cole clearly states that "attempts to make the elected person a mere delegate must always break down, whatever the form of representation.....Our functional democracy.....makes it possible to abandon the theory of delegation without imperilling democratic control". (50) And, even more categorically: "I am not suggesting that the representative should be reduced to the status of a delegate". (51)

Nevertheless, it is possible to question Margaret Cole's contention on the grounds that nowhere in the chapters on democracy in these two works does G.D.H. Cole argue that the representative should be independent to determine what he thought was right. Thus, although he holds that it is impossible to tie down a representative by instructions, "because the delegate is so often waiting for further instructions that nothing gets done", (52) he does not go to the other extreme of espousing representation without 'instructions' or 'counsel'. These extremes of mandate and independence are relevant only in parliamentary democracy where "the elected person must either receive full instructions at the time of election.....or else act on his own will and not those of his constituents". (53) With the advent of 'functional' democracy, however, the electorate no longer has to instruct its representative "because it can continue throughout his time of office to criticise and advise him, and because.....it can at any time recall him if it is not satisfied with the way in which he is doing his job". (54) There is little need, therefore, to instruct the representative if the association is constantly advising on and participating in those matters which directly concern it, and which they fully comprehend. Furthermore, the power of recall would ensure that the 'will' of the association prevailed over the independent 'will' of the representative. Thus, although the

representative is not formally committed/mandated; the informal, constant, group influence over the representative serves to ensure the harmony of interest between association and its representative. There is, therefore, little practical scope for the use of independent judgement or convictions by the representative,

In allowing the represented a "free choice of, constant contact with, and considerable control over, his representative" (55) in relation to "the common point of view.....(of) some definite social purpose" Cole appears, therefore, to exclude the trustee style. Indeed, he actually uses the term 'delegate' in talking of the structure of the Commune:

".....I have no faith at all in the virtues of direct election except when it can be combined with a constant touch of the body of voters with their representative. Thus direct election is good in the village or ward, because all the electors can meet with, question, and instruct their representative face to face.....The real safeguard for the voter is to preserve the fullest form of democracy, including the right of recall, in the small units within which real contact is possible, and to rely on this contact and power of recall to the carrying out of the popular will in the larger bodies. These larger bodies can themselves best be composed of delegates....." (56)

From this statement there appears to be little room for the representative to act as he thinks right. The very nature of Cole's system of representation would appear, therefore, to exclude a trustee

orientation. For, as we stated earlier, the trustee style of representation is dominant where the interest/opinion of the electorate is:

- i) heterogeneous, not easily identifiable
- ii) when the electors are unaware of their interest - through ignorance, disinterest, etc.
- iii) where unforeseen situations and complications constantly arise and when, because of factors i) and ii), there is no guide to action from the electorate.

However in Cole's scheme the interest of each electorate is:

- i) homogeneous, readily identifiable
- ii) the electors are conscious of their interest: "the member is connected with the association because its business is his business." (57)
- iii) whilst "the Member of Parliament of today is elected.....in the void, to deal with anything that may chance to turn up", (58) the functional representative is in "constant contact" with his electorate. The norm is "constant participation" on the part of the voter (59) - so that the view of the electorate is always known by the representative.

Such an outline does not fit well with Margaret Cole's conclusion that her husband believed that the representative should act as he thought was right. The evidence of Social Theory and Guild Socialism Restated seemingly leads to the opposite conclusion - that the representative has no room for independent action. He represents a coherent,

cohesive group; the members of which are fully aware of their specific interest and are in constant contact with their representative. Consequently, there is no scope for interpretation of the association's interest because it is known by all its members. The very fact that the interest of the association is known means that its representative does not have to be instructed upon that interest. He does not have to be formally mandated to pursue the objectives of the group because he is already committed to the association as "its business is his business". Gone, for the most part, therefore, are the formal instructions and mandates of delegatory theory. However, the representative in Cole's theory must be seen as being equally bound by his voters through the acceptance of a common interest, through constant contact with them and through their right of recall. In both the formal delegate theory and in Cole's revised version the end result is the same - namely, little scope for independent action on the part of the representative.

#### 'Focus' and 'Style' of Representation

Thus far in the discussion of delegate and functional theory the implicit assumption has been that a delegate style of representation can only be meaningfully adopted when a cohesive, homogeneous 'interest' or 'will' forms the focus of representation. Developing this contention it may subsequently be argued that, as a general proposition, there exists a positive relationship between the type of constituency represented (on a continuum from homogeneous/functional to heterogeneous/geographical) and the style of representation (on a continuum from delegate - politico - trustee). (60) Indeed, as noted earlier, Burke appeared to have reached a similar conclusion in as much as he believed that the interest of the nation could only be represented by a trustee style. In so doing he linked the style of representation to a focus of representation.

However, Eulau et al, in their seminal article of 1959, (61) claim that Burke's linkage of a conception of the focus of representation with a conception of the style of representation is misleading - as these two notions should, for analytical purposes, be kept distinct. In particular they criticize Burke's contention that a representative pursuing the national interest could not be bound by instructions but, instead, must follow his "unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience". They proceed to argue that this "linkage of a particular areal focus of representation with a particular representational style constitutes only a special case in a generic series of empirically viable relationships between possible and different foci of representation and appropriate styles of representation". (62) Accordingly they contend that the style of representation is neutral as far as the focus of representation is concerned, for "a representative may base his decisions on his own conscience or judgement, but the cause he promotes may be parochial. Or he may follow instructions, but the mandate may be directed towards the realization of the general welfare". (63)

This distinction between focus and style has been universally, and uncritically, accepted into the literature on representation. (64)

Yet, arguably the analytical neutrality of these two notions is not as pronounced as Eulau et al suggest. If we take, in the first instance, the trustee orientation it may well be contended that such a style is necessarily associated with the representation of wide, heterogeneous 'interests' or 'opinions'. Not necessarily the national interest, as Burke maintained, but more generally, any geographical constituency or association comprised of a diverse membership. In this sense Eulau et al's analysis is defensible - as the focus of the trustee need not be restricted solely to the areal focus of the nation but may be linked with other foci such as a territorial constituency, or a political party or an administrative agency etc. Hence, analytically,

the trustee orientation is not solely, nor necessarily, associated with the representational focus of the nation. What is of importance in this fact for our purposes, however, is that all of the foci listed by Eulau et al, as being compatible with the trustee style, are composed of disparate elements, where no single interest or opinion prevails. Therefore, for all the reasons outlined earlier (see p.90 ), the representative of a heterogeneous electorate is required to use his 'superior' knowledge and information to determine and promote the 'will' and the 'interest' of his constituents. What is an essential pre-requisite of the adoption of a trustee style of representation is, therefore, the width of electoral opinion or interest to be considered by the representative.

Where the spread of opinion and interest is as narrowly defined as in Cole's Guild system, then it is unlikely that the representative would be allowed to, or for that matter be inclined to, act as a trustee - primarily because of the homogeneous nature of the interest which he represents. Indeed, the very specificity of this functional focus appears to demand a delegate style of representation - as instructions, recall and constant interchange between the representative and the represented are an integral part of Cole's scheme. The scope for independent action by the representative consequently appears to be theoretically restricted.

Empirically the delegate style of representation is largely untenable when separated from all but the narrowest and most uniform of interests. For as Bruno Leoni argues "the more numerous the people.....one tries to 'represent'.....and the more numerous the matters in which one tries to represent them, the less the word 'representation' has a meaning referable to the actual will of actual people other than that of the persons named as their 'representative'." (65) This is

particularly true in the representation of a geographical constituency in which a myriad of interests and opinions are to be found and from which a clear, unambiguous voice of instruction for the representative is unlikely to emerge. In practice, therefore, the representative seeking to perform the delegate role may be obliged to perceive his geographical constituency as a series of concentric, smaller 'constituencies' and to seek instruction from the more cohesive segments of the 're-election' or 'primary' constituencies. Unfortunately, the representative may simply be confronted at these levels with microcosms of the multifarious opinions and interests of the wider constituency, in which case the fundamental dilemma posed by delegate theory is left unresolved. Should the focus of representation be perceived to be the political party, rather than a territorial district, the same problem of diversity again arises to confound the possibility of the representative being clearly mandated - as political parties are themselves aggregates of opinions and interests. Thus the practical problems of performing a delegate style of representation, for all but the most homogeneous of foci, are manifest. Indeed, even Eulau et al concede that the exigencies of modern government make it increasingly difficult for electorates to instruct their representatives in any meaningful way. And suggest that "rather than being a 'pious formula', the role orientation of trustee may be a functional necessity" (66) as the business of government becomes more intricate and technical.

Consequently it is possible to argue that the delegate style of representation is both analytically and empirically linked with a specific focus of representation. Our contention has been simply that a refinement needs to be made to Eulau et al's initial distinction - in as much as what appears to be of importance in the determination of the style of representation is not the focus (in its location in a

geographical area, an association or even the nation - as Eulau et al rightly observe) but the homogeneity of interest or opinion encompassed within the 'focus'. Where the interest is single and homogeneous, as in Cole's functional theory, then the trustee style is analytically excluded. However, the wider the range of interest or opinion - culminating in the truly heterogeneous national focus - the greater the possibility, and indeed the necessity, for the representative to 'interpret' the interest or will of the electorate. If the distinction between homogeneous and heterogeneous foci of representation is accepted then the analytical linkage between a 'specific' focus and the delegate style, and a 'non-specific' focus and the trustee style may also be made. This formulation does not deny, therefore, that a generic series of relationships between the style and the focus of representation may exist - as it is theoretically possible for a delegate to act in the national interest, where that interest is singular and cohesive; or alternatively for a representative to act as a trustee for a constituency where the interests are diverse and multiplex. But the important point is that each representational style is respectively associated with either a homogeneous or an heterogeneous focus of representation.

#### Later Formulations of Functional Representation

Cole's theory of functional representation recognizes the importance of specialization in modern industrial society. Every industry, every consumer interest is to have its own representative body to deal with the specific problems of that association alone. Every citizen in turn would belong to a variety of groups in his role as producer and consumer - with a different representative representing each of his different interests. In this manner Cole's representatives would act as acknowledged specialists, each dealing primarily with one subject

area. The inherent problem of this schema however lies in the co-ordination of the disparate functional interests into some common policy. Cole's initial reaction is to wash the question away by stipulating that "the Guildsman has not to face any problem of arbitrating between divergent interests. In a democratic society, the whole body of consumers and the whole body of producers are practically the same people, only ranged in the two cases in different formations. There can be no real divergence of interests between them". (67) This statement has much in common with David Truman's notion of 'overlapping membership' in pluralist thought, whereby "it is the competing claims of other groups within a given interest group that threatens its cohesion, and force it to reconcile its claims with those of other groups active on the political scene". (68)

However, later in Guild Socialism Restated, Cole does countenance the possibility of "differences arising on questions of policy between functional bodies". (69) Yet he simply affirms his belief that consensus over policy would ultimately emerge through the process of deliberation at Guild Council level. Exceptionally, where such deliberation fails, the Commune would be called upon to arbitrate: "this they would probably do, as a rule, through special committees assisted by experts". (70) But the difficulty then arises that if the difference of opinion stems in the first place from the conflict between functional experts, how are the 'expert' assistants of the Commune to be recruited, and how are they to impartially adjudicate between the rival claims of their expert colleagues?

A related problem to the general one of co-ordination concerns the ability of powerful functional groups to promote their sectional interests over that of the communal interest. Prophetically, for the 1970s, Cole acknowledged that "we do not find it easy to coerce large and powerful groups today, although the state is nominally

and theoretically equipped with full authority to do so". (71) Guild Society, however, is to be "built on the basis of trusting people, and of placing power, and with it responsibility, in the hands of functional bodies". (72) Hence, the powerful group will restrain itself and bow to the "social opinion of the community, which is a far more effective instrument than direct coercion." (73)

A further objection to Cole's analysis of future pluralist society concerns the question of the allocation of all social interests into functional groupings. Indeed, Cole recognized that no matter how fully the functional organization of society is developed there "will remain matters which neither fall readily within the sphere of any of the functional bodies, nor call for the creation of a separate functional organization to deal with them." (74) Inevitably, he resorts to the typical pluralist device of invoking the concept of 'potential' groups - so that it would be possible to create a separate functional body for a particular purpose if circumstances so demanded. However, unlike later pluralist theory, in which new groups are self-generating from latent interests, in Cole's scheme it would be the function of the Communes to call such bodies into existence. Whether the Communes would acknowledge the legitimacy of all interests (take, for example, the 'environmental' interest which in its strictest sense is neither the concern of 'producer' nor 'consumer') is open to question.

The inconsistencies of Cole's functional schema do raise serious doubts as to the possibility of instituting a functional scheme in practice. Nevertheless, there is, particularly in his condemnation of liberal democratic parliamentary institutions, a compelling logical consistency to his analysis of the problems facing representatives in a complex industrial society. A good case could be made in support of this section of Cole's works against David Nicholl's scathing

attack that "Cole.....tended to write too much and too rapidly; he seems very often to have published the first half-baked idea which came into his head". (74)

Certain contemporaries of Cole would undoubtedly have concurred with Nicholl's view, the Webbs, in particular, disagreed strongly with his functional analysis. The antipathy of Beatrice Webb to Cole can be gauged from her diary entry of May 1924: "The waste of so brilliant an intelligence is pitiful; it is he who is strangled by stale doctrines, stale not because they are old but because they are not true." (75)

Whilst sharing Cole's opinion that the existing state machinery in Britain would, unless reformed, become increasingly incapable of performing its tasks, the Webbs did not agree with either the decentralization of state power or the functional principle as advocated by Cole.

Indeed, they firmly believed that the central control of the economic agencies of the state would be in the best interests of a 'Socialist Commonwealth'. Thus Parliament should remain in existence as "the most influential, and in many respects the most important, constitutional organ of the democratic state.....by which the community, as a whole, formulates and declares its will in national affairs". (76)

And the national Parliament was to be elected from geographical constituencies, or from groupings of 'citizens' rather than on a functional basis.

For, although the Webbs acknowledged the considerable advantages to be gained from functional representation when "what is to be discussed and decided concerns peculiarly the vocation in question", they nevertheless believed that "the case is reversed when what is dealt with concerns not the vocation as such, but the community". (77)

Their objection to the functional principle is stated thus:

"When what is in question is mining or agriculture, medicine or accountancy, there is much to be said for those who are engaged in the occupation voting

as miners or agriculturalists, doctors or accountants and choosing representatives of these several vocations. When, however, what is in question is how the future interests of the community as a whole are to be safeguarded, or what is to be done to maintain us all in health or to train the young, or how the national taxation is to be levied, or what shall be the nation's policy in foreign relations, it is neither necessary nor desirable for men and women to vote as members of particular vocations, accentuating the feelings distinctive of these vocations, rather than as citizens, accentuating their consciousness of a common interest as members of one and the same community, in the future well-being of which they are all involved. The very argument which is used in favour of vocational representation against the manner in which the House of Commons is today chosen - namely that among the electors in a geographical constituency there is and can be no common will that is possible to represent on any vocational question - is equally applicable against the election of representatives by vocations as such, when what is to be represented is no will that all the members of the vocation have in common. If it is the vocational will, not the civic will, that ought to be represented when vocational issues are involved, it is equally the will of the citizens as such, not that of carpenters or engineers as such, that needs to be represented when the questions at stake touch their feelings and emotions as citizens, and not as carpenters or engineers". (78)

Thus, the purpose of the new representative institutions in the Socialist Commonwealth, should be to express the desires, and to formulate the will, of the whole community. Hence, sectional interests would, therefore, be submerged in the search for 'the common interest'.

Yet, having dismissed the functional principle of representation the Webbs proceeded to advocate the re-organization of the national representative institutions along functional lines. Parliament was, therefore, to be split into two co-ordinate national assemblies - each independent, yet both co-equal. On the one side the 'Political Parliament' would be confined to its "proper and original functions" (79) of administering justice, conducting foreign affairs and defending the nation. On the other side the 'Social Parliament' would be assigned "the function of exercising whatever national control may from time to time be required over the nation's economic and social activities". (80) This new body was, therefore, to control the domestic affairs of the state by supervising health and educational services, industry and the public utilities, and by controlling the power to raise taxation. Standing committees of the Social Parliament, shadowing each major department of state, were to supervise the various operations of the state. The membership of each committee was to be determined in accordance to those members "specially interested in the subject" (81) and in any case "the constant occupation of the members of each committee with the affairs of one particular industry or service will soon render them acquainted with it". (82) But, although specialization was to be the norm, the Webbs recognized that the Social Parliament, acting through its standing committees "can never know enough, and can, merely by the eyes and ears of its own members, never know anything accurately enough, even to come wisely to an independent decision upon issues of policy". (83) They subsequently recommended, therefore, that each standing committee should be assisted by a

'National Board' with full power over the administration of a department. Each Board was to be appointed by the Social Parliament and subject only to specific directions as to policy from its parent committee, or the Social Parliament itself. The membership of these Boards was, significantly, to be determined primarily along vocational lines as the "large majority of which would be either engaged as principal officers in the service or would be representative of the vocations to which the bulk of the employees belonged". (84) In this way it was hoped that the Boards would promote the highest efficiency in each service; and to prompt them in this direction each standing committee would engage specialist staff to monitor the activities of its functional Board.

The basic flaw in the Webb's reformist fabric, however, is that whilst recognizing the necessity of incorporating functional expertise into the governmental process, they refused to endorse the principle of functional representation in Parliament. Both Houses in their parliamentary dyarchy were thus to be elected on the basis of geographical areas - with each Member charged with the representation of the myriad of interests encompassed therein. Consequently, although Members of the Social Parliament would be required to serve on, and to specialize in the area of, a standing committee they would still remain 'amateurs', in comparison with the functional representatives on the Boards and the specialist staff of the committee itself; precisely because they were there to represent, and to take cognizance of, the diffuse interest of the community as a whole. In all respects, therefore, the elected representative would be cast in the role of the 'dilettante' (as described by Weber) in opposition to the functional 'experts' serving in the administrative system of the National Boards. Indeed, the Members of the Webbs' Social Parliament would appear likely to have faced similar, but greatly aggravated problems, to

those encountered by present-day Members of Parliament in the practice of 'group politics'. Leading pressure groups in Britain now appear to have established a conventional right to direct consultation with the Government - as their aura of expertise, respectability and representativeness has allowed the major sectorial interests to penetrate into the formative stages of policy-making. Two effects appear to stem from this practice, "one is to raise the question in the public's mind of whether they are better represented through their pressure group or through their Member of Parliament? Secondly, the status and efficacy of M.P.s and Parliament is further reduced". (85) Thus the incorporation .. of functional interests in the administration of state industries and services in the Webbs' scheme may predictably have led to the loss of "status and efficacy" on the part of the elected representatives in the Social Parliament.

This problem, however, is not confined solely to the Webbs' scheme of reform, but, indeed, recurs in a series of works advocating the inclusion of vocational expertise in the parliamentary process, while simultaneously retaining the representation of the 'miscellaneous' interests of geographical districts. In 1928, for example, Dr. Temple in Christianity and the State (86) advocated the creation of an Industrial, an Ecclesiastical and an Educational Parliament to legislate, subject to the veto of the 'Political' Parliament, in their own spheres. Their memberships were to be drawn from voluntary organizations operating in their respective fields and would thus bring expertise to bear in the consideration of specific functional policies. Legislative activity would, therefore, be highly specialized in each of these added assemblies - in stark contrast to the activity of the 'Political' Parliament.

A more moderate scheme was adumbrated by Winston Churchill when he briefly flirted, in his 1930 Romanes lecture, with the notion of a 'sub-Parliament' to advise on industrial matters. This 'House of Industry' was to draw its membership from the trade unions and employers organizations, along with a few recognized economic experts, and its task would be to draw up resolutions or draft bills for consideration by the Government. In this way functional representation was to be grafted on to the existing territorial form of representation. Indeed, L.S. Amery in adopting and developing Churchill's idea in his Thoughts on the Constitution believed that "the advantage of setting up a separate 'House of Industry' or 'sub-Parliament' is that the new principle of functional representation can in this way be tried, without destroying the existing geographical principle". (87) However, the inherent contradiction contained within this statement is revealed in Amery's projection of the working relationship between the two Houses. On the one hand, the new Chamber was to be subservient to the House of Commons, which would remain as the "central and dominant element in the parliamentary system". (88) Yet, on the other, the new House was to be the "one in which the great economic problems of the day could secure practical and responsible discussion" (89) by the "best elements" from both sides of industry. In which event the standing of the 'amateur' constituency representative in the House of Commons may well be undermined by the formal representation of major functional interests - much more so than under the modern practice of group politics as outlined earlier by J.P. Mackintosh.

The quintessential importance of these later formulations of functional representation is that they implicitly recognize the constraining role of the prevalent notions of representation in Britain on the development of legislative specialization. In

advocating the creation of functionally based, specialist advisory assemblies they acknowledge the inability of territorially based, trustee oriented representatives, who are pledged to reflect the diversity of constituency or national opinion on the miscellany of public affairs, to adequately control the activities of the complex modern state. The focus of representation is, therefore, altered in these models to allow for functional specialization in the subordinate assemblies (whether sub-Parliaments, or National Boards). Yet an inherent contradiction is evident between the claims of superiority on the part of the 'amateur' geographically based Political Parliament, and the actual capacity of the functionally based sub-Parliaments to dominate legislative outputs.

#### Party Representation

"It is a remarkable fact that most theoretical writings about political representation have ignored the existence of organized parties. This is odd in the United States, where parties play an important part in the representative process even though party discipline is weak; it is extraordinary in Britain, where the scope for individual action on the part of M.P.s has been drastically reduced by the development of strict party discipline since the Reform Act of 1867". (90)

Indeed, one of the greatest ironies of British parliamentary politics is that the very time of the assertion of the trustee style of representation in the 19th century witnessed the development of disciplined political parties. The Commons has remained

schizophrenic over the position of parties ever since. On the one hand, the business of the House is conducted strictly in accordance with party dictates. Yet, on the other, the formal record of proceedings (Hansard) refuses to acknowledge the existence of party. The pre-eminence of party, nevertheless, is manifest and is so comprehensively chronicled elsewhere that little purpose is served here in repeating a description of party control. What is, however, of importance is an examination of those theories developed to justify the role of party in the representative process.

Whilst it is true to say that a theory of 'party representation' has emerged in Britain, no single theorist has been accredited with its development. Instead vague references are made to the "Labour doctrine", (91) or "British left-wing writers", (92) or even to "Socialist and Tory Democracy". (93) Perhaps the notion of "party representation" is best considered as a rationale of practice rather than as a theory as such. Nevertheless, for both major parties the doctrine maintains that the Member of Parliament is primarily a representative of his party. As Herman Finer noted in 1954 "Representative Government is party Government." (94) The M.P. becomes a delegate of his party; his task is to carry out the party programme offered to the electorate at the last election. "The growth of party and of party organization has destroyed the possibility of any independence for the average Member who belongs to them and has reduced him to the position of a subservient cog within the wheel of his great, disciplined, mass party." (95)

This style of representation is justified, particularly by members of the Labour Party, by the theory of the electoral mandate. Simply stated the notion of the mandate holds that the Party should present to the electorate a manifesto listing the policies to be pursued if

the party is returned to office. Once in power the party should translate these promises into action. (96) Individual Members of Parliament pledged to these promises are consequently obliged to support the party's programme in the House. Their individual views are largely irrelevant. What matters is the programme sanctioned by the electorate, for through the mandate the 'will' of the people will be realised. The fact that the electorate pronounce upon specific policies at election time leaves little scope for independent judgement on the part of their representative. - hence the justification of party discipline and the norm of party support in the House. The grave danger with the mandate theory is that, given the oligarchical tendencies of political parties, (97) the policies presented to the electorate will emanate from a small group of party officials: with the attendant risk that M.P.s will be bound to support, not the expressed will of the people, but merely the programme of the party leadership. To guard against this possibility the 'Labour theory' maintains that the party platform should be determined by the mass membership of the party. Through the medium of the annual conference the 'rank and file' membership is held to shape future party policy. In the words of Clement Attlee, conference is the "final authority of the Labour Party": the body that "issues instructions which must be carried out by the Executive, the affiliated organizations, and its representatives in Parliament." (98) Attlee's view draws strictly upon clause v (i) of the Labour Party's constitution, which states that conference "shall decide from time to time what specific proposals of legislative, financial, or administrative reform "shall be included in the party programme. S.H. Beer sympathizes with this doctrine: "According to this theory of democracy, voters organize or join a political party and by means of its conference agree on a programme; they then nominate candidates who advocate this programme before the electorate at large. Candidates elected on this programme

must stand by it. This is precisely how they fulfil their responsibility to the electorate. In short, if British democracy is 'government by the people', then programme-making by a party conference is a perfectly reasonable device for putting into effect this basic principle." (99)

As a prescription for party representation the Labour doctrine has much to commend it. However, as a description of reality its shortcomings are legion. It is widely recognised that the Labour leadership has never felt itself to be fundamentally bound by conference decisions. Even though conference, by a two-thirds majority, can ensure the acceptance of a resolution as part of the party programme: the decision as to which parts of the programme enter the manifesto rests with the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Committee of the P.L.P. The wishes of conference are frequently "re-interpreted" in this process. For example, the 1973 conference accepted the policy proposals of Labour's Programme : "arguably the most radical socialist document to be endorsed by a Labour conference since 'For Socialism and Peace' in 1934". (100)

One of the radical proposals endorsed in 1973 was for the creation of the National Enterprise Board, as a major step towards state control of industry. Yet with its creation in 1976 the N.E.B. was seen to be "a million miles away from the all-conquering machine that the Labour party originally envisaged in 1973." (101) Indeed, Dr. Stuart Holland, one of the N.E.B.'s original designers viewed the progeny of the Labour Government as "a sell-out". However, at least one Labour M.P. was satisfied with his prediction made in 1973 that the "extreme and unrealistic decisions taken at the conference would never be implemented. They (would be) buried by Labour Cabinets and Labour M.P.s who are accustomed to commonsense decisions and political realities." (102) The fate of the N.E.B. simply

highlights the P.L.P.'s persistent disregard and re-interpretation of conference decisions. R.T. McKenzie emphasized this point in his observation that "from Keir Hardie to Harold Wilson the parliamentary leaders, with varying degrees of difficulty, have resisted all attempts to encroach their autonomy". (103)

One leg of the Labour theory of representation is thus seriously riddled with woodworm. The other leg, that the manifesto provides a viable mandate, has all but crumbled from the 'dry rot' of psephology. Studies of voting behaviour clearly indicate that general images, attitudes and beliefs about parties influence voting patterns far more than specific policy pledges. Indeed, surveys have consistently shown that a majority of people are either ignorant of, or disagree with, the specific policies of the party they support. (104) This undermining of the pillars of party representation leads to the paradox that "while British political practice is now dominated by the assumption that the Parliamentary parties will behave as disciplined blocks, British political thought still lacks any justification of party discipline that is generally accepted." (105)

It is possible, however, to advance a partial theoretical justification of party representation, and its attendant discipline, if the focus of attention is directed from specific mandatory pledges to the more general area of 'values'. A revised theory can be constructed whereby the electorate votes for the 'image' of the party: the 'image' being dependent upon the ideas subscribed to. Thus the image of the Labour Party as being 'for' the working class mirrors the party's belief in Socialism. In turn the parliamentary representatives of the party are mandated to operate within this framework of ideas. The boundaries of the frame not being too closely guarded:

"The word 'socialism' is not in any way an exact descriptive term, connoting a particular social structure, past, present or even imminent in some ideologue's mind. Rather it describes a set of values, of aspirations, of principles which socialists wish to see embodied in the organization of society". (104)

Whether the dominating concern of the Labour Party, i.e. equality, provides a sufficiently precise guide to parliamentary action remains, however, uncertain. For, within the broad view of the need for equality, the proposed routes to achieve this aim within the party have been remarkably diverse. Ernest Bevin held that socialism "which is the common ownership (of the means of life)" (107) was the only solution to the inequalities fostered under capitalism. Crosland, on the other hand, maintains that "We can.....pursue our goals within the framework of a mixed economy, with public ownership taking its place as only one of a number of possible means for attaining our objectives". (108) With such manifest navigational discrepancies on the road to equality it remains doubtful whether the paradox outlined by Birch is resolved.

Nevertheless, the theory of the electoral mandate still finds support amidst the ranks of politicians, especially those on the left-wing of the Labour Party. Ann Holmes (then prospective Labour Parliamentary candidate for Kensington) highlighted the continuing appeal of the mandate in a letter to The Guardian: "The fact remains that Labour M.P.s to be accountable to their electorates, must be bound to those election pledges (of the manifesto) for their sense of direction". (109) By this view the M.P. remains a 'party man'; a party delegate. Yet it may be argued that a delegate style of representation is dependent

upon the existence of a specific focus of representation. Does such a clearly defined, cohesive interest exist in the Labour Party?

One can assert that the economic condition of the working class provides a common unifying interest. Laski made the point some forty years ago that "the programme of the Labour party, like that of any other party is implied by the economic interests of its own supporters." (110) However, doubts may be raised about the cohesiveness of interest within the Labour Party on two counts. Firstly, the economic interest of the working class may be viewed as being heterogeneous. Secondly, the supporters of the Labour Party are not confined to the ranks of the 'objective' working class. For the inexorable "competitive struggle for people's votes", (111) leads the P.L.P. to broaden its appeal beyond the working class. Hence the party becomes a coalition of differing groups whose interests are aggregated within the party. In this process the 'interest' of Labour supporters becomes diffuse, with the result that "the interests of (Labour) backbenchers are now less concentrated on matters directly affecting the welfare of the working class." (112) Indeed, Marxists and some Tribunate Members would go so far as to say that the 'interest' of the working class is no longer advanced by the Labour Party.

Nevertheless, the theory of 'Labour Democracy' still maintains that the representative should act as a delegate bound by the wishes of his supporters. The diversity of interest and opinion among these voters being harmonized through support of the party's programme. The manifesto, in turn, acting as a guide to those parliamentary representatives committed to it during the election campaign. Thus, although elected on a territorial basis the focus of the representative's attention is the national party programme. As the party's platform

is a comprehensive one, the individual representative who is bound to it will be expected to deal with the full range of issues confronting the legislature. The implication for legislative specialization being that the party representative will be concerned to support his party across the whole range of subject areas.

An alternative hypothesis, however, is that as the focus of representation is now the party, rather than the nation or the constituency, it becomes possible for the party to organize a division of labour within its ranks. Given that each representative of the party is committed to its value system, decisions reached in the light of this ideology would obtain the unanimous approval of the Parliamentary Party. Hence all party representatives may be predicted to support policies guided by shared values, even though they did not personally participate in the making of the specific decision. Thus, under the umbrella of a common ideology the party may encourage a division of labour: firstly, through the selection of specialists and, secondly, through the creation of specialist groupings within the legislature. Herman Finer noted the first development over twenty years ago:

"Now, since the party must, for its very life's sake, have a minimum number of experts of different kinds - good debaters, able committeemen, financial experts, some especially expert in each great branch of social and economic legislation and in international affairs - headquarters seizes every opportunity that offers to claim a comparatively safe seat for such candidates, and local caucuses rarely dispute such claims. Nowadays,

the number of such experts is at least about one tenth of all the seats contested by a party.....England is more earnest and rational in this respect than either France or the United States....." (113)

However, Finer appears to exaggerate the influence of central party leadership in Britain. In theory the N.E.C. of the Labour Party does possess the necessary resources to 'place' candidates in constituencies. But in practice the Constituency Labour Parties have considerable autonomy in the selection of their candidates; though the independence of C.L.P.s may appear to be limited by the influence of trade unions on the General Management Committees, and on the N.E.C. itself. Thus trade unions are often in a powerful position to place their own sponsored 'specialist' candidates in constituencies. In 1970, trade unions sponsored 112 Labour Members, (114) many of whom may be regarded as specialist in the area of their sponsoring union's activity.

In this manner specialists can be brought into the legislature. Yet there is no comprehensive effort to rationalize the selection procedures to facilitate their entry. The national party organization cannot enforce its will consistently against the wishes of constituency party selection committees. As Karl Bracher explains: "The central dilemma of modern parliamentarianism becomes apparent here. A strong influence of the central party leadership is the only guarantee for the nomination of objectively suited, specialized candidates for parliamentary and party work; but this method endangers precisely that immediate contact with the constituency which seems to be possible only by way of local electoral committees, through a decentralized party organization". (115)

Even though the recruitment of specialists remains a random process in practice, the theory of party representation can be modified to allow for specialization; initially, through the medium of selection procedures and, secondly, through an intra-party division of labour within the legislature. Thus the theory of Party Democracy has an ambiguous relationship with the theory of specialization. In one sense the M.P. is bound to support the entire party programme and to deliberate upon all the issues involved. In another sense the individual representative may specialize, for the representative is mandated simply to an ideology, which he holds in common with his party colleagues. The shared values in the party enable representatives to specialize: for each Member knows that the view he adopts on one subject will be that of his colleagues if they had personally participated in that area. Similarly the representative is aware that his party colleagues will reflect his views on those subjects he is not directly concerned with. (116)

#### Representation in Practice

From the foregoing review of representative theories it has proved possible to deduce the nature of the linkage between representative orientations and legislative specialization. On the one hand, the trustee orientation of Whig and Liberal theories suggests that each representative should be concerned in the deliberations on all matters coming before the attention of the legislature - hence militating against the division of labour within the Chamber. Similarly, the initial formulation of the notion of party democracy holds that the party representative is committed to the support of the entire electoral programme and, therefore, may be anticipated to spread his legislative activity evenly across all subjects. On the other hand, however, a division of labour appears to be compatible with

delegatory conceptions of representation. Indeed, it has been our contention that the delegate style of representation is tenable only in relation to a specific, homogeneous focus of representation - as the very specificity of interest concentrates the elected member's attention upon that interest in his legislative activity. The clearest expression of this association is perhaps provided in the functional theory of Cole, but may also be seen, in a modified form, in the second formulation of the Labour theory of party representation, wherein party ideology provides a sufficiently homogeneous foundation for an intra-party division of labour. (117)

However, the very fact that the delegate theory of representation, (whether in its American form, or the revised version of functional theory, or for that matter in the latter formulation of party representation), has failed to establish firm roots in the British political soil strengthens the belief that part of the explanation for the failure of the House of Commons to develop a comprehensive division of labour lies with the nature of the prevalent theories of representation. For the three strands of thought, Whig, Liberal and Collectivist, providing the major positions in the continuing controversy over representation in Britain are essentially antithetical to the development of legislative specialization. In this debate, political practice has long been on the side of collectivist ideas of 'Party Democracy', though Burkean notions still attract considerable support. Part of the fortitude of the 'trustee' case stems from the support of the 'independent' Member offered by the official procedure of the House. The Committee of Privileges, for example, is constantly on the guard against any outside encroachment upon the 'independence' of Members. Whilst the Committee has pragmatically reconciled itself to the impingement of party into the corridors of Westminster, it has rigorously opposed any limitation

of a Member's freedom of action stemming from the acceptance by the M.P. of outside financial aid. The 1947 Resolution of the House underscored the limits of propriety: ".....it is inconsistent with the dignity of the House, with the duty of a Member to his constituents, and with the maintenance of the privilege of freedom of speech, for any Member of this House to enter into any contractual agreement with an outside body, controlling or limiting the Member's complete independence and freedom of action in Parliament.....the duty of a Member being to his constituents and to the country as a whole, rather than to any particular section thereof". (118)

The Privileges Committee has had frequent occasion to reiterate the sentiments of this resolution. (119) But the Committee is only one bastion of support for Burkean ideas of independence. Sections of the electorate still cling to the vision of the independent Member of Parliament. Alan Beith, M.P. is in no doubt that "Edmund Burke has followers still", (120) after the receipt of a clergyman's letter ending with the words "I must abstain on what is the church's professed policy and trust to your judgement after having considered all representations". Such thoughts are not solely the preserve of the clergy, even the Royal Commission on the Constitution concurred that: "it is sometimes the duty of politicians not to respond to popular feeling, but to go against it. They are elected to use their own judgement on behalf of the people". (121)

Members of Parliament themselves are not above reiterating 19th century notions of independence when the need arises. Invocation of Burkean theory is frequently a corollary of intra-party conflict, (122) the typical recitation of 'trustee' theory being reserved for conflicts between an M.P. and his constituency party. Nigel Nicholson, Dick Taverne and Reg Prentice, the three most celebrated victims of

rejection by their constituency parties, have all defended their stance against criticism in pure Burkean terms of 'independence'.

Irrespective of party conflict there is, however, one realm of parliamentary activity where the independence of Members is largely sacrosanct: an area where most Members are in agreement that their judgement should prevail over that of the electorate. This is the twilight zone of 'moral' issues where, it is commonly asserted that M.P.s are elected not to do the bidding of the electorate but to formulate programmes for it on the basis of their own judgement. (123)

A view eloquently supported by Brian Walden, who in the emotionally charged debate on the re-introduction of hanging for terrorist offences in December 1974, told M.P.s that they "were not agents of outraged public opinion. They must listen to what their constituents said, but they come to Westminster as their own men, not as delegates. When that principle died, parliamentary democracy died with it". (124)

'Independence' theories still, therefore, attract widespread support in Britain. In spite of this, however, there can be little doubt that the predominant mode of representation concerns 'party', the essence of both Tory and Socialist Democracy is the rejection of the independent Member freely following his own judgement. Not surprisingly the simultaneous homage paid to these two contrasting representative theories leads to a certain degree of confusion. The electorate, for example, persists in voting for party labels rather than individuals (witness the fate of Dick Taverne, Eddie Milne, and Eddie Griffith in 1974) but at the same time grumbles about the "lack of independence" of backbenchers at Westminster. The "lack of clarity (very marked with the late Victorian period) over the value and meaning of representative democracy tends to mean that M.P.s and Parliament lose or are blamed whatever they do." (125)

This confusion over representation in Britain is further heightened by Members 'representing' personal or sectional interests over and above that of their party, their constituents or the nation. The phenomenon of Members acting on behalf of sectional economic interests was well established before the 1832 Reform Act. Although the focus of representation has altered since those times the House still permits Members to reflect sectional pressure, on the understanding that they will declare their interest openly and not enter into any contractual agreement limiting their freedom of action. As long as outside groups refrain from instructing or limiting the freedom of action of individual M.P.s, so that the Member maintains his 'independence', then the relationship between group and representative can be accommodated in the Whig theory of representation. Similarly with the 'collectivist' theory, as long as the aims of the group and those of the Member's party are harmonious, then little difficulty arises out of the M.P.'s connection with an outside interest. Indeed, in times of conflict between party and group, M.P.s have a reputation for following party programmes at the expense of group sympathies. (126)

However, the representation of sectional interests does raise the possibility of conflict between the Member's duty to 'the nation' or his 'party'. This possibility was acknowledged tacitly in the establishment of the Register of Member's interests, with its purpose of providing "information of any pecuniary interest or other material benefit which a Member may be thought to affect his conduct as a Member or influence his actions, speeches or vote in Parliament". (127)

The practice of representation in Britain, therefore, is far from uni-dimensional. The adhesion to contrasting principles of representation within the political culture leads to an ambivalence in the interpretation of the representative's role. On the one hand most Members of Parliament owe their allegiance to the political party

that secured their election. (This loyalty has little to do with the use of discipline by the party, for on most issues backbenchers are in sympathy with the programme of the party). To this extent Members subscribe to the doctrine of the mandate - to the notion of party representation. However, at the same time M.P.s may assert their 'independence' in line with Burkean tradition. To complicate matters still further, whilst still espousing a trustee or a party delegate orientation an M.P. may be simultaneously acting as the agent of a sectional interest.

What emerges, therefore, is not a compartmentalization of theories; but rather a fluidity of thought that allows a representative to determine his own 'style' of representation at any given moment. Thus, representation can be conceived as a continuum, with the trustee orientation at one pole, and the delegate style at the other. In between lies a grey area where the two styles may be adopted serially or simultaneously by the representative. (128)

But, if the representative is able to reconcile two, apparently, contrasting conceptions of his role in this manner: what utility do such theories hold in practice? The answer may well be "none". Heinz Eulau, for one, has argued that "our common conceptions of representation are obsolete". (129) Nevertheless, this does not inhibit politicians from calling upon these conceptions to justify their actions. Representative theories are far from being obsolete as a source of legitimacy. In stressing the responsibility of the elected to the electorate these theories propagate the myth of popular control whereby the action of the representative is held to be legitimate through his responsibility to his voters. The link between represented and representative is thus claimed to be a strong one. Representatives, indeed, are always at pains to stress this

bond between themselves and their voters. In this manner representative theories serve the function of mobilizing consent for the action of representatives and conferring upon these actions an aura of legitimacy.

Yet in practice the gap between representatives and the represented in the 20th century is ever widening in the face of increased complexity, the range of legislation and the speed required to expedite such business. The enormous restraints upon the time and knowledge of the electorate effectively excludes the mass from communicating their thoughts to their representatives. In practice, therefore, the representative is granted considerable freedom of discretion to act as he sees fit on the intricate and rapidly varying issues coming before the legislature. Yet the value of representative theories, for the representative, is that they imprint in the electorate's consciousness a vision of a strong bond between the mass and the legislators. Thus common conceptions of representation keep the blood of legitimacy flowing in an artery of responsiveness that in actuality is all but severed. The ambivalent interpretation of representative role ascribed to British M.P.s suggests that they are capable of holding, at any given time, a mix of 'styles' and 'foci' of representation. It is, therefore, possible to hypothesize that the particular 'mix' adopted by the representative will affect the degree to which he specializes. From the foregoing review of the major strands of British representative theory it is possible to deduce the relationship between these theories and the degree of parliamentary specialization. On the one side, 'independence' theories, both Whig and Liberal, appear to be antithetical to the development of specialization - as does the notion of 'party representation' in its strictest formulation. On the other the 'revised' version of party delegate theory may accommodate an intra-party division of labour.

Hence, in the representative mix, the more pronounced a 'trustee' style and the 'wider' the focus of representation, the lower the likelihood of specialization. The greater the emphasis placed upon a 'specific' focus and 'mandate', the greater the likelihood of concentration of activity. To a considerable degree, therefore, the individual representative may, within the limits of accepted theories, determine his own pattern of representation. The individualistic conceptual mix of representation may thus provide some partial explanation for the variations of the development of specialization both within and between legislative bodies.

Postscript. The Representational, Political and Organizational Influences upon Legislative Specialization: A Model.

Having identified, in the last two chapters, the key variables likely to have an impact upon the level of legislative specialization (both formal and informal) we are now in the position to create a 'model' (130) of such a division of labour. By arranging each variable along a continuum, defined by the two poles of (i) specialized activity/ extensive division of labour, and (ii) generalized activity/restricted division of labour - it will be possible to identify and predict the level of specialization resulting from any given mix of these variables. The elements in our model are arranged into its two discrete, but not mutually exclusive, categories of macro-, and micro-, level phenomena. In practice, as the findings in the next chapter illustrate, these elements tend to be closely interconnected in the pattern of formal and informal specialization.

The first element in the model (see Figure 1) is the nature of the authority hierarchies within the legislature. Where 'leadership' is

FIGURE 1

SPECIALIZATION

GENERALIZATION

MACRO-ELEMENTS

Structure of intra-house authority hierarchy	Decentralized Non-Hierarchical (Exec, Party, House-fragmented)			Centralized Hierarchical (Executive dominant)	
Nature of ideological/partisan competition	Non-partisan/ Non-ideological Non-adversary style	Partisan/ Non-ideological Non-adversary style	Partisan/ Ideological Non-adversary style	Partisan/ Ideological Adversary style	
Prevalent notions of representation	Functional focus Delegate style	Party focus Delegate style (2nd formulation)	Geographical focus Delegate style	Party focus Delegate style (1st formulation)	National/ Geographical focus Trustee-style (Whig + Liberal).

MICRO-ELEMENTS

Personal Political Goals	Influence (intra-House)	
	Public Policy (specific policy field)	
	Re-election perceived homogeneous and electorally safe	Re-election perceived heterogeneous and electorally vulnerable
	Political career advancement (legislative career - intra-house focus)	Political career advancement (executive career - intra + extra House focus)

segmented into different and competing hierarchies (between 'party', 'executive', and 'house' structures for example); in other words, where a decentralized, horizontal pattern of the distribution of authority exists - then the conditions for an organizational division of labour would appear to be more favourable than those pertaining where centralized, vertical hierarchical patterns of leadership exist. The second element concerns the nature of ideological or partisan competition within the representative institution. It may be stipulated that where such conflict is seen as a zero-sum competition - where all major issues are reducible to a choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives - then decision-making is simplified, and the necessity for specialized knowledge as a criterion for choice is de-emphasized. At the other extreme, where ideological or partisan factors play little or no part in determining choice, then rational decision-making is more dependent upon the possession of expert knowledge - and hence the necessity of specialization. Thirdly, representative theories can be arranged on the continuum in accordance with their theoretical compatibility with a division of labour.

In so arranging the variables in this manner it is possible to hypothesize that the particular mix of elements will determine the extent of the division of labour within a legislature. Thus it seems reasonable to predict that the combination of a decentralized distribution of authority with a non-adversary style of intra-House politics, in a legislature in which functional/delegatory modes of representation predominate, will lead to an extensive division of labour. While, at the other extreme, the existence of a centralized authority hierarchy, taken in conjunction with an adversary style of partisan politics, and prevalent notions of geographical/trustee theory, will lead to comparatively low levels of specialization; in between these extremes the extent of specialization will vary in accordance with the

particular mix of variables.

In addition to these macro-level phenomena the individual aspirations and goals of representatives may be anticipated to influence the level of specialization (both formal and informal). As the essence of legislators' individual goals will be considered at length in later chapters, <sup>(131)</sup> our intention at this juncture is merely to locate each of the major goals along the continuum. The legislator ranking 'influence within the Chamber' as his primary goal may be anticipated, normally, <sup>(132)</sup> to seek the respect of his colleagues through a display of the capacity to wed sound political judgement with specialist knowledge. Similarly, the representative primarily concerned with 'making good public policy' may regard specialist knowledge, and hence the strategy of specialization, as a requirement for contributions to the formulation and scrutiny of legislative outputs. However, the picture becomes more complex for the legislator ranking 're-election' as his primary goal - as at least two contrasting locations on the continuum may be identified. Firstly, the representative who perceives his constituency to be homogeneous and electorally secure may regard specialization in the subject area of greatest concern to his constituents as the best strategy. In contrast, the member who sees his constituency as being both heterogeneous in character, and electorally vulnerable, may feel obliged to spread his legislative activity widely - in the hope of maximizing his electoral support. Finally, the representative who's primary goal is 'political career advancement' may find that his adoption of the specialization strategy is directly influenced by the prevailing mix of macro-level phenomena and the resultant normative system. Thus in legislatures with no centralized authority hierarchy (specifically where there is no dominating executive leadership) and where conditions are therefore conducive to an intra-House division of labour - the normative system will support

the decentralization of power, the status quo. Consequently, the career aspirant in this setting will conform to the dominant values (including in this case the norm of specialization) in the expectation that conformity will assist his political advancement in the House. In legislatures in which a centralized hierarchy of authority exists (most notably where the political executive dominates the legislature) then the normative system will sustain the existing distribution of power and the requirements of hierarchy against the requirements of specialization, in which event the career aspirant will conform to the generalist norms prevailing within the Chamber.

Obviously such characterizations are, of course, gross oversimplifications, but, it is believed that they do have sufficient validity to serve as a basis of prediction, and a guide for the study of the nature and extent of legislative specialization.

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114. In October 1974 the number was 127 out of a total of 319 M.P.s
115. K.D. Bracher, op cit, p.352.
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117. In the case of the second formulation of party theory the focus of 'ideology' is not as different in practice as suggested here. (see footnote 116). Neither is it specific in the same sense as in functional theory - for it is not confined to a single sectional interest or subject area. Rather, party ideology represents a relatively coherent set of ideas covering the widest range of subjects. But the point is, however, that party ideology in our theory allows for an intra-party division of labour - so that, although not directly analagous to the association identified in Cole's theory the relationship between 'homogeneous' focus and specialization can still arguably be posited.
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119. See, for example, The First Report from the Committee of Privileges, H.C.228, Session, 1974, p.vii; The Committee noted, in response to Joe Ashton's allegations of impropriety by six of his parliamentary colleagues, that "whilst Members may accept reward for advising outside bodies there must be no condition expressed, or implied, that in return for that reward they will act in any particular way which would remove their independence". See also The Second Report from the Committee of Privileges, H.C.634, Session 1974-75, paragraph 3, where the Committee condemned the resolution of the Yorkshire Area Council of the National Union of Mineworkers as a "continuing threat to Members' freedom of speech and action which could not be allowed to remain in existence".
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131. See Chapters 4, 5, and 8; see R.F. Fenno, Congressmen in Committees, Little Brown, Boston, 1973, Chapter One, for an elaboration on the notion of personal political goals.
132. The prevailing norms of the legislature may influence the strategy designed to win influence, - note, for example, the case of Michael Foot and Enoch Powell in the British House of Commons. These exceptions do not necessarily disprove our general proposition.

## Chapter 4

### The American Experience

The model of legislative specialization developed at the end of the last chapter identifies the key variables influencing the development of the division of labour within legislatures - namely, the nature of authority hierarchies, of ideological/partisan conflict and of conceptions of representative role. The hypothesis being that where decentralized authority structures, non-adversarial mechanisms of decision-making and delegatory styles of representation predominate then an extensive division of labour will develop. Conversely, where the environmental mix combines centralized authority hierarchies, adversary mechanisms and trustee styles of representation then specialization will be less well developed. Between these extremes the extent of specialization will be determined by the specific mix of these elements at any given time.

However, before we consider the implications of this model for the British House of Commons it is of value to examine the assumptions of our model in a context distinctly different from that of the Commons. Such an undertaking will be useful firstly, in counteracting the pronounced tendency of British studies to examine the House of Commons "as if there were no other social scientists engaged in legislative research elsewhere whose theoretical accomplishments could be useful". (1)

Hence, the voluminous literature on specialization in legislatures in the United States provides a comparative point of reference for this study. And secondly, the very dissimilarities between the political and representational setting of the British and American legislatures enables us to assess the impact that environmental influences have upon the internal organization of representative institutions. In this

manner the traditional objection to the cross-national comparison of the British and American legislatures - that each institution is unique and, therefore, cannot usefully be compared with the other - can be stood on its head to argue that an understanding of the contextual differences is essential to our comprehension of the different patterns of specialization that have emerged within each institution. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, initially to explain, in the light of our model, why Congress "has provided effectively for specialization, much more effectively, indeed, than the national legislature of any other country", (2) secondly, to determine the actual extent of this strategy and, finally, to identify the organizational problems encountered in the pursuit of specialization.

The basic contention of this chapter is that the high profile of specialization in the United States Congress is directly attributable to the specific mix of political and representational elements within its environment; a mix which is remarkably conducive to the development of specialization. In the first instance, in accordance with the proposition derived from organization theory, there is no centralized authority hierarchy in Congress to subvert the importance of specialization. The separation of powers, in the formal division of authority between the President and Congress, effectively denies the legislature centralized executive leadership inside the Chamber. Congress, therefore, lacks - what the British House possesses - members whose claim to authority stems from their direct access to the expertise of the state bureaucracy, and who are thus differentiated from the rest of Members by their tenure of ministerial office. In the absence of executive leadership, the development of expertise through formal specialization, becomes a necessary mechanism of choice in Congress. The development of formal specialization in turn provides a pattern of leadership - that of seniority leadership of the chairmen

of the standing committees of Congress. But this pattern is essentially horizontal and incapable of replacing the vertical hierarchy of executive leadership. Indeed, the dispersion of power amongst committee chairmen effectively acts as a countervailing force against the development of other forms of centralized hierarchical command structures - particularly within the political parties. The power of the floor leaders within Congress consequently appears to be "interstitial and personal rather than formal and authorized". (3)

Overall, therefore, there is little centralized leadership in Congress. Instead, there has been, as S.P. Huntington notes, a dominant trend throughout the 20th century towards the dispersion of power: "This leaves Congress only partially equipped to deal with the problems of modern society. In general, the complex modern environment requires in social and political institutions both a high degree of specialization and a high degree of centralized authority to co-ordinate and to integrate the activities of specialized units.....Congress, however, has adjusted only half-way.....it has failed to combine increasing specialization of function with increasing centralization of authority. Instead, the central leadership in Congress has been weakened, and as a result Congress lacks the central authority to integrate its specialized bodies". (4) However, this 'failure' is far from co-incidental, for as we shall argue, the inherent tension between the requirements of hierarchy and those of specialization are resolved in accordance with the locus of institutional power. Thus, in Congress, where power is diffused, the power-holders seek to perpetuate the centrifugal forces already in operation; whereas, as this study seeks to show, in the British House of Commons, where power resides in the vertical hierarchy of executive leadership, then the holders of power seek to maintain centripetal forces.

A second feature of congressional politics differentiating the American

practice from that of the British legislature is the relative unimportance of ideological and partisan considerations as criteria of choice within the Chamber. The weakness of partisan allegiance in Congress has been comprehensively chronicled <sup>(5)</sup> and it is commonly agreed that ideology plays a very small part in Congressional decision-making generally. Cross-party voting is subsequently an accepted part of American representative life, and as M.J.C. Vile observes "American Senators and Congressmen.....vote against their party leadership with a frequency and a regularity which would be intolerable in a more ideological context." <sup>(6)</sup> In contrast to the position in the House of Commons, where party organization invokes an image of corporate action in support of, or opposition to, executive policies; in Congress there tends to be government by individuals rather than by party.

Finally, in line with the hypothesis of the preceding chapter, that extensive specialization is most likely to develop in those legislatures in which delegate styles with specific foci of representation predominate, there is indeed a strong tradition of legislators adopting delegatory orientations in the United States. <sup>(7)</sup> It is to be anticipated, therefore, that representatives oriented in this manner would concentrate their legislative activity primarily upon those interests which directly and immediately affect their constituents; and would seek the views, or act in accordance with the established opinion, of their constituents on these subjects. Of course, the objection to this view is that the heterogenous interests of most geographical constituencies militate against the adoption of such a strategy. Nevertheless, recent evidence suggests that representatives may perceive their constituency in a number of different ways - so that the geographical constituency comes to be segmented into a 'primary constituency', which includes solidary or functional groups - such

as ethnic and economic groupings whether organized or not, as well as 're-election' and 'personal' constituencies. (8) Arguably, the 'primary constituency' becomes the main focus of legislative attention for the professed delegate. Indeed, the strength of constituency influence upon the choice of specialisms within the legislature can be gauged from the finding of Matthews and Stimson that fully 82% of members interviewed, who considered themselves specialist, tended to specialize in subjects of particular interest to their constituents. (9)

### The need for specialization

According to the first proposition of organization theory noted earlier in Chapter 2, an organization will increasingly feel the need for a division of labour as the quantity and complexity of demands made upon it increases. Indeed, all studies of specialization in U.S. legislatures implicitly accept this proposition. Hence, H.B. Asher notes, for example, that "external constraints, such as the heavy demands placed upon the Congress, are certainly conducive to the development of a division of labour organized around substantive policy areas. The expansion of the federal government in the 1960s into such areas as health care, space exploration and education makes it even more difficult for the legislator to be a policy generalist". (10)

And D.R. Matthews, in noting the increase in environmental demands upon the Senate, argues that legislators "ought to specialize because they must". (11) Whilst the growing scope and complexity of legislative activity undoubtedly makes specialization advisable, it is the relative absence of other, more cost-efficient, mechanisms of choice which actually makes it imperative in the U.S. Congress. Faced with a mass of technical issues, the U.S. legislator, who is unable, or unwilling, to accept the authoritative directions of executive and party leadership, is dependent upon his own expertise, or that of his Congressional

colleagues, as the means for making a rational choice amongst policy options.

But specialization has been developed to its present extent in Congress not simply because of its importance as a decision-making strategy, but also, because it has facilitated the attainment of the organizational goals of Congress, and the personal goals of individual Congressmen. Thus the institutionalization of a formal division of labour has maintained the capacity of Congress to perform vital legislative and oversight functions. Nelson Polsby has no doubts that in the lower House "the total impact of a cadre of specialists operating over the entire spectrum of public policies is a formidable asset for a political institution; and it has undoubtedly enabled the House to retain a measure of autonomy and influence that is quite exceptional for a 20th century legislature". (12) Concomitantly, individual legislators have benefitted in this process as the decentralization of power in Congressional committees "has created a great many important and interesting jobs within the House, and thus increased the attractiveness of service therein as a career." (13) Reforms aimed at re-centralizing Congressional power would, therefore, in Polsby's opinion, only reduce the effectiveness of Congress "because the House would come to be less valued in and of itself, its division of labour would provide less of a power base for subject matter specialists, and the incentives to stay within the organization would sharply decline." (14)

The necessity of specialization in the Congressional decision-making process finds further reflection in the normative system of both Houses. In each House a set of legislative norms or 'folkways' serve to define the expected conduct of legislators. These unwritten, informal rules prove to be "highly functional to the (Congressional) social system since they provide motivation for the performance of vital duties and

essential modes of behaviour which, otherwise, would go unrewarded." (15)

In other words, legislative customs enable Congress to act, to get things done, by emphasizing the importance of traditional modes of behaviour and by underpinning the prevailing power structure. Through the process of socialization, an acceptance of clearly defined legislative roles is inculcated in new recruits so as to ensure that they cause minimum disruption to the operations of Congress. Thus the key norms, identified by Matthews, as those of apprenticeship, legislative work, specialization, courtesy, reciprocity and institutional patriotism; all facilitate the functioning of Congress. Apprenticeship, for example, effectively limits the contribution of Freshman Senators and Congressmen to debate; thus reducing the time consumed by deliberation on the floor of the Chamber. And when this norm, with its emphasis upon deference to senior members, is combined with the norms of courtesy and reciprocity, friction within the legislature is effectively minimized.

The norm of legislative work is functional to the operation of Congress by encouraging the belief that respect from colleagues is increased by the legislator devoting the major proportion of his time to detailed, often dull and politically unrewarding work. Similarly, the norm of specialization, by encouraging the division of labour and the development of expertise, buttresses the organizational requirement for specialization. Yet the norm of specialization also secures the perpetuation of the decentralized character of Congressional decision-making and subsequently legitimizes the existing distribution of power, by emphasizing the prestige of the expert, and by discouraging any major challenge to the authority of the committee experts. In conforming with this norm, Congressmen are, therefore, essentially underpinning the fragmentation of power within the legislative system and consenting to the maintenance of the status quo. (16) While conformity to this

norm, as with all of the folkways, is obviously not absolute, considerable majorities of Congressmen (17) still adhere to it; partly, out of organizational necessity, and, partly, out of the belief that conformity enhances respect and effectiveness within the legislature. (18)

The importance of the 'folkway' of specialization in both Houses is, therefore, not only a reflection of the need for a division of labour in the environmental setting of Congress but also is an indication of the decentralized power structure within Congress. For the norm of specialization not only facilitates the functioning of Congress but also serves to justify the power of committee experts and to pre-empt the centralizing claims of party leaders. In so doing, this norm helps to legitimize the existing distribution of power and is, therefore, instrumental in the perpetuation of the status quo.

#### The extent of specialization.

Whilst the necessity of specialization as a strategy of decision-making has been conceded in theory, the extent to which this strategy is employed in practice by Congressmen remains somewhat obscure. For the main source of information about informal patterns of specialization remains the early works of Matthews (19) and Clapp, (20) and much of their evidence on this phenomenon is perceptual and limited. Matthews, on the basis of a limited number of interviews with twenty-five Senators, reached the conclusion that informal specialization was highly developed in the Upper House and cited the opinion of one leading Senator in support: ".....I have picked out two or three sub-committees in which I am especially interested and have concentrated on them. I believe that this is the usual practice around here." (21) Clapp, on the evidence gained from conversations with thirty-six

Congressmen reached a similar conclusion that "faced with an impossible workload, Congressmen have responded in different ways, most of them seeking refuge in specialization." (22) Unfortunately, given the limited number of representatives interviewed in both of these studies, there is no guarantee that the perceptions recorded are in fact representative of opinion generally in Congress.

The importance of Matthews' work, however, does not rest upon interview data, but rather its significance is to be found in its pioneering attempt to quantify the extent of informal division of labour by means of an 'index of specialization'. This index sought to measure specialization according to the proportion of public bills and resolutions introduced by each Senator that were referred to the two committees receiving the largest number of his sponsored bills and resolutions. (23) The assumption being that, the greater the proportion of bills referred to just two committees, the greater the degree of informal specialization. However, the validity of such an assumption may be questioned on at least two counts; first, the index does not reflect the scope of a Senator's wider legislative activity in debate and service on committee; and, secondly, there is the problem, which Matthews' acknowledges himself, that the jurisdictions of Senate committees are sufficiently broad and overlapping that two bills on very different subjects may be referred to the same committee, while two bills on similar subjects may be referred to different committees. (24)

In spite of these deficiencies the index is of value in revealing that informal specialization is not as highly developed in the Senate as the perceptions of Senators might have led one to anticipate. Although there was a pronounced profile of specialization - the largest single group of Senators (48%) in the 83rd and 84th Congresses displayed only a 'low' level of specialization; a further 36% were ranked as being

moderately specialized and only 16% of Senators were highly specialized in their legislative activity.

The work of Matthews on the Senate has recently been replicated in the House of Representatives by Olson and Nonidez. (25) Unfortunately, whilst claiming as their objective the application of Matthews' measures of legislative activity to members of the House of Representatives, these authors, in fact, significantly alter the computation of the original index of specialization. Whereas Matthews measured the proportion of all bills introduced by a Senator which were referred to his highest two committees, Olson and Nonidez arbitrarily increase this number to three committees. The effect of this change is both to weaken the stringency of the index (out of a preconception on the authors' part of a lower profile of specialization in the House) (26) and also to remove the opportunity for an inter-House comparison of informal specialization. Furthermore, Olson and Nonidez ultimately fail to specify the profile of specialization; so that one is left not knowing the extent of informal division of labour in the House.

L.V. Grant's (27) evaluation of a simple theory of specialization in the House of Representatives similarly leaves one unenlightened as to the degree of informal specialization. In fairness to Grant, however, his primary concern is with the development and testing of a mathematical model of decision-making rather than with an empirical investigation into the extent of the existing division of labour. Nevertheless, Grant does produce an index as a measure of the degree to which the individual Congressman concentrates his sponsorship of bills in a specific subject area, weighted in accordance with his relative activism in the introduction of bills. However, Grant's index is, at best, simply a means of identifying specialists in any given area, and, at worst, there is the suspicion that his index is as much a measure of

activism as of specialization. (28)

One attempt to break away from the measurement of specialization in terms of the sponsorship of legislation is provided by R.E. Lehnen in his analysis of debate on the floor of the Senate. (29) Lehnen tests the proposition that not all Senators act in the same way, or concentrate equally on all issues coming before the Senate, by examining the number of subject areas members speak upon. In detail, he observed that although there is a wide variation in the number of legislators speaking upon an issue; the number that contribute to a 'substantial' degree, that is over 2% of the debate, is in fact small. Thus, of the 59 Senators who spoke a substantial amount, 14 (24%) spoke extensively on three or more issues and were classified as 'generalists'; 13 (22%) spoke extensively on two issues and the remainder, 32 (54%), spoke substantially on only one subject. In total, therefore, 45 Senators - just under half of the total membership - met the specialist role. However, 40 Senators, in the session studied, made no contribution whatsoever to debate - a phenomenon regarded as surprising and with no evident cause by Lehnen. Lehnen's analysis is incapable of resolving the question of whether this latter cohort of members were in fact specialists whose specialisms did not feature in discussion in the single session under study. And a further limitation upon the utility of his study concerns the nature of Senate deliberation itself; given that "speeches in the Senate are usually set, poorly attended, indifferently received and frequently interrupted". (30)

Existing quantitative analyses of informal specialization thus appear, on the whole, to be of only limited value in revealing the true extent of the employment of the specialization strategy in Congress. Heavy reliance is still, therefore, placed upon the perceptions of legislators about the pattern of specialization. The views most

frequently quoted still derive, however, from the works of Matthews and Clapp; yet, as we have already noted, the representativeness of these opinions is open to question. A welcome addition to this perceptual information, therefore, is the data provided by Matthews and Stimson in their recent work Yeas and Nays. (31) From interviews with 100 members of the House of Representatives they discovered that 97% of Congressmen regarded themselves as 'specialists' in some field of legislative work. Indeed, 22% of the sample claimed to focus their attention primarily upon one issue area, a further 41% focused primarily upon two issue areas, 19% concentrated upon three subjects, 8% on four areas and the remaining 7% claimed five or more specialisms. (32)

These findings clearly point, therefore, to the existence of a pronounced pattern of informal specialization within Congress. However, as of yet, no quantitative analysis of specialization has succeeded in discovering the extent to which these perceptions are matched by actual patterns of behaviour.

For a more comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of informal specialization one has to turn away from the works on Congress to consider the studies of state legislatures. At the state level legislators are faced with similar problems to those of their Congressional colleagues in dealing with the increased variety and technical complexity of public issues. For, as H. Owen Porter comments, although the state legislator "is not intentionally recruited to be expert in any area, he is expected to choose among alternatives in many areas, and he is often given little time to assemble relevant information." (33) One key strategy for "avoiding inappropriate information while securing the discrete information needed to make rational decisions" (34) is, of course, that of specialization. The extent to which individual legislators actually adopt this strategy is clearly revealed in Buchanan et al's (35) seminal study of legislative

role orientations in four state legislatures. In total 471 out of 504 legislators in California, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee were interviewed, and the extent and character of specialization was gauged from their responses to the following questions:

- i). Is there a particular subject or field of legislation in which you consider yourself particularly expert - I mean when it comes to dealing with proposed legislation in that field? What (field) is that?
- ii). Why is that (i.e. that you are expert)?
- iii). Could you name five or six members of the House (Senate) whom you consider particularly expert in their respective fields? (36)

91% of interviewees named one or more members they considered to be specialists in some substantive field, and 83% named fields in which they personally specialized. While differences in the amount of specialization noted amongst the four legislatures did exist, such differences were not consistent and did not follow any obvious pattern.

Other studies, most notably that of Porter and Leuthold (37) in Michigan, have replicated Buchanan et al's original questions and have discovered similar patterns - namely, "that almost every legislator listed areas in which he was trying to specialize or become expert." (38) Porter and Leuthold's study is of particular significance in so far as the analysis was conducted over two sessions (1964 and 1968) and revealed that the pattern of specialization was fairly stable over time.

In the light of these findings, the claim made by H.B. Asher (39)

that specialization is assigned lesser importance in state legislatures than in Congress appears to be somewhat misplaced. Yet Rosenthal also contends that the norm of specialization is only weakly held at state level and that "one of the major problems in state legislatures.... is the lack of specialization". (40) Both authors cite the evidence provided in Wahlke et al's The Legislative System, that only very small percentages of state representatives specifically mentioned "an acceptance of the committee system" as one of the rules of the legislative game, in support of their claim. But, ultimately, the dispute between Asher and Rosenthal, on the one hand, and Wahlke et al, on the other, (who claim that specialization, is in fact "more obvious in state legislatures than in Congress") (41) resolves into a matter of semantics rather than of substance. The former set of authors take specialization to mean formal specialization, while the latter set focus essentially on the informal dimension of the division of labour.

In practice informal and formal patterns of specialization overlap, but it is worth noting, as Matthews and Stimson point out, that although "the committee system and the strategy of specialization by individual members are related to one another.....they are not the same thing". (42)

Nevertheless, in Congress this relationship does appear to be remarkably strong: in one recent survey 98% of specialists in the House of Representatives stated that the subject matter of their committees provided at least one of their specialisms, and fully 56% claimed that their specialisms corresponded exactly to their present or former committee assignments. (43) At the state level, however, the distinction between formal and informal patterns of specialization is that much more pronounced. In the four state legislatures studied by Buchanan et al, for example, the percentages of members attributing their own expertise to experience gained on committees ranged only from 11% to 25%. Nevertheless, when state representatives were asked to

identify experts within the legislature, 65% of the most 'visible' experts were found to be committee chairmen in their respective subject fields. (44) Similarly, Porter and Leuthold discovered that two-thirds or more of the nominations of experts in the Michigan assembly went to the chairman or members of the relevant committees. So that, even at the state level, a substantial correspondence of formal and informal patterns of specialization can be observed; enough, perhaps, to cast some doubts upon the contention of Asher and Rosenthal.

Unfortunately, this debate on the relative significance of specialization in the state and the national legislatures becomes even more convoluted by the propensity of U.S. academics to use the terms 'expertise' and 'specialization' as synonyms. Thus, Asher, in arguing that specialization is of lesser importance at the state level, focuses his attention upon the depth of expertise, and clearly conceives of committee service as being the primary means of acquiring such expertise. Subsequently, in contrasting the high rate of turnover of personnel in state legislatures with the relatively stable membership of Congress, he draws the conclusion that "obviously, if tenure of office is shorter, the likelihood of developing expertise is less". (45) But this argument largely ignores the importance of 'primary' expertise: the knowledge of a specific subject area gained from the occupational or personal experience of the legislator outside of the legislature. Indeed, the significance of extra-parliamentary experience at the state level is evident in Buchanan et al's study - for previous occupational experience was identified as the major source of expertise in the four state legislatures. (46) The part-time nature of state legislatures may go some way towards explaining this emphasis upon 'primary' expertise; as the legislator may be encouraged to devote his attention to those matters with which he is already familiar rather than to expend time developing 'secondary' expertise in committee. The advantage of such

an informal system is that it allows the legislature readily to adapt to the changing problems within the state. (47) The disadvantage, however, is that the vagaries of the electoral system make it impossible to guarantee that the required experts will be elected at the necessary time. For it remains a truism that the legislature must take the particular mix of experts elected at any given time. Individual representatives may subsequently be required to develop expertise in areas of importance for the legislature - on top of their primary expertise - especially if the subject area of that primary interest is deemed to be relatively inessential to the needs of the legislature. In which case, 'secondary' expertise, gained from sustained attention to a particular issue in committee, becomes important in the legislative system. And, in which further case, Asher's point about the high rate of membership turnover in state legislatures becomes significant, because membership instability on standing committees impedes the development of 'secondary' expertise, as members do not serve long enough to acquire familiarity, in depth, with the subject matter of their committee assignments. However, before proceeding to examine the importance of formal specialization, let us simply draw to a conclusion the somewhat inconsequential debate over the relative importance of specialization at the state and Congressional level by noting that both sides in this discussion appear to talk past each other. Hence, Buchanan et al, on the one side, focus upon the informal pattern of specialization, whilst Asher and Rosenthal, on the other, concentrate upon the formal division of labour. If for no other reason, therefore, an examination of the dispute between these authors has been of value in demonstrating the confusion that can arise, unless it is clearly specified whether it is the informal or the formal dimension of specialization that is being studied, and also, unless specialization, as the process of the division of labour, is distinguished from expertise, as the product of such specialization.

Formal Specialization - Congressional Committees

The centrality of the formal system of specialization in the U.S. national legislature is such that "it is hard to imagine Congress without committees, they seem a natural, as well as indispensable, part of the legislative process." (48) 'Natural' that is as an organizational response to the increased scope and complexity of the legislative demands made upon Congress. For committees enable the individual legislator to develop his knowledge of a specific policy area, whilst at the same time enabling the legislature as a body to develop expertise across the widest range of issues. In this way Congress, working through standing committees, has reacted to its increased legislative role in the 20th century. Moreover, formal specialization can also be viewed as a 'natural' response to the problems encountered in securing Congressional oversight of the activities of the executive during this period. Thus Rieselbach argues that "to avoid being overwhelmed by executive-branch specialization and sophistication, Congress must, as a counterpoise, possess similar information and know-how. And it is precisely these skills and resources which the committees generate. Freed from any necessity to focus on all subjects, some members concentrate on the topics under the jurisdiction of the committee on which they serve. The knowledge they develop ensures that Congress will have among its numbers men who can effectively challenge administrative behaviour...." (49)

Indeed, the importance of this oversight function has led to a protracted debate as to whether or not the Congressional committee structure is solely a response to executive branch advantages. Morrow, (50) for example, contends that the Re-organization Act of 1946, by consolidating committees and assigning to them exclusive oversight responsibilities over specific executive agencies, simply reflected the organizational changes accomplished within the bureaucracy. Neustadt, (51) on the other hand, argues that the shape of the bureaucracy, in fact, reflected the jurisdiction of Congressional committees. Without

becoming too immersed in this controversy it seems reasonable to suggest, as indeed Neustadt ultimately concedes, that the relationship between legislative and executive structures may in practice be reciprocal. For our purposes, however, it is merely necessary to note that committee based specialization in Congress represents one obvious organizational mechanism for coping with the increase in legislative workload and also for exercising control over the executive.

Furthermore, the development of a formal division of labour appears as an even more 'natural' phenomenon given the absence of other structural arrangements capable of simplifying the process of decision-making within Congress. In the first instance the constitutional separation of powers, as we noted earlier, effectively denied Congress a centralized hierarchy of decision. "It, therefore, lacked" as Bradshaw and Pring point out ".....ministers who were able to put before it the results of all the routine work, done by the executive.... in the circumstances the gradual growth of small bodies capable of doing the groundwork is understandable". (52) Secondly, the political parties in Congress proved incapable of providing effective leadership. The marked lack of party cohesion, reflecting the ideologically denatured electoral competition and the decentralized structure of U.S. parties, largely removed 'ideological' and 'partisan' criteria from decision-making. Therefore, while ideological voting undoubtedly occurs in Congress it does not happen "often enough to serve as a general model of how Congressmen usually make up their minds". (53) In addition, the representative tradition in America, with its emphasis upon narrow 'foci' and delegatory 'styles', is generally supportive of a division of labour. Thus concentration upon sectional district interests, and the promotion of those interests in the legislature, is accepted as a legitimate part of the role of most Congressmen. And nowhere have these interests been seen to be better promoted than in committees.

For, if it is the case that institutional arrangements directly affect the representative's ability to represent his 'policy constituency', as C.O. Jones contends, then committees dealing with specific subjects, such as the House Agriculture Committee, can be seen to be "organized to allow a maximum of constituency-oriented representation". (54)

Committees in Congress are, therefore, both a cause and a consequence of the decentralization of power within the legislature. Their propagation was initially facilitated by the absence of rigidly centralized authority hierarchies; and their continuance institutionalizes a horizontal dispersion of authority within the House and the Senate. In accordance with our contention that organizational structure is not simply a product of organizational necessity, but also closely reflects the predilections of the most powerful actors within the institution, it is not surprising to find, therefore, that committee chairmen have consistently frustrated all attempts to centralize power into the hands of party leaders and the Speaker in Congress. However, the chairmen have been less effective in maintaining their position against the inherent centrifugal forces at work in Congress. Indeed, the very conceptual foundation upon which their power rested - the division of labour and the possession of expert knowledge - contained the potentiality for a fragmentation of their power. Precisely because the logic of specialization, which was capable of supporting the existence of 22 committees, was equally capable of sustaining a more extensive division of labour. Hence, as J.D. Lees notes "as Congressmen, in response to the sheer pressure of work, have become more specialized, so an internal division of labour within a committee seems to be sensible". (55) The use of subcommittees in turn permits greater specialization, as the legislator need not grapple with the full range of questions within the jurisdiction of the full committee, but,

instead, may concentrate specifically on one facet of the subject.

The seeds of the proliferation of subcommittees in congress were largely sown by the Legislative Re-organization Act of 1946 which, whilst successfully reducing the number of standing committees, had as an unintended consequence, the internal fragmentation of the responsibilities of the full committees. In most cases, however, the subcommittees were the creatures of the chairmen - their numbers and their scope for influence was closely regulated. Ultimately, therefore, the extent of a subcommittee's power was determined by the licence the committee chairman was willing to concede to it. In three cases - the committees on Internal Security, Rules, and Ways and Means all operated without subcommittees until the mid-1970s. Not surprisingly, these were the committees most tightly controlled by their respective chairmen. (56)

Underpinning the power of the committee chairmen in their committees, and more generally in the House as a whole, was the seniority system, whereby the member of the majority party with the longest continuous service on a committee automatically became chairman. The strength of the norm of deference to committee decisions also contributed to the chairman's power. However, the radical transformation of the composition of the House of Representatives, brought about by the influx of new members in the 1970, 1972 and 1974 elections, (57) led, in turn, to a reassessment of some of the traditional procedures of Congress. A prime target for reform was the seniority system, and the introduction of secret ballot votes for nominations for committee chairmanships, in 1971 and 1973, effectively undercut the power base of the chairmen. The challenge to the chairmen's autonomy was pressed still further in Session 1974-75 when the proposals of the Bolling and Hansen committees, on the re-organization of the committee structure, were considered in

the House. (58) In adopting the Hansen proposals, the House strengthened the position of subcommittees and their chairmen vis-a-vis full committees and their chairmen: for each committee of more than twenty members was required to set up at least four subcommittees. This requirement, taken in conjunction with the earlier 'Subcommittee Bill of Rights' of 1973 (59) (which had specified the range of the powers and privileges of subcommittees) effectively curtailed the power of standing committee chairmen to control the activities of their respective subcommittees. The new ascendancy of subcommittees in the late 1970s has now been accepted by committee chairmen - if not enthusiastically, then at least as something about which nothing can be done. Indeed, it was perhaps almost inevitable that their power, resting as it did upon the centrifugal force of specialization, should be fragmented by the very strength of this force itself. Consequently, whereas the standing committees have dominated the House throughout the last sixty years "it would not (now) be completely surprising to see the House of the 1980s built around subcommittee hegemony, with subcommittee chairmen controlling the legislative output of committees and members deferring to the subcommittee chairmen's expertise on the House floor". (60)

In fact this vision of the future has already been long actualized in the House Appropriations Committee. As long ago as 1962 Richard Fenno observed that decision-making was decentralized to the extent that:

"Each subcommittee holds hearings on the budget estimates of the agencies assigned to it, meets in executive session to decide what figures and what language to recommend to the full committee (to 'mark up' the bill), defends its recommendations before the full committee, writes the committee's report to the House, dominates the debate on the

floor, and bargains for the House in conference committee. Within its jurisdiction, each subcommittee functions independently of the others and guards its autonomy jealously". (61)

In working through a dozen or so subcommittees the Appropriations Committee has not simply been responding to the magnitude of its task, by more effectively dividing the labour of its membership, but it has also enabled its membership to achieve personal goals "by giving to each member nearly certain influence within the restricted scope of his subcommittee activity". (62) The outstanding benefit of subcommittee service for most Congressmen, therefore, is increased influence in the policy-making process; albeit over a limited range of issues. As the expertise of the legislator deepens through protracted consideration of one facet of a subject in subcommittee, so his influence within that sub-unit increases; to the extent that his subcommittee colleagues may defer to his recommendations in his field of competence. In turn, full committee members, as Fenno and Lees show for the Appropriations Committee, usually defer to the recommendations of their subcommittees, and the House as a whole normally defers to the standing committee. In this way it becomes possible for a single subcommittee member to directly affect the policy outputs of Congress. (63)

The extension of this pattern of subcommittee activity, (64) following the reforms enacted in the 1970s, has, thus, simultaneously facilitated the attainment of the corporate goal of expeditiously and effectively processing legislation, and also the attainment of the personal goal, held by many subcommittee members, of exercising more influence within the House. However, the darker side of this change is the "risk of so fragmenting the policy process so that nothing gets done". (65) Thus, in line with the second proposition derived

from our study of organization theory (see Chapter 2, page 35), the extension of the formal division of labour has brought in its wake problems of integrating the fragmented specialist knowledge of the diverse range of subcommittees. This problem has become even more acute than at the time when J.A. Robinson counselled that:

"Arriving at creative decisions on public problems demands something more than knowledge of the particular subject in hand. What is primarily required is combining bits and pieces of information on many different subjects, or relating what is known about one aspect of a problem to what is known about relevant aspects of other problems. Inventive problem solving requires, in a word, integrative solutions. The decentralized character of Congress, however, does not lend itself to the ready integration of specialized knowledge - indeed, some of its subcommittees are so autonomous that their decisions are rarely reviewed, much less reversed by their parent committees.....the knowledge of a few individual experts is an insufficient foundation for public policy decisions." (66)

Furthermore, the intensive specialization brought about by subcommittee activity also heightens the problems of decision-making on the part of individual Congressmen, because the other side of the coin of legislative specialization is the dramatically decreased capability of members to deal with matters outside of their specialisms. Thus specialization in one subcommittee area produces dependency upon specialists in other subject areas for information in those areas. Moreover, the non-specialist is confronted with a further dilemma, in so far as he

is incapable of evaluating the value of information offered by an expert on technical criteria. Therefore, it is not enough for the specialist to act as a simple repository of information for the non-specialist he must also act as an interpreter and an adjudicator for his Congressional colleague. So that the non-specialist is dependent upon the expert both for the provision of technical information and also for 'judgement' upon such matters, in which case decision-making for an individual legislator, acting as a non-specialist, is rendered into the simpler form of choosing a particular specialist on whose judgement he feels he can rely. The particular choice is determined by the expert's capacity for sound political discernment in addition to his policy expertise.

The process by which non-specialist legislators select a 'primary decision-maker' <sup>(67)</sup> has recently attracted the attention of L.V. Grant, Matthews and Stimson, and D. Kovenock. <sup>(68)</sup> Grant, in an effort to predict the specific primary decision-maker for each member, for each decision that the member must make, produces a "simple arithmetic representation" of legislative decision-making. His model is based upon the initial propositions that "(i) individual Congressmen make decisions in a specific issue area by selecting as a primary decision-maker a specialist in that area; (ii) the probability that a Congressman will select a specialist as a primary decision-maker depends on the degree of specialization, and the degree to which a particular specialist and non-specialist are likely to interact on a regular basis". <sup>(69)</sup> Sixteen pages of formulating and testing this theory only leads Grant to concede that "it is impossible at this time to judge whether or not the representation is so unstable as to be unreliable", <sup>(70)</sup> though he does believe that the predictive value of his theory is reasonably good given the limited expectations of such a simple model.

A rather more comprehensive and conclusive test of 'normal decision-making' (71) is, however, presented by Matthews and Stimson, who reached the conclusion, on the basis of detailed interviews with Congressmen and a computer simulation of decision-making, that members vote by taking cues. (72) In this process the cue-givers (both initial and intermediary) (73) exert influence over the cue-takers. Committees and subcommittees as collectivities, and their members as individuals, are potent cue-givers by virtue of their expertise. Indeed, 86% of Matthews and Stimson's interviewees mentioned committee members as cue-givers. And the recommendations of committee experts were found to have a legitimacy not possessed by non-committee experts.

The danger in this situation is that key cue-givers may be 'captured' by outside interests and subsequently the whole decision-process of Congress may come to be skewed in their favour. That Congressmen, recognized as experts, do act as nodal points of access for outsiders into the legislative system is made apparent in David Kovenock's statement that "policy specialists outside the Congressional system 'wholesale' communications to parallel specialists within the legislature; these men in turn 'retail' it to others in the House". (74) A similar point is made by Matthews and Stimson who observe that "the House experts - what we have called the initial cue-givers - have become the Chamber's 'windows on the world'. These men and women are in more or less continuous contact with those persons and groups - bureaucrats, lobbyists, academic experts, media representatives, and others - who are interested and knowledgeable about the subject at hand". (75) The opportunity for manipulation of the experts clearly exists in this interchange. Yet it should be remembered that the specialist in 'retailing' outside communications is not simply 'selling' raw data, he is also 'selling' his political judgement of this information. So that

if it is apparent that the Congressional expert is merely acting as the mouthpiece of outsiders then his credibility as a cue-giver will be undermined. However, the transmission of information may not always be a conscious process. For, the expert, when telling a colleague what the content of a particular piece of legislation is, what it means, or what effect it is intended to have, may well be unaware of just where he got the specific information from himself. He may well have attended committee hearings, talked with lobbyists and departmental officials, and generally absorbed the views of interested organizations on the subject over a long period of time. Consequently, the specialist legislator may effectively, if not consciously, transmit information on behalf of outside interests in Congress.

This 'two-step flow of communication' is equally apparent at the state level. In Michigan, for example, H. Owen Porter found that a substantial majority of 'reputed legislator experts' acknowledged that they frequently communicated with lobbyists. (76) Whilst recognizing the problems associated with the recall and quantification of legislators' contacts with organized interests and their transmission of 'outside' information, Porter, nevertheless, feels sufficiently confident that his interview data supports the supposition that reputed experts frequently transmit information received from outsiders. (77) Indeed, a higher proportion of recognized experts than self-nominated experts believed that they frequently passed on outside opinion about legislation in their specialist fields. But, as in Congress, the specialist legislator does not act as a mere transmitter of information; he also distils and interprets the data for his legislative colleagues. "Those who act as interpreters must", as Porter notes, "inevitably gain influence within their spheres". (78) However, expert legislators are not available in all subjects, so that differences in the quantity and reliability of outside information varies between policy fields.

The absence of experts in particular subjects in Michigan led non-expert legislators, and lobbyists alike, to remark upon the added complications and frustrations they felt in the performance of their duties in those areas. Ultimately, therefore, "the process of representation itself may be affected by the availability of such middlemen as well as by characteristics of the issue and policy fields". (79)

### The bases of specialization

The foregoing analysis has concentrated upon the necessity, the extent, and the problems associated with formal and informal specialization in state and federal legislatures. One issue that has so far been avoided, however, concerns the bases of subject specialization; the reasons for selecting a particular subject specialism. At the national level, at least three considerations are held by Matthews to enter into a Senator's choice of specialism; either his personal and professional background, or his perceptions of the interests of his present and possible future constituents or his committee assignments. Personal background affects the area of specialization in so far as "a former economist.....for example, is likely to want to focus his energies on the subject in which he possesses some skill". (80) However, the factor more important in most cases, according to Matthews, is the Senator's perception of the interests of his constituency. Hence most Senator's are believed to specialize in subjects of particular concern to their constituents. Unfortunately, Matthews does no more than assert that this is the case, and he fails to quantify the importance of constituency influences upon the choice of subject specialisms. A clearer indication of the importance of constituency factors in determining this choice is, however, provided in Matthews and Stimson's study of specialization in the House of Representatives. There, fully 82% of Members interviewed, who considered themselves to be specialist,

claimed to concentrate on subjects of particular importance to their constituents. However, this does not necessarily mean that 'constituency relevance' is the primary source of subject specialization, as the sheer heterogeneity of interests within a district may enable a representative, who is primarily interested in a subject for 'personal' reasons, to claim that his specialism is also of importance for his constituency. Thus personal background, educational training and previous occupational experience may initially determine the choice of specialism, but the legislator may subsequently, and legitimately, claim that the subject is also of relevance to his constituents. An indication of the relative importance of the varying reasons cited for the choice of specialisms can be gauged from Table 4.1

TABLE 4.1 Reasons for choice of specialisms: House of Representatives and state legislatures. (81)

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>House of Representatives</u>	<u>4 State Legislatures</u>
	(Matthews and Stimson)	(Buchanan et al)
	<u>N. of responses</u>	<u>N. of responses</u>
	(221)	(636)
	%	%
Occupational experience	10	37
Personal experience	25	31
Constituency experience	36	9
Political experience	8	5
Committee assignment	<u>21</u>	<u>18</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

At the state level it is noticeable that 'constituency relevance' is cited far less frequently, whilst occupational experience assumes greater importance, than in the House of Representatives. One reason for the greater influence of previous occupation on the choice of specialisms at state level, already mentioned earlier in this chapter, is that the

part-time nature of state assemblies may lead state representatives to focus upon those subjects with which they are already well acquainted. This factor may similarly account for the importance assigned to 'other personal experience' at the State level. Unfortunately, the evident insignificance of 'constituency relevance' is not so readily explained, unless it is argued that state constituencies are somehow more homogeneous than Congressional districts - so that district interests at state level are more specific, and the disjunction between them and the 'personal' interests of the representative are more apparent. However, it is not altogether certain that a smaller geographical area is automatically correlated with more specific interests. Furthermore, such an interpretation does not consider the representative role orientations of legislators - for there is no evidence to suggest that state legislators have a wider focus (than their constituency) than their federal colleagues. (82)

In spite of the differences of emphasis evident in Table 4.1, the reasons listed therein do appear to form the accepted bases of specialization. Yet essentially this categorization is inadequate, as it isolates the choice of specialism from the legislator's general concern with the attainment of his personal goals. For, just as the level of informal specialization is influenced by the particular mix of legislative goals, so, it may also be contended that the choice of subject specialisms is also related to the personal aspirations of the representative. The close association between the extent of specialization and particular legislative objectives was highlighted by J.A. Schlesinger, who noted in Ambition and Politics, (83) that representatives with serious legislative objectives and concerns for accruing seniority would be more likely ceteris paribus to specialize than members with progressive ambitions and major policy goals. The most comprehensive examination of the association between personal goals and specialization is to be found, however, in Richard Fenno's

Congressmen in Committees: wherein Fenno assumes that members will work in committee to achieve their stated goals. Three basic goals are identified in this study, these being 're-election', 'influence within the House' and 'good public policy'. Whilst all Congressmen hold all three simultaneously, each Congressman has his own set of priorities and personal ranking of these goals. From the initial proposition of basic goals Fenno proceeds to argue that members will act on committees in ways calculated to achieve their goals. However, the opportunity to achieve personal objectives varies widely among committees, so that members will attempt to match their personal goals with service on those committees most likely to secure the attainment of such objectives. Obviously, this matching process is far from perfect, and this, in itself, may have ramifications upon the level of informal specialization. "Quite clearly, legislators who received their desired assignments.....are more likely to perform the activities required by specialization than members who were placed on a committee they did not seek. In short, specialization need not automatically follow simply because the legislator is assigned to a committee; individual goals and situations must also be taken into account." (84)

Our concern at the moment, however, is not with the level of specialization but with the choice of the areas in which to specialize, the contention being that the specific mix of legislative goals affects not only the extent, but also the subject area, of specialization. Fenno's finding that "House committees come to be characterized, at any point in time by distinctive, nonrandom distributions of individual member goals" (85) is thus of significance for our case. Whereas Fenno is concerned with the member's choice of a committee, our concern focuses upon the selection of a subject area. Yet the two are necessarily related, for a committee patently deals with a specific subject. Hence, it may be suggested that, in choosing to serve on a particular committee, the

representative is also selecting a subject specialism; the fact that there appears to be a remarkable consensus of goals among each committee's membership in Fenno's study strengthens our claim. For particular mixes of legislative goals are clearly associated with particular types of committee, in so far as they present differing opportunities to pursue re-election, influence, and public policy; and so are linked with specific subject areas. This point is perhaps best clarified by example.

Starting with the goal of 'influence', in Congressmen in Committees Fenno found that members of the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees are essentially 'influence-oriented'. "The desire to have more influence inside the House than other Congressmen is the distinctive, dominant goal of Appropriations and Ways and Means members". (86) Hence membership of these financial committees is sought primarily because a position on either guarantees the ear and deference of other Congressmen. (87) Although the subject matter of finance has its own independent appeal, there is no doubt from Fenno's interviews that the reputation for power of the Appropriations and the Ways and Means Committees is their basic attraction. Nevertheless, even though influence-oriented members are attracted initially by this reputation, they also choose at the same time a subject area in which to specialize. It is largely immaterial to our case that this choice of specialism is derivative, rather than a primary concern - for a specialism has been selected, even if it is on the basis of the putative importance of the subject rather than its actual content.

Similarly, interest in the content of a subject appears to be of secondary importance to the member who holds re-election as his primary goal, and who seeks committee assignments in areas of importance to his constituency. As far as the representative is concerned, the importance

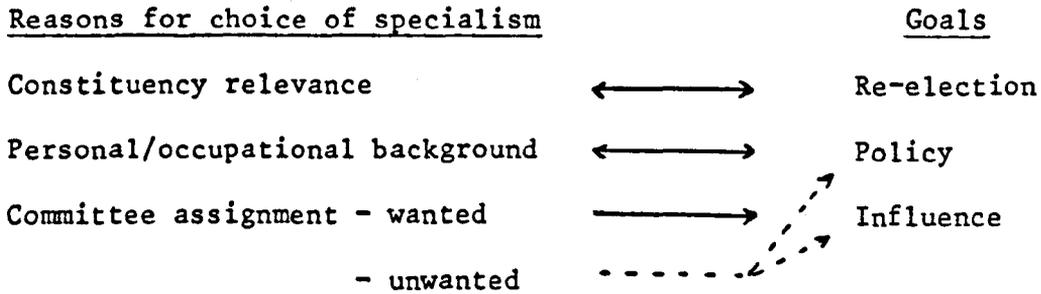
of a subject derives from its significance for his constituents. So that he will specialize in any issue area, as long as that course of action increases his chances of re-election. The primacy of this motivation is clearly seen on the Interior and Post Office Committees, where members rationalize their choice of assignments specifically in terms of service to constituents. Such comments as "I was attracted to it (Interior), very frankly, because it's a bread and butter committee for my state.....I had vested interests I wanted to protect" (88) peppered the responses. A desire to wield influence within the House and a concern with the making of good public policy are, therefore, distinctly secondary considerations for such members.

Indeed, it is only when the third goal - of making good public policy - is predominant, that a personal interest in the content of the subject area of a committee becomes apparent. Only on those committees where the internal consensus favours policy-making, rather than influence or re-election, does the choice of assignment and the selection of a subject specialism tend to be conterminous. This association is clearly shown in the Education and Labour and Foreign Affairs Committees where the goal of making good public policy mirrors the memberships' "strong personal interest in and a concern for the content of public policy in their committee's subject matter". (89) Unlike his re-election-oriented and influence-oriented colleagues the policy-oriented member, therefore, appears to make a primary choice of subject specialism. Nevertheless, in all three cases the selection of committee assignments in accordance with the legislator's personal aspirations leads ultimately to the choice of an area of subject specialization. In this manner legislative goals and the choice of an area of formal specialization are inextricably linked.

But, how significantly does this generalization differ from the accepted

wisdom as to the source of subject specialization? If we take the three factors cited by Matthews and simply list them alongside the three basic goals identified by Fenno then a fairly close relationship may be seen to exist between them (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 Bases of specialization and personal goals.



Our contention, therefore, conflicts with Asher's view that "while a member's goals will help explain whether or not he will specialize, other factors must be considered as well in accounting for the areas in which he chooses to specialize". (90) However, for the relationship, identified in Figure 1, to be validated then it must clearly be established that a member with, say, the primary goal of re-election will tend to cite constituency relevance rather than personal interest or committee assignment, as the source of his subject specialism. Without detailed and extensive primary research this hypothesis cannot be fully tested; but, fortunately, sufficient secondary information is available from which it may be possible to at least infer the strength of the relationship.

There does appear to exist a strong association between constituency relevance, as stated reason for subject specialization, and the goal of re-election. Fenno explicitly recognizes this link in his comment that "Congressmen who sought membership on the Post Office Committee did so.....for reasons of constituencies and re-election". (91) This point is further substantiated by the explanation of one re-election

oriented member that "you have to look out for the interests of your people.....Politics is a great way to promote your ideals, but first you have to help your constituents". (92) But perhaps the connection between the goal of re-election and choice of a specialism relevant to the legislator's constituency is most concisely expressed by one of Buchanan's interviewees who noted that "if I don't become an expert in civil service legislation I'll be out on my ear. It's dictated by my constituency, with a tremendous number of governmental employees". (93)

The representative citing personal or occupational experience as the source of his specialism is unlikely to be concerned primarily with re-election: unless, he is able to demonstrate that his own interest in a subject in fact reflects the importance of that subject in his constituency. Nor does it seem likely that the influence-oriented member would normally claim that personal interest in a subject leads him to specialize in that area, for such a member will specialize in any area as long as that strategy brings him prestige within the House. We are, therefore, left with the link between personal or occupational experience and the goal of making good public policy. Fortunately, for the purposes of our argument, Fennø did, indeed, find that the policy-oriented members of the Education and Labour, and Foreign Affairs Committees "punctuate(d) their statements of policy aspirations with statements about their pre-Congressional involvement in the two fields.....(they) voice a similar combination of personal interest, prior experience, and policy commitment." (94)

Finally, members ranking influence as their primary goal and seeking assignments on the most prestigious committees may be expected to cite 'committee assignment' as the reason for their choice of specialism. A study of the House Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees does in fact reveal the close connection between these factors. Indeed,

such is the strength of this relationship, between a committee's reputation for prestige and the choice of an area of specialization, that Fenno is led to observe: "if the men presently serving on the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees believed that the District of Columbia Committee was the most powerful committee in the House, they would seek membership on it". (95) At face value, therefore, this association between the goal of influence and committee assignment appears almost complete. Unfortunately, however, the match between members' aspirations and their committee assignments is, as we noted earlier, not absolute. (96) Consequently, not all influence-oriented members may serve on the committees of their choice, and so may be unwilling to specialize in the subject area of an unwanted committee assignment. This complication to our hypothesis may, however, resolve itself in one of two ways. Either, the legislator may temporarily relegate 'influence' in his ranking of priorities until he is able to move onto a more prestigious committee. Or, alternatively, the unwanted assignment may be turned to advantage by building a reputation in that area. Thus as one Eastern Democrat pointed out to Fenno:

"I was elected in a special election. They didn't know what to do with me so they put me on the first (committee) with a vacancy - Interior. I was a little horror-stricken at first.....But they just put me on it because there was no place else. But then I started thinking it over. I looked around and saw everyone was leaving and this might be a good place to stay and move up. And I was right. Within two and a half years I was sub-committee chairman and in six years I was ranking majority member....(Later) I had a chance to go on to Appropriations but I wouldn't take it". (97)

Influence in a limited sphere of legislative activity can thus be developed outside of the most powerful committees in the House. But still, as the above quotation illustrates, the choice of a subject specialism for the influence-oriented member rests primarily upon committee assignment rather than upon personal interest or constituency relevance.

While the exact strength of the relationship between legislative aspirations and stated sources of subject specialization cannot be fully determined (here at least), the evidence provided above does suggest a fairly close association between these two factors. In questioning Asher's assertion that "other factors" than legislative goals, must be considered in accounting for the choice of specialisms all that is being suggested is that these goals themselves affect this choice. Thus to paraphrase Fenno "each Congressman has his own mix of priorities and intensities.....if every (subject area) provided an equal opportunity to pursue re-election, influence, and policy, Congressmen holding varying mixes would appear randomly distributed across all (subject fields). Such definitely is not the case. The opportunity to achieve the three goals varies widely among (issue areas)". (98)

### Conclusion

The American experience of legislative specialization clearly provides important insights for our study. The analysis of the division of labour has enabled us to assess both the relevance of the propositions of organization theory and the utility of our theoretical model. Hence, the need for, the extent of, and the problems associated with, specialization in American legislatures have all been identified. Yet, perhaps the real value of this study of the American experience lies in the spotlighting of the inextricable intertwining of political and

organizational factors in the determination of the institutional structure of legislatures. Indeed, it is apparent that while the need for specialization arose out of the increased scope and complexity of legislative business, the need was only satisfied because of propitious political circumstance. For the separation of powers effectively prevented a centralized hierarchy of decision developing in the national legislature. And the ideological environment of Congress further restricted the development of partisan political conflict capable of reducing choice to zero-sum competition. The institutionalization of a formal division of labour reflected more than organizational need, it also, more importantly, reflected political necessity.

Once established, the committee system provided, in the offices of committee chairmen, a focus of Congressional leadership and also, concomitantly, formalized the dispersion of power within the legislature. In this respect the formal division of labour was both cause and consequence of the decentralization of power. Indeed, the centrifugal logic of specialization has proved incapable of resisting a further fragmentation of power - in the extension of the sub-committee system in the 1970s. Clearly, the balance between the requirements of hierarchy and those of specialization has tipped overwhelmingly in favour of the latter in the United States legislature. One obvious consequence, resulting from this imbalance, has been the problem of co-ordinating legislative activity in order to ensure coherent and cohesive policy outputs from Congress.

At the micro-organizational level the individual representative has adopted specialization as a strategy of decision-making, again, for a mixture of organizational and political reasons. Firstly, in face of the complexity of his proximate environment, and the general problem of information deficiency, a division of labour appears to be a natural

organizational response. However, secondly, the process of legislative socialization whereby legislators are inculcated into an acceptance of the predominant norms of the assembly (norms which legitimize the existing distribution of power and defend the status quo) makes the adoption of this strategy almost certain. For representatives come to believe that their personal goals - whether they are re-election, influence or policy oriented - are attainable primarily through specialization.

The study of the American experience, therefore, provides a comparative reference point from which to launch our examination of specialization in the House of Commons. Of particular importance has been the confirmation that political and representational elements cannot be divorced from organizational requisites in the development of institutional structure. And that this structure, and the normative system defending these institutional arrangements, reflects the distribution of power within the legislature. Hence, it is to be anticipated that the dissimilarities between the political environments of the British and American legislatures would be manifested in distinctly different patterns of formal specialization (as we already know) and of informal specialization (of which we have little knowledge).

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12. N.W. Polsby, 'The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives', American Political Science Review, Vol. 62, 1968, p.166.
13. ibid.
14. ibid.
15. D.R. Matthews, op cit, p.116.
16. The status quo is also buttressed by support for the norm of institutional patriotism whereby legislators "are expected to believe that they belong to the greatest legislative and deliberative body in the world", ibid, p.101.
17. see H.B. Asher, 'The Learning of Legislative Norms', American Political Science Review, Vol. 67, 1973, p.501-502, 504.

18. D.R. Matthews, op cit, p.114.
19. ibid.
20. C. Clapp, The Congressman: His Work as He Sees It, Brookings Institution, Washington, 1963.
21. D.R. Matthews, op cit, p.96.
22. C. Clapp, op cit, p.110.
23. see D.R. Matthews, op cit, p.275 for details of this index.
24. ibid.
25. D.M. Olson and C.T. Nonidez, 'Measures of Legislative Performance in the U.S. House of Representatives', Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. 16, 1972, pp.269-277.
26. ibid, p.271.
27. L.V. Grant, 'Specialization as a Strategy in Legislative Decision-making', American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 17, 1973, pp.123-147.
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30. ibid, p.507.
31. D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit; though the sample here is still less than 30% of the total membership.
32. A further 3% claimed they did not specialize. There is an element of confusion in Matthews and Stimson's results. On p.57, note 1, the percentage of members with one 'specialty' area is listed as 22; whilst in Appendix A, p.163, the percentage is listed as 48, undoubtedly, the latter is a printing error.
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34. ibid.
35. W. Buchanan, H. Eulau, L.C. Ferguson, J.C. Wahlke, 'The Legislator as Specialist', Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 13, 1960, pp.636-651.
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41. J.C. Wahlke, et al, op cit, p.199.
42. D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit, p.41. (My emphasis)
43. ibid, p.42.
44. W. Buchanan et al, op cit, p.643.
45. H.B. Asher, op cit, p.69.
46. 37% of respondents gave 'occupational experience' as the primary reason for considering themselves expert, Buchanan et al, op cit, p.644.
47. See ibid, p.642.
48. L.N. Rieselbach, op cit, p.58.
49. ibid, p.59.
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56. See L.N. Rieselbach, op cit, pp.74-77, G. Goodwin, 'Subcommittees: The Miniature Legislatures of Congress', American Political Science Review, Vol. 56, 1962, pp.412-436; C.O. Jones, 'The Role of the Congressional Subcommittee', Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. 6, 1962, pp.327-344; R.F. Fenno, Congressmen in Committees, Little Brown, Boston, 1973, pp.94-114, for a discussion of subcommittees in the U.S. Congress.
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58. see N.J. Ornstein and D.W. Rohde, 'Shifting Forces, Changing Rules, and Political Outcomes: The Impact of Congressional Change on Four House Committees', in R.L. Peabody and N.W. Polsby, op cit, pp.186-269.
59. see N.J. Ornstein, 'Causes and Consequences of Congressional Change: Subcommittee Reform in the House of Representatives 1970-73'; in N.J. Ornstein, Congress in Change, Praeger, New York, 1975, pp.88-114, especially 105-108.
60. N.J. Ornstein and D.W. Rohde, op cit, p.266.
61. R.F. Fenno, 'The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System: The Problem of Integration', American Political Science Review, Vol. 56, 1962, p.315.
62. R.F. Fenno, Congressmen in Committees, op cit, p.94.
63. J.D. Lees, op cit, p.60-61. Lees concludes his case study of the Appropriations Subcommittee for the Treasury and Post Office Departments with the statement that "provided Committee decisions appear to conform to House expectations, the decisions of a small group of legislators can become the decision of the House, and even of Congress".
64. The existence of an active subcommittee structure in itself does not necessarily mean that this pattern of influence will be apparent. The 'ideological content', the 'technicality' of differing subjects may affect the pattern of subcommittee specialization. See, for example, R.F. Fenno, Congressmen in Committees, op cit, p.105 wherein he notes that members of the Education and Labour Committee specialize in so far as they have a special interest in one field or the other. This does not mean that others defer to them in decision-making in subcommittee.
65. N.J. Ornstein and D.W. Rohde, op cit, p.269.
66. J.A. Robinson, 'Decision-Making in Congress', in A de Grazia, Congress: The First Branch of Government, Doubleday Anchor, New York 1967, p.251.
67. That is a specialist in the particular area of concern, see L.V. Grant, op cit, p.125.
68. see L.V. Grant, ibid; D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit; D. Kovenock, 'Influence in the U.S. House of Representatives: Some preliminary Statistical Snapshots', paper prepared for 1967 Annual

Meeting of the American Political Science Association, cited H.O. Porter, op cit, p.705, and D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit, p.57.

69. ibid, p.126.
70. ibid, p.143.
71. 'Normal decisions' according to Matthews and Stimson being those outside of members' specialisms. See, op cit, p.44.
72. ibid, p.145.
73. Initial cue-givers are individuals who "because of personal attributes and positions in the legislative structure, are looked to as a source of information and evaluation on legislative issues". Intermediary cue-givers are groups who cannot normally claim, as a group, to have expertise. "Their claim is, rather, to have processed - reacted to - the evaluations of experts in a way that suits the proclivities of the cue-taker". ibid, p.52.
74. D. Kovenock, op cit, p.26.
75. D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit, p.157.
76. H.O. Porter, op cit, p.712.
77. ibid, p.713.
78. ibid, p.722.
79. ibid, p.730.
80. D.R. Matthews, op cit, p.250.
81. D.R. Matthews and J.A. Stimson, op cit, p.155. (Table 7.1); W. Buchanan et al, op cit, p.644, (Table 4). The categories in Table 4.1 are composites; only occupational experience and constituency relevance are drawn from the original studies. The 'personal experience' cell includes Matthews and Stimson's 'education and training', 'personal experience and background'; and combines Buchanan et al's 'other personal experience' and 'other personal involvement' categories. 'Political experience' combines Matthews and Stimson's 'service in other legislature' and 'service in the House'; whilst using Buchanan's 'political experience' category - the two not being identical. Finally, 'committee assignment' uses Matthews and Stimson's classification and Buchanan's 'legislative assignment' category which is somewhat wider than the former.
82. see J.C. Wahlke et al, op cit, Chapter 13; see R.H. Davidson, The Role of the Congressman, Pegasus, New York, 1969, pp.121-126.
83. J.A. Schlesinger, Ambition and Politics, Rand McNally, Chicago, 1966,
84. H.B. Asher, op cit, p.67.
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88. ibid, p.6.
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91. ibid, p.6.
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93. W. Buchanan et al, op cit, p.645.
94. R.F. Fenno, op cit, p.11.
95. ibid, p.4.
96. Though it should be noted that Fenno did find that 81% of his sample had sought, and worked for, assignments on the committees on which they presently served.
97. ibid, p.8.
98. ibid, (my parentheses).

PART TWO

## Chapter 5

### Informal Specialization in the House of Commons

As a theoretical construct the model outlined in Part One is of importance both in its specification of the key contextual variables influencing the level of legislative specialization and also in its predictive capability. Indeed, it is possible to predict on the basis of this model that informal specialization in the British legislature would be relatively underdeveloped - given its peculiar environmental setting. The primary purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to test the accuracy of this prediction by means of a quantitative analysis of the activity of backbenchers in the main formal procedures of the House. In fact the profile of informal specialization outlined in this chapter represents the first systematic analysis of the extent of the specialization strategy on the backbenches in the House of Commons. Such an analysis is, however, beset by problems. The first difficulty, and one common to all studies of activity in the House, concerns the lack of academic and parliamentary consensus as to the practicability and utility of analyzing the 'behaviour' of backbenchers. "There are, after all", as Anthony King points out "as many ways of being an M.P. as there are M.P.s". (1) Indeed, many Members appear to be convinced that their personal pattern of activity in the House is unique, a point endorsed by one backbencher in his statement that "the activity of a Member of Parliament and the way in which he distributes his time and energies is a fairly complex subject. I would think that there are 630 answers and each one of them different". (2) Nevertheless, the uniqueness of individual patterns of backbench behaviour is perhaps overstated, for general patterns, though frequently complex and convoluted, can be discerned in parliamentary activity.

The second problem of analysis, and one specific to this study, concerns the measurement of specialization. In its literal sense to specialize means, according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary, to specially or exclusively study one particular branch of a subject. Hence, R.M. Punnett in the only major study of specialization in the House of Commons (on the part of Frontbench Opposition Spokesmen) constructed an 'index of specialization' which measured the extent to which a Member's parliamentary activity was concentrated upon any single issue area. (3)

The major advantage of this index is its simplicity. Unfortunately, however, its very simplicity may prevent the accurate measurement of the level of specialization. Indeed, it is possible for two M.P.s to score identically in Punnett's index, yet for them to display markedly different profiles of specialization. For example, both Members may devote 50% of their attention to a single subject, and so receive the same score in the index; but one Member might spread the remaining 50% of his activity evenly over twenty or more subject areas, while the other Member concentrates upon a single additional area. Clearly the first M.P. is less specialized than the second, but Punnett's index is incapable of making such a distinction. Indeed, an earlier 'index of specialization' used at a preliminary stage of the present study suffered from a similar weakness. (4)

To overcome the deficiencies of earlier indexes, the 'index of specialization' used in this, and successive, chapters is based upon the 'coefficient of variation' (sometimes referred to as the 'coefficient of variability'). (5) This coefficient provides a relative measure of dispersion related to the mean as a measure of central tendency.

Whilst taking into account the spread of activity, the coefficient essentially weights contributions according to their deviation from the mean. In this manner, the more extreme the deviation the higher the coefficient score. The advantage of this coefficient is that it

allows a comparison of the same variable to be made in spite of different arithmetic means. Hence it is possible to compare the dispersion of activity across the various subject areas, for M.P.s with widely differing total levels of activity. (6)

To supplement the 'index of specialization' an additional index, measuring the total spread of attention on the part of each backbencher, is also used in this chapter.

### Methodology

A stratified random sample of 113 backbenchers, that is one-quarter of the total number of backbenchers in 1970-1, was constructed to reflect differences within the House according to (i) party, (ii) length of parliamentary service, (iii) occupation, (iv) activity at Question Time. (7) The sample was drawn from 451 backbenchers; frontbenchers namely members of the Government (including Parliamentary Private Secretaries), Opposition Spokesmen, along with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means were excluded.

The activity of each of the 113 backbenchers was monitored in four procedures over a period of two parliamentary sessions. The procedures examined were Parliamentary Questions, both oral and written, Debates on the floor of the House, Early Day Motions and Standing and Select Committees. (8) Two parliamentary sessions were chosen to enable cross-time comparisons of the level and nature of backbench specialization to be made. The two sessions studied were 1970-1 and 1972-3; the 1970-1 session was selected primarily because it was the first session after the 1970 general election, and as such provides an opportunity to study the pattern of 'socialization' of a cohort of

newly elected M.P.s. It also represents the last parliamentary session to be left relatively undisturbed by the constitutional debate over entry into, and continued membership of, the European Community. (9) The second session, 1972-3, in contrast, represents the first full session after accession to the Community, and also the last complete session of the 1970-74 Parliament. No claims are, however, made that either session represents a 'typical' parliamentary session. Indeed, few sessions can ever be described as 'typical'. Each session since 1968, for example, has manifested a-typical features: 1969-70 witnessed the unusual events concerning In Place of Strife and the abandonment of the Parliament No. 2 Bill; 1970-71 saw the protracted struggle over the Industrial Relations Bill on the floor of the House; 1971-72 was dominated by the consideration of the European Communities Bill; session 1973-74 was foreshortened by the events of January-February 1974, and subsequent sessions up until May 1979, have been characterized by minority governments.

The activity of each Member in the sample, in each of the formal procedures in both sessions, was noted and coded by subject area. (10) A classification of thirty-five subject areas was devised, based largely on the classification used by Oakley and Rose. (11) This categorization was preferred to the more widely used one, based on the areas of responsibility of each central government department, as it allowed for a more precise differentiation to be made between subject areas. In using a department-based classification the three discrete areas of local government, housing and transport would have had to have been classified under the nebulous heading of 'environment'. However, it is apparent that backbenchers do not think of subjects in such amorphous categories. (See Chapter 6).

### The Spread of Backbench Attention

The basic proposition to be examined throughout this chapter is that the backbench Member of Parliament, in response to conditions of complexity and diversity will be expected to divide his attention unequally amongst the multiplicity of issues demanding his activity in the House. The extent to which the backbencher specializes, and the degree to which "the operational code of the House of Commons actually encourages specialization" (12) therefore provides our research focus.

One simple, but crude, measure of the concentration of attention in the House is the total number of subject areas in which the backbencher is active. And as Table 5.1A reveals, most Members in our sample confine themselves to a fairly narrow range of issues. Indeed, only in signing Early Day Motions do most Members spread their activity relatively widely; and, even then, the mean number of subject areas covered per Member is less than half of the total number of subjects in the coding frame (15 in 1970-1, and 12 in 1972-3).

The mean range of attention at Question Time is somewhat narrower at 10 and 8 subjects respectively for the two sessions under study. Indeed, between one-sixth of Members in 1970-1, and one-quarter in 1972-73, focused upon three or fewer issues in asking Questions. In view of the 'freedom' and 'scope' of this procedure the limited spread of attention is perhaps surprising. The fact that most Members did not take the opportunity to range widely over the areas of government policy is even more notable, given that Questions, unlike most other parliamentary procedures, are absolved from the direction of the party Whip. Indeed, "Question Time remains almost the only vestige of the rights backbenchers enjoyed in the 19th century" (13) and the freedom

of the backbencher is further enhanced by the fact that he is allowed to raise, with relatively few restrictions, any issue at any time during the session. Thus as Henry Lucy noted, over eighty years ago, "...the question hour, touching on all subjects under the sun, is a microcosm of the sitting", (14) and as Chester and Bowring still maintain "Questions.....remain much the most personal of all the activities of the House, reflecting much more closely than any other form of procedure the everyday activities of Members, the problems that concern them, their personal predilections and idiosyncracies". (15)

TABLE 5.1A Number of subject areas covered by each Member\* in Debates, Questions and Early Day Motions.

\* Conservative and Labour Members. (All tables in Chapter 5 refer to Conservative and Labour Members only).

<u>No. of subjects</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>		<u>Questions</u>		<u>E.D.M.s</u>	
	1970-1 (n 108) %	1972-3 (n 95) %	1970-1 (n 107) %	1972-3 (n 91) %	1970-1 (n 109) %	1972-3 (n 98) %
1 - 3	45.3	54.7	16.8	26.4	3.7	4.1
4 - 10	52.8	43.2	39.3	44.0	19.3	35.7
11 - 35	<u>1.9</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>43.9</u>	<u>29.6</u>	<u>77.0</u>	<u>60.2</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Mean	4.3	3.9	10.0	8.1	14.5	11.6
Median	3.8	3.3	9.3	6.4	14.9	11.4
Std. Dev.	2.5	2.4	6.5	5.7	5.5	4.4

The smallest spread of attention is, however, to be found in activity in debates, for in the first session of our study just under one-half of Members confined their speeches to between one to three subjects; in the second session, just over one-half of the sample spoke on this number of issues. Indeed, only two Members in each session spoke on more than eleven subjects, and, even then, the maximum spread was

thirteen subjects. The narrow range of activity for most M.P.s on the floor is adequately reflected in the mean number of subjects spoken upon, which is notably low at four subjects for both sessions (standard deviation 2.5 and 2.4 respectively).

A further point worthy of note in Table 5.1A is that the proportion of Members in each of the cells in the frequency distribution, for each procedure, remains relatively consistent over time. Indeed, as the correlation coefficients set out in Table 5.1B reveal, there is a strong, positive association between the number of subject areas in which a backbencher is active in 1970-1, and his spread of attention in 1972-3.

TABLE 5.1B The number of subjects covered per Member in 1970-1 correlated with the number covered in 1972-3. (Pearson's r)

<u>Debate</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
(n 95)	(n 90)	(n 97)
r 0.57*	r 0.70*	r 0.65*
r <sup>2</sup> 0.32	r <sup>2</sup> 0.49	r <sup>2</sup> 0.43

\* significant 0.0001

One final point to be noted in Table 5.1A is that the mean number of subjects covered per Member is smaller in all procedures in the second session. This narrower spread of attention may indicate that backbenchers, after an explosive release of energy in the House in the first session after a general election, eventually settle into more restrained patterns of behaviour in later sessions.

The level of backbench specialization

Whilst it is clear from Table 5.1A that most backbenchers, in debates and Questions at least, restrict their activity to a fairly narrowly defined

group of subjects, it is not apparent whether their attention is focused evenly, or unevenly, upon the differing subject areas. In order to measure the distribution of activity across subject areas an index of specialization, based upon the coefficient of variation as a relative measure of dispersion, was therefore constructed. The upper limit of this index being 5.92 and the lower limit being 0. Thus the true generalist scores 0 by dividing his activity evenly among all thirty-five subject areas, while the true specialist scores 5.92 by focusing solely upon one subject. The more extreme the deviation of activity on any one subject from the mean, the higher will be the score in the index. In practice, however, no Member in the sample scored as a true generalist; the lowest score noted was 1.16, whereby the activity of the backbencher was fairly evenly spread across eighteen issue areas. Although several other Members had a wider spread of activity (the widest being twenty-nine subjects) their attention was less evenly distributed across the range of subjects. Their index scores were, therefore, greater than 1.16, as the index essentially weights scores according to their deviation from the mean, even though it does take into account the total spread of activity.

The profile of informal specialization in each procedure in 1970-1 and 1972-3 is shown in Table 5.2A. The categories in this frequency distribution represent high, medium and low levels of specialization. (16)

To be ranked as 'highly specialized' a backbencher required a score of at least 4.34, which approximates to a concentration of activity in the ratio 67:33. A score of 2.75 (approximating to a dispersion of activity of roughly 30:30:20:10:10) or more, is required for a Member to be ranked as 'moderately specialized', whilst Members scoring 2.74, or less, are classified as 'low specialists'.

TABLE 5.2A Index of Specialization

<u>Level of specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>						
	<u>Debates</u>		<u>Questions</u>		<u>E.D.M.s</u>		
	1970-1 (n 108) %	1972-3 (n 95) %	1970-1 (n 107) %	1972-3 (n 91) %	1970-1 (n 109) %	1972-3 (n 98) %	
High 5.92 - 4.34	20.4	22.1	15.9	17.6	1.8	3.1	
Medium 4.33 - 2.75	62.0	63.2	38.3	38.5	2.8	6.1	
Low 2.74 - 1.16	<u>17.6</u>	<u>14.7</u>	<u>45.8</u>	<u>44.0</u>	<u>95.4</u>	<u>90.8</u>	
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	
Mean	3.72	3.83	3.10	3.13	1.83	2.10	
Median	3.54	3.58	2.84	2.92	1.65	1.87	
Std. Dev.	0.98	1.07	1.45	1.19	0.73	0.77	

It is apparent from Table 5.2A that the profile of specialization varies from one procedure to another, though the profile is pretty stable over time. This latter point is reflected in Table 5.2B where fairly strong and statistically significant correlations are to be observed between the index scores of Members in 1970-1 and those in 1972-3. In questioning activity 38% of variance between the two sets of scores is explicable in terms of their linear association, in E.D.M.s the proportion of variation explained falls to 27% and in debates falls further still to only 15%

TABLE 5.2B Specialization scores 1970-1 correlated with specialization scores 1972-3: (Pearson's r).

<u>Debates</u> (n 95)	<u>Questions</u> (n 90)	<u>E.D.M.s</u> (n 97)
r 0.38***	r 0.61***	r 0.52***
r <sup>2</sup> 0.15	r <sup>2</sup> 0.38	r <sup>2</sup> 0.27

\*\*\* significant 0.0001

Returning to Table 5.2A, it is clear that activity in debate is most specialized, with one in five backbenchers being ranked at the highest

levels of the index. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Members in this procedure specialize to a high, or moderately high, degree (82% in 1970-1, and 85% in 1972-3). However, the backbenchers in the sample appear to be rather less willing to concentrate their activity in asking Parliamentary Questions. For, although questioning activity still appears to be relatively specialized, with one half of backbenchers ranking as high, or moderate, specialists; the single largest proportion of Members in any one cell is to be found at the lowest level of the index. Activity in E.D.M.s is, however, the least specialized of all three procedures, with over 90% of Members in either session failing to reach a score of 2.75. The corollary of the wide mean spread of activity in E.D.M.s thus appears to be a fairly even dispersion of attention amongst subject areas.

These variations in the level of specialization between procedures suggest important differences in the nature of each mode of parliamentary activity. Indeed, each procedure appears to offer differing advantages to the backbencher in the performance of his legislative duties and in the pursuit of his personal goals. In turn each mode exacts its own 'costs of participation', calculated in terms of the preparation time, the performance time and the 'wasted' time (i.e. the probability of participation) needed to reap the advantage of each procedure. An assessment of these relative costs may, therefore, provide some explanation for the differences in the aggregate levels of specialization observable in Table 5.2A. For it may be argued that an 'inexpensive' procedure, in terms of its costs of participation, may enable the backbencher to range widely at minimal cost, whilst a more 'expensive' mode of activity may serve to focus the Member's attention upon specific issues, because of the high costs involved. However, before examining the relative costs of each of the three procedures, a distinction should perhaps be drawn between 'theoretical' and 'actual'

costs - as these may not always be identical.

### Costs of Preparation

In theory the highest costs of preparation are exacted by debates. Few Members can speak, and expect to be listened to, without some prior organization of their thoughts. A reasoned contribution to debate normally requires considerable preparation - particularly as it is commonly believed in the House that the quality of a speech is more important than its length. Thus, as one Member remarked at the Granada dinners, "you don't win respect only by making speeches. You've got to give some indication of work, of doing some research, of knowing what you're talking about". (17) Most Members, therefore, at the very least, prepare short notes to guide their thoughts; many are in addition briefed by outside associations, (18) and still others undertake their own research.

Somewhat lesser preparation costs appear to be incurred in the tabling of Questions, though in practice these costs may still prove to be substantial. To be in order a Question must ask for information or for action; must relate to a matter within the Government's responsibility; and must not have already been covered by an answer, or by a refusal to answer, given in the same session. (19) A backbencher may, on occasion, have to spend some considerable time drafting a Question so as to circumvent these restrictions. Furthermore, if a Member's oral Question is eventually answered in the House, he needs to be "well prepared", as Fred Willey notes, "to make the best of it and.....take the Minister by surprise". (20) Similarly, a backbencher may incur considerable preparation costs in drafting written Questions, particularly when mounting a campaign by tabling fifty or

more Questions on the same topic, as substantial reserves of ingenuity and stamina are often needed on such occasions.

In comparison the preparation costs involved in signing Early Day Motions appear to be small. With the exception of the sponsors of the Motion, who will have spent time drafting and canvassing support for the Motion, the sole cost for most other signatories is the time expended in reading and signing the Motion.

If procedures are ranked in accordance to their theoretical preparation costs then it can be seen that E.D.M.s feature at the least expensive end of the scale, Questions occupy an intermediate position, while debates rank at the most expensive end of this scale. In ranking the procedures in this manner it may be posited that the less time needed to prepare for participation, the greater the likelihood that the backbencher will be able to afford to spread his activity widely and evenly across subject areas; whereas, in contrast, the greater the preparation costs the lower his capability to range widely over the various issue areas. Indeed, Punnett makes a similar point in his comment that "the higher level of specialization of debates than in oral or written questions (for Opposition Spokesmen) to some extent may be consequent upon the level of preparation that is necessary for most debating contributions". (21)

However, it should be noted that the actual preparation costs may not always correspond to the theoretical weightings set out above. On occasion, Members may have spent no time at all in preparing for a contribution in the Chamber. It is not unknown, for example, for backbenchers to be exhorted by their party Whips to speak in a debate, for which they are unprepared, simply to prolong the discussion. Other fortuitous circumstances may also prompt a Member to speak in debate

without prior preparation: thus Michael O'Halloran "in a recent debate of palpitating boredom confessed he couldn't take a moment more, and rose to creep away. At which very moment, the Tory who'd been speaking sat down; the Speaker called O'Halloran: and the Member for Islington delivered the least prepared speech of his life". (22) However, the willingness of most backbenchers to intervene in debate in such bizarre circumstances appears to be closely restricted. For example, of those backbenchers interviewed by the author, all could easily recall occasions when the Whips had called upon them at short notice to contribute in debate. Yet none admitted to having actually complied with their Whips' requests; (23) for they all believed, along with Tam Dalyell, that "it's absolutely vital for a politician to know when not to speak. The best thing I've learnt is not to open my trap about things I know nothing about". (24)

### Costs of Performance

The three procedures can also be ranked on a scale of 'costs' according to the length of performance time required for participation. E.D.M.s appear to exact the lowest 'performance costs', as the time expended in signing the Motion is the sole cost incurred by most signatories. Similarly, the tabling of written Questions is an 'inexpensive' mode of parliamentary activity in terms of its 'costs of performance'. Oral Questions, on the other hand, require that the Member be present in the Chamber at the time that his Question is raised, in order for him to ask his 'penetrating' supplementary Question; (25) and so exact greater performance costs. However, the greatest costs are incurred in participating in debate - for the backbencher is customarily required to be present in the Chamber, at the very least, for a short period before, and after, his own contribution.

When these costs of performance are added to the costs of preparation they serve to accentuate the differences between each procedure. Indeed, as these costs are cumulative, the relative 'distance' between each procedure on our scale of costs increases, and, concomitantly, the strength of the relationship between low procedural costs and a wide and even spread of activity, and between high costs and specialized activity, also increases.

### Cost 'Efficiency'

If the 'efficiency' of each procedure, in terms of the ability to secure maximum reward for the minimum expenditure of energy, is considered in relation to the above costs, then clearly some modes of parliamentary activity are more 'cost-efficient' than others. (For the purposes of our discussion the 'reward' accruing to the backbencher is the public expression of his interest in any particular subject - in the form of print in the published records of Parliament). The 'cost-efficiency' of each procedure may be of consequence in determining the profile of specialization. For it may be postulated that a highly 'efficient' procedure, that is one in which the probability of reaping a printed 'reward' is high while the costs of participation are low, may encourage the backbench Member to be relatively active across a wide range of subjects. Conversely, where the probability of obtaining a 'reward' in a given subject area is uncertain, yet the procedural costs of participation are simultaneously high, then it may be anticipated that the backbencher will focus his attention upon a narrow range of issues in an attempt to maximize his chances of participating in the consideration of a specific subject area.

By this argument E.D.M.s rank as the most cost-efficient procedure,

insofar as they reap the maximum recognition of activity (a signature in print) for the minimum preparation and participation costs. The next most cost-efficient mode of parliamentary activity is the written Question in that a guaranteed printed response is secured at relatively little cost. (26) The cost-efficiency of the oral Question is, however, much lower than that of the unstarred Question. In the first place the number of oral Questions asked per Member is limited, to the extent that an M.P. may table no more than eight Questions in the period of ten sitting days ahead of the date on which the Minister is able to answer, with no more than two Questions for answer on any day. Secondly, the backbencher stands only a one in three chance of having his Question answered in the House, given the combination of the tabling restrictions, the rota system, the total number of Questions asked, and the shortness of Question Time itself. To surmount these obstacles the backbencher may well adopt the specialization strategy in an effort to improve his chances of obtaining an oral response on an issue of specific concern.

The least cost-efficient mode of activity of all appears, however, to be debates: the probability of a backbencher being called to speak upon a particular issue of concern is low, yet costs of participation are, as we have seen, high. Firstly, the choice of subjects for discussion on the floor of the House is largely the prerogative of the frontbenchers. The Government initiates the majority of debates, while the Opposition frontbench determines the choice on Supply Days. Backbenchers are subsequently left with very few opportunities to initiate debate: the main occasions arising on the adjournment (27) or, to a lesser extent, on matters of emergency under standing order nine, or on the Second Reading on Consolidated Fund Bills.

Moreover there is no guarantee that a backbencher will be called to

speak in debate even when an issue of personal concern is chosen for discussion on the floor of the House. The time available for backbench contributions in debate is still severely restricted; a fact noted with disapproval by Frank Hooley, who calculated that in an average one-day debate there are "six hours of debate, two and a half hours of which are used by frontbenchers, with three and a half hours being taken up by backbenchers. That means that about seven honourable Members from each side contribute to the debate.....it is not satisfactory". (28)

One common strategy, adopted by backbenchers to increase their chances of contributing to a debate on a matter of special interest to them, is to limit their intervention in discussions on other matters. In the 1970-74 Parliament this strategy was underpinned by the system employed by Selwyn Lloyd, as Mr. Speaker, for selecting speakers in debates. As John Grant notes, this system appeared to take into account the number of times a backbencher had spoken previously in a session and also allowed for special interests too. (29) Indeed, one Labour backbencher interviewed by the author was adamant that he would be unwilling to "jeopardize" his chances of speaking on a matter of prime concern by contributing widely on other, more "peripheral" issues. But even in adopting this strategy there is no certainty that the backbencher will be called by the Speaker. For example, Maureen Colquhoun bemoaned the fact that in spite of having a degree in economics "I have sat through every single economic debate in the House since I've been here, right to the very end, trying to speak, but I have never been called". (30) And it is this very uncertainty of being called to speak which makes debate an inefficient mode of activity, for there is a high probability that the time spent in preparation, and sitting in the Chamber waiting to speak, will not produce a tangible reward in terms of column inches in Hansard.

Cost 'Effectiveness'

'Participation costs' and 'efficiency' are not, however, the sole, nor necessarily the primary, factors influencing the backbencher's choice of procedure. Probably of more importance, is the 'effectiveness' of each mode in facilitating the performance of his legislative duties and in the advancement of his personal goals. Each procedure may, therefore, be seen to offer differing advantages to different groups of backbenchers, according to their legislative objectives and personal goals. In turn, the motivations for using one procedure rather than another may buttress the patterns of specialization associated with each procedure. However, before developing this argument it should be noted that there are certain problems associated with an assessment of the 'effectiveness' of each procedure. Firstly, any advantage to be gained from the use of one procedure, rather than another, ultimately depends upon the skill and technique of an individual backbencher. Two M.P.s may obtain totally different effects, for example, in tabling broadly similar Questions, simply because of differences in their inquisitorial style. Secondly, an assessment of 'effectiveness' needs to consider the distinction between 'theoretical' and 'actual' parameters of influence; and thirdly, a comparative judgement of the three procedures needs to take into account the multiplicity of roles and goals that a backbencher may seek to fulfil in any one of them. Bearing these problems in mind, it is possible to argue, nevertheless, that a particular procedure may appear more attractive to a Member with a certain mix of personal goals than to another backbencher with a different ranking of priorities.

If, for example, the paramount goal of a backbencher is to enhance his chances of re-election, he would naturally seek to publicize his concern for the interests of his constituents. Whilst the M.P. would

use any procedure for this purpose, Question Time would appear to hold distinct attractions for him - in view of the widespread media coverage of Questions. For, as one of the participants at the Granada dinners noted: "You get much more publicity per line for a Question than you will ever get per line for a speech". (31) Furthermore, as Cranley Onslow argues, Question Time offers a valuable opportunity "to satisfy your constituents that you are an active Member of the House (by doing) something on the floor of the House", particularly "as opportunities to make speeches are more limited now than they once were". (32) Question Time may not, however, hold such pronounced attractions for the ambitious backbencher, intent upon promotion. D.N. Chester does not think that "anybody has reached Cabinet status by asking oral Questions. It is not one of the ways of climbing rapidly up the ladder.....I do not think I would advise the young man wanting to reach the frontbench to ask a lot of Questions". (33)

The ambitious backbencher may well be better advised to further his political career by building a reputation in debates on the floor of the House. Indeed, Julian Critchley recently offered this advice to the newly elected Vivian Bendall on how best to rise in the ranks of the Tory party: "He should speak regularly in the House. He must not be discouraged if not called, or by the fact that no one listens and that few read Hansard, The Whips notice". (34) Critchley's advice reflects the almost universal belief in the House that reputations are to be made on the floor of the Chamber, and that the demeanour of the backbencher in debate is a key indicator as to his potential for frontbench office. Performance in debate is so particularly important in the House of Commons because "there is probably no other political system in the world where a politician's career depends so much on his ability at the despatch box". (35) This point was recently emphasized by Sir Peter Rawlinson who stressed the importance of drawing Ministers

from a Parliament "in which prominence is won by effectiveness in debate.....'imported' Ministers have not been particularly successful (witness Mr. Frank Cousins) since the art of parliamentary debate..... is not quickly mastered". (36)

In addition to alerting the frontbench of his presence, activity in debate may also prove of value to the backbencher as a means of establishing his ideological 'pedigree' within the House. However, a more effective and cost-efficient method of making explicit the particular notion of socialism or conservatism that a Member may subscribe to is through the signing of Early Day Motions. In this procedure a backbencher may display his allegiance to a particular 'faction' or 'tendency', and so establish his doctrinal credentials with his party colleagues as E.D.M.s represent "spontaneous un-whipped backbench manifestos". (37) Whilst backbenchers sign E.D.M.s for a variety of motives, (38) these Motions do nevertheless represent free and public statements of support for a particular point of view. Not surprisingly, therefore, most of the academic attention focused upon E.D.M.s has been devoted to their use as a tool of analysis in the study of backbench attitudes. (39) Thus Berrington, for example, has established that a common approach is evident over a wide range of issues on the left of the Labour Party:

"The apostles of a socialist foreign policy usually stand for a militant programme of common ownership at home, faith in nuclear disarmament, hostility to the American alliance, antagonism to the level of defence spending, have tended to be accompanied by a messianic belief in the reconstruction of society, in the establishment of a new economic and social order. The left wing socialist would claim, moreover, that his opinions on what appear

to be separate and distinct issues, are informed by a single and coherent doctrine". (40)

This very coherence of outlook may subsequently prompt wide ranging activity in E.D.M.s on the part of a significant number of Labour Members. Although such homogeneity of outlook may be lacking within the Conservative party, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suggest that those Tory backbenchers keen to display their ideological inclinations will do so across a range of issues, even though these issues are not perceived to be logically inter-related as on the Labour left. The exact extent of intra-party differences will be examined later in this chapter, all that is being suggested here is that the purpose of signing E.D.M.s - be it an expression of opinion, or an alignment with some informal friendship group (41) - leads to activity across a range of issues.

In practice the nature of the relationship between a representative's personal goals and his usage of particular procedures is unlikely to be so clearly defined as that outlined above. Nevertheless, as a general proposition it is reasonable to suggest that each procedure offers distinct advantages to differing groups of Members holding particular legislative and personal goals. These objectives may in turn influence their level of specialization in each procedure. Thus the re-election oriented Member, using Parliamentary Questions to publicize his concern for his constituents' interests, may take advantage of the low procedural costs of that procedure to spread his activity fairly widely across the subjects of importance in his constituency. Likewise, the backbencher intent on establishing his ideological pedigree may seek to do so across a wide range of policy fields - and the low procedural costs exacted by E.D.M.s assists him in this task. However, the backbencher, keen to develop his reputation in the House, may be aware that to intervene too frequently in debate, and across

too wide a spread of subjects, may prove to be counterproductive, should he come to be regarded as a 'dilettante' by his parliamentary colleagues. Furthermore, the procedural costs of debates may serve to limit the number of contributions made by any single backbencher. Thus the various costs incurred in participating in any given mode of parliamentary activity may, in conjunction with the 'effectiveness' of each procedure, directly influence the level of specialization in each procedure.

### Specialization and Party

The first hypothesis to be tested is that the profile of specialization will differ markedly between backbenchers in each of the two major parties. The assumption underpinning this hypothesis is that conceptions of representative role are roughly dichotomized between Labour and Conservative Members. Indeed, Kenneth Newton contends that "a common knowledge of Conservative and Labour policies leads one to expect a stronger preference for the trustee role among Conservatives and a stronger Labour preference for the delegate role". (42) Clearly the Conservative party has traditionally been the bastion of the trustee 'style' and the national 'focus' of representation. It has consistently rejected any form of 'delegation', (43) and has fervently supported the belief that "the real importance and strength of the House is founded on the independence of its Members.....voting according to the judgement that they form on their own independent assessment of the facts and debate". (44) And its 'focus' is clearly the nation, for as Disraeli propounded: "the Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing". (45) Therefore, in line with our contention in Chapter 3, that the adoption of a trustee 'style' and 'wide' representational 'focus' has as its corollary a generalized

pattern of legislative activity, it is to be anticipated that Conservative backbenchers will disperse their attention fairly evenly and widely across the various subject areas in the House. One established Conservative backbencher implicitly accepted this hypothesis in his statement that "the pattern of my activity in the House of Commons, and indeed in my constituency, varies from day to day, since one is obviously, by one's very representative duty, influenced by all issues which crop up". (46)

In contrast, it is frequently asserted that Labour Members of Parliament should act as delegates from their constituencies, or more accurately, from their constituency parties; and that they should seek to promote the 'interest' of the working class and more specifically the 'interest' of functional groupings of working class members. To this extent a Labour backbencher may be expected to concentrate upon those "matters directly affecting the welfare of the working class such as insurance benefits and housing". (47) In particular the activity of trade union sponsored Members may skew the aggregate profile of specialization within the Labour party, as their conception of the representative role appears to entail a narrow, neo-functional focus of representation. In fact W.D. Muller argues that "the organisational affiliation of the trade union M.P.s gives emphasis to their specialization and lays them open to the charge of neglecting the public interest.....By publicly flaunting their rejection of the 19th century liberal or radical concepts of representation - concepts which emphasise the independence of the M.P. from outside commitments and are still among the more common definitions of the role of the M.P. - the trade unionists offend the defenders of these traditional myths of representation". (48)

A rough dichotomy of representative role orientations may thus be easily posited between Labour and Conservative backbenchers. Indeed,

if this split is in practice as pronounced as that suggested above, then marked differences should be apparent between the levels of specialization of the two groups of backbenchers - with Tory backbenchers being generally less specialized than their Labour counterparts. However, the data on the spread of activity for our sample reveals no consistent differences in the aggregate patterns of activity between the two parties (see Table 5.3). Only in the crosstabulations for activity in E.D.M.s do these differences become statistically significant, by virtue of the fact that the activity of Labour M.P.s is more widely dispersed - particular in the second session. Similarly the only statistically significant correlation coefficients for the association between the number of subject areas covered per Member and party <sup>(49)</sup> are found in E.D.M.s. The positive nature of these coefficients indicate that the wider spread of activity is generally associated with Labour M.P.s. However, this association is still substantially weak as the coefficients explain only 12% of the variance between the two variables in 1972-3, and only 6% in 1970-1. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the differences observable in activity in E.D.M.s are explicable in terms of divergent representative role orientations. (Indeed, the direction of these differences is the opposite of that posited above, as Labour Members display a more generalized pattern of activity than Conservative backbenchers). A more plausible explanation may, therefore, be sought in the nature of E.D.M.s and the purposes for which they are signed. Thus, many Labour backbenchers may willingly sign E.D.M.s concerned with a wide range of issues because they see such issues to be inextricably linked as part of a coherent ideological perspective. The activity of Conservatives, on the other hand, may be more circumscribed as they are inclined to renounce over-arching doctrinal views and so regard subjects as discrete areas with no inexorable link between them. More simply, the Conservative backbenchers in the sample, as supporters



of the Government, may also have refrained from signing Motions critical of the frontbench, or those demanding action on its part, across a wide range of issues.

In the two other procedures of Questions and debates, the association between party and the spread of activity is notably weak in both sessions. The crosstabulation for Questions in 1972-3 in Table 5.3 does produce a statistically significant difference between the profile of the two major parties. Most of the difference is accounted for by the majority of Conservatives being grouped in the medium range of the distribution, whereas Labour Members are fairly evenly dispersed among all three cells.

When we examine the index of specialization (Table 5.4) no significant differences are to be found between the respective profiles of specialization of the two major parties. Correspondingly, although there is a positive correlation between the level of specialization and party in all procedures in both sessions - which indicates that high scores in the index are associated slightly more with Labour than Conservative Members - the correlation coefficients are notably weak and, at best (in Questions), explain only 2% of the variance. Therefore our hypothesis, that the differing conceptions of representative role held by Conservative and Labour backbenchers will lead to distinct patterns of specialization on their part, can be rejected. Yet this is more a rejection of the simplistic dichotomization of role orientations along party lines than a rejection of the fundamental hypothesis that conceptions of representative role are associated with the level of legislative specialization. In reality the distribution of representative role orientations in the House of Commons is far more complex than suggested above in the simple hypothesis. Indeed, as we have already suggested in Chapter Three,

TABLE 5.4 Index of specialization crosstabulated with Party  
(Labour and Conservative) 1970-1 and 1972-3

a). 1970-1

<u>Level of specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>		<u>Questions</u>		<u>E.D.M.s</u>	
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>
	(n 57)	(n 51)	(n 56)	(n 51)	(n 56)	(n 53)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	19.3	21.6	12.5	19.6	3.6	0.0
Medium	64.9	58.8	39.3	37.3	0.0	5.7
Low	<u>15.8</u>	<u>19.6</u>	<u>48.2</u>	<u>43.1</u>	<u>96.4</u>	<u>94.3</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  0.45 df2 n sign  $\chi^2$  1.03 df2 n sign

r 0.10

r 0.14

r 0.07

r<sup>2</sup> 0.01

r<sup>2</sup> 0.02

r<sup>2</sup> 0.00

b). 1972-3

<u>Level of specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>		<u>Questions</u>		<u>E.D.M.s</u>	
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>
	(n 46)	(n 49)	(n 44)	(n 47)	(n 47)	(n 51)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	19.6	24.5	15.9	19.2	4.3	2.0
Medium	67.4	59.2	29.5	46.8	8.5	3.9
Low	<u>13.0</u>	<u>16.3</u>	<u>54.5</u>	<u>34.0</u>	<u>87.2</u>	<u>94.1</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  0.69 df2 n sign  $\chi^2$  4.07 df2 n sign

r 0.04

r 0.15

r 0.07

r<sup>2</sup> 0.00

r<sup>2</sup> 0.02

r<sup>2</sup> 0.00

individual Members may hold different styles of representation either serially or simultaneously, so that a mix of styles is to be anticipated on the part of backbenchers within each of the major parties. To determine the relative mix of styles and foci within the parties would, however, entail a detailed and extensive interview programme with M.P.s: a task which is unfortunately beyond the resources of the present study - yet one which is an essential stage for further research.

### Specialization and length of service in Parliament

A second hypothesis to be tested is that a backbencher's level of specialization in his parliamentary activity will be influenced by his length of service in the House. Sufficient evidence is already available to suggest that Member's attitudes to their parliamentary duties vary significantly according to their length of service in the House. (50) Indeed, Barker and Rush have found pronounced 'generational breaks' in the attitudes of Members, with the 'breaks' corresponding to the dates of general elections. Significantly, the shared attitudes of each 'generation' tended to transcend party lines, in the sense that Members of a common 'generation' tended to agree more with each other than with party colleagues of a different generation. Although Barker and Rush, on the basis of their data, could not 'prove' the existence of parliamentary generations they nevertheless believed that the concept offered a fruitful line for further research.

One reason for the selection of the 1970-1 session for study was, therefore, because it offered the opportunity to observe the activity of a new 'generation' of M.P.s in their first session in the House, and so to discover whether their pattern of activity differed significantly from that of more established backbenchers. Subsequently

Members were grouped into three 'generations', according to their length of service in the House by the end of the 1970-1 session. The cohorts were formed on the basis of (i) one year's service or less (entry corresponding to the 1970 general election and subsequent by-elections), (ii) two to seven years service (entry at the 1964 and 1966 general elections and subsequent by-elections) and (iii) eight years service or more (entry at general and by-elections before 1964).

On the basis of the existing literature on backbench behaviour in the House it is possible to develop at least three hypotheses as to the nature of the relationship between specialization and the length of experience in Parliament. Firstly, a negative, linear relationship may be posited, whereby 'new' M.P.s specialize to a greater degree than their longer serving colleagues. Indeed, new Members are, according to W.D. Muller, immediately counselled to specialize on first entering the House. (51) Many M.P.s appear to take this advice, for as Paul Rose M.P. points out there are a "growing number of newer Members concerned with serious research and pressure on specific issues. They do their homework in depth and their contributions are made when they have expertise to offer and something original to say". (52) At the other end of the scale it is possible that as parliamentary 'senescence' takes its toll the satisfaction of the long serving Member with the traditional methods and workings of the House, and its inherent amateurism, increases. At least one new Labour Member is convinced that "on average older Members tend to be generalists in that they spread their interest, though some of them are positively disinterested in anything". (53) A somewhat more charitable view is that senior backbenchers become drawn to the 'generalist' role by an incremental extension of their interests over time. So that an interest in one issue area may gradually extend into activity in a related area, and so on, until the M.P. comes to view all issues as being necessarily

interrelated.

A second, and conflicting, hypothesis is that the level of specialization increases along with the length of parliamentary service. In which case a positive, roughly linear, relationship may be posited, with the new Member acting as a 'generalist' and the more senior Member performing the specialist role. One strategy open to the new Member on entering the House is indeed to adjust to his new role by acquainting himself with a wide range of issues. In fact, one established Conservative Member characterized new recruits in their first session as "blue ass flies flitting around from policy area to policy area". (54)

Moreover, ambitious novice backbenchers may also recognize that "to become too highly specialized is to commit oneself to being a career backbencher". (55) It may be, therefore, that senior Members with no hope, nor prospect, of promotion may more readily adopt the specialist role. In addition, former Ministers on the backbenches may continue to focus upon the areas of their former ministerial responsibilities, rather than return to the performance of the generalist role. This trend was highlighted by a former Labour Cabinet Member, who noted that his specialization in defence and international affairs as a backbencher stemmed basically from his tenure of office as Foreign Secretary, and an earlier post as a junior Minister in the War Office. (56)

Thirdly, the association between the level of specialization and parliamentary service may possibly be non-linear in form - insofar as the peak level of specialization is reached at some intermediate stage of a backbencher's career, or alternatively the generational profile is affected by the impact of a particularly specialized cohort of Members. The generation of Members first elected in 1964 and 1966 have in fact been identified as just such a cohort. Bernard Crick, for example, argues that in the 1960 s "a kind of sea change was

passing over the Parliamentary Labour Party.....here were new men with strong emotional commitments still to the 'Labour Movement'.....but with professional habits of mind and work". (57) This impression was substantiated by Barker and Rush's finding that, in terms of attitudes, the image of the 1960's Labour intake as a 'reformist element' was indeed justified. In view of this image it may reasonably be hypothesised that the profile of specialization of the 1960's entrants will be generally higher than that of the other generations in the House.

In practice, however, there appears to be a weak positive association between the level of specialization and the length of service in the House. The actual relationship appears to approximate most closely to the roughly linear, positive association postulated in the second of our hypotheses. All of the correlation coefficients in Table 5.5A are positive and, apart from those for activity in debates, are statistically significant. Yet, once again, the coefficients explain little of the variance between the two variables - at best 8% (in Questions, 1972-3) and at worst only 1% (in debate, 1972-3).

TABLE 5.5A Index of specialization scores correlated with length of parliamentary service, 1970-1 and 1972-3. (Pearson's r)

<u>Session 1970-1</u>	<u>Debate</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r 0.12	r 0.17*	r 0.23**
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.02	r <sup>2</sup> 0.03	r <sup>2</sup> 0.05
<u>Session 1972-3</u>	<u>Debate</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n 98)
	r 0.08	r 0.29**	r 0.23**
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.08	r <sup>2</sup> 0.05

\* significant 0.05

\*\* significant 0.01

The generational differences in the profile of specialization are clearly illustrated at Question Time (see Table 5.5B) where the activity of the 1970 cohort is markedly less specialized than that of the other, more senior, generations. This difference is particularly pronounced for activity in 1972-3, with nearly three-quarters of new M.P.s ranking at the lowest level of the index - more than double the proportion of 'older' Members at this level.

TABLE 5.5B Index of specialization crosstabulated with parliamentary 'generations'. Parliamentary Questions 1970-1 and 1972-3.

<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>1970-1</u>			<u>1972-3</u>		
	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>			<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>		
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1964/6</u>	<u>Pre 1964</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1964/6</u>	<u>Pre 1964</u>
	(n 31)	(n 21)	(n 55)	(n 27)	(n 17)	(n 47)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	6.5	14.3	21.8	3.7	29.4	21.3
Medium	35.5	52.4	34.5	22.2	35.3	48.9
Low	<u>58.0</u>	<u>33.3</u>	<u>43.7</u>	<u>74.1</u>	<u>35.3</u>	<u>29.8</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  6.13 df4 n sign

$\chi^2$  15.92 df4 sign 0.01

Several factors may help to explain the relatively low level of specialization by new M.P.s at Question Time; firstly, a new entrant may feel the need to publicize his attention to a wide range of constituency matters; and, secondly, a new backbencher may table a wide range of Questions to gather basic information - information which his more experienced colleagues have already accumulated. Indeed, the wider span of attention of new Members in the sample at Question Time, is reflected in the finding of a negative correlation between the number of subject areas in which an M.P. is active and the length of parliamentary service. In the first session the correlation coefficient is -0.24 (significant at 0.01,  $r^2$  0.06), but increases to

-0.42 (significant at 0.001,  $r^2$  0.17) in the second session. When the sample is analysed in terms of 'parliamentary generations', the crosstabulation with overall spread of activity reveals significant differences between the cohorts. (At Question Time in 1970-1  $\chi^2 = 7.78$ ,  $df_4$ , significant at 0.1; and in 1972-3  $\chi^2 = 15.93$ ,  $df_4$ , significant at 0.01). The major contribution to the statistical significance stems from the wider spread of attention on the part of the 1970 'generation'.

In activity in debates no clear relationship exists between either the level of specialization, or the number of issue areas covered per M.P., and the length of service in Parliament. The correlation coefficients for the association between the level of specialization and length of service fail to reach statistical significance in either session ( $r$  0.12,  $r^2$  0.02 in 1970-1. and  $r$  0.08,  $r^2$  0.01 in 1972-3). Similarly, the correlation coefficients for the relationship between the number of subject areas covered per Member in debate and the length of service in the House are substantially weak at -0.06 in 1970-1. and -0.19 in 1972-3. Not surprisingly, therefore, the crosstabulation of parliamentary generations with index of specialization scores, or with the number of areas covered, produces no significant differences.

The strength of the association between the level of specialization and length of service increases however in activity in E.D.M.s. In both sessions the correlation coefficient is positive and significant at 0.23 (significant at 0.01), but, as in questioning activity, little of the variance (5%) in the level of specialization is explained by the linear regression line with length of parliamentary service. Likewise, only 8% of the variance between the spread of activity in E.D.M.s and the length of experience in the House is explained by the product - moment coefficient ( $r$  -0.28, significant 0.01, in both sessions).

Nevertheless, these significant correlations do appear to support the hypothesis that new Members are generally less specialized in their activity in the House than their more experienced colleagues.

#### Specialization and Full Time/Part Time Membership of the House

The fact that membership of the House of Commons continues, even in the 1970s to be a 'part-time' occupation for most M.P.s, (58) arguably may influence the profile of backbench specialization. Clearly, the pursuit of an extra-parliamentary career may have implications for the performance of a Member's parliamentary duties. In fact pronounced attitudinal differences towards the parliamentary role have been found to exist between 'part-time' and 'full-time' M.P.s. (59) Barker and Rush found in their 1967 survey of opinion in the House, that 'part-timers' tended to adopt a more generalized and independent approach in their use of the facilities of the Commons Library, and that they generally disapproved of developments, such as specialist committees, which would "press them towards a professionalization of their parliamentary role". (60) As a group, therefore, 'part-timers' may see themselves firmly within the tradition of the 'amateur-gentleman' politician, and believe that their outside occupation keeps them attuned to 'political reality' and the 'best interests of the nation'. In keeping with this view, they may come to display a 'generalist' approach in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

Alternatively it may be postulated that 'part-timers' may in fact adopt the 'specialist' role in the House, as the shorter period of time open to them to perform their legislative duties may well compel them to focus their activity narrowly in the Commons. Moreover, involvement in particular subject areas outside the House may lead 'part-timers' to

specialize in their respective fields within the House. Hence a 'part-timer' may perceive himself to be, and be seen by his colleagues to be, a 'specialist' by virtue of his specialized knowledge gained from the performance of an outside occupation. Indeed, a common defence of the position of the 'part-timer' emphasizes this latter point:

"As for specialization, the House of Commons has been renowned for it throughout the ages, and it has been the specialization of the Member who is a part-timer, following another vocation.....and, therefore, with his own expert knowledge". (61)

Some M.P.s go so far as to suggest that the term 'specialized Member' should be "reserved for the part-time Member with specialized sources of outside information". (62) While the usage of the word 'specialized' in this context muddies the distinction between 'expertise' and 'division of labour', this line of argument does nevertheless suggest that the specialist strategy may well hold considerable appeal for the 'part-time' Member of Parliament.

When we analyze the relationship between the 'part-time' and 'full-time' status of Members (63) and their respective levels of specialization, the correlations in each procedure are substantially weak and inconsistent in their direction over time (see Table 5.6A). Only in E.D.M.s does this relationship reach a level of statistical significance, but, even then, very little of the variance is explained by the correlation coefficient.

A stronger association is, however, observable between the spread of activity and 'part-time' membership in the House. Positive, statistically significant correlations are to be found for activity in Questions and E.D.M.s in both sessions - the direction of the

TABLE 5.6A Index of specialization scores correlated with full-time/part-time membership of the House (Pearson's r).

	<u>Debates</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
1970-1	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r -0.07	r 0.09	r- 0.16 *
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.00	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.03
1972-3	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n 98)
	r 0.03	r -0.10	r- 0.26 **
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.00	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.07

\* significant 0.05

\*\* significant 0.01

TABLE 5.6B Number of subjects covered crosstabulated with full-time/part-time membership of the House.

	<u>No. of subjects covered by M.P.</u>				<u>Procedure</u>							
	<u>Debates</u>				<u>Questions</u>				<u>E.D.M.s</u>			
	<u>1970-1</u>		<u>1972-3</u>		<u>1970-1</u>		<u>1972-3</u>		<u>1970-1</u>		<u>1972-3</u>	
	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>	<u>P.T.</u>	<u>F.T.</u>
	(n67)	(n41)	(n54)	(n41)	(n67)	(n40)	(n53)	(n38)	(n67)	(n42)	(n57)	(n41)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1- 3	44.8	46.3	53.7	56.1	20.9	10.0	28.3	23.7	4.5	2.4	7.0	0.0
4-10	53.7	51.2	44.4	41.5	41.8	35.0	54.7	28.9	26.9	7.1	45.6	22.0
11-35	1.5	2.4	1.9	2.4	37.3	55.0	17.0	47.4	68.7	90.5	47.4	78.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

X<sup>2</sup> 0.17 df1ns X<sup>2</sup> 0.11 df1ns X<sup>2</sup> 3.85 df2ns X<sup>2</sup> 10.41 df2 X<sup>2</sup> 5.76 df1 X<sup>2</sup> 8.42 df1

(1-3 x 4-35) (1-3 x 4.35) Sign 0.01 Sign 0.02 Sign 0.01  
(1-10 x 11-35) (1-10 x 11-35)

r 0.02 r 0.09 r 0.25\* r 0.23\* r 0.24\* r 0.41\*\*

r<sup>2</sup> 0.00 r<sup>2</sup> 0.01 r<sup>2</sup> 0.06 r<sup>2</sup> 0.05 r<sup>2</sup> 0.06 r<sup>2</sup> 0.17

\* significant 0.01

\*\* significant 0.001

correlation indicating that a wide spread of activity is slightly more associated with 'full-time' Members than with 'part-timers'. (See Table 5.6B). Again it is noticeable in Table 5.6B that debate, as a procedure, appears to suppress differences between groups of backbenchers (in line with the crosstabulations for party, and parliamentary generations) - presumably because of its inherent costs of participation.

### Specialization and Occupation

In stratifying the sample for this study due regard was paid to the 'occupational' composition of the House. <sup>(64)</sup> Unfortunately, the representation of manual workers in the sample was only six in number: being a proportionate reflection of the under-representation of working-class Members in the House. To generalize from such a small base would perhaps be misleading - therefore, the crosstabulations between the various measures of specialization and occupational status have not been recorded in the text, but, instead have been set out in Annex 1. It is sufficient to note here, however, that there appear to be no significant differences between the profiles of activity for 'professional', 'business' and 'miscellaneous' occupational groupings of M.P.s in the sample.

### Specialization and Levels of Parliamentary Activity

R.M. Punnett in his study of frontbench specialization argues strongly that an examination of the relationship between the degree of specialization and the level of activity "is essential to the proper understanding of the situation". <sup>(65)</sup> Naturally enough, therefore, this relationship is also of significance in the analysis of backbench

specialization. At its simplest the relationship between these two variables may be conceived of as being linear in form, and negative in direction; so that, as the level of activity increases, so the level of specialization decreases. Correspondingly, it may also be hypothesized that as the level of activity increases so the overall spread of attention widens. Indeed, just such an assumption guided Chester and Bowring's comment that "Questions put down by a persistent questioner are likely to cover a wide variety of matters. A Member who wants to make a regular practice of asking Questions will find material for them in every field in which he is interested, or in his constituency, or from any source". (66)

If this relationship between the total number of issue areas covered and the level of activity is considered, it soon becomes apparent that there is a strong, positive association between these variables in our sample. So that, generally, as the activity of Members in the sample increases so too does their spread of attention. (See Table 5.7A).

TABLE 5.7A Number of issues covered correlated with the level of activity, 1970-1 and 1972-3

	<u>Debates</u> (n 108)	<u>Questions</u> (n 107)	<u>E.D.M.s</u> (n 109)
1970-1	r 0.77 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.60	r 0.74 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.54	r 0.75 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.57
1972-3	(n 95) r 0.78 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.62	(n 91) r 0.70 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.48	(n 98) r 0.80 *** r <sup>2</sup> 0.63

\*\*\* significant 0.001

A simple linear relationship between the level of specialization and the level of activity may also be posited. The very nature of the

index of specialization, at its extremes, clearly suggests just such a relationship. For the M.P. who tables a single Question, or speaks in one debate, or signs only one E.D.M., will automatically score as a 'true specialist' in each of these procedures (i.e. the coefficient of variation will equal 5.92); whereas the 'true generalist' in this index needs to be active in each of the thirty-five subject areas, and by definition, therefore, is fairly active. However, in reality, there need not necessarily be an inevitable link between the degree of specialization and the level of parliamentary activity. It is entirely conceivable that a highly active M.P. may devote his entire attention to the consideration of one issue, whereas a relatively inactive backbencher may spread his infrequent contributions evenly across a range of issues. In fact when we come to consider the relationship between the index scores and the level of activity no simple linear association is observable. While the direction of the correlation is roughly negative, the strength of the correlation coefficient is undermined by the fact that a linear regression line cannot adequately describe the relationship. It is apparent from the scattergrams for these variables that a high level of activity does not always lead to a low level of specialization. This point is illustrated in Table 5.7B where highly active backbenchers can be found ranked at the highest level of the index - proving significant exceptions to the general rule of decreasing levels of specialization being associated with increasing levels of activity.

An interesting aside on the topic of parliamentary activity is that there is a strong relationship between a Member's activity level in 1970-1 and that in 1972-3. In all three procedures this association is significant at the 0.001 level. The strongest correlation is found in activity at Question Time ( $r$  0.83,  $r^2$  0.70), followed by E.D.M.s ( $r$  0.78,  $r^2$  0.62) and, finally, Debates ( $r$  0.71,  $r^2$  0.51). Although

TABLE 5.7B Crosstabulation of the index of specialization with the level of activity. Parliamentary Questions and Debates 1970-1 and 1972-3. \*

<u>Questions</u>	<u>1970-1</u>				<u>1972-3</u>			
	<u>Activity (a)</u>				<u>Activity (a)</u>			
	<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>V High</u> (n 33) %	<u>High</u> (n 24) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 25) %	<u>Low</u> (n 25) %	<u>V High</u> (n 21) %	<u>High</u> (n 19) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 23) %
High	6.0	16.7	4.0	40.0	4.8	21.0	0.0	39.2
Medium	27.3	25.0	52.0	52.0	9.5	31.6	65.2	42.9
Low	66.7	58.3	44.0	8.0	85.7	47.4	34.8	17.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2$  29.8 df 6 sign 0.001                       $\chi^2$  36.03 df 6 sign 0.001

(a) Activity - Very high = more than 51 P.Q.s  
 High = 26-50 P.Q.s  
 Medium = 11-25 P.Q.s  
 Low = 1-10 P.Q.s.

<u>Debates</u>	<u>1970-1</u>				<u>1972-3</u>			
	<u>Activity (b)</u>				<u>Activity (b)</u>			
	<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>V High</u> (n 29) %	<u>High</u> (n 18) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 33) %	<u>Low</u> (n 28) %	<u>V High</u> (n 27) %	<u>High</u> (n 28) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 15) %
High	10.3	22.2	12.1	39.3	3.7	10.7	13.3	60.0
Medium	58.7	55.6	69.7	60.7	63.0	75.0	80.0	40.0
Low	31.0	22.2	18.2	0.0	33.3	14.3	6.7	0.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2$  16.11 df 6 sign 0.02                       $\chi^2$  36.65 df 6 sign 0.001

(b) Activity Debates -

	<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1972-3</u>
Very High	= more than 301 col inches	= more than 39 columns
High	= 201-300 col inches	= 26 to 28 columns
Medium	= 101-200 col inches	= 14 to 25 columns
Low	= 1-100 col inches	= 1 to 13 columns

(The division for categories in 1972-3 paralleling those for 1970-1 on the basis of one column = 8 column inches).

\* E.D.M.s are excluded from this analysis as the majority of Members are concentrated in the 'low' cell of the index - leaving most cells in the activity frequency empty.

somewhat weaker correlations are found for the relationship between the spread of attention per M.P. in 1970-1 and in 1972-3, again the coefficients are significant at the 0.001 level - with the relationship at its strongest in Questions ( $r$  0.70,  $r^2$  0.49), followed by E.D.M.s ( $r$  0.65,  $r^2$  0.43), and Debates ( $r$  0.57,  $r^2$  0.33).

### Subject Specialization

Thus far in this chapter we have examined the extent, and consistency, of the division of labour on the backbenches without analyzing the extent to which backbenchers concentrate upon the same subject areas over time. The finding that backbenchers tend to focus their attention unevenly on different subject areas in each session does not inevitably mean that they specialize in the same issue areas in successive parliamentary sessions. It is entirely possible for a Member to score as a true specialist in both of the sessions under study, yet for him to focus his attention upon completely different subjects in each. However, for the individual backbencher, and the House as a corporate body, to reap the benefits of specialization it requires that attention be focused upon the same subjects over a period of time.

To measure the extent of subject specialization on the part of backbenchers in the sample an index was developed which measured the absolute differences between the proportion of activity devoted by each M.P. to each subject area in each session. <sup>(67)</sup> The index has an upper limit of 1 and a lower limit of 0; a zero score indicates that a backbencher specializes in the same subject areas in exactly the same proportion in either session, while a score of 1 indicates that a Member focuses his attention upon completely different subjects in 1972-3 to those in 1970-1.

Table 5.8 reveals the extent of 'subject specialization' as measured by this index. The most striking feature of this table is the very small proportions of Members classified in each of the three procedures as being highly 'subject specialized'. Whilst activity in Questions and E.D.M.s appears to be moderately specialized, with one-half and three-quarters of Members ranked respectively in the medium range of the index, activity in debate, for most Members in the sample, appears to fluctuate considerably among the subject areas over time. Part of the explanation for the low level of subject specialization in debates, and for the different profiles observable between the procedures in Table 5.8, undoubtedly rests in the relative 'costs of participation' of each mode of parliamentary activity. For, as we noted earlier, such costs are greatest for debate, both in terms of preparation and performance time, and in terms of the probability of 'wasted' time. Consequently a backbencher may encounter considerable difficulties in participating in debate on the same issue over time; firstly, the topic may not be chosen by the frontbench for discussion and, secondly, even if an issue recurs in successive sessions, there is no guarantee that the Speaker will call upon the Member to speak on each occasion. Thus the very fact of the greater dispersion of activity around the mean in debates (see Table 5.2A), when taken in conjunction with the lower probability of participation on a given subject (compared with Questions or E.D.M.s), may subsequently account for the greater absolute differences between subject areas over time in this procedure.

TABLE 5.8 Index of absolute differences in subject areas between 1970-1 and 1972-3 (Subject specialization). /

TABLE 5.8 Index of absolute differences in subject areas between 1970-1 and 1972-3 (Subject specialization).

<u>Degree of subject specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>		
	<u>Debate</u> (n 95) %	<u>Questions</u> (n 90) %	<u>E.D.M.s</u> (n 97) %
High ( 0-.32)	9.5	18.9	3.1
Medium (.33-.65)	36.8	53.3	75.3
Low (.66- 1)	<u>53.7</u>	<u>27.8</u>	<u>21.6</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

'Subject Specialization' and Party

In line with the hypotheses developed earlier in the analysis of the level of specialization, it is possible to suggest that Labour Members may be expected to be more highly 'subject specialized' than Conservative backbenchers. (68) The pattern of attention paid to the same subject areas in E.D.M.s, in 1970-1 and 1972-3, is indeed more consistent, and, therefore, more subject specialized, for Labour Members than for their Conservative counterparts. The crosstabulation in Table 5.9 between the level of subject specialization in E.D.M.s and party, reveals the higher level of specialization in specific subject areas on the Labour backbenches, but the strength of this association is more adequately revealed in the correlation coefficient ( $r = -0.35$ ,  $r^2 = 0.12$ , significant at 0.001). Labour M.P.s, with a more coherent ideological perspective towards the signing of E.D.M.s, may therefore be consistently attracted to the same range of issues over time; whereas Conservative backbenchers, without such an obvious coherent framework over-arching their activity in E.D.M.s, may come to focus their attention disproportionately across different subject areas in successive sessions.

However, when we examine the relationship between the level of subject specialization in debates and party, as the independent variable, the direction of this correlation is the reverse of that originally hypothesized. For low absolute differences (i.e. high 'subject specialization') tend to be associated more with Conservative rather than with Labour backbenchers. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant at the 0.001 level, but is relatively weak at 0.32 ( $r^2$  0.11). The differences in the profile of subject specialization between the two parties in debates is highlighted in Table 5.9 - where it can be seen that the proportion of Conservative M.P.s at the highest level of the index is eight times greater than that of Labour backbenchers.

TABLE 5.9      Index of subject specialization crosstabulated with party (Conservative and Labour).

<u>Degree of subject specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>		<u>Questions</u>		<u>E.D.M.s</u>	
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>
	(a)		(a)		(a)	
	(n 46)	(n 49)	(n 44)	(n 46)	(n 46)	(n 51)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	17.4	2.0	15.9	21.7	0.0	5.9
Medium	41.3	32.7	59.1	47.8	71.7	78.4
Low	<u>41.3</u>	<u>65.3</u>	<u>25.0</u>	<u>30.5</u>	<u>28.3</u>	<u>15.7</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	$\chi^2$ 8.93 df2		$\chi^2$ 1.18 df2		$\chi^2$ 4.62 df2	
	sign 0.02		n sign		sign 0.10	

(a) Includes only those Members active in both sessions.

Several possible explanations suggest themselves for the greater degree of subject specialization of Conservative backbenchers in their activity in debate - but none in isolation provide an adequate answer. It may be suggested, for example, that the predominance of 'part-timers',

or the greater proportion of new recruits, in the Tory sample may influence the level of subject specialization. However, neither the length of service nor the amount of time spent in the House are, as we shall see, significantly associated with the degree of subject specialization. A more pertinent explanation may lie, therefore, in the distinction between the supporters and the opponents of the Government in the House. The importance of debates as a means of building a reputation in Parliament has already been noted, and of particular significance for Conservative backbenchers at the time of this study was the fact that the man they sought to impress in debates was Edward Heath - who, as Prime Minister, had a distinctive, and in parliamentary terms, an idiosyncratic 'style' of leadership that emphasized "specialization, the delegation of tasks to the expert and the rejection of the concept of the 'amateur layman'." (69) Hence ambitious Tory backbenchers may have recognized that their chances of promotion would be enhanced by the adoption of the subject specialization strategy. In contrast Labour backbenchers, as members of the main Opposition party, may have acknowledged that their best strategy on the floor of the House was to harry the Conservative Government on any, and every, available opportunity. Indeed, this opposition 'mentality' may more accurately account for the Labour profile of subject specialization in debates than assertions that "Labour M.P.s tend to be outspoken and somewhat self-indulgent, giving expression to their views regardless of whether the issue is within..... their area". (70)

#### Subject Specialization and length of Parliamentary Service

When the scores for absolute differences in subject areas are correlated with the length of parliamentary service no significant relationship is

to be found. In all three procedures the correlation coefficients are weak but positive (debates  $r$  0.13, P.Q.s  $r$  0.11, E.D.M.s  $r$  0.15), and are, therefore, suggestive of a slightly higher profile of subject specialization on the part of new Members in the sample. The marginally higher profile of new Members can be seen in Table 5.10.

TABLE 5.10 Subject specialization crosstabulated with Parliamentary Generations

<u>Degree of subject specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>								
	<u>Debate</u>			<u>Questions</u>			<u>E.D.M.s</u>		
	1970 (n 26) %	1964/6 (n 19) %	Pre 64 (n 50) %	1970 (n 27) %	1964/6 (n 17) %	Pre 64 (n 46) %	1970 (n 27) %	1964/6 (n 19) %	Pre 64 (n 51) %
High	11.5	10.5	8.0	18.5	29.4	15.2	3.7	5.3	2.0
Medium	46.2	36.8	32.0	66.7	35.3	52.2	77.8	68.4	76.5
Low	<u>42.3</u>	<u>52.7</u>	<u>60.0</u>	<u>14.8</u>	<u>35.3</u>	<u>32.6</u>	<u>18.5</u>	<u>26.3</u>	<u>21.6</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	X <sup>2</sup> 5.64 df4 n sign			X <sup>2</sup> 2.19 df4 n sign			X <sup>2</sup> 0.99 df4 n sign		

Subject Specialization and Part-time/Full-time Membership of the House

It was postulated earlier that one stratagem that a 'part-time' M.P. may usefully adopt to maximize his activity in the House would be to specialize in specific subject areas. If this is the case, then we would anticipate that the level of subject specialization of 'part-time' Members would be greater than that of 'full-time' M.P.s. Whilst there is such a positive relationship between these variables in activity in debates - the correlation coefficient is, however, notably weak ( $r$  0.05). Yet, in Questions and E.D.M.s, where the correlation coefficients reach a high level of statistical significance, the direction of the relationship is in fact the reverse of that posited

above. (P.Q.s  $r$  -0.30,  $r^2$  0.09, significant 0.01; E.D.M.s  $r$  -0.38,  $r^2$  0.15, significant 0.001). Hence, low levels of subject specialization tend to be associated rather more with 'part-time' than 'full-time' Members; so that, although 'part-timers' generally have a narrower spread of activity at Question Time and in signing E.D.M.s, they nevertheless display a greater inconsistency of attention to individual subject areas over time than do their 'full time' colleagues.

### Subjects and Parties

There is a clear belief among backbenchers that each of the major parties has its own particular subject 'strengths' and 'weaknesses'. The 'weakness' of the Parliamentary Labour Party on agricultural issues, was, for example, noted by several Labour backbenchers in interview. A former Minister in the Department of Agriculture observed that on his return to the backbenches he immediately became a point of reference for many of his Labour colleagues on the issue of agriculture "as there are so few agricultural specialists in the Labour party". (71) In contrast the Conservative party appears well stocked with agricultural specialists. As Colin Mellors notes "Farming.....has a traditional importance in the ranks of the (Conservative) parliamentary party, especially in the rural constituencies", (72) though it is apparent that its importance has declined over the last ten years. Nevertheless 'agriculture' still remains an obvious Conservative 'strength'. Similarly, Conservative backbenchers have traditionally shown a stronger interest in foreign affairs and defence matters than their socialist colleagues. Indeed it is easy still to portray the Conservative party as being steeped in its colonial and imperial past. There is a strong and enduring colonial attachment within a significant section of the Tory parliamentary

party - as evidenced in their encouragement of the Smith regime in Rhodesia and the sympathy and support for the governments of South Africa. Yet it should be remembered that the majority of Conservative Members have accepted the decline of the Empire, and with it Britain's reduced international role, and have supported the subsequent search for a new economic foundation in Europe. At the heart of this search has been the insistence that "Britain's trading strength and overseas investments were a central aspect of her defence and security" (73) so that defence matters and international affairs become inextricably intermeshed for most Conservatives. Moreover, interest in foreign affairs appears to be a logical corollary of the national 'focus' of representation, for, if the Tory party is to promote the 'interest of the nation' through the fostering of 'enterprise' and Britain's trading strength in the world economic market, then an understanding of world affairs appears to be a pre-requisite. Arguably, therefore, the representational 'focus' of Conservative Members, and their definition of the 'national interest' in terms of the defence and sustenance of capitalism, engenders a profound interest in the policy areas of 'foreign affairs' and 'defence'.

On the other hand, Labour Members, if they assume a party delegate orientation to their representative role, may consider the domestic 'bread and butter' questions of working-class material well-being to be of greater concern than defence or foreign policy. This is not to say that Labour Members deny the significance of foreign affairs or focus exclusively upon domestic issues. Indeed 'the left' of the P.L.P. sees a close link between domestic and foreign policy but, as Berrington points out, while "questions of foreign policy are of paramount interest to some socialist militants, it remains true that the chief purpose and justification of the Labour Party, both for many of its zealots and for its rank-and-file voters, lies in its commitment

to social welfare and full employment at home". (74) Socialist doctrine, electoral pragmatism and party-delegate orientations all appear to reinforce each other to tie Labour M.P.s to the consideration of these domestic issues. The commitment to the transformation of the social and economic position of the British working class leads many Labour backbenchers to focus upon welfare, housing and employment policy. But underpinning this ideological commitment is a sensitivity to the demands of the electorate; a sensitivity which is accentuated when the M.P. sees himself to be a delegate from his constituency. The M.P. thus becomes 'bound' to promote the interests of his constituents - interests which are parochially defined by the bulk of Labour voters. Thus Paul Rose (Labour M.P. for Manchester, Blackley) has commented upon the depressing lack of concern over international problems on the part of Labour voters. Before the election in October 1974 Rose conducted a survey of the issues which were considered to be the main priorities of his constituents: "Prices and the cost of living headed the list; foreign affairs and Northern Ireland tied for bottom place". (75) He sought no answer to his rhetorical question: "How many votes are there in the goals of Indonesia or Leningrad?".

From these general observations it is possible to hypothesize that Conservative backbenchers will be more likely, all things being equal, to be active in the subject fields of agriculture, defence, foreign affairs, and, that other staple Tory interest, law and order; whereas Labour M.P.s will generally be more concerned with housing, health and welfare matters. On these issues the 'direction' of the difference between the two parties can be predicted, but on other issues, such as industrial relations and industrial policy, the 'direction' of any difference is open to greater speculation.

Table 5.12 sets out the mean proportion of activity expended in each

TABLE 5.12 Mean Proportion of Activity per Subject Area by Party

Questions 1970-1							
Subject	Full Sample		Conservative		Labour		
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	
Agriculture	5.127	(11.17)	6.632	(12.26)	3.509	( 9.72)	
Aid	0.764	( 2.30)	1.140	( 2.88)	0.358	( 1.37)	
Aviation	3.273	( 9.37)	3.807	( 9.43)	2.698	( 9.35)	
Animals	0.473	( 1.86)	0.491	( 1.58)	0.453	( 2.13)	
Arts	0.327	( 1.76)	0.456	( 2.35)	0.189	( 0.71)	
Civil Service	0.955	( 3.07)	1.333	( 4.01)	0.547	( 1.42)	
Constituency	17.027	(20.83)	8.878	(13.23)	25.792	(23.86)	***
Decimals & Metric	0.382	( 2.46)	0.737	( 3.39)	0.000	( 0.000)	
Defence	1.727	( 4.67)	2.175	( 5.36)	1.245	( 3.77)	
Economy	7.555	(14.08)	8.561	(15.24)	6.472	(12.77)	
Education	2.982	( 6.15)	3.193	( 6.27)	2.755	( 6.07)	
Environment	1.591	( 4.17)	2.351	( 5.37)	0.774	( 2.01)	*
Employment	2.946	( 6.44)	3.667	( 7.98)	2.170	( 4.15)	
Europe	5.009	(10.72)	7.175	(13.10)	2.679	( 6.72)	*
Foreign	3.373	(11.97)	3.298	( 9.51)	3.453	(14.24)	
House of Commons	1.755	( 3.13)	1.579	( 3.19)	1.943	( 3.08)	
Homes	4.245	( 9.77)	4.526	(10.94)	3.943	( 8.42)	
Health	4.236	( 9.38)	3.702	(10.31)	4.811	( 8.32)	
Industry	5.700	(11.89)	4.982	( 7.59)	6.471	(15.28)	
Law and Order	3.918	(12.29)	5.544	(16.51)	2.169	( 4.12)	
Legal	1.036	( 2.98)	1.281	( 3.48)	0.774	( 2.32)	
Local Government	0.509	( 1.79)	0.632	( 2.19)	0.377	( 1.23)	
Media	0.464	( 1.60)	0.491	( 1.74)	0.434	( 1.44)	
Northern Ireland	0.727	( 5.12)	1.228	( 7.06)	0.189	( 0.81)	
Post Office	1.373	( 6.74)	1.965	( 8.93)	0.736	( 2.92)	
Ports	0.136	( 0.67)	0.158	( 0.75)	0.113	( 0.58)	
Power	1.336	( 4.84)	0.860	( 3.45)	1.849	( 5.98)	
Race	0.464	( 2.05)	0.719	( 2.67)	0.188	( 1.00)	
Regions	0.609	( 2.04)	0.246	( 0.89)	1.000	( 2.75)	*
Science & Tech.	0.155	( 1.03)	0.263	( 1.42)	0.038	( 0.19)	
Scottish Affairs	4.309	(15.85)	1.632	(11.25)	7.189	(19.35)	
Sport	0.200	( 0.94)	0.316	( 1.23)	0.075	( 0.43)	
Transport	3.473	( 7.89)	5.421	(10.32)	1.377	( 2.69)	**
Welsh Affairs	2.318	(12.59)	1.772	(12.71)	2.906	(12.54)	
Welfare	6.491	(15.30)	5.930	(14.23)	7.094	(16.50)	

\* significant 0.05

\*\* significant 0.01

\*\*\* significant 0.001

TABLE 5.12 (Continued)

Questions 1972-3

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>
Agriculture	7.911	(19.07)	8.625	(18.45)	7.264	(19.77)
Aid	0.139	( 1.21)	0.250	( 1.73)	0.038	( 0.27)
Aviation	2.683	( 8.62)	4.167	(11.12)	1.339	( 5.23)
Animals	0.376	( 2.92)	0.188	( 0.70)	0.547	( 3.98)
Arts	0.198	( 1.80)	0.375	( 2.60)	0.038	( 0.27)
Civil Service	0.564	( 2.64)	0.167	( 0.66)	0.925	( 3.57)
Constituency	12.456	(18.81)	8.750	(11.82)	15.811	(23.02) *
Decimal & Metric	0.050	( 0.41)	0.021	( 0.14)	0.076	( 0.55)
Defence	1.951	( 5.24)	2.333	( 4.92)	1.604	( 5.54)
Economy	6.901	(13.26)	8.875	(14.61)	5.113	(11.76)
Education	2.832	( 6.91)	2.646	( 5.30)	3.000	( 8.25)
Environment	1.188	( 3.13)	1.583	( 3.36)	0.830	( 2.89)
Employment	4.267	( 8.95)	6.063	(11.59)	2.642	( 5.17)
Europe	3.218	(11.87)	3.271	( 8.44)	3.170	(14.38)
Foreign	3.356	( 6.99)	4.042	( 7.95)	2.736	( 6.01)
House of Commons	0.614	( 1.64)	0.521	( 1.24)	0.698	( 1.95)
Homes	5.416	(13.95)	4.688	(10.75)	6.075	(16.41)
Health	3.951	( 8.64)	2.250	( 4.77)	5.491	(10.85) *
Industry	4.624	( 8.38)	4.521	( 8.97)	4.717	( 7.90)
Law and Order	3.485	(11.16)	4.771	(14.74)	2.321	( 6.33)
Legal	1.099	( 4.19)	1.104	( 3.48)	1.094	( 4.78)
Local Government	0.455	( 1.96)	0.604	( 2.60)	0.321	( 1.11)
Media	0.396	( 1.77)	0.125	( 0.39)	0.642	( 2.39)
Northern Ireland	1.683	( 9.32)	2.521	(12.53)	0.925	( 4.89)
Post Office	0.446	( 1.24)	0.625	( 1.51)	0.283	( 0.91)
Ports	0.119	( 1.19)	0.250	( 1.73)	0.000	( 0.000)
Power	1.733	( 5.72)	1.250	( 4.99)	2.170	( 6.32)
Race	1.109	( 4.17)	0.896	( 2.28)	1.302	( 5.36)
Regions	0.456	( 2.03)	0.125	( 0.87)	0.755	( 2.66)
Science & Tech.	0.010	( 0.10)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.019	( 0.14)
Scottish Affairs	4.525	(15.05)	0.021	( 0.14)	8.604	(19.90) ***
Sport & Recreation	0.892	( 8.46)	1.813	(12.27)	0.057	( 0.31)
Transport	4.634	( 8.72)	6.146	( 8.24)	3.265	( 8.98)
Welsh Affairs	2.83	(14.07)	1.625	(10.83)	3.925	(16.50)
Welfare	4.020	( 8.92)	5.375	(10.51)	2.793	( 7.06)

Debates 1970-1

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>
Agriculture	3.236	(14.28)	4.053	(14.72)	2.359	(13.89)
Aid	0.191	( 1.20)	0.193	( 1.03)	0.189	( 1.37)
Aviation	4.227	(15.08)	4.035	(13.32)	4.434	(16.89)
Animals	2.22	( 2.22)	0.439	( 1.98)	0.339	( 2.47)
Arts	0.691	( 4.78)	1.141	( 6.48)	0.208	( 1.51)
Civil Service	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Constituency	14.027	(19.17)	11.456	(14.53)	16.792	(22.98)
Decimal & Metric	1.809	(10.59)	1.737	( 6.56)	1.887	(13.73)
Defence	3.991	(10.01)	4.308	( 9.78)	3.585	(10.33)
Economy	8.273	(19.53)	11.281	(22.21)	5.038	(15.74)
Education	1.873	( 8.59)	1.754	( 7.53)	2.000	( 9.69)
Environment	0.455	( 2.03)	0.316	( 1.68)	0.604	( 2.36)
Employment	10.418	(21.12)	8.930	(20.52)	12.019	(21.84)
Europe	8.372	(15.52)	9.667	(16.56)	6.981	(14.41)
Foreign	3.509	(11.24)	6.070	(14.99)	0.755	( 2.83) *
House of Commons	1.773	( 5.97)	0.825	( 4.45)	2.792	( 7.16)
Homes	3.709	(12.14)	3.298	(10.63)	4.151	(13.67)
Health	2.136	( 9.58)	0.526	( 2.12)	3.87	(13.47)
Industry	3.136	( 9.28)	5.596	(12.25)	0.491	( 2.29) **
Law	2.527	( 9.98)	3.386	(12.89)	1.604	( 5.34)
Legal	2.618	( 8.06)	1.789	( 4.82)	3.509	(10.46)
Local Government	3.082	(11.86)	2.509	(10.41)	3.698	(13.33)
Media	0.809	( 4.79)	1.281	( 6.42)	0.302	( 1.83)
Northern Ireland	2.036	( 9.48)	2.158	(11.43)	1.906	( 6.90)
Post Office	0.155	( 1.44)	0.263	( 1.99)	0.038	( 0.27)
Ports	0.573	( 3.09)	0.719	( 3.83)	0.415	( 2.02)
Power	2.336	(11.47)	0.912	( 4.68)	3.868	(15.73)
Race	0.164	( 0.93)	0.140	( 1.06)	0.189	( 0.79)
Regions	1.709	(10.48)	0.421	( 2.35)	3.094	(14.85)
Science & Tech.	0.073	( 0.76)	0.140	( 1.06)	0.000	( 0.00)
Scottish Affairs	2.518	(11.41)	1.649	(12.45)	3.453	(10.20)
Sport	0.227	( 1.39)	0.439	( 1.92)	0.000	( 0.00)
Transport	1.609	( 8.19)	2.211	(10.35)	0.962	( 4.95)
Welsh Affairs	0.255	( 2.17)	0.105	( 0.79)	0.415	( 3.02)
Welfare	5.155	(13.00)	5.772	(14.38)	4.491	(11.44)

TABLE 5.12 (continued)

Debates 1972-3

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>
Agriculture	1.812	( 7.72)	2.458	(10.20)	1.226	( 4.44)
Aid	0.891	( 5.70)	1.875	( 8.20)	0.000	( 0.00)
Aviation	3.238	(10.88)	4.813	(14.56)	1.811	( 5.62)
Animals	0.069	( 0.49)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.132	( 0.68)
Arts	0.082	( 5.51)	0.500	( 3.46)	1.038	( 6.89)
Civil Service	0.396	( 2.03)	0.000	( 0.000)	0.755	( 2.76)
Constituency	6.139	(18.88)	4.563	(11.90)	7.566	(23.52)
Decimal & Metric	0.198	( 1.51)	0.417	( 2.18)	0.000	( 0.00)
Defence	3.594	(11.33)	6.08	(15.17)	1.340	( 5.31) *
Economy	14.485	(22.74)	15.042	(22.06)	13.980	(23.54)
Education	2.208	(11.09)	0.896	( 3.144)	3.396	(14.99)
Environment	1.475	( 5.07)	1.688	( 4.83)	1.283	( 5.32)
Employment	5.178	(16.81)	8.313	(23.07)	2.340	( 6.75)
Europe	1.139	( 6.01)	2.000	( 8.36)	0.359	( 2.23)
Foreign	3.762	(12.25)	4.830	(14.26)	2.792	(10.15)
House of Commons	1.871	( 8.01)	1.958	( 7.67)	1.792	( 8.37)
Homes	7.406	(19.49)	5.729	(16.33)	8.924	(22.02)
Health	3.951	(13.58)	4.688	(15.56)	3.283	(11.62)
Industry	4.465	(13.28)	5.375	(15.78)	3.642	(10.62)
Law and Order	1.604	( 6.78)	2.167	( 7.64)	1.094	( 5.91)
Legal	1.792	( 7.14)	2.896	( 9.35)	0.793	( 4.13)
Local Government	1.099	( 5.02)	0.563	( 2.22)	1.585	( 6.59)
Media	1.406	( 5.97)	0.250	( 1.36)	2.458	( 8.03)
Northern Ireland	4.386	(14.51)	6.313	(19.11)	2.642	( 8.28)
Post Office	0.218	( 1.55)	0.250	( 1.73)	0.189	( 1.37)
Ports	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Power	0.851	( 4.97)	0.250	( 1.73)	1.396	( 6.65)
Race	1.450	( 6.18)	0.208	( 1.18)	2.566	( 8.33)
Regions	0.560	( 2.91)	0.208	( 1.44)	0.887	( 3.76)
Science & Tech.	0.624	( 4.46)	0.313	( 2.17)	0.906	( 5.81)
Scottish Affairs	6.703	(20.53)	1.125	( 7.79)	11.755	(26.48) **
Sport	0.149	( 1.49)	0.313	( 2.17)	0.000	( 0.00)
Transport	4.624	(12.91)	5.146	(14.51)	4.151	(11.39)
Welsh Affairs	1.535	( 9.17)	0.792	( 5.49)	2.208	(11.56)
Welfare	5.277	(14.13)	5.833	(16.34)	4.774	(11.92)

TABLE 5.12 (continued)

E.D.M.s 1970-1

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Full Sample</u>		<u>Conservative</u>		<u>Labour</u>		
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std dev</u>	
Agriculture	3.627	( 4.15)	3.193	( 4.696)	4.094	( 3.46)	
Aid	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	
Aviation	3.491	( 3.93)	5.526	( 4.20)	1.302	( 1.97)	***
Animals	0.800	( 2.71)	0.965	( 2.65)	0.623	( 2.79)	
Arts	2.327	( 3.59)	2.404	( 2.47)	2.245	( 4.51)	
Civil Service	0.091	( 0.55)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.189	( 0.78)	
Constituency	2.518	( 5.05)	1.105	( 2.14)	4.038	( 6.63)	**
Decimal & Metric	1.382	( 2.58)	2.649	( 3.09)	0.019	( 0.14)	***
Defence	1.145	( 2.80)	1.912	( 3.55)	0.321	( 1.22)	**
Economy	2.500	( 4.48)	1.649	( 2.36)	3.415	( 5.87)	
Education	0.818	( 1.73)	1.456	( 0.29)	0.132	( 0.52)	
Environment	0.545	( 2.24)	0.684	( 1.67)	0.396	( 2.74)	
Employment	7.282	( 5.37)	7.982	( 5.41)	6.528	( 5.28)	
Europe	3.909	( 6.57)	4.298	( 4.77)	3.491	( 8.11)	
Foreign	16.581	(11.21)	17.281	(13.61)	15.830	( 7.93)	
House of Commons	11.045	( 8.99)	12.491	( 8.56)	9.491	( 9.27)	
Homes	1.700	( 2.65)	0.246	( 0.95)	3.264	( 2.98)	**
Health	5.927	( 9.85)	7.404	(13.08)	4.340	( 3.76)	
Industry	6.073	( 5.37)	3.649	( 3.85)	8.679	( 5.57)	***
Law and Order	1.136	( 2.18)	1.561	( 2.75)	0.679	( 1.21)	**
Legal	1.736	( 2.95)	2.088	( 3.38)	1.359	( 2.36)	
Local Government	1.355	( 2.20)	1.930	( 2.75)	0.736	( 1.13)	
Media	3.564	( 4.49)	4.772	( 5.11)	2.264	( 3.31)	**
Northern Ireland	1.391	( 2.29)	1.140	( 2.33)	1.660	( 2.25)	
Post Office	0.809	( 2.01)	0.807	( 1.51)	0.811	( 2.46)	
Ports	0.355	( 0.96)	0.526	( 1.20)	0.169	( 0.58)	
Power	1.364	( 4.97)	0.070	( 0.37)	2.75	( 6.92)	**
Race	0.091	( 0.52)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.189	( 0.74)	
Regions	0.900	( 2.137)	0.088	( 0.66)	1.774	( 2.76)	***
Science & Tech.	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	
Scottish Affairs	1.382	( 4.21)	0.246	( 1.85)	2.604	( 5.53)	**
Sport	2.409	( 3.44)	2.509	( 4.13)	2.302	( 2.52)	
Transport	1.355	( 1.91)	0.947	( 1.99)	1.792	( 1.74)	*
Welsh Affairs	1.391	( 6.18)	0.281	( 1.63)	2.585	( 8.63)	
Welfare	7.255	( 6.12)	3.404	( 4.22)	11.396	( 5.25)	***

TABLE 5.12 (continued)

E.D.M.s 1972-3

Subject	Full Sample		Conservative		Labour	
	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev	Mean	Std dev
Agriculture	0.297	( 1.42)	0.625	( 2.02)	0.000	( 0.00)
Aid	1.614	( 2.70)	1.917	( 3.35)	1.339	( 1.93)
Aviation	0.188	( 0.98)	0.375	( 1.39)	0.019	( 0.14)
Animals	3.307	( 4.61)	5.438	( 5.75)	1.377	( 1.71) ***
Arts	2.782	( 3.62)	3.271	( 4.35)	2.339	( 2.77)
Civil Service	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Constituency	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Decimal & Metric	0.555	( 1.81)	1.000	( 2.29)	0.151	( 1.09) **
Defence	4.871	( 5.16)	7.875	( 5.59)	2.151	( 2.65) ***
Economy	2.545	( 3.02)	2.500	( 3.59)	2.585	( 2.41)
Education	2.713	( 5.59)	3.292	( 7.74)	2.189	( 2.35)
Environment	1.129	( 2.28)	0.792	( 2.41)	1.434	( 2.13)
Employment	7.465	( 5.21)	5.813	( 5.05)	8.963	( 4.94) **
Europe	1.842	( 2.72)	1.208	( 2.58)	2.415	( 2.73) *
Foreign	18.257	(11.38)	16.521	(13.03)	19.830	( 9.49)
House of Commons	8.852	( 6.68)	10.813	( 7.84)	7.075	( 4.87) **
Homes	3.446	(10.46)	0.000	( 0.00)	6.506	(15.76) **
Health	3.356	( 3.58)	2.000	( 3.19)	4.585	( 3.49) ***
Industry	3.901	( 4.56)	0.979	( 2.29)	6.547	( 4.49) ***
Law and Order	7.960	(13.61)	15.271	(16.89)	1.339	( 2.13) ***
Legal	1.198	( 2.72)	1.292	( 2.58)	1.113	( 2.87)
Local Government	0.901	( 1.79)	0.833	( 1.92)	0.962	( 1.69)
Media	3.198	( 3.79)	1.688	( 3.51)	4.566	( 3.53) ***
Northern Ireland	1.000	( 2.58)	2.104	( 3.44)	0.000	( 0.00) ***
Post Office	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Ports	0.029	( 0.29)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.056	( 0.41)
Power	0.396	( 1.72)	0.438	( 2.06)	0.358	( 1.35)
Race	0.663	( 1.53)	0.854	( 1.98)	0.491	( 0.95)
Regions	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Science & Tech.	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Scottish Affairs	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.00)
Sport	0.069	( 0.54)	0.000	( 0.00)	0.152	( 0.73)
Transport	1.693	( 5.34)	2.833	( 7.52)	0.660	( 1.19)
Welsh Affairs	0.000	( 0.00)	0.000	( 0.000)	0.000	( 0.00)
Welfare	12.564	( 9.82)	7.604	( 5.99)	17.056	(10.49) ***

subject area for the whole sample, and the corresponding proportions for each of the major parties. To test whether the observed differences between the means of the two parties were statistically significant the 't' statistic was computed and the significant differences noted. (76)

From Table 5.12 it can be seen that in the subject area of agriculture the mean level of activity of Conservative Members is, with the exception of E.D.M.s in the first session, higher than that of Labour M.P.s. While the 'direction' of this difference is as forecast, the differences between the parties are not statistically significant. The inclusion of 'food' and 'fisheries' in the coding cell for agriculture plays an important part in explaining the relatively high Labour mean in this area - as several Labour M.P.s were particularly interested in the price of foodstuffs during the period under study.

On defence matters, however, no such coding vagaries intervene, and the 'direction' of the difference between the parties is as expected for all procedures and in both sessions. These differences being most marked in E.D.M.s (significant at 0.01 in 1970-1; and significant at 0.001 in 1972-3) and in debates in 1972-3 (significant at 0.05). On foreign affairs the Conservative mean level of activity is higher than that of Labour M.P.s in debates in both sessions, in Questions in 1970-1, and in E.D.M.s in 1970-1. Only in debates in 1970-1, however, does the difference reach the 0.05 level of statistical significance. The pattern of difference between the two parties is somewhat clearer in the area of law and order, in that the Conservative mean is greater in every procedure in both sessions; yet these differences are significant in E.D.M.s only (significant at 0.01 in 1970-1, and significant at 0.001 in 1972-3).

Turning to the subjects hypothesized to be of greater interest and importance for Labour Members - it rapidly becomes apparent that the

mean proportion of activity in the areas of housing, welfare and health is not consistently higher (i.e. across all procedures in both sessions) for Labour Members than that of their Conservative counterparts. Thus on welfare matters the Labour mean in E.D.M.s is significantly greater in both sessions, yet in debates Conservative M.P.s display a higher mean proportion of activity on this subject. In the cognate area of health policy the Labour mean is significantly greater in Questions and in E.D.M.s in 1972-3 (significant at 0.05 and 0.001 respectively) but elsewhere the direction of the difference fluctuates from procedure to procedure and fails to reach statistical significance. A somewhat clearer picture emerges in the area of housing, as Labour M.P.s in the sample devote a greater mean proportion of their activity to this subject than do Conservative Members. In activity in E.D.M.s these differences were significant at the 0.01 level. The exception to this pattern occurs in Questions in 1970-1 where the Conservative mean is higher than that of the Labour sample. A host of Questions on 'Fair Rents' (presaging the legislation of the following session), on council house sales and on housing improvement grants were tabled in this session - most notably by James Hill, and Norman Tebbit (who was the vice-chairman of the Conservative Housing and Construction Committee).

On employment matters - an issue of equal importance for both parties - the only significant difference is to be found in E.D.M.s in 1972-3. The greater level of activity of Labour Members in signing Motions, in support of industrial action on the part of agricultural workers, gasmen, railway footmen and coal miners, highlights the difference between the two parties. Similarly on trade and industry matters - another area of equal importance for both parties - the direction of the difference between the means of the Labour and the Conservative samples varies from procedure to procedure. In E.D.M.s

Labour Members display a significantly higher mean level of activity in this area (significant at 0.001 in both sessions). Yet in 1970-1 the Conservative mean level of activity on industrial matters was significantly higher than that of the Labour sample. Many of the Conservative M.P.s in the sample contributed extensively to the discussions on the steel industry, Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, Rolls Royce and to the consideration of the Industry Bill, and the Ship Industry Bill of this session.

On the question of E.E.C. matters Conservative Members in the sample devoted, on average, a greater proportion of their questioning and debating activity to this subject - though in neither session were the differences between the parties significant. Only in E.D.M.s in 1972-3 does a significant difference appear, and then it reflects the higher Labour mean level of activity on E.E.C. affairs (Motions on such topics as sugar supplies in the E.E.C., the rights of British engineers to practice in Europe, and Spanish membership of the community attracted the support of many Members in the Labour sample).

However the most striking difference between the two samples occurs in the area of 'constituency' matters. In all procedures in which constituency issues are coded, (77) the mean proportion of activity recorded for Labour M.P.s is greater than that for Conservative backbenchers - significantly so in P.Q.s and in E.D.M.s. And it is to this subject that we now turn.

#### 'Constituency' as a Subject Area in the House

The relationship between the elected representative and his constituency is one of fundamental importance in western liberal democracies. Even

Edmund Burke, as the defender of the trustee, argued that the representative should "live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence and the most unreserved communication with his constituents". Indeed his objection to delegate theory concerned not the belief that the representative had a necessary duty to communicate with his constituents and to promote their interest, but rather the insistence that the Member was obliged to take instructions from his constituents and to promote 'local' interests over the 'national' interest. While political scientists in North America have eagerly and rigorously researched into the linkages between the representative and his constituency, (78) British research in this area has been relatively sparse. The studies that have been undertaken tend to describe either the contents of the mailbag of M.P.s or their caseload at constituency surgeries; (79) more recently attempts have, however, been made to examine the relationship between the behaviour of M.P.s in the House and the nature of their constituencies. (80)

One of the original research questions included in the design of the present study sought, therefore, to discover the extent to which British M.P.s focused upon constituency matters in their parliamentary activity. A major difficulty, inherent in such an undertaking, rests in establishing the nature of a 'constituency' topic. Given the heterogeneous interests and opinions encapsulated within a geographical constituency, the elected Member may justifiably claim that any subject area in which he is active in the House is of concern to his constituents. Furthermore, it is often extremely difficult to unravel the entangled web of motivations that prompt a Member's interest in any given policy area. How does one, for example, determine the prime motivation leading to a contribution in the House on agriculture by a Member who is by occupation a farmer, who has close functional ties with the National Farmers' Union and who also represents a rural constituency?

Is the contribution prompted out of 'personal', 'sectorial/functional', or 'constituency' interest? Undoubtedly in reality there is a mutual reinforcement of interests, but it would be difficult, and possibly misleading for the researcher to argue that this Member's contribution in the House arose primarily out of the desire to promote his constituents' interest.

In an attempt to resolve this problem, a separate subject code for 'constituency' was included in the coding frame of subject areas. For a contribution to be coded as a 'constituency' matter, the M.P. had to make overt and explicit reference to his locality in his intervention. Thus, for example, a Question asked by the Member for North East Derbyshire on unemployment in Clay Cross would be classified under the 'constituency' heading, whereas a Question tabled by the same Member on unemployment, without the specific constituency tag, would be coded under 'employment'. One objection to this coding strategy is that 'constituency' does not constitute a 'subject area', in the same sense as 'agriculture' or 'employment', but rather is an amalgam of other subjects. Offsetting this disadvantage, however, is the advantage that, in employing this strategy, the decision as to which issues are deemed to be of importance within a constituency is made by the M.P. - by his specific reference to his locality - rather than arbitrarily by the researcher.

The first hypothesis to be tested is that, given the representational 'style' and 'focus' ascribed to Labour M.P.s, it is to be anticipated that their concentration upon 'constituency' issues will be greater than that by Conservatives in the sample. The distinctly higher mean proportion of activity expended on 'constituency' matters by Labour M.P.s in Table 5.12 is supportive of this hypothesis. When the correlation coefficients for the relationship between the proportion

of activity spent on the consideration of 'constituency' affairs and political party in each procedure are computed - significant correlations, suggestive of higher levels of activity on the part of Labour Members, are to be found in Questions and E.D.M.s. (See Table 5.13).

TABLE 5.13 Proportion of activity spent on the consideration of 'constituency' affairs correlated with party - Labour and Conservative, (Pearson's r).

<u>Session</u>	<u>Procedure</u>		
	<u>Debates</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
1970-1	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r 0.14	r 0.41 ***	r 0.29 ***
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.02	r <sup>2</sup> 0.17	r <sup>2</sup> 0.09
1972-3	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n )
	r 0.07	r 0.19 *	-
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.04	-

\* significant 0.05

\*\*\* significant 0.001

In debates, however, no significant correlations are observable. The weakness of the correlations in debates may be accounted for in several ways; firstly, the correlation for 1972-3 reflects, in part, the use made of the sessional index of Hansard as the prime data source for activity in debates in this session - as it is unclear when coding the entries in the index, with the exception for those on adjournment debates, whether or not a Member makes explicit and continuous reference to his constituency. This caveat should, therefore, be borne in mind when examining Table 5.13. Secondly, the absence of a significant association between the level of activity on 'constituency' affairs and party in the first session (when no such coding vagaries intervene) highlights the crudity of a simple dichotomization of

representative role orientations between the two major parties.

Indeed, one Conservative Member in the sample stood the premise, that Tory backbenchers uniformly adopt a trustee 'style', on its head with his statement in the House in December 1970 that: "There is now strong feeling in my constituency against British Summer Time and, whatever my personal inclination, I must represent the majority feeling in my vote. I still like light evenings but, if the majority of my constituents want to abolish B.S.T. I must vote in that way". (81)

Clearly this statement spotlights the necessity for further research into Members' perceptions of their representative role!

A second hypothesis to be tested is that Members from electorally vulnerable constituencies will be more inclined to make specific reference to their constituencies in the House than will M.P.s from safe constituencies. This hypothesis is, moreover, related to a slightly wider proposition that M.P.s from marginal constituencies will be generally less specialized in their parliamentary activity than their 'electorally secure' colleagues. One Labour Member, in communication with the author, explicitly accepted this premise: "I would like to comment that I am not an intensive specialist because of the nature of my constituency. It is very marginal and, as a consequence, much of my activity is parish pump.....I am afraid that intense specialization is for Members with more political security". (82) To test the validity of this assumption, the specialization scores of M.P.s in the sample were correlated with the size of their electoral majorities. (83) Although a positive correlation is observable between these variables in all three procedures (see Table 5.14) the strength of the relationship is very weak. Only in debates is the association statistically significant and, even then, only three per cent of the variation is explained by the line of the linear regression between the variables.

TABLE 5.14 Index of Specialization scores correlated with size of electoral majority (Pearson's r).

<u>Session</u>	<u>Debate</u>	<u>Procedure</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
1970-1	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r 0.18 *	r 0.08	r 0.07
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.03	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01
1972-3	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n 98)
	r 0.17 *	r 0.10	r 0.07
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.03	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01

\* significant 0.05

Not surprisingly, therefore, when Members are grouped according to the 'marginality' (84) or 'safeness' of their constituencies no significant differences are to be found between the profiles of specialization of the two cohorts. (See Table 5.15).

TABLE 5.15 Index of specialization crosstabulated with electoral 'marginality'. Parliamentary Questions and Debates 1970-1 and 1972-3.

<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>Procedure</u>							
	<u>Debates</u>				<u>Questions</u>			
	<u>1970-1</u>		<u>1972-3</u>		<u>1970-1</u>		<u>1972-3</u>	
	<u>Marginal</u>	<u>Safe</u>	<u>Marginal</u>	<u>Safe</u>	<u>Marginal</u>	<u>Safe</u>	<u>Marginal</u>	<u>Safe</u>
	(n 26)	(n 82)	(n 21)	(n 74)	(n 26)	(n 81)	(n 23)	(n 68)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	7.7	24.4	19.0	22.9	15.4	16.1	13.0	19.2
Medium	65.4	61.0	57.2	64.9	23.1	43.2	26.1	42.6
Low	<u>26.9</u>	<u>14.6</u>	<u>23.8</u>	<u>12.2</u>	<u>61.5</u>	<u>40.7</u>	<u>60.9</u>	<u>38.2</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
	x <sup>2</sup> 4.40 df2		x <sup>2</sup> 1.71 df2		x <sup>2</sup> 4.48 df2		x <sup>2</sup> 3.59 df2	
	n sign		n sign		n sign		n sign	

Furthermore, the degree of subject specialization also appears to be

largely unrelated to the size of electoral majority. The correlation coefficients for all procedures are notably weak - suggesting that Members from electorally vulnerable constituencies are not consistently less specialized in their attention to specific subjects over time than their 'electorally safe' colleagues, (debates  $r$  0.06, P.Q.s  $r$  -0.08, E.D.M.s  $r$  -0.10).

When we turn to consider the extent of the concentration of activity upon 'constituency' as a subject, it rapidly becomes apparent that there is only a weak association between this variable and the size of a Member's electoral majority. Only in debates in 1972-3 does the correlation coefficient appear to be statistically significant (see Table 5.16), but this coefficient is artificially high, given the presence of three outliers on the scattergram and, as such, exaggerates the strength of the association. Thus as an independent variable, the size of electoral majority is basically unrelated to the level of specialization, or to the extent of 'subject specialization', or even to the level of concentration devoted to the subject area of 'constituency'. What may prove to be a more powerful independent variable, therefore, is the perception of electoral vulnerability on the part of M.P.s, rather than the crude statistic of the actual size of electoral majority. Alan Kornberg has indeed discovered that Canadian legislators tend to perceive their constituencies to be considerably more competitive than an objective classification would suggest. Hence "measures which are based on the legislators' perceptions of the degree of competition rather than those employing electoral data, are more efficacious in that they are more likely to delineate the actual influence of constituency upon legislative attitudes and behaviour". (85) In Britain the need for research along these lines is strongly felt.

TABLE 5.16 Degree of concentration upon constituency correlated with size of majority. (Pearson's r).

<u>Session</u>	<u>Procedure</u>		
	<u>Debates</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
1970-1	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r -0.10	r 0.14	r -0.03
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.01	r <sup>2</sup> 0.02	r <sup>2</sup> 0.00
1972-3	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n )
	r 0.18 *	r 0.01	-
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.03	r <sup>2</sup> 0.00	-

\* significant 0.05.

One independent variable which has attracted the attention of British political scientists in its association with constituency matters in the House is the length of parliamentary service. Barker and Rush have found that newly elected M.P.s in both major parties, and from safe and marginal seats alike, feel the need to "dig themselves in", "to establish themselves in their seats.....(and to) build up a good credit balance of personal and constituency service". (86) Obviously, one way for the newly elected Member to achieve this aim is to make overt reference to his constituency in his contributions in the House. On the basis of this premise it may be hypothesized that the greater concentration of activity upon 'constituency' matters will be associated more with 'new' than longer serving M.P.s. In practice, however, only in activity in debates in 1970-1 is such a significant association to be found (r -0.27, r<sup>2</sup> 0.07, significant at 0.01) - undoubtedly the number of maiden speeches made in this session, speeches which traditionally make reference to the new M.P.s constituency, affects the strength of this association. In each of the other procedures less than one per cent of the variance between these variables is explained by the correlation coefficient.

A final observation worthy of note is that the level of activity in the area of 'constituency' in the House is significantly related to prior service on a local council. (87) This relationship is most pronounced in Questions, in both sessions, and in debates in 1970-1 (see Table 5.17), and indicates that M.P.s with prior experience in local government have a slightly greater propensity to mention their constituencies in their dealings in the House than their parliamentary colleagues who have no previous service on a local council. This finding supports previous studies which have already established that clear attitudinal differences towards constituency duties, particularly towards the 'welfare officer' role, exist between Members according to prior experience in local politics. (88)

TABLE 5.17 Proportion of activity spent on the consideration of 'constituency' affairs correlated with local government service. (Pearson's r).

<u>Session</u>	<u>Debates</u>	<u>Questions</u>	<u>E.D.M.s</u>
1970-1	(n 108)	(n 107)	(n 109)
	r -0.19 *	r -0.22 **	r 0.03
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.04	r <sup>2</sup> 0.05	r <sup>2</sup> 0.00
1972-3	(n 95)	(n 91)	(n )
	r -0.14	r -0.22 **	-
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.02	r <sup>2</sup> 0.05	-
	* significant 0.05		
	** significant 0.01		

Conclusion

Specialization in the House of Commons, is not the easiest of phenomena to analyze, there are, as we have noted, considerable methodological problems involved in the collection and the analysis of data on this

topic. Nevertheless, we have been able in this chapter to establish a profile of specialization for our sample of backbenchers. But this profile itself is not without its complexities insofar as it reflects the diversity of M.P.s' activities in three formal procedures in the House. A single aggregate index of specialization for all three procedures cannot reasonably be provided as there is no common unit of measurement available to measure 'activity' in each procedure - activity in Parliamentary Questions is 'unlike' activity in debates, and in turn neither form of activity is 'like' that in E.D.M.s. An index which assigns equal weightings to contributions in different modes of activity is likely, because of the radically different costs of participation that each procedure exacts, to produce highly misleading results. (89) The profile of backbench specialization has, therefore, to be considered separately for each procedure, in order that the differing patterns of behaviour, and the different use made of each procedure, can be fully appreciated.

The pattern of activity in the three procedures studied in this chapter resembles a series of concentric circles - with activity in debates being most specialized for most members, and thus forming the inner circle. Encircling debates is the pattern of activity in Parliamentary Questions which is generally more diffuse, but still moderately specialized. And the outer circle represents activity in the signing of Early Day Motions which appears to be generalized, both in terms of the width of attention and in the fairly even dispersal of activity across subject areas. The profile of activity, as reflected in the level of activity, the spread of attention, and the depth of specialization, appears furthermore to be relatively consistent over time for each Member in the sample.

The relationships between the level of specialization and the key

independent variables identified in this study are moreover complex, as both the strength and the direction of the correlations vary from one procedure to another. The level of specialization is, however, consistently associated with partisan allegiance in the House - to the extent that there is a weak correlation between high index scores and membership of the Parliamentary Labour Party. The level of specialization is also positively related to the length of service in the House, as there is a tendency for index scores to increase as the length of parliamentary experience increases; indeed in E.D.M.s and P.Q.s this relationship is statistically significant. In contrast the association between the degree of specialization and full-time/part-time membership of the House is weak in strength, and inconsistent in direction. Only in E.D.M.s is the direction the same, and the correlation coefficients statistically significant, in both sessions - indicating that the level of specialization is generally marginally higher for part-timers than full-time Members in this procedure.

Perhaps the most significant set of findings in this chapter, however, are those relating to the level of 'subject specialization' on the part of backbenchers. The level of attention paid to any one subject area clearly varies considerably from one session to the next, as only in E.D.M.s, and to a lesser extent in P.Q.s, is activity moderately 'subject specialized'. (And this is due in no small part to the fact that because backbench attention is generally focused more thinly and widely among subject areas in these procedures, the absolute differences in the proportions of activity devoted to each area are likely to be concomitantly small). Thus, in line with our prediction, made in Part One, the level of subject specialization appears to be relatively low. British backbenchers appear, indeed, to be unwilling to develop, and to display, their expertise in specific subject areas by protracted consideration of these areas in successive sessions. What our analysis

has been unable to establish, however, is whether the failure to specialize consistently in the same areas over time is a correlate of representative role orientations. Although we hypothesized (on the assumptions drawn from existing studies) that the 'styles' and 'foci' of representation could be dichotomized along party lines, it soon became apparent that this split did not adequately reflect representational reality. The mix of 'styles' and 'foci' of representation within the major parties can only be measured, however, by detailed interviews with a large sample of M.P.s - an undertaking which is beyond the resources of the present study. Future research may yet, however, prove (or disprove for that matter) the strength of representative role orientations as an independent variable in their association with parliamentary specialization. The present study has merely assembled the tools of analysis (in the form of the research hypothesis, and the measure of specialization), and made an initial reconnaissance of the terrain in preparation for further and deeper empirical exploration.

References

1. A. King, British Members of Parliament: A Self-Portrait, Macmillan, London, 1974, p.6.
2. Letter to the author, Conservative M.P., 1st October, 1975.
3. R.M. Punnett, Front-Bench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973, p.473-481.
4. See D. Judge, 'Backbench Specialization - A Study in Parliamentary Questions', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1974, pp.171-186. The index in this article was more sophisticated than that used by Punnett insofar as it took into account the proportion of activity devoted to each subject area (see pp.173-174) rather than just the proportion devoted to the main area of interest. Nevertheless, this index was still unable to discriminate between the true specialist who devoted all of his attention to the consideration of one subject, and another M.P. who divided his activity between four subject areas in the proportions 30:30:30:10 - both Members would score 10 in the index.
5. See H.M. Blalock, Social Statistics, McGraw Hill, New York, 1960, p.73.
6. See Appendix D for further explanation.
7. See Appendix A for full details of the sample and the stratification factors employed.
8. See Appendix C for details on the recorded activity of backbenchers. Activity in committee, and the pattern of formal specialization is considered in detail in Chapter 8.
9. However, six days of debate were still devoted to the topic of the Common Market in session 1970-1. The Labour Opposition used two Supply Days (21st and 22nd January 1971), and the Government initiated a four day debate on the E.E.C. on the 21st July, 1971.
10. See Appendices A and B.
11. R. Oakley and P. Rose, The Political Year 1971, Pitman, London, 1971, p.241. The thirty-five categories used in this study are listed in Appendix B.
12. W.D. Muller, 'Trade Union M.P.s and Parliamentary Specialization', Political Studies, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1972, p.317.
13. Memorandum submitted by D.N. Chester, Report from the Select Committee on Parliamentary Questions, H.C. 393, Session 1971-2, p.87.
14. H.W. Lucy, A Diary of the Unionist Parliament, 1895-1900, p.103; cited in D.N. Chester and N. Bowring, Questions in Parliament, Clarendon, Oxford, 1962, p.103.
15. ibid, p.200.
16. The intervals in the frequency distribution were found in the following manner:

$$w = \frac{(\text{highest score} - \text{lowest score})}{k}$$

w = interval width; k = number of categories

See A.J. Loether and D.G. McTavish, Descriptive Statistics for Sociologists, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1974, p.52.

17. A. King, op.cit., p.68
18. Valentine Herman has observed a tendency for backbenchers, before speaking in adjournment debates, to contact "interest groups, research organisations, private firms, or individuals to obtain facts, figures and opinions which are then presented to the Minister concerned in the debate". V. Herman, 'Adjournment Debates in the House of Commons', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol.26, 1972-3, p.95
19. For a detailed description of the procedure relating to the tabling of Parliamentary Questions see, HC 393, Session 1971-2; for detail of proscribed Questions see The Times, 4th May, 1978, which lists the results of Jeffrey Rooker's inquiries into the refusal to answer certain questions by 24 government departments.
20. F. Willey, The Honourable Member, Sheldon Press, London, 1974, p.97
21. R.M. Punnett, op.cit., p.325
22. The Guardian, 30th November, 1971
23. John Grant, M.P. notes that he was approached by the Whips in this manner, but he refused to comply with such requests; see J. Grant, Member of Parliament, Michael Joseph, London, 1974, p.93.
24. The Sunday Times, Colour Supplement, 28th September, 1975, p.82
25. In practice Ministers are rarely caught unawares by supplementary Questions. On this point, see D.N. Chester and N. Bowring, op.cit., p.248; D.N. Chester, 'Questions in the House' in S.A. Walkland and M. Ryle, The Commons in the Seventies, Fontana, Glasgow, 1977, p.157; John Hall's question to Peter Walker, HC 393, Session 1971-2, Q.59, p.11
26. Since 1972 a backbencher has even been able to obtain an answer to his written Question on a named day by simply marking the Question with a letter 'W' and the specified date. Even those unstarred Questions without a 'W' normally secure a reply within a week of being tabled.
27. See V. Herman, op.cit., pp.92-104. Adjournment debates are particularly significant as they enable backbenchers to inject matters of personal and constituency interest into the stream of parliamentary business. A Member may raise any matter he desires on the adjournment (subject only to the luck of the ballot). Indeed, these debates, along with Questions, remain as one of the few remnants of backbench influence over the timetable of the House.
28. F. Hooley, H.C. Debates, Vol.904, Col. 1070, 2nd February, 1976.
29. J. Grant, op.cit., p.45. Selwyn Lloyd acknowledged this practice in Mr. Speaker Sir, Jonathan Cape, London, 1976, pp.79-81.
30. The Guardian, 5th September, 1977
31. A. King, op.cit., p.79
32. C. Onslow, HC 393, Session 1971-2, Q500, p93
33. ibid, Q499

34. The Times, 14th April, 1978 (my emphasis)
35. B.W. Headey, 'The Role Skills of Cabinet Ministers: A Cross-National Review', Political Studies, Vol.22, 1974, p.72
36. The Times, 12th September, 1977
37. S.E. Finer, H.B. Berrington and D.J. Bartholomew, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons, 1955-9, Pergamon, London, 1961, p.7
38. See ibid, p.9
39. See H. Berrington, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons, 1945-55, Pergamon, Oxford, 1973; M.N. Franklin and M. Tappin, 'Early Day Motions as Unobtrusive Measures of Backbench Opinion in Britain', British Journal of Political Science, Vol.7, 1977, pp.46-69, J. Leece and H. Berrington, 'Measurement of Backbench Attitudes by Guttman Scaling of Early Day Motions: A Pilot Study 1968-9; British Journal of Political Science, Vol.7, October 1977, pp. 529-541.
40. H. Berrington, op.cit., p.181
41. As suggested by M. Franklin, see H. Berrington, op.cit., p.16
42. K. Newton, 'Role Orientations and their Sources among Elected Representatives in English Local Politics', Journal of Politics, Vol.36, No.3, 1974, p.634.
43. See Conservative Central Office, The Party Organisation, London, 1970, p.1
44. A.Clark, Conservative M.P. (Plymouth Sutton) The Guardian, 13th Sept. 1976.
45. B. Disraeli, Crystal Palace, 24th June, 1872; quoted in I. Lang and B. Henderson, The Scottish Conservatives - a Past and a Future, Conservative Political Centre in Scotland, Edinburgh, 1975, p.3
46. Letter to the author, 1st October, 1975
47. G.R. Strauss, 'The Influence of the Backbencher: A Labour View', Political Quarterly, Vol.36, 1965, p.279
48. W.D. Muller, The Kept Men, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1977, p.122. (In 1970 there were 114 sponsored M.P.s on the Labour benches).
49. 'Party' is treated as a dummy variable. Dummy variable analysis allows nominal and ordinal variables to be treated as if they were interval. Conservatives are coded '0' and Labour M.P.s '1'. See H.M. Blalock, Social Statistics, McGraw Hill, Kogakusha, Tokyo, 1972, 2nd ed., Chapter 20; D.J. Palumbo, Statistics in Political and Behavioural Science, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, 2nd ed., pp.155-158; S. Labovitz, 'Some Observations on Measurement and Statistics', Social Forces, Vol.46, December 1967, pp.151-160; J. Cohen, 'Multiple Regression as a General Data-Analytic System', Psychological Bulletin, Vol.70, No. 6, 1968, pp. 426-443; D.B. Suits, 'Use of Dummy Variables in Regression Equations', Journal of the American Statistical Association, Vol.52, December 1957; S. Labovitz, 'Assignment of Numbers to Rank Order Categories', American Sociological Review, Vol.35, June 1977, pp.515-524.
50. See A. Barker and M. Rush, The Member of Parliament and His Information, Allen and Unwin, London, 1970, esp. pp.376-386.

51. W.D. Muller, op.cit., p.317
52. The Guardian, 17th April, 1978
53. Interview, Labour M.P., 24th May, 1977
54. Interview, Conservative M.P., 17th July, 1974
55. A. King, op.cit., p.70
56. Letter, ex-Minister, Labour M.P., 8th October, 1975.
57. B. Crick, The Reform of Parliament, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968, 2nd ed.. p.210
58. In 1971 the Boyle Committee found that 70% of M.P.s continued a part-time occupation outside of the House. The amount of time spent in such extra-parliamentary employment ranged from in excess of 30 hours a week (5% of part-timers) to less than 5 hours a week (29% of part-timers). See Review of Top Salaries: Ministers of the Crown and Members of Parliament, Cmnd 4836, 1971, Appendix A, Tables 15 and 16. In 1978 the Select Committee on Procedure recognised that part-time membership of the House had ramifications upon the operation of the House. The Report went as far as to state: "We believe that the arrangement of parliamentary sittings to enable Members to pursue outside employment conflicts with our idea of a modern and effective parliamentary system". First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, HC 588 I, Session 1977-8, para. 9.23, p.cxvii
59. See A. Barker and M. Rush, op.cit., pp.369-378; for the bases of the classification 'part-time'/'full-time' see ibid., p.370-371.
60. ibid, p.375
61. H. Fairlie, The Life of Politics, Methuen, London, 1968, p.202
62. A. Neave, Control by Committee, Conservative Political Centre, 1968, cited in A. Barker and M. Rush, op.cit., p.376.
63. Dummy variable analysis used in the computation of the correlation coefficients - 'part-timers' coded '0', and 'full-timers' coded '1'.
64. For the purposes of this study occupation is defined as the primary occupation of a Member in his pre-parliamentary career. 'Primary' is used to discern the lengthiest period engaged in any one occupation, for those Members who have been engaged in more than one occupation. 'Pre-parliamentary' is used to discern full-time occupations as opposed to the nominal part-time employment of some M.P.s as 'consultants' or 'directors'. This criterion helps to distinguish between M.P.s who, after election, gain employment as 'parliamentary consultants' and 'company directors', and those who continue as economic consultants and company directors in addition to their parliamentary duties. The data on Members' occupational backgrounds was collected from Andrew Roth, The Business Background of M.P.s, Parliamentary Profiles, London, 1972 and crosschecked with the raw data used by Colin Mellors in his study Socio-economic Backgrounds of M.P.s 1945-70, M.A. dissertation, Sheffield University, 1972.
65. R.M. Punnett, op.cit., p.332

66. D.N. Chester and N. Bowring, op.cit., p.226
67. See Appendix D for details of this index.
68. See pages 196-197.
69. R.M. Punnett, op.cit., p.357
70. ibid., p.355
71. Interview, Labour M.P., ex-minister, 21st November, 1975.
72. C. Mellors, The British M.P., Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978, p.74
73. A. Gamble, The Conservative Nation, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, p.160
74. H. Berrington, op.cit., p.125
75. The Guardian, 26th June, 1978
76. The 't' statistic is a difference of means test, see H.M. Blalock, op.cit., 1st. ed., pp.170-176; two-tailed tests of significance are used throughout.
77. No activity on 'constituency' matters is recorded for E.D.M.s. in 1972-3. The data for this procedure in this session is drawn from the data-bank of EDMs housed at Newcastle University. This 'bank' does not hold a full list of EDMs.- excluded are EDMs with fewer than ten back-bench signatures for a particular party, EDMs relating to regional or constituency matters, those concerned with particular interests/pressure groups, or highly specific and technical issues and those concerned with inter-party trivia.
78. See, for example, W.E. Miller and D.E. Stokes 'Constituency Influence in Congress', American Political Science Review, Vol.57, March 1963, pp.45-56; J.C. Wahlke, H. Eulau, W. Buchanan, L.C. Ferguson, The Legislative System, Wiley, New York, 1962, especially Chapter 13; A. Kornberg, 'Perception and Constituency Influence on Legislative Behaviour', The Western Political Quarterly, Vol.19, June 1966, pp.285-292; L. Froman, Congressmen and Their Constituencies, Rand McNally, Chicago, 1963, R.F. Fenno, 'U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration', American Political Science Review, Vol.71, No. 3, September 1977, pp.883-917; H.D. Clarke, R.G. Price, R. Krause 'Constituency Service among Canadian Provincial Legislators: Basic Findings and a Test of Three Hypotheses', Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol.8, Part 4, 1975, pp. 520-542.
79. See A. Barker and M. Rush, op.cit., esp. pp.168-204; F. Morrell, From the Electors of Bristol, Spokesman Pamphlet No. 57, Spokesman, Nottingham, 1977; W. Hampton, Democracy and Community, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1970, Ch.4; R. Munroe, 'The Member of Parliament as Representative: The View from the Constituency', Political Studies, Vol.25, No.4, 1977, pp.577-587.
80. See R.C. Frasure, 'Constituency Racial Composition and the Attitudes of British M.P.s', Comparative Politics, Vol.3, January 1971, pp.201-210; J.C. Schwarz, 'The Impact of Constituency on the Behaviour of British Conservative M.P.s', Comparative Political Studies, Vol.8, No.1, 1975, pp.75-89.

81. D. Awdry, H.C. Debates, Vol.807, Col. 1395, 2nd December, 1970
82. Letter to the author, Labour M.P., 1st October, 1975.
83. Electoral majority is measured as a percentage of the total votes cast.
84. 'Marginal' constituencies are classified as those where the margin of victory is less than 10% of the poll. This classification corresponds approximately to the 'marginal' and 'semi-marginal' categories used by S.E. Finer, H.B. Berrington, D.J. Bartholomew in Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons 1955-59, Pergamon, Oxford, 1961, p.79. The inclusion of 'semi-marginal' constituencies takes account of the tendency for legislators to perceive their constituencies to be more competitive than an objective classification of marginality (normally 5%) would suggest.
85. A. Kornberg, op cit, p.286.
86. A. Barker and M. Rush, op cit, p.178.
87. Local government service is treated as a dummy variable. Members with prior experience on a local council are coded '0', those with no prior experience '1'.
88. A. Barker and M. Rush, op cit, p.195.
89. R.M. Punnett's index of specialization assigns equal weight to references for P.Q.s and debates; see R.M. Punnett, op cit, Tables 22, 23, 24. Given the very high degree of subject specialization on the part of Opposition Spokesmen in both Questions and debates the effects of equal weighting are not as misleading as they would be in the profile of backbench specialization - where the range and level of attention paid to the differing subject areas is far greater. A further flaw of Punnett's index is that it uses references in the sessional index of Hansard as the measure of parliamentary activity. Consequently, a single Question can carry the same weight as a lengthy uninterrupted speech on the floor of the House.

## Chapter 6

### Informal Specialization: Members' Perceptions

The activities of Members of Parliament at Westminster are not confined exclusively, or even necessarily in large part, to those formal proceedings of the House studied in Chapter 5. Whilst a measure of specialization can be obtained, as Punnett argues, (1) by examining Hansard, such a measure obviously is unable to take into account the pattern of activity beyond the Chamber. This may not prove to be a significant failing, if it is contended that activity in the Chamber is a reflection of a Member's concern with particular subjects in his general parliamentary activity. Indeed, a leading Conservative backbencher advised the author that "the easiest way to discover who takes an interest in (a given subject) is either to look up a Hansard for a major debate on that issue and see who has spoken, or to note who asks Questions about it at Question Time". (2) Other Members, however, were less certain that Hansard reveals an accurate profile of backbench activity; one northern Labour M.P. clearly asserted that "the records of the House - Hansard, Order Papers, and so on - do not accurately reflect the activity of some Members of Parliament". (3) In similar vein a Conservative backbencher counselled that "the House of Commons is a peculiar place in which some of the most significant activities - for example, discussion between a group of interested Members in the Smoking Room - are completely informal". (4) Therefore, to take such considerations into account, a second phase of the project, designed to supplement the content analysis of the last chapter, sought to elicit the perceptions of M.P.s of their individual patterns of specialization and of the general division of labour on the backbenches.

A short postal survey was, therefore, sent to all backbenchers in September 1975. The questionnaire was a development from a pilot survey of ex-backbenchers and serving Members in the spring of that year. (5) The questionnaire was sent to all backbenchers; Government frontbenchers, including Parliamentary Private Secretaries, Opposition Spokesmen, the Speaker and his deputies were all excluded from the survey. Of the 453 backbenchers serving in the House in September 1975, 161 returned completed questionnaires - giving a response rate of 35.5%. A further 39 Members (8.6% of all backbenchers) returned letters stating that as an "unbreakable rule" they did not respond to postal surveys. The reluctance of British M.P.s to answer postal questionnaires, a trend which has been particularly marked over the last five years, is now an accepted part of research into parliamentary behaviour in Britain. The low response rate of the present survey, whilst disappointing, nevertheless compares favourably with the returns of other surveys. In 1973 Gregory and Alexander surveyed 220 backbenchers and received 77 replies, giving a return of 35%. (6) In 1975 a survey conducted under the auspices of Justice from Reading University - during the same period as our survey - obtained a return of 19%. More recently Hall and Higgins, (7) and Paul Whiteley, (8) in their surveys of opinion on the Labour benches in 1976 obtained responses of 32% and 31% respectively. Indeed, Whiteley was forced to observe that "it appears that M.P.s are becoming over surveyed": a conclusion undoubtedly shared by many backbenchers, including one Conservative who told the author that she was 'overwhelmed' by as many as eight or nine postal surveys a week, many originating from North American educational institutions. (9)

The respondents to our survey were remarkably representative of the total population of backbenchers along the lines of the key variables of party and length of parliamentary experience (see Table 6.1).

Although the sample is not particularly large and subsequently the findings of the survey are far from exhaustive, the results of the survey may nevertheless provide a fairly representative insight into some of the views on backbench specialization.

TABLE 6.1 Composition of the House of Commons, and the survey sample, by party and length of parliamentary service.

i). <u>Party</u>	<u>House</u>		<u>Backbenchers</u>		<u>Sample</u>	
	N	Excluded	N	%	N	%
Cons	277	54	223	49.2	81	50.3
Lab	318	124	194	42.8	67	41.6
Others	39	3	36	8.0	13	8.1
Vacant	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>635</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>453</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>161</u>	<u>100.0</u>

ii). <u>Date of Entry</u>	<u>Cons</u>		<u>Lab</u>		<u>Total (incl. others)</u>	
	<u>House</u> (n 223)	<u>Sample</u> (n 81)	<u>House</u> (n 194)	<u>Sample</u> (n 67)	<u>House</u> (n 453)	<u>Sample</u> (n 161)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Pre 1964	39.5	30.9	29.4	23.9	32.5	25.5
1964-66	14.8	17.2	29.4	28.5	21.6	21.1
1970	19.7	23.5	16.0	17.9	17.4	20.5
1974	<u>26.0</u>	<u>28.4</u>	<u>25.2</u>	<u>29.9</u>	<u>28.5</u>	<u>32.9</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  3.77 df 3 n sign

The first question asked of M.P.s was whether in their work in Parliament there were any particular subject areas which attracted a majority of their interest and activity. (10) At this stage Members were not explicitly asked whether they specialized in these areas for fear of confusing the concept of 'specialization' with that of 'expertise'. (A question designed to discover Members' awareness of this distinction was included later in the survey). None of the respondents, however,

encountered any difficulty in identifying subjects upon which the majority of their attention was concentrated in the House. The pattern of the response to this question is outlined in Table 6.2. Overall, the profile of specialization on the part of respondents reveals a high degree of concentration of activity. Less than one in six backbenchers stated that most of their parliamentary activity was spread widely across six or more policy areas. While at the other extreme only seven per cent of the sample claimed to devote most of their attention to one subject area. The single largest group of backbenchers stated that they concentrated primarily upon two or three issues, and another one-third of M.P.s claimed to devote most of their attention to four or five subjects.

TABLE 6.2 Number of subjects attracting a majority of activity and interest per Member crosstabulated with Party.

<u>No. of Subjects</u>	<u>Party</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Others</u>	
	(n 81)	(n 67)	(n 13)	(n 161)
	%	%	%	%
1	7.4	4.5	15.4	6.8
2 - 3	55.6	29.9	23.1	42.2
4 - 5	28.4	46.2	23.1	35.5
6 +	8.6	19.4	38.4	15.5
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  20.38 df 6 sign 0.01

Labour v Conservative  $\chi^2$  12.39 df 3 sign 0.01

Significant differences in the profile of specialization between parties are apparent in Table 6.2. On the one hand there are the differences between minor party Members and their major party colleagues; most of these differences stem from the fact that a greater proportion of third party M.P.s are to be found at both the highest and the lowest levels of the table. This paradox is largely

explicable by the fact that those minor party Members who claimed to devote their attention mainly to one subject area tended to interpret 'subject area' somewhat more liberally than their major party colleagues. Thus one Liberal Member claimed that his specialism was in economic affairs, which to his mind "includes Treasury, Industry, Trade, Energy, etc". Other minor party M.P.s were, however, more precise in their specification of subjects. Yet most of them pointed to their paradoxical position in the House, for as one Member of Plaid Cymru noted "(our) position.....is rather different from that of backbenchers in the larger parliamentary parties. With only three M.P.s we have to specialize, and we divide policy areas between us". Thus, although called upon to specialize, the range of specialisms (given the small number of Members in each minor party) is generally greater than that of M.P.s in the Conservative and Labour parties.

On the other hand there are also significant differences to be seen in Table 6.2 between the profile of specialization in the major parties. Conservative backbenchers appear to see themselves as being more highly specialized than their Labour counterparts, to the extent that 63% of Tory Members claimed to concentrate upon three or fewer subjects, whereas about half of this number of Labour respondents (34%) claimed to specialize to the same degree. Correspondingly, two-thirds of Labour respondents stated that their attention was focused mainly on four or more issues, as opposed to just over one-third of Conservatives. These differences are borne out in the statistically significant correlation between the number of 'specialisms' claimed per Member and party allegiance. <sup>(11)</sup> ( $r$  0.24,  $r^2$  0.06, significant at 0.002). The positive nature of the correlation indicates that Labour Members were generally more inclined to list a greater number of 'specialisms' than were Tory respondents.

The more specialized profile of activity on the part of Conservative respondents does reinforce the finding of Chapter 5 that Tory M.P.s in our sample tended to be more 'subject specialized' in their deliberations in the House than Labour backbenchers. (12) Furthermore the perceptions of M.P.s highlight yet again the inadequacy of the hypothesis that Conservative backbenchers would be expected to be less specialized than their Socialist counterparts. Explanations, other than a dichotomization of representative role orientations, have, therefore, to be sought for these party differences in the profile of specialization.

One possibility may be, simply, that the responses to this question are unrepresentative of the distribution of attitudes in the House as a whole. It may be argued that those Conservative backbenchers who returned the questionnaire were primarily those committed to the cause of specialization in the Commons. However, if this position is adopted, what then needs to be explained is firstly, why 'generalist' Tory Members would fail to respond and, secondly, why Labour Members with a commitment to specialization would also fail to respond to the same questionnaire. Such questions are essentially unanswerable. Perhaps a more plausible, though still tendentious, interpretation of the findings of Table 6.2 is to be found by reference to Mr. Heath's 'style' of leadership of the Conservative Party. Heath clearly stands out as the exception to the general executive rule of amateurism in British Government, in that he was, firstly, more willing to appoint backbench 'specialists' to his Opposition Team between 1965-70, and, secondly, more prepared to allocate departmental posts in accordance with previous opposition duties. Moreover, he initiated fewer reshuffles of his Cabinet than most other post-war Prime Ministers. (13) Hence, one consequence of Heath's style of leadership, albeit unpopular at the time, may have been to increase the general awareness and

acceptance of the need for a division of labour on the part of Conservative backbenchers. The fact that the leadership of the Labour party has never been renowned, either under Wilson or Callaghan, for its active promotion of the norm of specialization may account for the differences between the backbenchers of the two main parties. Indeed, two Labour Members in interview both confirmed the absence of a commitment to specialization on the part of the Labour leadership. One openly spoke of "the amateur norms of the executive" and went on to argue that "Ministers don't want expert, specialized backbenchers as they make life difficult". When asked what skills Labour Ministers required to hold office he replied: "At the moment Ministers require managerial competence in their departments, and they like their backbenchers to be enthusiastic amateurs so as not to criticize their own ignorance of their briefs". (14) A supportive view came from a newly promoted P.P.S. who noted that there were considerable advantages to the Government in "keeping backbenchers unspecialized". He further believed that there was "a strong desire by the Government to keep backbenchers amateurs". (15) Hence the contrasting styles of leadership between the two major parties may provide a valuable insight into the differing development of backbench perceptions towards specialization. Indeed, the whole question of the 'philosophy of the executive' and its impact on the 'norms' of the Commons provides another area in need of primary research in Britain.

#### Perceptions of specialization on the backbenches

That the majority of backbenchers in the survey regard themselves as specialists in particular subject areas is apparent from the discussion thus far. However, there is no indication as to whether the same M.P.s regard other backbenchers to be specialists. Therefore, to see how far respondents believed specialization to be a common phenomenon

in the House they were asked to specify whether "most/quite a lot/not very many or very few" backbenchers concentrated their attention upon a few issues. Only six backbenchers felt unable to make such a judgement; the remainder (n 155) answered in the manner outlined in Table 6.3.

TABLE 6.3 Extent of backbench specialization: responses analysed by party.

<u>Extent of backbench specialization</u>	<u>Party</u>			
	<u>Cons</u> (n 81) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 63) %	<u>Others</u> (n 11) %	<u>Total</u> (n 155) %
Most specialize	45.7	30.2	27.3	38.1
Quite a lot	48.1	60.3	45.4	52.9
Not very many	6.2	3.2	27.3	6.5
Very few	0.0	6.3	0.0	2.5
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Lab v Cons  $\chi^2$  3.31 df2 n sign

Members in the survey obviously perceived specialization to be a widespread strategy adopted by their parliamentary colleagues. Over one-third of respondents believed that most backbenchers specialized in particular areas. Conservative M.P.s were particularly inclined to see most of their colleagues as specialists. Labour M.P.s on the other hand were more reserved in their judgement on this issue, with 60% of Labour respondents claiming that quite a lot of Members specialized. However, the lowest estimate of the degree of specialization came from minor party Members, with over one-quarter believing that not very many backbenchers specialized.

While the differences in the estimation of backbench specialization between the two major parties are not statistically significant they

are once again suggestive of a greater Conservative attribution of specialization in the House, both individually and collectively, than is the case in the Labour party.

Parliamentary Time expended on 'specialisms'

Having established that the majority of respondents saw themselves as being relatively specialized in their "interest and activity" in the House, a check was then made to discover whether activity on these specialisms occupied the majority of the respondent's parliamentary time. Surprisingly, perhaps, only five backbenchers were unwilling, or unable, to quantify the amount of time spent on their stated 'specialisms'. What soon becomes apparent from the answers of the remaining Members is the substantial amount of time backbenchers spend in the consideration of a narrow range of issues. Of those M.P.s claiming to specialize exclusively on one subject, 30% said that they spent approximately one-third of their time in the House on that subject; 40% spent around one-half, 20% around two thirds, and one Labour M.P. claimed to spend over three-quarters of his time on the subject of 'housing'.

Table 6.4 sets out the responses of the Members focusing primarily upon two to five subject areas. Fully 60% of respondents in each of the two major parties claimed to spend at least around one-half of their parliamentary time on their specialisms. Approximately one backbencher in three in these parties indicated that two-thirds or more of their time was taken up in dealing with between two to five issue areas. Notably, no significant differences are to be found between the two major parties in this table ( $X^2$  3.67 df 4 not significant).

TABLE 6.4 Parliamentary time devoted to specialisms (2-5)  
crosstabulated with party.

<u>Time spent on</u> <u>2-5 subjects</u>	<u>Party</u>			<u>Total</u> (n 120)
	<u>Cons</u> (n 65)	<u>Lab</u> (n 49)	<u>Other</u> (n 6)	
	%	%	%	%
One quarter	13.8	14.3	0.0	13.3
One third	26.2	24.5	16.7	25.0
One half	27.7	30.6	33.3	29.2
Two thirds	23.1	12.2	33.3	19.2
Three quarters	9.2	18.4	16.7	13.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Of those Members claiming to be interested in more than five subjects 64% (n 16) stated that their attention was indeed spread widely and evenly over a wide span of issues. One Labour M.P. justified his lack of specialization thus: "Most M.P.s have to decide, it is said, at some time in their membership whether to be a 'generalist' or a 'specialist' and most, it is said, come down for the latter. I am resisting this 'pattern' (if it is one) and trying to avoid being 'type-cast' ". (Labour M.P., 1964). 36%, however, argued that although their 'spread' of interest was fairly wide they, nevertheless, concentrated upon certain issues. This concentration could either take the form: "I spread my activities in the House over the subjects (urban deprivation, community work, youth work, unemployment, social services, rights of the individual, education) and try and concentrate on all of them according to what is a current problem" (Conservative M.P., 1974), or alternatively: "of my main subjects (six listed) I concentrate basically on finance and taxation" (Conservative M.P., 1974). Nevertheless, such Members be they 'generalists' or 'quasi-specialists', were far outnumbered by Members claiming to concentrate narrowly in their parliamentary activity.

Members were next asked to specify the areas in which they were particularly active. The answers were used to check the responses to the earlier question "how many subjects attract a majority of activity and interest?" and also to reveal any intra-party differences in the focus of concentration. As was to be anticipated from the findings of Chapter 5, Conservative respondents mentioned 'agriculture', 'defence', 'foreign affairs' and 'law and order' as the area of their specialisms more frequently than Labour Members. Labour backbenchers in turn focused more upon 'education', 'housing', 'power', 'transport' and 'welfare'. However, only in the fields of 'agriculture' and 'housing' were the differences in the proportions between the two parties statistically significant at the 0.05 level. (See Table 6.5).

#### Source of subject specialisms

To discover why backbenchers concentrated upon specific issues, each M.P. was asked to state the reasons for his original interest in a particular subject. Four broad categories of 'interest' were suggested - 'personal', 'constituency', 'parliamentary' and 'party' - as possible sources of specialization. These categories were formulated on the basis of published American studies <sup>(16)</sup> and from a study of speeches in Hansard in 1970-1. Members, by convention, state their 'interest' in a particular topic in preface to their contribution on the floor of the House. Perhaps the most common source of interest is personal, occupational experience of a subject. A clear expression to this effect came from James Hill in July 1970: "As I believe that in a maiden speech one's interests should be stated may I state my three loves. The first two will be housing and planning, due to my years as Chairman of the Southampton Housing Committee and being my profession. The third will be aviation due to my 11 years service with B.O.A.C. as an aircrew member.....those are

TABLE 6.5 Subject area of stated specialisms by Party (Cons and Labour)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Party</u>					
	<u>Cons</u>		<u>Lab</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>n of</u> <u>mentions</u>	<u>% total</u> <u>mentions</u> (n 248)	<u>n of</u> <u>mentions</u>	<u>% total</u> <u>mentions</u> (n 263)	<u>n of</u> <u>mentions</u>	<u>% total</u> <u>mentions</u> (n 511)
Agriculture *	21	8.5	10	3.8	31	6.1
Aid	2	0.8	6	2.3	8	1.6
Air	9	3.6	5	1.9	14	2.7
Animals	0	0.0	2	0.8	2	0.4
Arts	1	0.4	2	0.8	3	0.6
Civil Service	1	0.4	1	0.4	2	0.4
Constituency	1	0.4	3	1.1	4	0.8
Metric	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Defence	21	8.6	13	4.9	34	6.7
Economy	19	7.7	13	4.9	32	6.3
Education	10	4.0	17	6.5	27	5.3
Environment	7	2.8	5	1.9	12	2.3
Employment	14	5.7	13	4.9	27	5.3
Europe	8	3.2	10	3.8	18	3.5
Foreign	22	8.9	18	6.8	40	7.8
House of Commons	1	0.4	4	1.5	5	0.9
Homes *	13	5.2	26	9.9	39	7.6
Health	6	2.4	10	3.8	16	3.1
Industry	30	12.1	32	12.2	62	12.1
Law and Order	14	5.7	7	2.7	21	4.1
Legal	3	1.2	5	1.9	8	1.6
Local Government	6	2.4	9	3.4	15	2.9
Media	3	1.2	5	1.9	8	1.6
Northern Ireland	2	0.8	1	0.4	3	0.6
Post Office	1	0.4	1	0.4	2	0.4
Ports	1	0.4	2	0.8	3	0.6
Power	4	1.6	6	2.3	10	2.0
Race	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Regions	1	0.4	5	1.9	6	1.2
Science & Tech.	5	2.0	1	0.4	6	1.2
Scottish Affairs	5	2.0	4	1.5	9	1.8
Sports	1	0.4	0	0.0	1	0.2
Transport	6	2.4	11	4.2	17	3.3
Welsh Affairs	1	0.4	1	0.4	2	0.4
Welfare	9	3.6	15	5.6	24	5.0
		<u>100.0</u>		<u>100.0</u>		<u>100.0</u>

\* significant 0.05

the things in which I am interested and in respect of which I hope I can be an asset to the House". (17) Similarly, Christopher Tugendhat cautioned the House, when speaking in the debate on the Second Reading of the Industry Bill, "I may be biased in my view because I wrote about it (industry) for many years as a journalist for the Financial Times". (18)

In addition, 'personal' interest in a subject may stem from entrepreneurial concern, as was the case of John Wells' intervention in the debate on horticulture in December 1970: "Here I speak from the heart. I have a small commercial greenhouse in Kent". However, financial interest in a topic under debate is not always clearly indicated. Harold Walker, for example, felt obliged to interrupt Peter Mills' (a farmer with 230 acres in West Devon) speech on agricultural support prices and import duties to enquire: "Is it not a convention of the House that hon. Members with an interest in the subject under debate declare their interest?". (19) When financial interest is declared it may, on occasion, be intertwined with other concerns. Thus John Osborn intervened in the debate on the steel industry in May 1971 "with some trepidation" as his financial interest in the private sector of the steel industry was claimed to put him in competition with the public sector. However, he went on to state "my interest lies in the steel industry and my constituency is concerned with the public and private sectors". (20)

On the other side of industry 'personal' interest in a subject may stem from membership of a trade union or professional organization. Walter Padley's unconditional opposition to the Shops (Weekday Trading) Bill was directly linked to "a lifetime association with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. I have had 21 years service as a sponsored Member of that Union in this House and 16 years as the

national President of the Union". (21)

Finally a miscellany of 'personal' reasons may stimulate an interest in a particular topic. Membership of a quasi-governmental, or quasi non-governmental body may promote an interest in a subject; take, for example, John Wells' interest in inland waterways which arose from his membership of the advisory council of the Inland Waterways Board. (22)

Interventions in debate can, however, arise from more obscure sources of 'personal' interest such as childhood memories, (23) or even through matrimonial links. (24)

When the responses of Members to the 1975 survey are analyzed it should come as no surprise, therefore, to find that 95% of backbenchers (i.e. 152 of the 160 who responded to this question) stated that their interest in at least one of their specialisms arose from 'personal' factors. 97% of Conservatives and 94% of Labour Members answered in this way, as opposed to 85% of 'other' Members. The second most commonly stated reason for interest in a specific issue was constituency 'interest'. In total 73% of respondents claimed that one or more of their specialisms was a subject of importance to their constituents. However, the proportion of Labour Members listing constituency 'interest' as a source of their specialization was significantly higher than in the Conservative party. (See Table 6.6). Hence, the party differences observed in Chapter 5, between the propensity of Members to mention their locality in the House, are mirrored by differences in the perceived importance of 'constituency' subjects as a stimulus to subject specialization: with Labour Members being more constituency oriented than their Tory colleagues.

TABLE 6.6 Source of subject specialisms by party

<u>Source of original interest</u>	<u>Party</u>				(a)
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Total</u>	
	(n 80) %	(n 67) %	(n 13) %	(n 160) %	
Personal	97.5	94.0	84.6	95.0	
Constituency	61.3	89.4 **	61.5	73.0	
Parliamentary	17.5	28.4 *	0.0	20.6	
Party	26.5	31.3	76.9	32.5	

\* significant 0.05

\*\* significant 0.01

( (a) % in each column totals more than 100% due to respondents specifying more than one source of interest).

The third category in Table 6.6 that of 'parliamentary' stimulus of interest, also reveals significant differences between Labour and Conservative respondents. Generally discussion in the House is a minor source in prompting subject specialization, but even so, a greater proportion of Labour Members claimed that interest in at least one of their specialisms originated in the House. Typical of Labour responses was that of one M.P., widely regarded by his fellow backbenchers as an expert on defence matters, who argued that his interest in this area had been aroused through discussions in Parliament as he had "never (been) much involved with it before election". (Labour M.P., 1974).

Labour Members were, in addition, more likely to cite the importance of a subject to their party as a source of their specialisms than Conservative backbenchers. However, the choice of specialism in accordance with 'party' considerations was essentially the preserve of minor party Members. The delegation of 'party spokesman' duties to M.P.s of the minor parties prompts these Members to specialize in

areas assigned by the party. In this manner over three-quarters of third party respondents claimed that their specialization in a particular area was prompted by party factors.

### Expertise and Specialization

In Chapter 2 it was observed that one normal consequence of specialization is the development of expertise, whereby, through a division of labour, certain members of the organization gain knowledge in one area of its dealings, the possession of which places them in a position of power over other members without such knowledge. However, it may be questioned whether specialization makes for expertise in legislative assemblies or expertise makes for specialization. For it is possible to separate the notions of 'division of labour' and 'expert knowledge' in representative bodies. Firstly, it is quite plausible for an M.P. in the Commons to be an expert on a given subject - say, through his professional involvement in that area prior to entering the House - yet for him to concentrate his parliamentary attention upon a totally different area. A second possibility, noted in Chapter 5, is for a Member to specialize (i.e. concentrate his activity) on a particular topic in each session; but for the topic to change in each successive session. In this way, whilst the M.P. 'specializes' for short periods, expertise is not developed in any particular area. Thirdly, expertise and specialization may be mutually reinforcing in a Member's parliamentary activity, in which case the 'expert' recruit to Parliament concentrates his attention upon the issue on which he is already knowledgeable, or alternatively a Member, through prolonged concentration upon a topic, develops a detailed understanding of that subject.

The fact that expertise may not always be a concomitant of parliamentary

specialization was recognized by the participants at the Granada dinners, Anthony King noted that one Labour M.P. "made the point that it is possible for someone to be something of an expert in a particular field without confining himself to that field exclusively. He insisted that, while the specialist/generalist dichotomy may be a real one, the expert/generalist dichotomy is not". This Member proceeded to cite Frank Allaun as one example of this case:

"Frank Allaun has a mighty range of interests.

It just so happens that the one he's best known for is housing; and, if I had a question that I wanted to raise on housing, who would I go to, straight away, but Frank Allaun? But to suggest, if anybody is suggesting, that Frank Allaun is dealing with housing to the exclusion of everything else.....that just isn't true". (25)

To test whether M.P.s generally were (a) willing to make this distinction between expertise and specialization, and (b) considered themselves to be expert in some field other than those they concentrated upon in the House, each respondent was asked: "Do you regard yourself to be an expert in any particular subject, as distinct from specializing in it in your parliamentary activity?" Only three Members felt unable to answer the question and of the remainder very few questioned the term 'expert'. Comments such as: "Expert is a bit strong! but yes it approximates to my position on law" (Conservative M.P., 1961), or more cynically: "being an 'expert' in politics usually means being immune to new ideas!" (S.N.P. M.P., 1974) were exceptional. Exactly two-thirds (n 53) of Conservative respondents claimed expertise in fields other than their parliamentary specialisms, while 63% (n 41) of Labour and 62% (n 8) of 'other' M.P.s answered in this manner. Most of these respondents listed their

occupational experiences outside Parliament as the source of their expertise; experience which was not utilized significantly in their work in the House. The fact that so many Members made this distinction is of considerable importance in analyzing the answers to the next set of questions.

Each backbencher was asked three related questions:

- i). Would you say that you are an expert in the subject area(s) you listed in answer to question two?
- ii). Why do you regard yourself as expert in this /these subject(s)?
- iii). Could you name five or six backbench Members of the House whom you consider to be expert in particular subject fields?

These questions replicate those used in a series of American studies, originating with Buchanan et al's survey of state legislators in 1960. (26) These American surveys, however, tend to treat 'expertise' and 'specialization' synonymously. Thus the original question used by Buchanan "to examine the extent and character of 'specialization'" (my emphasis) was: "Is there any particular subject or field of legislation in which you consider yourself particularly expert - I mean when it comes to dealing with proposed legislation in that field?" (27) In the British context, where formal specialization is not so pronounced, and where expertise is not always associated with legislative specialization (as the answers to the preceding question illustrate); Buchanan's original query may have produced ambiguous responses. Nevertheless, 73% (n 116) of British respondents considered themselves to be expert upon at least one of their specialisms. This figure compares favourably with the 83% of Buchanan's state legislators who saw themselves as experts. The Scottish Labour M.P. who stated: "'expert' is an extreme description. I would prefer to

say that on 'housing' I can speak with authority, and on 'defence' that I have done my homework", was in a minority. Though it should be noted that several of the 44 Members who stated that they did not consider themselves to be expert also questioned the notion of expertise generally. One established Labour backbencher was adamant that: "I've yet to meet an expert" and another Labour M.P., recruited in 1964, answered "No sir - as Charles Chaplin says about humanity - we are all only amateurs! No sir (I would) not even (call myself) an expert on agitation which I would aspire to be!!"

Of the 116 backbenchers claiming to be experts, proportionately more Conservative M.P.s, 75% (n 61), than Labour, 71% (n 47), or 'other' Members, 62% (n 8), regarded themselves as experts in the areas of their stated specialisms. Some of the reasons stated by Members for regarding themselves as expert were on occasion opaque: "because the media kindly tells me so" (Liberal M.P., 1966), or: "because of the results I achieve" (Labour M.P., 1950), and in one instance positively tautological: "because I know a lot about it" (Conservative M.P., 1970). However, with such exceptions, most responses fall into six general categories (see Table 6.7).

The importance of extra-parliamentary occupation as a foundation for expertise in the House is apparent in Table 6.7; with over half of Labour and Conservative respondents claiming expertise based on professional knowledge. Typical of such responses were:

"My interest in coal mining is because I was a coal miner (with certificates, etc)." (Labour M.P., 1964).

"Law and legal matters as I am a barrister".  
(Labour M.P., 1964).

TABLE 6.7 Stated reasons for expertise by party

<u>Stated Reason</u>	<u>Party</u>				(a)
	(No. of Responses)				
	<u>Cons</u> (n 91) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 82) %	<u>Other</u> (n 11) %	<u>Total</u> (n 184) %	
Personal experience	25.3	39.0	27.2	31.5	
Occupation/Profession	59.3	51.3	45.5	54.9	
Study/Academic Training	8.8	7.3	18.2	8.7	
Visits	3.3	1.2	0.0	2.2	
Parliamentary Experience	3.3	1.2	0.0	2.2	
Writing	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>9.1</u>	<u>0.5</u>	
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	

(a) Respondents could name more than one field in which they considered themselves expert - hence total n. of responses is greater than total number of respondents.

The second main source of expertise was 'personal experience'. For example, one Conservative M.P. with a stated specialism in 'arts and national heritage' claimed expertise in this subject because "since schooldays I have gathered experience and knowledge" (Conservative M.P., 1957). Another Member wrote that his knowledge of Northern Ireland affairs stemmed from the fact that "I was born in it and have lived most of my life in it".

Research and formal educational qualifications in a subject area made up a further 9% of responses. Visits to foreign countries, particularly Africa and the Middle East led a number of backbenchers to claim expertise in the affairs of these countries. But what is particularly striking in Table 6.7 is the small percentage of responses citing 'parliamentary experience' as a source of expertise. One of the few M.P.s whose expertise arose in this way was a Conservative backbencher, elected in 1964:

"I am an expert because I have specialized in it.

(subject) for two years. I chair the party committee and have built up extensive contacts with representative organizations".

Another Conservative backbencher, elected in 1950, cited his chairmanship of a select committee in the House as one, but not the sole, reason for his expertise in a particular area. The fact that so few Members mentioned 'parliamentary experience' as a foundation of expertise is undoubtedly a reflection of the underdevelopment of formal specialization, and its accompanying normative system, in the House of Commons. In Buchanan's survey of U.S. state legislators 18% of responses attributed expertise to "information or interest acquired as a result of experience as a committee member or a legislative investigator". (28) Unfortunately, the different usage of the terms 'expert' and 'specialist' employed in the two studies does not allow for direct comparison of these results. Nevertheless, they are perhaps symptomatic of a deep divergence of opinion as to the significance of formal specialization between the two polities - an issue which will be developed in Chapter 8.

However, turning to the third of the related questions ("Could you name five or six backbench Members of the House whom you consider to be expert in particular subject fields?"), 80% (n 129) of British respondents stated that they could do so, 8% (n 13) said they could not and the remainder 12% (n 19) felt unable to answer. Of the M.P.s answering the Question, more Conservatives (44%, n 64) than Labour backbenchers (36%, n 54) were willing to name one or more Members as experts in some substantive field. Unlike the original American survey, in which representatives were asked to state the names and fields of their nominated experts (91% did so), British M.P.s were not explicitly asked to do so; nevertheless, 52% of Labour and Conservative

respondents did provide a list of experts and their fields of expertise. Whilst these nominations closely reflected party divisions, with Labour Members normally naming Labour 'experts' and Conservatives nominating Tories, there was notable cross-party accord on certain experts. So that 15 of the 165 nominations for experts on the Labour benches came from Conservatives and 8 of the 130 nominations for Tories came from Labour Members. The dispersion of experts amongst the subject areas is recorded in Table 6.8. Significant differences, between the proportion of nominations per subject area, are observable between the two parties. The percentage of Conservative nominations of experts in the areas of 'aviation', 'local government', 'law and order', and particularly 'economics', was significantly greater than in the Labour party. Labour backbenchers, on the other hand, gave a greater percentage of their nominations to experts in the areas of 'power' and 'housing'. Hence, the distinctive patterns of 'interest' in varying subject areas between the two major parties is once again apparent.

In certain subject fields there appears to exist a degree of consensus upon the recognized party expert in that area. Thus, for example, of the six Tory nominations in the field of 'aviation' five went to Norman Tebbit. All four nominations on the subject of 'the arts' in the Conservative party went to Robert Cooke. Similarly all eight nominations on 'education' went to Dr. Rhodes Boyson. However, in the field of 'economics' a group of acknowledged experts was apparent on the Tory backbenches. John Biffen, Nigel Lawson, Nicholas Ridley claimed eight, six and five nominations respectively. But most nominated of all was Peter Rees with twelve nominations for his knowledge on taxation. Other highly nominated Conservatives included Peter Mills (agriculture), Timothy Renton (trade), and Michael Latham (housing).

TABLE 6.8 Fields of expertise: nominations of experts by subject area (Conservative and Labour)

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Party</u>								
	<u>Cons</u>			<u>Lab</u>			<u>Total</u>		
	<u>n</u> <u>M.Ps</u>	<u>n</u> <u>Nomin</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Nomin</u>	<u>n</u> <u>M.Ps</u>	<u>n</u> <u>Nomin</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Nomin</u>	<u>n</u> <u>M.Ps</u>	<u>n</u> <u>Nomin</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Nomin</u>
Agriculture	3	5	3.9	4	6	3.6	7	11	3.7
Aid	1	1	0.8	2	2	1.2	3	3	1.0
Aviation*	2	6	4.6	1	1	0.6	3	7	2.4
Animals	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Arts	1	4	3.1	3	5	3.0	4	9	3.1
Civil Service	0	0	0.0	1	3	1.8	1	3	1.0
Constituency	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Decimals & Metric	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Defence	3	5	3.9	5	10	6.1	8	15	5.1
Economy ***	10	39	30.0	5	9	5.5	15	48	16.3
Education	1	8	6.2	3	6	3.6	4	14	4.7
Environment	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Employment	3	3	2.3	5	5	3.0	8	8	2.7
E.E.C.	8	10	7.7	5	6	3.6	13	16	5.4
Foreign	3	4	3.1	9	9	5.5	12	13	2.0
House of Commons	0	0	0.0	1	6	3.6	1	6	2.0
Housing **	6	8	6.2	9	33	20.0	15	41	13.9
Health	1	1	0.8	4	4	2.4	5	5	1.7
Industry	6	9	6.9	5	8	4.8	11	17	5.8
Law *	5	5	3.9	0	0	0.0	5	5	1.7
Legal	0	0	0.0	2	3	1.8	2	3	1.0
Local Government *	5	7	5.4	2	2	1.2	7	9	3.1
Media	0	0	0.0	3	8	4.9	3	8	2.7
Northern Ireland	0	0	0.0	1	1	0.6	1	1	0.3
Posts	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Ports	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Power *	2	2	1.5	3	10	6.1	5	12	4.1
Race	0	0	0.0	1	1	0.6	1	1	0.3
Science & Tech.	4	4	3.1	1	5	3.0	5	9	3.1
Scotland	1	1	0.8	2	3	1.8	3	4	1.4
Sports	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Transport	0	0	0.0	1	3	1.8	1	3	1.0
Welsh Affairs	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0
Welfare	6	8	6.2	4	16	9.5	10	24	8.1
	<u>71</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>165</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>153</u>	<u>295</u>	<u>100.0</u>

\* sign 0.05

\*\* sign 0.01

\*\*\* sign 0.001.

On the Labour backbenches Frank Allaun on housing (16 nominations) and Jack Ashley on disablement and welfare matters (12 nominations) were the most visible experts in their respective fields. John Roper was nominated 5 times for his knowledge of E.E.C. matters and Colin Phipps was the acknowledged Labour expert on the oil industry (7 nominations). In the area of science and technology Arthur Palmer was the leading expert (5 nominations), whilst J.P. Mackintosh was the undisputed expert on either side of the House on 'constitutional' issues, receiving 3 nominations each from both parties. Several other Members were regarded by their Labour colleagues as 'expert' in more than one field; Robin Cook received nominations in the areas of defence and housing, George Cunningham in social security and housing and Tam Dalyell in Scottish affairs, defence and foreign affairs.

Following on from the identification of expertise an attempt was made to establish the extent to which informal backbench channels for the dissemination of such knowledge existed. Members were, therefore, asked whether they would consult any other backbencher for advice on a subject with which they were personally unfamiliar. 99% (n 159) readily acknowledged that they would and did. Answers to this question were riddled with such comments as "of course", "frequently", "naturally" and "all the time". Turning the question about, M.P.s were then asked whether other backbenchers consulted them on those specific areas in which they claimed to specialize. In reply 96% (n 154) of respondents claimed that they were approached in this way. Perhaps, not surprisingly an association between a positive answer to this question and length of service in the House was found: a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.16$ ,  $r^2 = 0.03$ , significant at 0.02), indicates that those Members not consulted by other backbenchers tended to be newly elected M.P.s. On the other hand, one established Labour Member, who regarded himself, and was regarded by some of his colleagues

to be, an expert in foreign affairs complained that he was consulted "frequently. In fact, too frequently!!". Although the possibility exists that some M.P.s in answering this question may have inflated their own importance as dispensers of specialist knowledge, there does, nevertheless, appear to be strong networks for the transmission of advice within each party. These channels of communication appear to transcend factional lines within parties, and even party boundaries themselves. This point was made on several occasions by Members in interview, one newly elected Labour Member revealed that he had cross-party contacts on the subject of animal welfare. Another Labour Member stated that he had received considerable private support and advice from Conservative Members on a matter of legal reform, even though they indicated that they would not be able to support him in public. However, another Labour backbencher, a former Minister, whilst acknowledging his own cross-party contacts did point to the existence of "competing groups of specialists in our (Labour) party. Take economic affairs, here there are a number of specialist cliques ranged along the ideological spectrum. Members have then to choose which variety of economic advice they want". (29)

To see how important 'ideology' was in influencing the choice of specialist advice Members were, therefore, asked: "In seeking such advice (on an unfamiliar subject) would the ideological 'position' of the backbencher be more important than his expertise on the subject?". The responses are outlined in Table 6.9.

The overwhelming majority of Members in the survey clearly indicated that their paramount consideration in seeking advice was the expertise of the Member rather than his ideological stance. The importance of expertise over ideology was more pronounced amongst Conservatives

than amongst their Labour colleagues. Correspondingly, greater emphasis was placed upon ideological considerations in the Labour ranks. But, even then, just under three-quarters of Labour respondents believed expert knowledge to be of greater importance than ideological inclinations.

TABLE 6.9 Ideological position v expertise in seeking advice

<u>Ideological position</u>	<u>Party</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 80) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 66) %	<u>Total</u> (incl. 'others') (n 159) %
More important	3.7	10.6	7.5
Less important	87.5	72.7	79.9
Both important	<u>8.8</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>12.6</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  5.34 df 2 sign 0.1

Specialization over time

It was observed in Chapter 5 that M.P.s' levels of specialization in their parliamentary activity tended to be consistent over time; in that a high degree of concentration of activity in one session was normally associated with a high concentration in the next. The degree of 'subject specialization' was, however, found to be fairly limited. To see, therefore, whether this pattern reflected the nature of subject specialization generally, M.P.s were asked two related questions on this issue:

- a). Are the subjects in which you are particularly active now the same subjects you concentrated upon in your first session in Parliament?

b). Has there been any significant change in your interest in certain areas since you first entered Parliament?

In answer to the first question 77% of respondents claimed that the subjects they focused upon in 1975 were the same as those they were particularly interested in when they first entered the House. (See Table 6.10). Longer serving Members, not unnaturally, perceived a greater change than their 'newer' colleagues. A positive relationship between length of service and change of specialisms is apparent ( $r$  0.17,  $r^2$  0.03, significant at 0.02). This association is not, however, so evident in the responses to the second question. Over one-third of all respondents noted a significant change in their interests in the House, with newly elected backbenchers as likely to claim a change of interests as their older colleagues ( $r$  0.08,  $r^2$  0.01, not significant). Conservative respondents saw less of a change in their interests than either Labour or third party M.P.s (30% of Tories answered 'yes' compared with 43% of Labour and 46% of 'other' respondents). It is notable, however, that when responses are analyzed in terms of 'parliamentary generations' it is the 1964/66 cohort which claimed a greater change of interest. (30)

Quite why the 1960's cohort should answer in this manner is not readily apparent. Indeed, the general 'reformist' reputation of this generation might have led one to expect that this group, more than any other, would have deepened their knowledge in certain subject areas by focusing consistently upon them over the years. However, it may be misleading to link 'reformism', and support for the development of services and facilities in the House, with specialization, in as much as a Member may support the improvement of facilities yet still adopt a generalist approach.

TABLE 6.10    Change of interest in Parliament over time  
crosstabulated with parliamentary generations

a). Specialisms  
same as in  
first session

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	<u>Pre 1964</u>	<u>1964/66</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>All</u>
	(n 41)	(n 34)	(n 33)	(n 53)	(n 161)
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	75.6	58.8	81.8	86.8	77.0
No	<u>24.4</u>	<u>41.2</u>	<u>18.2</u>	<u>13.2</u>	<u>23.0</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  9.69 df 3 sign 0.05

b). Significant  
change of  
interests

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	<u>Pre 1964</u>	<u>1964/66</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>All</u>
	(n 41)	(n 34)	(n 33)	(n 53)	(n 161)
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	34.1	55.9	27.3	34.0	37.3
No	<u>65.9</u>	<u>44.1</u>	<u>72.7</u>	<u>66.0</u>	<u>62.7</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  6.85 df 3 sign 0.1

Procedures and Specialisms

One final question, which leads onto the consideration of formal specialization, was included in the survey to establish whether some procedures of the House were more favoured by backbenchers than others in the pursuit of their specialisms. To this end, Members were asked to rank, in order of preference, the procedures they personally found to be of most use for raising an issue in the House. Four procedures, all of which allowed for individual backbench initiative, were suggested in the question. However, respondents widened the original choice from Questions, Early Day Motions, Adjournment debates and backbench party committees to include 'debates' generally, formal

committees of the House and informal modes of activity such as letters to Ministers and communications in the national press. The ranking of these 'procedures' is set out in Table 6.11.

TABLE 6.11 Preferences for procedures in pursuing specialisms in the House of Commons

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Preference</u>			
	<u>1st</u> (n 157) %	<u>2nd</u> (n 154) %	<u>3rd</u> (n 123) %	<u>4th</u> (n 89) %
Questions	43.3	31.8	18.8	9.0
Backbench Committees	27.4	29.2	21.2	20.2
Debates	6.4	20.2	27.6	24.7
Direct contact with Ministers	10.8	9.2	2.4	7.9
Formal Committees	7.6	1.9	1.6	1.1
Press/Letter	4.5	1.9	2.4	1.1
E.D.M.s	0.0	5.8	26.0	36.0
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Most noticeably, Parliamentary Questions appear to be the most favoured procedure for raising an issue of special importance in the House, as 37% of combined first and second preferences went to P.Q.s. The second most popular method of pursuing an interest in a specific topic appears to be through raising the issue in the relevant party group. One senior Conservative emphasized that "Party committees are indeed useful. Members do tend to cluster around these committees, which cover the interests they are following at that time". And well over one-quarter of respondents listed these committees as either their first or second choice of 'procedure'. Conservatives tended to rank these committees more highly than their Labour colleagues with 36% of Tory, as opposed to 25% of Labour, first and second nominations going to these groups. This inter-party difference suggests a distinction between the attitudes of M.P.s in the two major parties towards the

value of backbench party committees: a distinction which we will analyze more closely in the next chapter.

Ten percent of respondents believed that direct correspondence or contact with the Minister responsible for a specific topic was the best method of pursuing a particular cause. More Labour Members (13%) than Tories (8%) preferred this method: so taking advantage of their position on the Government benches. One Labour M.P. stated that his "score card" on his specialisms "is a pretty good one. This is due to the fact that.....I am on very close terms with most members of the Government, and have little or no difficulty in, in a sense, negotiating with them directly. You will find many other Members, particularly those in the Trade Union Group, who also prefer to do things directly with Ministers, rather than joining in debates, or tabling Questions". (Labour M.P., 1964). On the Opposition benches certain Conservative Members also recognized the value of direct communication with Ministers. A Conservative backbencher, first elected in February 1974, commented: ".....considerable knowledge may be gained from correspondence with Ministers and Ministries - which rarely catches the public eye. I can think of several M.P.s who, not being the publicity seeking types, would not be picked out too easily from a review of Hansard say. Perhaps Sir David Renton's concern with population is a case in point; until he published his correspondence with Mr. Wilson over this matter it was effectively hidden from public view yet he was making his point, and being accepted as an authority on the subject in question".

Around one in ten first and second preferences went to activity in debate. Although adjournment debate was specified in the question many Members widened 'debate' to include all debates in the Chamber. Several Members argued that adjournment debates were best left for

constituency matters:

"The Adjournment Debate, for example, is appropriate for pressing a problem affecting a particular constituent....." (Labour M.P., ex-Minister, 1945).

"Adjournment Debates, in my experience, tend to be used far more to highlight a particular parochial problem which has arisen in a Member's constituency. It is generally not regarded as a good device for drawing attention in depth to a major national issue". (Conservative M.P., 1964).

Therefore, Members tended to speak generally of debate rather than confine themselves to adjournment debates. A few Members obviously took great delight in "interrupting Ministers on the floor", (Conservative M.P., 1974) or in "cross-House interruption", (Northern Ireland M.P., 1974) during debate.

Only a small proportion of Members considered activity on select and standing committees to be the best method of pursuing an interest in the House: again, perhaps, highlighting the weakness of formal specialization in the Commons. Nearly as many respondents chose letters to the press or published articles as their first or second preference. However, the lowest ranking procedure in terms of first and second preferences was E.D.M.s. Not one of the 161 respondents chose E.D.M.s as their first preference in pursuing an interest in the House. Indeed, some Members wrote disparagingly of this procedure:

"The Early Day Motion is a propaganda device which some Members use purely for that purpose. Many regard it as the parliamentary equivalent of fly

posting". (Conservative M.P., 1964).

"E.D.M.s - useless! Gesture politics".

(Liberal M.P., 1964).

But at least one Labour M.P. was convinced that E.D.M.s were useful tools for 'pressurizing' the Government, and cited the case of E.D.M. 355/1975 (31) which was signed by 151 Labour Members and warned the Labour Prime Minister of their implacable opposition to continued membership of the European Economic Community.

### Conclusion

The profile of specialization in the House of Commons as perceived from the backbenches is far more pronounced than the profile established in Chapter 5 from a quantitative content analysis of activity. Most backbenchers appear to see themselves, and the majority of their backbench colleagues, to be relatively highly specialized in their parliamentary activity. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents consider themselves to be expert in the subject area of at least one of their parliamentary specialisms, and can easily identify other expert backbenchers in the House. Conservative M.P.s are particularly inclined to identify themselves and their parliamentary colleagues as being specialized. And other inter-party differences emerge with regard to the nomination of experts in specific subject fields, to the importance of ideological considerations in the choice of specialist advice and to the importance of constituency factors as a source of subject specialisms. Thus, while Members' perceptions generally confirm the pattern of specialization and the nature of inter-party differences discovered in

Chapter 5, they nevertheless tend to inflate the levels of expertise and specialization in the House. This is not to argue that the profile based on the analysis of the written record of the proceedings of the House is more accurate than that based on the perceptions of backbenchers, only to suggest that Members may unconsciously exaggerate their own degree of specialization. One piece of evidence supporting this view arises from the fact that of those Members claiming to concentrate upon one subject only 30% devoted two-thirds or more of their time in the House to the consideration of that issue; similarly only 32% of backbenchers who focused primarily on a range of between two and five subject areas claimed to devote this amount of time to these areas. Clearly, whether this degree of concentration warrants the description of high specialization is open to question; indeed one experienced backbencher suggested that M.P.s had a tendency to confuse 'specialization' with 'interest' in a subject:

"An M.P. is likely to have some 'theme' or 'themes' in which he is more than usually interested but this will be a kind of continuing interest that will rise and subside according to pressures and counter pressures.....(although) I have 'themes' I could mention, I have no 'specialization' and do not consider myself an 'expert' in anything. And what I say about my life as an M.P. would I think be said by most M.P.s about themselves". (32)

However, most respondents did not concur with this view, in as much as they overwhelmingly accepted the term 'specialization' to describe their pattern of work in the House of Commons. But the differences of opinion among M.P.s as to the performance of their legislative duties, and the differences between their perceptions of

the pattern of activity and a quantitative analysis of such activity, does raise the whole question of the 'accuracy' of M.P.s perceptions of their work in Parliament. (33)

## References

1. R.M. Punnett, Frontbench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973, p.473.
2. Letter, 19th June 1974, Conservative M.P., secretary of a leading party committee.
3. Letter, 29th September, 1975, Labour M.P.
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5. I would like to record my thanks to Michael Rush for his comments on the design of the pilot survey, and to those Labour and Conservative Members who assisted at this preliminary stage of the survey.
6. R. Gregory and A. Alexander, 'Our Parliamentary Ombudsman, Part Two', Public Administration, Vol. 51, Spring 1973, pp.41-59.
7. J. Hall and J. Higgins, 'What Influences Today's Labour M.P.s', New Society, 9th December, 1976.
8. See P. Whiteley, 'The Structure of Democratic Socialist Ideology in Britain', Political Studies, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1978, p.217.
9. Interview, Conservative M.P., 3rd October, 1975.
10. For a full list of the questions see Appendix E.
11. Each M.P. was asked to state the subject areas he concentrated upon. Responses to this question served as a check to the first question in the survey, and also allowed an exact count of the number of 'specialisms' to be made. Party is treated as a dummy variable.
12. See Chapter 5, Table 5.9.
13. See R.M. Punnett, op cit, pp.167-168, pp.375-380.
14. Interview, 24th May, 1977.
15. Interview, 25th May, 1977.
16. See W. Buchanan et al, 'The Legislator as Specialist', Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 13, 1960, p.644, and D.R. Matthews, U.S. Senators and their World, Vintage, New York, 1960, p.250.
17. H.C. Debates, Vol. 803, Col. 548, 7th July, 1970.
18. H.C. Debates, Vol. 810, Col. 371, 26th January, 1971.
19. H.C. Debates, Vol. 819, Col. 1741, 24th June, 1971.
20. H.C. Debates, Vol. 818, Col. 82, 24th May, 1971.
21. H.C. Debates, Vol. 808, Col. 838, 11th December, 1970.
22. H.C. Debates, Vol. 811, Col. 1531, 15th February, 1971.
23. See Brandon Rhys Williams contribution on South East Wales, H.C. Debates, Vol. 822, Col. 304, Session 1970-1.

24. See Nigel Fisher's contribution on Northern Ireland, H.C. Debates, Vol. 815, Col. 309: ".....I am an Ulsterman by marriage.....".
25. A. King, British Members of Parliament, Macmillan, London, 1974, p.71.
26. See W. Buchanan et al, op cit, p. 639; H.O. Porter and D.A. Leuthold, 'Legislative Expertise in Michigan: Formal and Informal Patterns Over Time', Michigan Academician, Vol. 3, Fall 1970, No. 2, p.72.
27. ibid, (my emphasis).
28. W. Buchanan et al, op cit, p.645.
29. Interview, 14th November, 1976.
30. See Annex 2 for an analysis of answers to other questions crosstabulated with 'parliamentary generations'.
31. E.D.M. 355/1975 was sponsored by P. Shore, A. Benn, M. Foot, B. Castle, J. Silkin and J. Hart and urged "Right honourable and honourable Members to campaign for withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Common Market and invite their fellow-citizens to join them".
32. Letter, Labour M.P., 14th May, 1975.
33. This issue is considered in rather more detail in Chapter 9.

## Chapter 7

### Formal Specialization - 'Mezzo-Level Structure' - Party and All-Party Committees

In spite of the fact that 'specialization' has attracted weighty parliamentary and academic attention over the last three or more decades, no systematic study of micro-level specialization, other than that outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, has been published. One reason for this omission is that 'specialization' has largely been viewed by British commentators as a macro-level phenomenon. Consequently, there has been a tendency to treat specialization in the House almost exclusively as a synonym for a formal, committee based, division of labour; not unnaturally such an approach obscures the significance of the informal pattern of specialization through treating it simply as a consequence of formal specialization. Furthermore, this approach understates specialization at intermediate-levels of parliamentary organization, for the 'mezzo-level', interposed between the informal specialization of individual backbenchers and the formal specialization of the House as a corporate body, incorporates a series of 'specialized' party subject groups and all-party committees.

These 'unofficial' committees are important on several distinct grounds. Firstly, they are notable for their very existence as they represent a system of specialized committees operating in a House renowned for its resistance to formal specialization. Secondly, they are important as they incorporate alternative mechanisms of choice based upon principles other than adversary philosophy, so that expertise and specialization are fostered at the 'mezzo-level' as replacements for adversary methods of decision-making. Indeed, in spite of both sets of committees including the word 'party' in their titles, it is the

very absence of partisan politics ( in an adversary sense) which facilitates the development of organizational structures based upon a formal division of labour. All-party committees, on the one hand, transcend inter-party conflict through practising ideological catholicism, whilst party subject committees function in the hermetically sealed atmosphere of their respective doctrinal monotheisms. (1) In either case the key propellant of British parliamentary activity in the 20th century - adversary politics - is missing. Backbenchers serving on these 'unofficial' committees are called upon to make their own decisions - rather than act in strict compliance with the wishes of their party leaders. Without the simplistic dichotomization of alternatives, so characteristic of debate in the Chamber, backbenchers are required to choose between multiple possibilities and to do so on the basis of their own expertise and political judgement. Hence it is not simply coincidence that a formal committee system emerges as a mechanism of choice at this 'mezzo-level' in the absence of adversary considerations.

### Party Committees

The present extensive system of backbench subject committees dates essentially from the immediate post-war years of 1945-1946. Both parties had utilized subject committees before the war. The Conservative party had an agricultural committee in existence before 1914 and developed a number of 'specialized' groups dealing with the armed services, foreign affairs, finance, and trade and industry in the train of the 1922 Committee. Correspondingly, the Labour Party, by the late 1930s, was operating a number of advisory subject committees. However, it was only in the period of post-war reconstruction that these subject groups became a formal part of party organization, Labour subject groups were confirmed in 1945 and the formal system of party

committees in the Conservative party followed in 1946. Both sets of committees (2) are now an established feature of party organization in the House of Commons. The range of subjects covered by party committees in 1970-1 (the first session of the quantitative analysis in Chapter 5) and 1974-5 (the session of the postal survey in Chapter 6) is set out in Table 7.1.

Party committees are of significance not only in the functioning of the major parties but also in the working of the House as a whole. "Much of an M.P.'s time is", as Crick notes, "spent in unofficial party groups and committees". (3) One member of the Conservative Employment Committee, in interview, estimated that he normally devoted five to six hours per week to the business of this committee. This weekly total had, however, soared on several occasions in the 1970-1974 Parliament; most notably during the passage of the Industrial Relations Bill in 1971, and latterly during the disruption of the early months of 1974. Whilst this Member was a particularly active and conscientious official on the committee, his estimation of his colleagues' activity was not much lower than his own.

Of more importance than the amount of backbench time occupied by party committee business is, however, the influence which backbenchers are capable of exercising over their respective leaderships in these committees. Twenty years ago Richard Body M.P. went so far as to argue that "No matter which party is in power, if one of its committees at a representative meeting disapproves of a certain measure or wishes something done that the Government has failed to do hitherto, then there is either a change of heart by the Government or a first class row culminating in one or two resignations. Needless to say, the first is the more usual of the two consequences. There lies the influence of the party committee". (4) Body's assessment undoubtedly exaggerates

TABLE 7.1 Conservative Party Committees and Labour Subject Groups  
1970-1 and 1974-5

	<u>Conservative Party Committees</u>		<u>Labour Subject Groups</u>	
	<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1974-5</u>	<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1974-5</u>
Agric. Fish & Food	*	*	Agriculture & Food	*
Arts & Amenities	*	*	Arts & Amenities	*
Aviation Supply/ Aviation	*	*	Aviation Supply/ Aviation	*
Broadcasting and Communications	*	*	/Broadcasting and Public Information	*
Defence	*	*	Defence/ Defence & Services /Disablement	*
			Economic and Finance	*
Education	*	*	Education and Science	*
Employment	*	*	Employment	*
/Energy		*	/Energy	*
/Environment		*	Environment	*
Finance	*	*	Europe	*
			/Fisheries	*
			/Forestry	*
Foreign & Common- wealth Affairs	*	*	Foreign and Commonwealth	*
Health & Soc Security	*	*	Health & Soc Security/ Health	*
Housing and Construction	*	*	/Housing and Construction	*
Industry	*	*	/Industry	*
Legal Committee	*	*	/Legal & Judicial	*
Local Gov & Development	*	*	/New Towns & Urban Development	*
			/Northern Ireland	*
			Overseas Aid	*
			Parliamentary Affairs	*
			/Planning & Local Government	*
			/Ports Group	*
			Post Office/ Posts & Telecomm'ns	*

	<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1974-5</u>		<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1974-5</u>
			Power and Steel	*	
/Prices and Consumer Affairs		*	/Prices and Consumer Protection		*
			/Shipping		*
/Small Business		*	/Social Security		*
			/Sports		*
			/Steel		*
Trade	*	*	Trade & Industry	*	
			/Trade		*
Transport Industries	*	*	/Transport		*

(Source F.W.S. Craig, The Political Companion, No. 8, September, 1971;  
No. 21, Spring, 1975).

the influence of these bodies for, from the few detailed studies of their involvement in the formulation of public policy, it is apparent that their potentiality for influence far exceeds their actual capacity to determine policy. The practical limitations upon party influence are clearly revealed in Ronald Butt's classic study of the passage of the Bill to abolish Retail Price Maintenance in 1964. Whilst the Conservative opponents to this Bill, working through the backbench Trade and Industry Committee, did have some success in amending the Bill, their importance rested in "the psychological lengths that Heath had to go to in order to placate them. He had to accept meetings and negotiations of a character no other Minister had been obliged to enter with the 'other ranks' of the Parliamentary Party". (5) Ultimately, however, the dissidents in the Committee were unable to kill the Bill, or even to persuade Heath to postpone its introduction until after the general election. In this specific sense the Trade and Industry Committee failed in its attempt to determine party policy but did, nevertheless, provide a clear expression of backbench opinion for the Conservative leadership to note.

The importance of Conservative party committees as forums for the expression of backbench opinion was apparent in the 1970-4 Parliament. Several committees, most notably the Finance and Industry Committees, served as the forums in which dissenters could meet and express their views. Conservative opposition to the 1972 Industry Bill was thus expressed primarily through the Industry Committee. However, although backbench critics of this measure managed to win minor amendments in the form of increased accountability and parliamentary scrutiny, they failed to prevent the Government from completing its U-turn on industrial policy. Similarly the 'neo-liberal' dissenters in the Finance Committee, while vehemently opposing the Government's reversals on economic policy after 1972, were unable to seriously impede the

progress of its counter-inflation and public expenditure policies. But the importance of such committees lies not so much in their ability to directly influence executive policy but in the fact that they provide "dissenters with authoritative forums through which to express their dissent, an authority which they could not obtain within the parliamentary party as a whole". (6) Nevertheless the Government may not always seek out such expressions of backbench opinion, for example, Home Office Ministers held a number of meetings with Conservative backbenchers following the defeat on the Immigration Rules on 22nd November 1972 - only one of which was with the Home Affairs Committee. Most consultation on this issue was on the basis of ad hoc meetings with backbenchers. (7)

In the Labour Party, party groups are more concerned with 'policy', as opposed to tactical and business matters, than their Conservative counterparts. (8) Yet, in the 1970-74 Parliament they met less frequently than Conservative party committees and were not serviced by a Research Department Officer in the way that Conservative committees were. For all their greater discussion of policy matters Labour groups have, however, been adjudged to be "less effective than the corresponding (Conservative) committees". (9) J.P. Mackintosh has most visibly questioned the significance of subject groups in the Labour Party. In 1968 he wrote: ".....as a Member of four of these Committees, I have found no evidence of any such influence, the meetings being irregular with no minutes kept, there is no fixed membership, and no concerted conclusions or action". (10) Elsewhere he noted: "When Conservatives are in office their backbench 'subject groups' on agriculture, defence, foreign affairs and so on have some influence ; but, though such groups also exist on the Labour Party side, they are less active and influential". (11) J.J. Lynskey found that Mackintosh's view on the ineffectiveness of these groups was shared by

other of his Labour colleagues. In fact several Labour M.P.s contended that the real significance of the subject groups lay in their use by frontbenchers as a method of controlling backbench dissidence. In their eyes the regulations concerning official membership of party groups served as a mechanism whereby controversy could be confined to a group of backbenchers arguing in the confines of small subject committees. (12) Yet in arguing their case the above M.P.s probably overstated the importance of 'official membership', for, even under the regulations in force between 1970-76, Labour backbenchers still felt free to attend more than their official quota of committees. (13) Indeed the real significance of 'official membership', in the eyes of at least one backbencher, was not to restrict attendance at committee meetings but rather to control the elections of the officers at the beginning of each session. The relaxation of the rules concerning membership of subject groups in 1976, which allowed M.P.s to vote in up to six committees, was particularly welcomed by this Member. (14)

At the same time as this change in 1976, the P.L.P. also adopted new procedures designed to enhance the status of its subject groups. A working party, initially under the chairmanship of John Horam, had been established in May 1976 to consider the position of these party groups. It ultimately recommended, in July 1976, formal procedures whereby departmental Ministers were required to discuss proposed legislation with the relevant group and generally to keep the group informed of activity in their department. James Callaghan as Prime Minister endorsed these recommendations. In the words of one group officer: "Jim issued a very firm directive that Cabinet Ministers must keep in touch with the various subject groups and discuss with them the action they propose to take, and the door of the appropriate Cabinet Minister is always open to Chairmen of subject groups". (15)

Most Labour group chairmen agree that the influence of their committees has increased with the adoption of these new procedures. One Chairman contended that "there is ample evidence to prove that given the right form of leadership they (subject groups) can be of substantial influence in their dealings with Ministers and Departments". (16)

However, reservations as to the true impact of these changes still persist:

"There is a greater willingness for all (subject) Ministers to come along and talk to the (subject) Group. What all this amounts to in practice, I am not quite sure. I remember a member of our Group saying to a senior Cabinet Minister, after one and a half hours discussion '.....do you really take any notice of what we say?' The Minister replied that he found the discussions very interesting, he weighed the expression of opinion very carefully indeed, and then he went away and did what he thought was right". (17)

What is important for present purposes, however, is not a detailed, comparative assessment of group influence but rather the specification of the source of their potentiality for influence. This potentiality exists, in short, because party committees function on a specialized basis. Through the formal division of labour each committee or group 'shadows' a major department, in so doing the membership of each committee deepens its collective and individual knowledge and also serves as a reference point for party colleagues. Hence the potentiality of these groups is founded upon the combination of specialized knowledge and political judgement. But it is essential to recognize that the organizational structure at the mezzo-level is engendered from the special combination of political and representational

features of the intra-party environment. Firstly, as noted earlier, intra-party debate is shorn of the adversarial posturing which is so characteristic of debate on the floor of the House. Choice, within the confines of party, is no longer presented as a zero-sum game - with only two, mutually exclusive, options on offer. Principles other than simple allegiance to one's party leaders have, therefore, to guide backbench decision-making. In which case a systematic, formal division of labour appears to provide an alternative, rational mechanism of choice.

Yet the non-adversarial style of intra-party deliberation is not, in itself, a sufficient base for the development of specialization. Of equal importance is the representational element in this compound - for the existence of specialist party committees is one manifestation of the strength of notions of party representation in Britain. In theory the party focus of representation enables a backbencher to specialize, in the knowledge that the view he adopts on his own specialism will be virtually the same as that of his party colleagues had they personally been active in that area. Similarly, he is conscious of the fact that his opinion will be reflected in those areas in which he is not a 'specialist' by other party Members committed to the same electoral programme. In practice, however, the unity of party monotheism is fragmented by the existence of ideological 'sects' - which actively compete with one another to advance their respective conceptions of 'true' socialism or conservatism. The ideational fragmentation is, of course, most pronounced, and most visible, in the Parliamentary Labour Party, wherein the elections of officials for the major subject groups represents open competition between the main factions. Indeed, it is possible to suggest that one of the reasons why backbench groups in the Labour party have failed to develop in influence, and in the level of expertise, equal to that of Conservative

committees may rest in the ideological divisions within the Labour Party. Thus the intra-party division of labour in the latter comes to resemble an intra-factional division of labour. While there is a tendency towards 'policy party' representation in the Conservative party, as witnessed in the Finance Committee of 1972-3, for example; there does, however, appear to be a wider consensus on the nature of conservatism, and subsequently a greater emphasis upon subject expertise rather than upon ideological position in the backbench committees (though the latter still remains of importance).

Overall, therefore, in both parties the party focus of representation, and to a lesser or greater extent the 'policy party' focus, enables a division of labour to be rationalized. Indeed, to remove the party delegate orientation is to make the justification of specialization all the more difficult in view of the other British theories of representation. Thus to argue that "the House has something to learn from the maligned parties which compose it in the matter of intelligent organization" (18) is indeed true. But, as we shall argue in the next chapter, the lessons to be learned are as much political and representational as they are organizational.

Before developing this argument it is of value to analyze the pattern of backbench specialization on these party groups. As of yet no systematic study of activity in these groups has been published. Although P.G. Richards and, more notably, R.M. Punnett provide useful insights into the structure and influence of party committees, neither provide a clear indication of the extent or depth of specialization on these committees. There is, however, an "inherent difficulty" (to use a Crick euphemism) (19) in carrying out such an analysis: proceedings of all party committees are held to be confidential, so that enquiries concerning activity in these committees can place helpful Members in

"a slight difficulty" in as much, as one Member explained, "that it is technically a Breach of Privilege to communicate what goes on inside a party committee in the House of Commons - you may recollect that..... Garry Allighan was actually expelled from the House for doing this". (20)

In the Conservative party another restraining influence appears to be in force; the secretary of one committee declined to answer any questions on the working of his committee with the comment "I am afraid that under the rules of the 1922 Committee, all proceedings of backbench Conservative committees are private and cannot be divulged". (21)

Fortunately, not all Members felt so inhibited by these regulations.

The profile of specialization in party committees was established from two sources. Firstly, backbenchers were asked, as part of the 1975 survey, about their attendance at these groups and about the relationship between their personal specialisms and activity in party groups. Secondly, key officials of the major fifteen committees in each party were asked their opinion upon the extent of specialization and the nature of expertise evident on the part of committee members. (22)

Twenty of the thirty officials canvassed, nine Conservative and eleven Labour, replied to the queries. The responses of these officials, taken in combination with the answers of Labour and Conservative backbenchers to the 1975 survey, provide the basis for the first systematic analysis of activity in party committees.

The importance of party committees as a backbench means of pursuing subject specialisms in the House was noted in Chapter 7. Further testimony as to their importance can be found in the observation that 89% (n 132) of Labour and Conservative respondents in 1975 claimed to attend one or more subject groups on a regular basis. Marginally more Conservatives claimed to be regular attenders than did their Labour counterparts (93%, n 75; to 85%, n57). Yet those inter-party

differences are not as great as one might have been led to expect from the comments made by Labour M.P.s at the Granada dinners. Here attendance at Labour subject groups was claimed to be very irregular, as the number of Members attending subject groups was adjudged to be "very, very few, whether around this table or throughout the P.L.P.

Very, very few". (23) This view was supported by another Labour representative whose personal record on subject groups was seen to be "as appalling as the vast majority of my colleagues. I just don't

go". (24) The intervening years between the Granada dinners (1972) and the postal survey (1975) appear to have marked a change in the pattern of attendance of Labour backbenchers at these committees.

The return to office and the questioning of the backbench role within the Labour party after 1974 undoubtedly stimulated Labour interest in the work of subject groups. Nevertheless, even so, there remains an undercurrent of scepticism over the value of subject groups, which reflects a more fundamental division of opinion between the two parties than the attendance figures by themselves suggest. Critical comments upon the value of party committees were the exclusive preserve of Labour respondents; one respected Labour academic, for example, stated that he did not regularly attend meetings of subject groups as "they are worthless in my opinion". (Labour, 1966). In similar vein one of his older colleagues remarked: "Parliamentary party committees are a wasted time as Ministers still rule". (Labour, 1950). Another Labour Member claimed that his infrequent attendance at group meetings was the result of restricted interest in their activities apart from "securing a responsible chairman and officers: and supporting them at any critical time". (Labour, 1964). Such comments were notably absent from the responses of Conservative Members.

Overall, Conservative backbenchers restricted their regular attendance to fewer party committees than their Labour counterparts. The number

of subject committees attended by each Member on a regular basis is set out in Table 7.2.

TABLE 7.2 Number of Party Subject Groups regularly attended per backbencher crosstabulated with party (Conservative and Labour).

<u>No. of subject committees regularly attended</u>	<u>Party</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 75) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 57) %	<u>Total</u> (n 132) %
1	14.7	7.0	11.4
2	26.7	28.1	27.3
3	32.0	19.3	26.5
4	16.0	36.8	25.0
5	9.3	5.3	7.6
6	<u>1.3</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>2.2</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  9.28 df 4 sign 0.1

(Combine 5 + 6).

In part this pattern may be indicative of a more 'professional' attitude on the part of Conservatives to their activity on these committees, in that Tory party committees meet more frequently and require of their members a greater commitment, so that the more effort demanded of Members on any one committee the less energy there is available to attend others.

Other inter-party differences were noticeable in the response to the request for the names of each committee regularly attended by M.P.s. Committees concerned with industry, defence, foreign affairs, health and social security matters attracted roughly the same proportion of nominations in both parties. Conservative respondents, however, showed a greater predilection for attendance at the agriculture,

aviation, economic and legal committees, whilst Labour backbenchers nominated the groups dealing with education and housing matters more frequently. Yet only on agriculture and housing did the proportion of nominations on these subjects differ significantly between the parties (significant 0.05). Overwhelmingly, regular attendance at the meetings of a particular subject committee was a consequence of the Member's prior interest in that subject. 91% (n 126) of backbenchers stated that their interest in an issue led them to attend a specific committee in the first instance. Correspondingly few M.P.s (7% in total, 4% of Conservative and 11% of Labour Members) claimed that interest in a subject aroused at a party group meeting had spurred them into concentrating upon that topic in their parliamentary activity. The remark of one Conservative barrister best summarizes the relationship between personal interest and attendance at party committees: "I attend committees because of my interests. I don't wander into committees at random wondering what I shall hear". (Conservative, 1955).

Members were then asked whether they frequently attended party committees dealing with subjects other than their stated specialism. Over half of the respondents in fact claimed not to do so. (See Table 7.3).

TABLE 7.3 Attendance at Party Committees outside area of stated specialisms

<u>Attend committees outside special interests</u>	<u>Party</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	
	(n 78)	(n 67)	(n 145)
	%	%	%
Yes	51.3	40.3	46.2
No	48.7	59.7	53.8
	100.0	100.0	100.0

$\chi^2$  1.34 df 1 n sign.

To some their restricted committee involvement was a source of regret:

"I would like to do so as my political interests are fairly widespread. However, the timetable allows for only one specialization (sic)".

(Conservative, 1970).

To others it was inevitable:

"I only attend (other committees) when some important issue arises where I feel that I should be informed as to what's happening and how my colleagues think. I doubt if any Member attends committees outside his special interests - the pressure of time is too great". (Conservative, 1970).

This estimation of the general pattern of attendance does appear nonetheless, on the evidence of Table 7.3, to be basically inaccurate. Indeed, over half of this Member's own party colleagues challenged his assessment by claiming regular attendance at committees outside their special interests. Three broad categories of reasons for attending subject groups beyond one's own specialisms were apparent in M.P.s answers. Most commonly, interest in what an outside speaker had to say attracted backbenchers to other committee meetings:

"The prominence of invited speakers whom one hopes have something to contribute to the 'war of ideas' leads me to attend (other groups)". (Labour, 1959).

"If there is a speaker of particular interest on an important issue then I'll attend". (Conservative, 1964).

Of almost equal importance, the topicality of an issue often stimulated attendance at groups outside a Member's chosen specialisms:

"To brief myself on subjects which are of major national importance, e.g. Direct Grant Schools at the moment". (Conservative, 1972).

"To keep an eye on a particular hot potato".  
(Conservative, 1966).

Constituency interest provided the third major stimulus to attend other party groups:

"Constituency importance - agriculture's big in my constituency - so I go to the agricultural committee". (Conservative, 1974, whose own special interests were industrial matters, penal reform and international affairs).

"Only as and when constituency interests require it, e.g. became member of Industry Group".  
(Labour, 1964, stated specialisms in foreign affairs, Europe and defence).

A few Members also believed that intervention in a committee discussion outside of their own immediate interests, may be of value to the regular membership therein:

"(I attend other committees) when it looks as though a principle is at stake and there is danger of the committee losing sight of the wood for the trees".  
(Conservative, 1945).

Finally, a belief in the generalist role led one M.P. to attend subject groups almost at random:

"I am basically a non-specialist with a little

knowledge in a wide area. If I am interested in a speaker/subject then I will attend". (Labour, 1974).

M.P.s were next asked whether their membership of a party committee increased their activity on that subject in the House. Around three-quarters of respondents claimed that it did. Typical of the examples given was the case of the Conservative Employment Committee in 1971. One member of this committee claimed that generally the membership was busily engaged in the passage of the Industrial Relations Bill: "In committee we made the bullets, mostly to fire ourselves but sometimes we let others do the firing". (Conservative, 1970). A further 3% of respondents felt that their involvement in the House on a specific issue was occasionally affected by their membership of a subject committee (see Table 7.4). The remaining 24% held that membership of party committees made no impact on their activity in the House.

TABLE 7.4 Activity in the House and Party Committee membership

Does your membership of a party subject group increase your activity in the House on that subject?

	<u>Party</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	
	(n 78)	(n 66)	(n 144)
	%	%	%
Yes	78.2	68.2	73.6
No	19.2	28.8	23.6
Occasionally	<u>2.6</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>2.8</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Certain Members who responded negatively did, nevertheless, perceive positive benefits (unlinked with levels of activity) to be gained from party committee membership. One Labour backbencher, elected in 1974, remarked that although his efforts in the House were not

increased through membership of subject committees he did, nevertheless, believe that his 'effectiveness' on his specialisms was heightened. Another, more experienced, Labour M.P. further suggested that activity on a given subject in the House could actually be reduced due to committee involvement: "(It is) possible to get Ministerial assurances in the groups. This obviates the need for parliamentary pyrotechnics".

The responses to the 1975 survey do, therefore, point to a fairly clear consensus upon the pattern of activity on party subject committees on both sides of the House. What remains unclear from these responses, however, is the level of expertise brought to bear on the consideration of subjects by these committees. In order to answer this question officials from each of the major subject committees of both parties were asked (i) whether they could identify a core of consistent attenders at committee meetings, and (ii) whether this nucleus formed an expert base for decision-making on particular topics.

Of the eleven Labour group officers who replied, all easily identified a regular core of between six to twelve backbenchers at group meetings. In each group the consistent attenders formed only a small proportion of the official membership; which ranged from fifty to over eighty backbenchers depending on the subject. On the Conservative side of the House there is no formal membership of party committees, membership is open to any M.P. holding the Conservative Whip. As a result there is a considerable fluctuation in the number of M.P.s attending any particular committee from one meeting to the next. This inconsistency was noted by one official who observed that: "Every member of the party is a member of every committee and, depending on the importance of the business which that committee is discussing, virtually all members of the party will attend or, if the matter is not of wide importance, the attendance will dwindle". The highest actual

attendances noted were, however, 120 and 90 respectively. Yet, despite the fluctuations in membership, each of the nine Conservative committee officials identified a group of consistent attenders. The size of these committee cores ranged from eight to twenty Members. Certain officials, in addition to specifying the number of committed committee members, went on to suggest reasons for such regular attendance. The most succinct summary was provided by one official who argued that 'core members' fell into four main categories: "(a) Far the largest group is those Members who have a constituency interest in.....(b) Those who have been professionally engaged in some branch of (the subject) in the past - that includes three of the present officers, (c) Those who have held Ministerial office connected with....., (d) A tiny proportion who just happen to be particularly interested in it for entirely unique reasons". This classification was basically repeated by other officials, Labour as well as Conservative, though in most cases constituency interest was usually de-emphasized.

The inter-party concord between group officials, over the identification of regular attenders, disappeared markedly in their responses to the second query. For Conservative committee officials were far more disposed to see their regular members as 'experts' in their field than were their Labour counterparts. Indeed, one Conservative official was prepared to make his own inter-party comparison on this point:

"The term 'expert' is grossly abused, but I would say that most of the active participants at committee meetings were Members who had far more extensive knowledge and first hand experience of (this subject) than you would find amongst the whole of the Parliamentary Labour backbenchers".

Other Conservatives restricted their comments solely to the nature of

their own committee's expertise, yet almost to a man they described the committee nucleus as expert in its own right:

"People who attend the committee regularly acquire a degree of expertise both because of the calibre of the people who go and address the committee, and also because they establish personal relationships with some of our visitors which enable them to meet informally and keep up to date on current problems and options".

"It is perfectly true that there tends to be a nucleus of regular attenders at party meetings which are in theory open to all Conservative M.P.s.....Though some members attending did so out of general interest, and could not be considered expert, there were a surprising number who had specialist knowledge".

On the Labour benches few group officials unambiguously accepted the term 'expert' as one appropriate for their regular members. Only one Member openly admitted that "I would not consider them (regular attenders) experts in the subject, nevertheless they have a reasonable grasp of at least part of a very wide field that the committee covers". Other group officials were more equivocal:

"Whether such people could be considered 'experts' in the subject is obviously a most subjective consideration. They certainly take considerably more interest in matters relating to (the subject) than the generality of Members, but outside 'experts', because of their exceptional specialization, would probably regard none of us as being particularly 'expert'."

"Whether these people and myself should be called 'experts' depends whether you are using the word in the parliamentary or the proper sense of the word. Few, if any, Members of Parliament are truly expert in a subject. We have to dabble in too many matters to be able to give any one of them enough time to become worthy of that name. In so far as we are experts we are so because of our concentration on this subject within the House rather than because of activities outside it".

This last point was taken up by an official of another key Labour group who implied that the expertise of his committee colleagues was as much the product of parliamentary specialization as of pre-parliamentary experience. For, in his own words: "I do not think that many of our side have much experience (on this vital subject) outside the House". Significantly, such a distinction between expertise stemming from parliamentary specialization, and expertise gained from occupational or personal involvement in a subject field, was made only by Labour officials. Conservatives universally equated the expertise of the committee nucleus with outside contact with an issue, whereas only a minority of Labour officials believed extra-parliamentary activity to be the primary source of group expertise.

Whatever the source of expertise, however, the benefits of possessing such knowledge in party committees only accrue to the party at large if the nuclei are capable of disseminating their knowledge. As the locus of informed opinion, a party subject group or committee has to operate both as a channel of communication between backbenchers and the party leadership, and also as a transmitter of information among ordinary backbenchers. In either case committee views are listened to not

simply, or even primarily, because of their expert content but because they represent an expression of specialist knowledge, tempered by party doctrine. Out of this syncretism of factual and political elements springs the potentiality for influence of subject committees. The 'judgement' of party groups has long been recognized (if not always readily appreciated) by frontbenchers in their soundings of backbench opinion. Equally, backbenchers see these committees as repositories of informed opinion. Some indication of their value in this connection was apparent from the comments of Members in interview and in correspondence, for example, the Secretary of a leading Conservative Committee indicated that committee members were constantly being asked: "'What do you think of such and such?' or 'Are we taking the right line on this issue?'. You see what they are after is not only our knowledge but also our judgement". (25) In turn he recounted how he sought the opinions of Conservatives on the Foreign Affairs Committee for guidance on East European affairs because, although he was interested in this area, he did not have the time to conduct his own research in this field. Similarly on the Labour backbenches subject groups play a valuable role in the transmission of opinion. One ex-Minister wrote: "The Subject Groups of the P.L.P. are of considerable importance both in dealing with the business actually before Parliament, and in helping to shape future party policy. In my experience it is quite common for backbenchers to consult each other in this way, and I think this is most desirable. One of the functions of a Party is to be a pool of expert knowledge". (26)

A formal division of labour provides a key mechanism for the maintenance of the water-level of this pool, firstly, through the regular interchange of ideas by informed party members at committee meetings; secondly, through the injection of outside expert opinion into these intra-party discussions; and, thirdly, through the dissemination of expertise by

party group members. In acting as 'cue-givers' to their party colleagues committee members are in a position to influence, indirectly, party policy. But it has been the more direct mode of influence, through attempts to change frontbench opinion, which has attracted most attention. In practice the potentiality for exercising influence over the frontbench reaches its peak in times of opposition when the party leadership "is managing party affairs, not affairs of government". (27) In theory, however, the influence of party committees in the making of public policy should reach its height when the party is in power. While Ministers, of both parties, do seek the counsel of their respective party committees, they appear to be more concerned, however, with opinion as to what their backbenchers will stand for rather than with what backbenchers actually want. Thus one Labour P.P.S. indicated that he frequently attended the party group which shadowed his Ministry "to take note of significant trends of opinion and, where necessary, to secure a meeting for the Secretary of State with group members; so that he can make the departmental point if opinion has veered away from the executive line". (28) Implicit within this statement is a tension between the 'us' of the executive and the 'them' of backbenchers in the party groups.

This divide between Ministers and backbenchers provides the third part of the equation for predicting the parameters of committee influence. It has long been recognized, to recapitulate, that subject groups are most effective in influencing the party leadership during periods in opposition. In opposition the party can afford to stress the purity of its dogma, to emphasize party notions of representation and to develop its organizational structure free from the rigid hierarchy of roles associated with government. Even in periods in office, government backbenchers still maintain that this compound of ideological, representational and organizational elements should

effectively structure decision-making in the party. But the significant transition between opposition and government occurs in the minds of frontbenchers - with the development of what one backbencher described as an "executive mentality" on their part. (29) From the perspective of Whitehall the political, representational and organizational bases of party committee influence become suspect. Firstly, party ideology may appear to be an encumbrance to Ministers, when pressed by their departmental officials to see the 'practicalities' of an issue. Indeed, party doctrine can prove to be a positive embarrassment to Cabinets intent upon executing policy 'U-turns'; for the officers of the state ship, in undertaking such manoeuvres, do not appreciate the howls of disgust emitted by their party passengers as the backbenchers survey the chart of the manifesto to note any deviation from the proposed course. Secondly, the focus of representation in the party theory becomes restrictive for Cabinet Ministers who are called upon to view 'the nation' as their prime focus of representation. It is perhaps not without significance that all three Prime Ministers in the 1970s have evoked the concept of 'the national interest' to defend their incomes and prices policies against attack from their own backbenchers. Thirdly, and finally, the executive mentality inculcated in Whitehall regards sustained and informed criticism from 'specialized' groups of backbenchers as anathematic. Hence party groups, which were treated as partners and valuable sources of advice in opposition, become suspect in times of office because of their quite detailed knowledge. (30) In this manner the value of a formal division of labour, even in the apposite political and representational setting of the mezzo-level, is undermined in the super-imposition of the hierarchical differentiation between Ministers and backbenchers. The centrality of this executive-backbench divide to the debate on formal intra-House specialization will be considered in Chapter 8, before then, however, the division of labour as instituted in all-party committees is worthy of examination.

All-party committees

All-party committees, as their name suggests, operate in the hinterland of adversary politics. Often called 'non-party committees', these groups deal essentially with issues upon which there is no clear bifurcation of attitudes between the major parties. In practice this means that their bipartisan activity is confined to minority interests or to what Richard Body disparagingly calls the "small fry" of parliamentary politics. (31) Indeed the overall pattern of all-party groups is amoebic in form; with a core of persistent groups surrounded by a host of ad-hoc and intermittent committees operating at any given time. Unlike party subject groups, all-party committees, therefore, do not form a systematized division of labour. In certain fields, such as foreign affairs, the coverage of all-party activity is quite extensive - by the end of the 1970-1 session there were 47 groups of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 10 area groups of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and 19 non-affiliated groups listed in this area. (32) In other areas, however, the range of all-party committees is far more restricted: with 9 committees dealing with social and welfare issues, 11 groups active in the related fields of technology, trade and industry, 4 environmental groups and numerous ad-hoc miscellaneous groups functioning sporadically in this session.

The absence of a systematic framework of all-party committees makes an assessment of their role in the House all the more difficult. One clue as to their significance can, of course, be gleaned from the comments of backbenchers themselves. A Conservative Member made the point, for example, that:

"A senior Member and ex-Minister like myself may well be engaged in a great deal of non-party (or all-party) activity which, nevertheless, is useful to Parliament, one might say essential to the life of Parliament.

Membership of the groups takes time and cuts right across normal party divisions. Yet it is, of course, specialization of a kind". (33)

However, the level of such specialization is generally low. All-party committees neither operate on a sufficiently systematic basis across the breadth of public policy; nor, on those topics with which they are involved, do they gear themselves to perpetual activity. Their 'specialized' nature tends, therefore, to owe more to their contacts with outside sources of expertise than to the committees' own research initiatives. Organized interests readily take advantage of all-party committees to feed information into the House and also to influence parliamentary opinion. The reciprocal nature of committee-interest group communion was remarked upon by one newly-elected Member:

"All-party committees are more real (than party groups). They allow outside groups access into the House and to its Members. I've found they provide M.P.s on the group with specialist information. In return we play the system by tabling Questions or sponsoring E.D.M.s to publicize their case.....But one thing's certain, the committee acts as an important channel of communication with outside". (34)

Several notable all-party groups have, in fact, been colonized by organized interests. The clearest documentation of this process is provided in connection with the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, which for two decades up until the late 1950s functioned as a "scientist's lobby". (35) In the 1970s the monthly meetings of the Committee are still "most often dominated by outsiders". (36) The work of other all-party committees is also influenced by their contacts with 'outside'

opinion. The Inland Waterways Group had as its Chairman in 1970-1, John Wells, who also served on the advisory council of the British Waterways Board, and in addition maintained very close contacts with the Inland Waterways Association. In March 1971, for example, the Association's views on the Bristol Docks Bill were presented to the all-party group by the Chairman of the Association himself. Likewise, the R.S.P.C.A. finds ready support from the Animal Welfare Group for its sponsorship of legislation in its field; the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association has the all-party B.L.E.S.M.A. Group active on its behalf; and the Temperance Group, still in existence, was originally formed on the basis of National Temperance Federation support and currently has a committee liaising with the Free Church Council. (37) More recently the Council for Nature played an instrumental role in the creation of the Committee for the Conservation of Species and Habitats. (38)

All-party committees may, therefore, serve as channels for the representation of functional interests in Parliament. Yet their importance in the decision-making process rests not solely in their transmission of outside information, but rather in the fine-tuning and careful amplification of opinion for the ears of Ministers. Clearly, the influence of these committees is at its strongest when the expertise of sectional interests is wedded to the parliamentary nous of group Members, in the pursuit of a specific objective beyond the mainstream of partisan conflict in the House. One of the most influential groups in the 1970-74 Parliament was in fact the Disablement Committee which, through its co-ordinated activity inside and outside the House, brought disablement matters out of the parliamentary shadows. Indeed, the Committee was closely involved in the passage of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, particularly at the committee stage, where most group members were appointed to the Standing Committee.

The Third London Airport Group also provides another important example of all-party influence in the 1970-4 Parliament. Formed after the 1970 general election, the Third London Airport Committee was closely involved in the campaign to prevent the siting of the proposed airport at Wing in Buckinghamshire. In their analysis of the T.L.A. Committee's campaign, Kimber and Richardson identified four main tactics employed by the group. Firstly, they arranged a series of meetings and visits largely aimed at informing and persuading M.P.s. Next, through press releases, the committee obtained widespread media coverage of its activity. Thirdly, to marshal backbench opposition to the choice of an inland site, a carefully worded Early Day Motion was sponsored to coincide with the publication of the Roskill Report. Finally, the committee emphasized the depth of feeling on the airport issue through its "stage-management" of the debate in the House. The result of this concerted action was that: "Whatever the Government's reasons for choosing Foulness, the committee by demonstrating considerable cross-bench opposition to an inland site, together with the massive extra-parliamentary campaign waged by W.A.R.A. (Wing Airport Resistance Association) managed effectively to close off one of the Government's main options".  
(39)

That certain all-party committees have effectively influenced public policy is apparent from these and other examples, but the closely prescribed circumstances in which such influence is exercised needs reiteration. First, and of fundamental importance, is the bipartisan or non-partisan nature of the committees' subject matter. In effect, therefore, all but the narrowest of policy issues are excluded from their consideration. In an era in which even the traditional bipartisan approach to such issues as race relations, Northern Ireland and Rhodesia is under question it appears ingenuous to argue that "all-party committees could become the focus for greater backbench influence

providing the backbenchers can develop an issue before the party lines have a chance to harden". (40) But even when an issue has been 'developed' by an all-party committee the result has not always been an outstanding success as the case of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee illustrates. (41) Moreover the development of bipartisanship in itself does not serve as an impediment to the future reinstatement of party conflict. The bipartisan approach on scientific matters which developed in the immediate post-war years underwent a radical transformation in the early 1960s, as the major parties adopted the electioneering themes of 'scientific revolution' and 'modernization'. (42) This process of the 'politicization' of science as an issue was accompanied by a reduction in the sphere of influence of the all-party Committee. However, the ramifications of 'politicization' extended beyond the all-party group to affect the intra-party organization of both major parties and, ultimately, the 'official' Committee on Science and Technology created in 1966. Both parties established a party committee on science and technology, after the appointment of Lord Hailsham as Minister of Science in 1959, in recognition of the partisan advantages to be gained from 'scientific expansion'. These groups, following the pattern of other subject groups, developed their own links with outside interests, and acted generally as co-ordinating bodies for the activity of interested M.P.s in the House. The fact that neither group was initially successful in influencing science policy simply highlights the constraints upon subject group influence.

The 'politicization' of science as an issue in the period 1959-64 was, moreover, to have significant repercussions for the working of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, as the scope for influence of this specialist committee was effectively restricted even before its inception. In effect the partisan divide, manufactured in the early 1960s, confined the Select Committee to the consideration of issues which were not a matter of contention between the parties. For

its Members, particularly its Chairman, were aware that the Committee would only be able to command attention within the House, and in Whitehall, if it acted as a cohesive unit. Nevertheless, partisanship did surface in the Committee on occasion. (43)

The second major constraint upon the extent of all-party group influence, concerns the type of information that they can 'retail' to the executive. When, as normally is the case, policy is the product of secret and structured bargaining between the Government, its agencies and affected functional interests then the impact of all-party contributions is likely to be negligible. The kind of knowledge required to exert influence in this process is an understanding of the options open for consideration rather than an 'academic' knowledge of the complexities of the subject. Where all-party groups have been able to exert most influence, therefore, is in the areas in which the Government has few formalized contacts with sectorial interests. As the transmitters and amplifiers of functional expertise in these marginal, but still important, areas, all-party committees have achieved their greatest successes.

### Conclusion

Bipartisanship and the representation of functional expertise provide the combination of elements endowing all-party committees with their potentiality for influence. However, in practice this combination is apparent in all but the narrowest range of subjects. Hence all-party committees do not form a systematic network of groups covering the whole field of public policy, rather they are confined to the margins beyond the party battle. Their claim to be considered 'specialized', therefore, rests upon the linkage of interested M.P.s with outside sources of expertise and specialist interests. But the very specification of the bases of their influence reveals the inherent

constraints upon the potentiality of all-party committees. It is difficult, therefore, to concur with Kimber and Richardson when they argue: "clearly there is scope for further development of the committees as an instrument of backbench power". (44) They would have been better advised to have heeded Walkland's prescient stipulation that "more awareness on the part of more M.P.s of the need to exclude politics from the analysis and assessment of problems of public policy and to confine it to the end decisions is prior to any structural reform of Parliament". (45) Without the exclusion of adversary conflict from the broader areas of policy the scope of all-party influence will remain limited.

Party subject committees, on the other hand, have the potentiality to exercise influence across the gamut of party policy. Indeed, party subject committees represent the most extensive system of specialized committees in the House - a fact worthy of attention in itself. And this 'specialized' structure is a product of a synthesis of political and organizational considerations. In the first instance, emphasis is placed upon rational methods of decision-making at the intra-party level partly because of the absence of adversary criteria for judgement. Secondly, intra-party specialization is also sustained by the theory of party representation, for, under the common ideological frame of the party manifesto, each party is able to organize a division of labour within its own ranks. The actual extent of this division of labour being dependent upon the nature of the intra-party consensus on values. Propitious representational and political circumstances thus combine to determine the organizational structure at the mezzo-parliamentary level, and to facilitate a formal division of labour within each party. However, to proceed to argue that these unofficial committees "assist in preparing the ground for specialist advisory committees" (46) in the House is unwise.

The significant change in the political and representational mix between the intra-party and the House levels has a significant bearing upon the development of formal specialization at the macro-level. For the failure of structural reform of the House in the past, and the likelihood of such failure in the future, can be accounted for in the political and representational traditions of the Commons.

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1. This is not to argue that intra-party conflict over ideas is absent. The existence of factions and tendencies within the two major parties clearly point to sectarian rifts over the conception of 'socialism' or 'conservatism'. However, intra-party debate is not fundamentally conducted on the premise of the irreconcilable clash of two (and only two) mutually exclusive alternatives.
2. In the following section the terms 'committee' and 'group' will be used interchangeably - though the formal title in the Labour party is 'subject group' and in the Conservative party is 'party committee'.
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4. R. Body, 'Unofficial Committees in the House of Commons', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 11, 1958, p.296.
5. R. Butt, The Power of Parliament, Constable, London, 1969, p.272.
6. P. Norton, Conservative Dissidents, Temple Smith, London, 1978, p.270.
7. See P. Norton, 'Intra-Party Dissent in the House of Commons: A Case Study. The Immigration Rules 1972', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1976, pp.404-420.
8. According to the spokesman interviewed by R.M. Punnett, see Frontbench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973, p.310.
9. P.G. Richards, The Backbenchers, Faber, London, 1972, p.51.
10. J.P. Mackintosh, 'Review of W.J. Stankiewicz's Crisis in British Government', Political Studies, Vol. 16, February, 1968, p.116.
11. J.P. Mackintosh, 'What is wrong with British Parliamentary Democracy', Westminster Bank Review, May, 1968, p.27.
12. See J.J. Lynskey, 'Backbench Tactics and Parliamentary Party Structure', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 27, Winter 1973-4. p.35.
13. Membership was officially restricted to three subject groups during this period. Though as Table 7.2 illustrates many Labour Members regularly attended more than three committees.
14. Interview, 25th May, 1977.
15. Letter, 20th March, 1978.
16. Letter, 29th March, 1978.
17. Letter, 15th March, 1978.
18. B. Crick, op cit, p.101.
19. See ibid. Crick contends that "this subject, despite its inherent difficulty cries out for systematic study".

20. Letter, 19th June, 1974.
21. Letter, 12th June, 1974.
22. The terms 'official' and 'officer' are used to cover Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Secretaries of these committees. The generality of the term 'official' conceals the specific office of each respondent - as Members were promised that no source would be attributable.
23. A. King, British Members of Parliament, Macmillan, London, 1974, p.54.
24. ibid.
25. Interview, 17th July, 1974.
26. Letter, 6th October, 1975.
27. R.M. Punnett, op cit, p.313.
28. Interview, 25th May, 1977.
29. Interview, 24th May, 1977.
30. Even in the Labour Party after the 1976 Reforms, subject groups still meet with executive resistance. As late as March 1978 one group official bemoaned the fact that "because of the way legislation is framed and the House of Commons organized, such groups can never hope to have more than a marginal influence". (Letter, 14th March, 1978).
31. R. Body, op cit, p.301.
32. See Mitchell and Birt, Who Does What in Parliament, Deaner Printers, London, 1970 and 1971; these lists are, however, incomplete - see J.J. Richardson and R. Kimber, 'The Role of All-Party Committees in the House of Commons', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 25, 1971-2, p.344.
33. Letter, 27th September, 1975 - original emphasis.
34. Interview, 24th May, 1977, Labour M.P.
35. See N.J. Vig, Science and Technology in British Politics, Pergamon, Oxford, 1968, especially pp.27-29, and Chapter 6; S.A. Walkland, 'Science and Parliament: the origins and influence of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 17, Nos. 3 and 4, 1964; S.A. Walkland, 'Parliament and Science since 1945', in A.H. Hanson and B. Crick, The Commons in Transition, Fontana, London, 1970, pp.152-168.
36. Labour M.P., 12th March, 1976.
37. See J.D. Stewart, British Pressure Groups, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958, p.162, and Chapter 8 generally.
38. See S.K. Brookes and J.J. Richardson, 'The Environmental Lobby in Britain', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1975, p.324.

39. J.J. Richardson and R. Kimber, op cit, p.347.
40. ibid, p.349.
41. See S.A. Walkland, op cit, p.400 - wherein he concludes: "The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee is perhaps best seen as a well-meaning but essentially amateur reaction, of a rather familiar and depressing type, to a particular historical situation".
42. See N.J. Vig, op cit, pp.35-40.
43. The Science and Technology Committee divided fully along party lines at the end of its 1966-67 inquiry into the U.K. Nuclear Reactor Programme. The Labour majority on the Committee, supported by one Liberal Member, favoured the creation of a single nuclear reactor design organization, while the Conservative minority preferred a 'market solution' and the retention of the competitive consortium system. See H.C. 381 XVll, Session 1966-67, esp.lxxix
44. J.J. Richardson and R. Kimber, op cit, pp.347-348.
45. S.A. Walkland, op cit, p.402.
46. A Barker, 'Parliamentary Studies 1961-65. A Bibliography and Comment', Political Quarterly, Vol. 36, 1965, p.348.

## Chapter 8

### Formal Specialization: Committees in the House of Commons

The guiding proposition for reformers of the House of Commons over the last fifty years has been, and continues to be, the need for structural re-organization based upon a formal division of labour. The advocates of reform clearly believed that the solution to the problems encountered by the House in coping with ever increasing and ever more complex issues was to be found in the canons of organizational theory. Indeed, as the scope of government activity and the size of the bureaucracy expanded so the frequency of demands for reform of the legislature also increased. This cycle has been particularly pronounced over the last fifteen years, as the Study of Parliament Group observed: "the intensification of procedural adjustment and almost continual study of procedural possibilities since the mid-sixties has been influenced by the ever-increasing load of work which the House has had to assume". (1) Increasingly, Members of the House came, during this period, to share the view expounded by Sir Bernard Braine that "as Government business becomes more complex, more hurried, and less well thought through, Members on all sides are less capable of making informed contributions to the process of decision-making and of leading public opinion". (2) Attention, not surprisingly, came to focus upon an organizational cure for this dilemma:

"We therefore need a very great degree of specialization. We need to spread the expertise. That is what every other major organization does. The companies and public corporations which are most effective are those which have learned how to spread expertise over the widest possible area.

They are those which have learned how to use economies of scale by getting groups of people together who raise their expertise one of another. This is what we must do". (3)

Or stated more succinctly: "Parliament must respond by creating an efficient machine of its own, which means a coherent sophisticated committee system....." (4)

Judged solely in terms of decision-making theory the strength of these proposals is irrefutable. Yet in the unique political and representative setting of the British House of Commons their logical force can appear to be less than compelling. In the last chapter the point was stressed that the importance of political and representational influences on organizational structure should not be underestimated: there it was argued that an effective formal division of labour would develop when other, more cost efficient, modes of decision-making were essentially inapplicable. Hence at the mezzo-level in the House a system of intra-party specialized committees developed in the absence of adversarial mechanisms of choice: so that, even though ideological disputes remained a key element in intra-party debate, conflict at this level was conceived of as being basically positive-sum rather than as the zero-sum clash of 'adversary politics'. Secondly, the mechanism of choice based upon a simple acceptance or rejection of the executive's prior decision, or an acceptance of the hierarchically structured authority patterns between Government and backbenchers, was often inappropriate at the mezzo-level. Finally, specialization was also facilitated at this level in so far as the theory of party representation actually supports an intra-party division of labour under the shared ideological frame of the party manifesto.

Thus in line with the model, developed in Chapter 3, the mezzo-level structure of party committees is a direct reflection of the propitious representative and political circumstances present at that level of parliamentary organization. Our argument has been that the extent of specialization is dependent upon the particular mix of key representative and political contextual factors; a relationship which is outlined again in Diagram 8.1.

DIAGRAM 8.1 Political and representational influences upon the extent of formal specialization

<u>Extent of formal specialization</u>	<u>Political and Representational Variables</u>		
	<u>Nature of ideological conflict</u>	<u>Authority Structures</u>	<u>Representative style and focus</u>
Highly developed	Ideological - non adversary i.e. positive sum	Non hierarchical decentralized	Functional) Party ) focus Delegate style
Restricted development	Ideological - adversary i.e. zero-sum	Hierarchical centralized	National ) Territorial) focus Trustee style

On this basis it is possible to predict that a highly developed formal division of labour would develop when a non-adversarial style of decision-making is combined with non-hierarchical authority structures and an emphasis on delegatory styles of representation. Alternatively, a legislature organized on an adversarial basis, with a clear distinction between executive and non-executive Members in the Chamber and an emphasis on trustee styles of representation would be less likely to develop a systematic division of labour. Between these two extremes the extent of formal specialization would be anticipated to vary in accordance with the specific mix of political and representational elements of the legislative environment.

In Chapter 4 the utility of this model, in the context of legislatures in the United States, was briefly examined, and it may prove to be of value at this juncture to restate those findings, and to further the comparative analysis of specialization by examining the bases of the committee system of the West German Bundestag. In the United States Congress it is clear that each of the three environmental elements, which have been identified as being conducive to the development of systematic specialization, are in fact present. In accordance with the first element of our model it is apparent that partisan-adversarial conflict is not a major feature of Congressional decision-making. Although party considerations are of importance to individual Congressmen, seldom are they the crucial factor in determining Congressmens' votes. Thus the occasions of 'party voting', when 90% of one party votes against 90% of the other, is extremely limited. Julius Turner, for example, found that only 17% of all roll-calls between 1921-1948 had this degree of party cohesion. (5) In a revised version of Turner's work, Edward V. Schneier found that 'party voting' varied from 8% in 1959 to only 1% in 1966. (6) Thus, as a general rule in Congress, the more important an issue is perceived to be, the greater the tendency for Congressmen to emphasize non-party facets of their legislative role. Correspondingly, it is of no surprise to discover that 'ideology' generally plays little part in influencing most Congressmen's decisions. Matthews and Stimson discovered from their interviews with Representatives that very few made decisions "largely on the basis of ideology". (7) Only 5% of Congressmen believed that ideological considerations were "almost always" a major factor in determining their vote, just under half (48%) claimed that such considerations "seldom" affected their vote and at least 10% claimed that ideology "never" featured in their decisions. The significance of these results for our model is that ideology "as an elegant solution to the problem of making reasoned choices from limited information on matters of great complexity" through its

invocation "of uniform criteria to handle disparate issues" (8) is remarkably under-developed in the U.S. Congress.

The second element of the model involves an examination of the nature of the authority hierarchies within the legislature. If we start with the executive hierarchy, by which we mean the differentiation of representatives into strata according to their tenure of executive or non-executive positions, then it is possible to suggest that where such differentiation is absent centralized leadership, which is 'authoritative' due to the possession of superior knowledge derived from expert bureaucratic advice, and 'authorized' by the support of the majority of representatives in the assembly, will also be lacking. Without such leadership, which provides a central focus for decision-making and which demands of non-executive members only that they ratify or reject executive decisions, representatives are forced to adopt other criteria of choice. This is not, of course, to argue that even with a formal separation of powers the executive does not provide a focus of leadership within the legislature. Indeed, the case of the U.S. Congress demonstrates that the President does provide some form of leadership within the legislature; clearly, the Presidential programme consumes the bulk of Congressional energies and constitutes the greatest number of public laws enacted, even though it constitutes only 5% of the total number of bills introduced into Congress. (9)

Yet executive influence remains of restricted significance in determining Congressional choice. For:

"the President's position on legislative proposals helps define the nature of the issue to Congressmen more than it serves as an authoritative evaluation for them in a situation of nearly total ignorance, members find it handy to know where the President stands, especially (but not only) if the President

is of the Congressman's party. This, however, may have relatively little to do with how they vote". (10)

Significantly what the constitution rends asunder in terms of centralized executive leadership in Congress, party leadership and seniority leadership has been unable to piece back together. (11)

The 'style' and 'focus' of representation forms the third crucial part of our model. In line with the hypothesis expounded in Chapter 3, that specialization is compatible in theory with only a restricted range of representative theories, the implicit assumption of the model is that a formal division of labour will be most highly developed where a delegate style and a specific focus of representation are pronounced. The American representative practice appears to support this contention as there is a strong tradition of delegatory orientations within Congress. Indeed some commentators argue that the strength of delegatory styles and narrow foci in the House of Representatives has a detrimental effect on Congressional policy-making:

"The country at large has become urban, suburban and metropolitan. Its economic, social, educational and technological activities are increasingly performed by huge national bureaucratic organizations. But on the Capitol Hill the 19th century ethos of the small town, the independent farmer, and the small businessmen is still entrenched behind the institutional defences which have developed in this century to insulate Congress from the new America". (12)

While Huntington's argument is perhaps over-stated, there is sufficient empirical evidence to show that most members of the House of Representatives acknowledge the need to pay attention to the views of their constituents: 70% of all members of the House of Representatives

were found by Rieselbach to pay heed to the wishes of constituents on at least some occasion, (13) and 65% held their district to be their prime focus of representation. (14) One consequence of such pronounced delegate orientations is that Congressmen normally seek direct "constituency pay-offs" from their legislative activity. Direct benefits for the constituency accruing most effectively from service on one of the so called "pork and interest" committees - such as Agriculture, Interior, Public Works, Merchant Marine and Fisheries. (15) So that there is an observable relationship between committee membership and representative role orientations, for as W.L. Morrow states: "The source of many stable committee roles is due in no small part to the fact that most committees are dominated by members whose constituencies are heavily concerned with the committee's work". (16) Hence the highly developed formal division of labour cultivated in the vacuum of the non-adversarial, non-hierarchically structured (17) environment of Congress is further propagated by its compatibility with the prevailing notion of representation. Each of the three elements specified in the model on page 324 as being conducive to the development of a formal division of labour are thus present in the U.S. Congress.

Yet it may be argued that the model is in fact 'tailor-made' to reflect the particular political and representational environment of the U.S. Congress and therefore is of little value in predicting the extent of formal specialization in other national legislatures. A more rigorous test of the model, therefore, is perhaps provided by an examination of the bases of the committee system of the Bundestag in West Germany. The Bundestag has, since its inception in 1949, operated a system of standing committees, supplemented on occasion by special and investigatory committees. Initially 39 standing committees were established, but by the sixth Bundestag (1969-1972) this number had been reduced to 15; although the number did increase to 19 after the

general election of 1972. Each committee 'shadows' a department of state and considers the legislation within that area. Although formally the whole House is supposed to discuss the basic principles of a bill before referring it to a committee for detailed consideration, in practice parliamentary discussion begins in committee and in many instances effectively ends there. While committees do report back to the House outlining changes and major differences of opinion during their deliberations the chances of rejection of their proposals in the Chamber are remote. (18) In addition to legislative proposals, the standing committees also have referred to them Government reports, resolutions and other discussion documents for investigation, and most committees regularly interrogate Ministers on their "annual departmental appropriation as well as other problems of interest to the committee, whether specifically referred to them by the Bundestag or not". (19) The importance of standing committees within the West German Federal Parliament is, therefore, considerable. Indeed, one reflection of their significance is to be seen in the fact that the Bundestag is outstanding amongst the national Parliaments in the European Economic Community as the best informed and most influential controller of its national government's policy in Brussels. The greater influence of the Bundestag than other national Parliaments is accredited by Juliet Lodge as being "largely a result of the reliance, for the discharge of parliamentary business, on committees since the bipartisanship this involves is more effective in bringing concerted pressure to bear on the Government than the 'verbal pyrotechnics' in debates associated with the old-fashioned business of.....British Parliamentary procedure". (20)

The very mention of 'bipartisanship' leads onto a consideration of the significance of partisan-adversary politics in the Bundestag. In contrast to the style of the U.S. Congress, partisan allegiances

are pronounced in the West German legislature. From the origins of a multi-party system in 1949, when ten parties gained representation in the Chamber, recent experience has witnessed the establishment of a three-party system of CDU-CSU, SPD and FDP. (21) In turn, the dominance of these parties has led to "a strongly polarized and competitive system of two rival parties, or party coalitions, the rationale of which has become more or less similar to that of English-style alternating party government". (22) In other words a system which favours 'winner take all' strategies where the victorious majority expect - and is expected by the electorate - to translate the political programme into practice. Governments (both CDU-CSU and SPD-FDP) have been aided in this task by the high degree of party cohesion within the Bundestag. In the third Parliament (1957-1961), for example, on the 46 ballot votes taken, an average of 98% of Members voted with the plurality of other Members in their respective parties. (23) More recently J.P. Mackintosh observed that the small majority of the SPD-FDP coalition after the 1976 general election meant in effect that "every member had to stand in line" (24) in voting in the House. But party unity has deeper roots than simple political expediency, for cohesion is essentially a product of German party history, of the class basis of parties and the ideological commitment of their foundation. Above all, however, unity, in Loewenberg's eyes, is a consequence of the high degree of party organization which "permits the parties to negotiate their internal differences in private and to reach a caucus decision which its members are willing to support solidly in public". (25)

The conditions for 'adversary politics', as defined by Nevil Johnson as "the maintenance of relationships of political competition through a mode of argument which assumes that political questions can best be resolved if expressed in terms of two and only two contrasting alternatives", (26) thus appear to be ripe in the Bundestag. But

such a conclusion would misrepresent the true German experience. Firstly, the ballot votes analyzed above are a procedural device used exclusively for political gain - to highlight differences of opinion between the party groupings. It is only to be expected, therefore, that bipolarization and party unity would be most pronounced on these occasions, and in practice ballot votes form only a minute proportion of votes in the legislative process. On other votes the tradition of the Bundestag has been one of a remarkable consensus between government and opposition parties. In the early 1960s, for example, the Opposition SPD party supported the legislative proposals of the Government in 90% of the votes of enactment. (27) Ultimately, therefore, although the potential for an adversary style of parliamentary behaviour exists, and occasionally manifests itself, in practice the tendency towards bipolarization is cut across by countervailing forces - most notably those of the relationship between the executive and the legislature, and of the representative tradition in Germany.

The relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government in Germany is more intricate and involved than that in either the United States or Great Britain. In practice the Chancellor and his Cabinet are recruited from the Bundestag and are, therefore, both "in and of" Parliament; but at the same time parliamentary and public conceptions of the role of the Bundestag still emphasize the established belief that the legislature should act as a corporate opponent to the executive. "Traditionally" as Nevil Johnson remarks "Government and Parliament have kept each other at arms' length". (28) Whilst this distance has shortened in the Federal Republic there remains no single continuous authority hierarchy in the Bundestag whereby the Government acts as the sole source of leadership, as the 'authoritative' voice in determining the choices of its supporters.

For in the Bundestag the authority hierarchy is fragmented, with the leadership of the executive and the leadership of the party being divorced. Unlike the position in the British executive there exists a complete separation between the organization of the Cabinet and of the parliamentary party leadership. "This element of organizational discontinuity" not only complicates the relations between leaders and followers in the parliamentary parties but also "reinforces the disposition that German M.P.s would have in any case to regard themselves as.....members of the Bundestag first and members of their party second". (29) Moreover, in the fragmentation of the leadership structure, and the reinforcement of the 'independent' position of the non-executive M.P.s, one simple mechanism of choice - that of 'voting with the leadership' - is subverted. Other mechanisms of choice have consequently to be utilized; most particularly those rational methods based upon expertise and the development of specialization.

But, as already argued, it is not a sufficient condition for the development of a formal division of labour merely that either criteria for decision-making, namely partisan allegiance or 'leadership hierarchies', should be de-emphasized, but, of considerable importance also, is the requisite of support in the political culture for representative theories capable of supporting, or at the very least justifying, specialization within the legislature. In line with the third element of our model, therefore, it is of significance that there exists in the German political culture a strong and continuous tradition of functional representation in the legislature. In the Second Empire the strength of notions of functional representation was confirmed, as new economic and social groups organized in the wake of industrialization, sought to defend their interests by delegating parliamentary spokesmen. As Loewenberg argues it was pointless in this period for a Parliament, constitutionally cut off

from the exercise of executive functions, to express general views on governmental policy. M.P.s could nevertheless be quite effective in the defence of special interests; as parliamentary approval was required for enactment of legislation and appropriations. Thus representatives in Parliament regarded themselves, and were regarded by their electorates, as agents for particular economic and social interests. The same pattern of representation was repeated in the Weimar Republic when again representatives "were accustomed to regarding themselves, and to being regarded, exclusively as instructed delegates of special interests". (30) This conception of representation is still prevalent in the Federal Republic, and its survival is in no small part encouraged by the proportional element of the electoral system which allows parties to make nominations according to the 'interest' to be represented.

Moreover, notions of representation which emphasize a delegate 'style' and a specific 'focus' also logically promote specialization on the part of individual representatives, and are generally accommodative to a formal division of labour within the representative assembly. It is perhaps no coincidence, therefore, to find that the procedural arrangements of the Prussian House of Representatives (which have had a considerable effect on the subsequent development of parliamentary procedure in Germany) provided for a system of specialized committees at a time when the representative function was conceived purely in terms of delegatory theory. (31) Similarly, it is possible to argue that the continuing strength of functional theory facilitated the re-adoption of a specialized committee system

in 1949.

Functional-delegatory orientations towards representative duties also facilitate the development of bipartisanship in the Bundestag's standing committees. For, in spite of committee memberships being determined in proportional strength to that of the parties in the House - party control of these committees is noticeably weak. Indeed, as Loewenberg notes "the system of party appointment of committees, designed to assure party influence on committee decisions in proportion to their strength, today allows the committees to escape from the control of the parties, as well as from the Government and Opposition and constitutes them as autonomous preserves of the major interest groups within their field of jurisdiction". (32)

In effect, therefore, interest representatives (along with senior parliamentarians) appoint themselves to the relevant committee and in so doing severely limit the discretionary powers of party selection committees. The ability of interest representatives (33) to gain places on specific committees is best illustrated in the case of 'domestic' committees. On the Social Policy, Labour and Economic Affairs committees, for example, the functional representatives within the CDU/CSU and the SPD-FDP combine to defend their interests across party lines. In this manner specialized functional knowledge becomes the main criterion of decision in committee rather than party directives. Indeed the flow of influence between party leadership and committee members is often the reverse of that in Great Britain, for in the Bundestag party leaders are frequently dependent upon the expertise of their committee colleagues in the formulation of policy. (34)

It is clear, therefore, that the political and representational environments of the Bundestag and the U.S. Congress, whilst being substantially different, do, nevertheless, contain the three essential

features identified in our model as pre-requisites for the development of a highly organized and effective internal division of labour. In each case there is a marked absence of both adversary politics and centralized leadership within the legislature. And, moreover, in both political cultures there continues to exist strong strands of representative theories, emphasizing delegatory 'styles' and specific 'foci' of representation, which are capable of rationalizing a formal division of labour within the representative assembly. When we come to consider the environment of the British House of Commons, however, the position is radically different.

#### Committees in the House of Commons

"Advocacy of an extended House of Commons committee system has so long a history in this century and has enjoyed such persistent support from political theorists (some of whom have also been practising politicians) that it is tempting to ascribe to obscurantism the refusal of the Commons to act on the advice offered to them". (35)

The resistance of the House to a systematic division of labour is more profoundly based, however, than on simple 'obscurantism': the political constraints upon structural reform of the House are real and seemingly overwhelming. For all three of the elements, identified in the preceding model, as being anti-thetical to the development of formal specialization are in fact central to the operational and normative system of the Commons. Partisan competition, the differentiation of executive from non-executive roles in the House and the absence of supportive theories of representation combine together to impede a systematization of the committee structure. Indeed

the existing committee 'structure' in the Commons is perhaps the classic illustration of organizational malformation arising out of a specific mix of political and representational factors. Never have committees exercised policy-making functions on behalf of the House as a whole: rather they have been regarded primarily as tools for expediting government business, through the consideration of the technical details of legislation, or for performing duties for which the House as a corporate body is unsuited, such as the collection and analysis of technical data. Never, in other words, have committees of the House provided for systematic specialization in the Commons.

#### Standing Committees

Nowhere is organizational mutation better illustrated than in the standing committees of Westminster. Standing committees are permanent in title only. In practice each committee is reconstituted for each separate bill, so that in 1970-1 the eight standing committees acted as fifty distinct groups in considering fifty Bills and in 1972-3 the eight committees considered forty-five Bills in forty-five different groups. (36) Unlike their counterparts in the U.S. Congress and West German Bundestag, modern British legislative committees make no claim to be specialized in the sense of heightening group expertise through constant attention to a single issue area. Modern practice in this instance marks a retreat from the original intentions of the creators of the standing committee scheme, for initially three committees, dealing respectively with the issues of law, commerce and Scottish matters, functioned on a specialized basis between 1882 and 1906. (37) Since 1907, and the implementation of the lettered system of committees, only the two Scottish Standing Committees have operated on a specialized basis, albeit in the heterogeneous realm of 'Scottish' legislation.

However, the Report of the 1977-8 Select Committee on Procedure dissents from the view that British standing committees operate in an unspecialized manner. In particular the Committee disagreed with the Study of Parliament Group's claim that "it is not generally appreciated the extent to which specialization and permanence are lacking in the present system of standing committees", (38) preferring instead the view that "while permanence is certainly lacking, we believe that the present standing committee system embodies precisely the kind of specialization which is appropriate to the consideration of bills, namely the participation of those Members who have either a specialized knowledge of, or interest in, the subject matter of the particular bill under consideration". (39) Some twenty years earlier Sir Kenneth Wheare had reached a similar conclusion that standing committees "by adjusting their membership to members' interests give much more scope to special knowledge and interest than might seem possible at first sight". (40) Wheare's assessment was made at the time of the 'two-tier' system of membership of standing committees whereby a 'nucleus' of twenty Members were selected for service on a lettered committee for the duration of a session and M.P.s with 'specialist' knowledge were then added for the consideration of individual bills. The theory behind this scheme was that a degree of expertise would be brought to bear in the scrutiny of legislation on two counts: firstly it should have been possible for the nucleus to develop some minimal competence in a particular subject area if bills from a particular department were considered regularly by the same committee. Secondly, the 'first-hand' knowledge of the 'added' Members should have contributed to increasing the level of expertise on the committee. The practice, however, was radically different from the theory. In a study of the scrutiny of legislation from the Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries, and Housing and Local Government, Kimber and Richardson found, for example,

that the nucleus system did little to raise the level of specialization in standing committees primarily because "the House, while sending the bills of the two departments virtually to the 'same' committee each time (A and D respectively) managed to send a different set of members to discuss the bill so that virtually all that two consecutive committees on the same topic had in common was the identifying letter of the alphabet". (41) By 1959 the Select Committee on Procedure had also come to recognize that the distinction between 'nucleus' and 'added' members was "artificial and serves no useful purpose" (42) and went on to recommend that in future membership of standing committees should be appointed in respect of each bill, taking into account the composition of the House and the qualifications of Members. In accepting this recommendation the House sought not to increase parliamentary specialization in the consideration of bills, but rather to bring the available expertise possessed by individual Members of Parliament to bear in specific instances. Yet assessments of this change, made by British academics, tend to obfuscate the distinction between expertise as specialist knowledge and specialization as the process of division of labour. Thus Crick contends that "the change in the composition of standing committees in 1960 towards greater specialism was more apparent than real"; (43) Kimber and Richardson in a more empirical vein adjudged that "the degree of specialization changed very little after the abandonment of the nucleus system, and although the committees were slightly more specialized, they were not significantly so". (44) H.V. Wiseman stands out, therefore, for the precision of his analysis that "the abolition of the distinction between the nucleus and the added members was only marginally, if at all, a move towards specialization. The changes in 1960 simply recognized that it was individual Members who specialized and all that was needed was to get them on to the committee". (45)

The confusion over the usage of the term 'specialization'; either to mean the product of (i.e. expertise), or the process of, a division of labour has continued to plague the subsequent debate on the position of standing committees. A good illustration of the different usage of the term is provided in the conflicting assessments of the extent of specialization made by the 1977-8 Procedure Committee on the one side, and the Study of Parliament Group, on the other. In this dispute (46) the Study Group conceived of specialization as the process of a division of labour whilst the Committee interpreted specialization to mean expertise on the part of individual M.P.s. Yet, in claiming that this latter form of 'specialization' was the kind most appropriate for the consideration of bills, the Committee appear to have been unaware of the inconsistency of their argument. For 'expertise' in Parliament, as revealed in Chapters 6 and 7, largely derives from extra-parliamentary activity, in as much as outside occupation and other 'personal experience' appear to be the main sources of specialist knowledge in the House. Yet as John Page M.P. argued in the House, for such 'expert' M.P.s to maintain their status they are required to continue with their extra-parliamentary activities.

"My view is that the contributions that people make  
.....in the House are in exact measure to their  
personal and current experience of the matter  
under discussion. I therefore hope that the  
honourable Member will not fall into the trap  
that some of his honourable friends have done  
and divorce himself from his previous existence -  
his previous way of earning his living - so  
that he can keep fresh and topped up with his  
knowledge of affairs outside the House; otherwise  
he will find that he tends to become only the  
mouthpiece of journalists". (47)

If this is the case, then outside employment provides not only the source of expertise but also detracts from the time available for Members to serve on standing committees: as such occupations are normally pursued in the mornings and early afternoons - the very times of standing committee sittings. Not unnaturally, therefore, businessmen, barristers and solicitors are groups of habitual absentees from standing committees. Members of the legal profession in particular appear to have established an almost recognized right not to be called upon to serve on these committees. (48)

The onus of active standing committee membership would appear, therefore, to fall particularly heavily on full-time Members who in the Page-Fairlie mould (49) are not held to be true experts. However, academic observers such as J.A.G. Griffiths have been able to identify "specialists and experts on particular matters" who serve frequently on standing committees dealing with such issues as housing and planning, health services, etc. Notably Griffiths cites as the source of expertise in these instances "chairmanship or membership of select committees of the House", (50) so that the benefits of parliamentary specialization, through service on select committees, appear to be reaped occasionally in legislative activity. The relationship between select and standing committee activity will be considered shortly, for the moment, however, let us consider the selection process for membership of legislative committees.

Members of standing committees are officially chosen by the Committee of Selection, but in practice the Whips of either party select the representatives for their respective sides. Hence loyalty to the leadership's line is a key determinant of a backbencher's chances of selection. Expertise or interest in the subject under consideration tends, therefore, to be a subsidiary but still important factor. The

importance of specialist knowledge is, however, elevated when a party is in Opposition and the need for a 'team' of knowledgeable backbenchers to support the frontbench spokesmen in committee is acknowledged by the Whips. When the party is in office the necessity for an expert advisory team of backbenchers is removed, as the Minister then has the services of the bureaucracy to call upon. Hence, the Government Whips often expect their backbenchers to make a contribution in committee solely through their presence, as John Roper M.P. explains:

"Government backbenchers often exclude themselves from debate, whichever party is in power. The Whips ask them to do so in order to expedite the passage of legislation.....I am sure that to the public it seems very foolish when they see honourable Members sitting upstairs in committee for hours or days on end saying nothing, not because they have nothing constructive to say but because the Government is worried about time". (51)

Work in standing committees for Government backbenchers can, therefore, often appear tedious and time-consuming, and in consequence the Whips may encounter problems in recruiting members for committee service on all but the most contentious pieces of legislation.

The importance of specialist knowledge as the criterion for decision-making by government backbenchers in committee tends, therefore, to be undermined in this process. Invariably more powerful influences than expertise in a subject sway their vote. The stance adopted by the Minister; his claim to authoritative pronouncement on the issue (a claim based upon the differentiation of parliamentary and executive roles, and the advice of functional agencies) are powerful determinants of backbench decision-making. Frequently Ministers confront their

backbench colleagues with legislative 'packages', worked out in detail with the affected interests and the bureaucracy, and which they are unwilling to see amended in the confines of standing committees.

Indeed Michael Thomas M.P. notes:

"So necessary, apparently, has it become for the Government to consult and to bargain with pressure groups on both major planks of policy and the most extensive range of detailed matters that Parliament is faced constantly with faits accomplis. In matters of legislation and executive decision, the political majority is wheeled out to rubber-stamp the compromises to the corporate state. Parliament is often even kept in ignorance of the alternative courses of action considered in the horse-trading of interest groups with each other and the executive. This will usually have been conducted in an atmosphere of secrecy which is preserved within the Government by the doctrine of collective responsibility and in the interest groups by enjoinders not to encourage Parliament to upset the carefully stitched together compromise package eventually presented to it for fear that one change will undo a carefully sewn-up garment". (52)

A second feature undermining the importance of specialist knowledge as a criterion for decision-making is the adversary procedure of standing committees. Although in theory cross-voting would appear to be encouraged by the more intimate nature of committee activity, and the possibility of the Government reversing any defeat on Report; in practice the effects of bipartisanship are negligible. (53) For the most part standing committees can best be regarded, therefore, as

the House operating with a smaller quorum. Party dictate invariably relieves individual backbenchers of the necessity of deciding upon the merits of a particular clause for themselves:

"In practice, backbenchers are faced consistently with the problem of lack of resources, information and sheer time and are often driven at the end of the day to decide issues not on their merits but on the grounds of whether it is a serious enough matter to be worth the opprobrium of upsetting the party Whips or joining the 'rock the boat' school. When that happens, even when the party political content of the decision is imperceptible even with a microscope and to the most determined observer, when Parliament is constantly predisposed by the system, by its procedure and by the inclinations of the frontbenches to operate like this, it is not surprising that the Government of the day effectively propose and dispose on all but the most important or the most trivial matters". (54)

For the most part, therefore, the influence of government backbenchers remains potential rather than actual. Executive dominance, founded upon party loyalty, effectively reduces the backbench role to one of providing ballast on most committees.

On the Opposition benches on standing committees, however, the role of the backbencher is somewhat different and the value placed upon the specialist knowledge of backbenchers is considerably higher. In the first instance, the rigid hierarchy of roles between frontbenchers and backbenchers is less apparent, with 'teamwork' being more

pronounced and with spokesmen actually welcoming knowledgeable support from their backbench colleagues in the absence of departmental information and briefing. As Walkland points out, on most bills the Opposition forms an ad hoc organization to draft amendments and to consider any government or other amendments tabled in committee; the nucleus of these ad hoc groups being recruited from the relevant backbench party subject groups. (55) In addition, backbenchers on a standing committee may regularly meet with the frontbench spokesman to discuss strategy. In this way the Opposition effort in committee tends to be more internally co-ordinated, with the frontbencher acting much more as a party spokesman than the Minister who acts primarily as the departmental spokesman and only secondarily as the voice of the party.

Contributions to standing committee deliberations by opposition backbenchers (and government backbenchers for that matter) may also be welcomed when the Member speaks 'authoritatively' for some organized, affected interest. Indeed pressure groups have long nurtured contacts with M.P.s serving on standing committees, in their attempts to secure amendments to bills and to gain further information on the intentions of the Government. These contacts have been developed to such an extent that at times, "this servicing by professionals and experts comes close in its drafting and briefing to the service provided for the Minister by his department". (56)

It is not without significance, therefore, that the importance of specialist knowledge is highlighted in the Opposition party in those periods when the 'authority hierarchy' separating frontbenchers and backbenchers is not rigidly reinforced by the parallel differentiation between members of the Government and backbenchers; and when the representation of functional interests can be accommodated into the

partisan challenge of the Government's programme. Yet ultimately the dominant elements of the parliamentary environment impinge upon the operation of standing committees to reduce the value attached to the possession of specialist knowledge. Adversary confrontation and executive dominance within the committee removes the necessity of making decisions according to a detailed understanding of the issues involved and renders choice into the much simpler form of whether to support or to oppose the prior decisions of the party leadership.

### Select Committees

In 1970-1 and 1972-3 no fewer than twenty-two select committees sat in each session. The functions of these committees varied enormously from purely domestic administration of the House's own affairs, (57) through investigatory work, (58) to ad hoc committees on legislation (59) and on specific policies. (60) Yet these committees were not organized on a systematic basis; rather they constituted, in the opinion of one M.P., a "total hotchpot" (61) and were likened by another Member to a "patchwork quilt, which covers part of the administrative bed much more completely than is needed, and does not cover other parts at all". (62)

The reasons for the failure of the House to develop a system of committees - an extensive formal division of labour - are not hard to find given the ascendancy of the executive, the adversary procedure and the prevailing conceptions of representation within the Commons. Indeed, in the peculiar political cauldron of the British House of Commons agreement has never even been reached on the advisability, let alone the necessity, of formal specialization. The compromise reached in the long-running debate between 'committee men' and 'floor men' in the House has resulted in the patchwork pattern whereby select

committees have been appointed in restricted fields and with very little autonomy. In essence the committees have come to perform "the work for which the House itself is not fitted - finding out of the facts of the case, the examining of witnesses; the sifting of evidence, the drawing up of reasoned conclusions". (63)

The advocates of reform of the House through specialization chose, in the 1960s, to base their case for the development of the committee system upon the existing compromise. The operation of the investigatory-advisory committees such as the Public Accounts, Estimates and Nationalized Industries Committees was cited as the precedent for further innovation. The reformist strategy seemingly hinged upon the need to convince the House and the executive alike of the incremental nature of their demands, of the simple progression from the existing base to some more structured pattern of committee activity. In this manner the model of investigatory-advisory committees then in existence - the model of compromise - became the stepping stone towards greater parliamentary specialization. Yet, precisely because it was the model of compromise, a compromise forged in the specific political and representative flux of the House, the model contained within it inherent limitations as to its capacity to develop into an effective, systematized division of labour. The reformers, whose avowed interest was to exercise greater control over the executive through the development of the committee system, chose nevertheless to overlook these restrictions or even to argue that they were not constraints at all. Thus, paradoxically the Public Accounts, Estimates and Nationalized Industries Committees were regarded as suitable precedents for reform, not because they threatened the Government's control of the Commons, not because they challenged the partisan procedure in the House, but precisely because they refrained from posing such threats.

The precursors of the 1966 extension of the select committee 'system' all functioned primarily as information gatherers and sifters. The Public Accounts Committee (P.A.C.), assisted by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the staff of the Exchequer and Audit Department, concerned itself with the 'facts' relating to the regularity of expenditure and to waste, extravagance and overspending by central departments. But as a fact-finder the P.A.C. did not always know where relevant information was to be found, nor have access to all information, nor even present its facts in the best possible manner. (64)

Similarly, the original remit of the Estimates Committee was to elicit information, but this time on the details of the Annual Supply Estimates; though the Committee soon ceased examining in detail the figures published in the Estimates, preferring instead to enquire into the manner in which public money was being spent, and the extent to which government policy behind such expenditure was being fulfilled. (65)

Yet the success of the Committee in either role was limited for, as Sir Richard Clarke comments: "taking the whole experience (of the Committee since) the war.....it must be debated whether the contribution was commensurate with the amount of effort of Members concerned and of officials who were the main witnesses. Not very many of the reports had much impact on Ministers and Whitehall, and influenced what actually happened: nor did they always perform the other equally important role of Select Committee reports, to inform Parliament and public opinion and create better public knowledge and improve the quality of public debate". (66)

Thirdly, the Nationalized Industries Committee also sought to check the actions of the executive, in relation to their dealings with the public corporations, through the collection and publication of information. Indeed, since its inception in 1956 the Select Committee has provided a mass of information on the capital requirements and the

financial objectives of the Nationalized Industries. More than any other, the Select Committee on the Nationalized Industries was regarded as the model for future reform through specialization. Crick, in the vanguard of the reformist movement in 1964 argued: "beyond doubt the Committee's work has led to significant changes in administration, even in policy, and to a far greater knowledge of the subjects in question among M.P.s". (67) However, a step back from the frontline of the reform movement provides a better perspective from which to view the achievements of the Committee. From this position Coombes provided a more reserved judgement on the Select Committee's impact, (68) and a former chairman of the Committee counselled ".....the Committee should be judged (on the).....influence of its reports and evidence on debate in the House. Here I am sometimes disappointed. I know some of our reports have been long and fairly solid reading, but I am not convinced that many of my fellow M.P.s actually read them. Members cry out for more information on many topics. When it is provided they say it is for the expert and do not always trouble to study it". (69) But in following the candle light of reforming zeal the 1960's reformers were willing to stumble over a few misgivings about the impact of committees without lowering the flame to see exactly what the obstacle was. The beauty of the established select committees for such people was that they operated on bipartisan lines. Both the Estimates Committee and the Nationalized Industries Committee were willing to consider questions of policy - but issues which were mainly beyond the boundaries of party conflict. The bipartisan ethos was willingly stressed by the reformers but, significantly, the inherent limitations upon the scope of party concord went unremarked; limitations which were plain to see, even to the Chairman of the Estimates Committee:

"The Committee is enabled by its restricted remit to conduct its enquiries.....in a non-party

atmosphere, which makes it easier for reports to be agreed to and eliminates almost entirely the need for divisions". (70)

Limitations which were apparent also to academic observers, hence David Coombes noted in the case of the Nationalized Industries Committee that "it is in the Committee's own self interest not to deal with matters which would divide its members on party lines. If the Committee did so divide, its proceedings would be bogged down in deliberations and debate". (71)

In addition to bipartisanship, however, the established committees were also attractive to the incrementalist reformers of the 1960s as they did not undermine the convention of ministerial responsibility. To salve ministerial sensitivities, advocates of an extension of the committee system persistently pointed to the fact that the established select committees did not infringe executive prerogatives. Harry Hanson adopted this stratagem in 1964 when he claimed: "in a sense the pass (for a coherent system of committees) has already been sold by the establishment of the Estimates Committee and the Select Committee on the Nationalized Industries, both of which have proved their capacity to give useful advice without either interfering with the processes of administration or invading the territory of ministerial responsibility". (72)

In similar vein Crick regarded the Nationalized Industries Committee as a healthy precedent for reform which did not pose a challenge to ministerial responsibility, though he was forced to admit that the Committee's investigations had "taken place in a unique area where the Government does not want to take full responsibility and where cross-bench opinion about such investigations has been remarkably unanimous". (73)

Nevertheless, the unique context of the investigations of the Nationalized Industries Committee did not restrain Crick from proposing

an extension of the committee system into areas in which Ministers clearly had responsibilities. Indeed, there is little reason why Crick should have felt any restraint as he never challenged the 'right' of ministerial decision nor the executive's 'right' to pass legislation unimpeded by Parliament. 'Strong' government, based upon the existing party structure of the House, in combination with 'strong' opposition - provided for in the probings of committees of "advice, scrutiny and investigation" - were the keystones of his view of Parliament. The contradictions in this schema have led other academics to criticize Crick on the grounds that "nowhere.....in his writings is there an awareness of the difficulty of reconciling his twin aims of strong single party government on the one hand with comprehensive bipartisan investigatory powers for the House on the other". (74) Yet such an awareness is not logically required on Crick's part because, for all his talk of parliamentary control; control in the literal sense of the 'command, restraint and regulation' of government actions was ultimately in the hands of the electorate. (75) Parliament was to be revitalized not as a direct check on the government but as the "centre of information, something that broadcasts ideas and facts relevant to political decisions". (76) Parliament's true function, therefore, was as a link between the public and the executive; informing each of the other's opinions. In this model the communication function becomes the dynamic of the system, with 'information' being the key ingredient in the process - hence the suitability of investigatory committees, charged with the collection and dissemination of information, to promote understanding on the part of the electorate of the actions of government. Moreover, in the collection of information, the committees had no need to question ministerial responsibility for policy initiatives; neither were their memberships required to adopt adversary stances; for, as long as the committees were simply advisory bodies, the necessity of decision was

removed from their remit. In turn, as long as parliamentary control was defined, or more accurately redefined, to mean

"influence, not direct power; advice, not command;  
criticism, not obstruction; scrutiny, not initiation;  
and publicity, not secrecy" (77)

then the essentials of 20th century parliamentary government were not challenged. In this manner, by redefining 'control' to mean its opposite, and by propounding a theory of communication which leaves the electorate as the sole check upon the executive, Crick evades the need to reconcile the contradictions inherent in a model of parliamentary control over a strong executive.

Whilst Crick provides one of the more comprehensive, if nevertheless devious, rationales for an extended system of committees; his acceptance of executive dominance and adversary procedures in the Commons is far from being unique amongst reformers. Indeed, the genealogy of reform through specialization has throughout its strongest branch an implicit acceptance of the existing political and representational environment in which the House functions. Thus, back in the 1930s, H.J. Laski whilst proposing a series of advisory 'departmental' committees to watch over the process of administration and to discuss, confidentially, the principles of bills was at pains to explain that such activity was not meant to question the executive function of Ministers. Rather committees "would be useful to (a Minister) by enabling him to test his policies upon a sample of public opinion before they have reached the stage where they can hardly be altered without a blow to his prestige, and they would serve the useful purposes of training Members in the art of administration, of giving some real assurance that debate would be informed, and of bringing civil servants into direct contact with Members of the Commons.....". (78) And he

went on to argue that "such an enlargement ought not to interfere with the Cabinet's control of the main stream of parliamentary activity..... those who ask for abrogation of any considerable measure of Cabinet control are in fact asking for what would be bound to develop into the destruction of ministerial responsibility". (79)

In the desire to be seen not to be challenging Cabinet control some later reformers were willing to "lean over backwards to allay the suspicions of the executive". (80) Perhaps the epitome of this approach was the scheme suggested by Hanson and Wiseman in their evidence to the 1958 Procedure Committee. They saw fit, for tactical reasons, to suggest a series of investigatory committees which would normally be non-voting, which would adopt a non-partisan approach to their work and which would keep any communication between Ministers and committees entirely confidential. (81) Whilst such a scheme may certainly have allayed ministerial fears it would just have equally subduced the entire rationale of a formal division of labour. Hanson and Wiseman's schema, therefore, represents possibly the nadir of the reform movement which sought quantitative reform without qualitative change.

Indeed a characteristic feature of the reform movement, throughout the 1960s, was that its political realism, in recognising that change could only occur with the support of the executive, was not matched by a realistic appraisal of what impact investigatory committees could make upon the same executive in a partisan, government dominated Chamber. In roundly condemning an earlier proposal, designed to "overthrow the existing system of single ministerial control, supported as it was by joint Cabinet responsibility" through submitting the departments of state to "committee control (in which case) not only would the system of single Ministerial control go, but the two

party system would go with it", (82) the 1960's generation of reformers revealed their innate conservatism. Because, for all that Jowett's proposals lacked sophistication and, for all that his analogy of 'municipalization' was misplaced, his analysis of the impediments to effective parliamentary control through committee specialization was as direct and clear as later analyses tended to be tortuous and opaque. Not for Jowett were committees separated from policy-making, whose influence depended upon investigations designed to

"a) open up an issue allowing outside opinion to focus on the problem before a decision was taken, b) inform M.P.s so that debates and questions in the House would be more relevant and therefore testing for Ministers, c) force departments and pressure groups to explain their assumptions, and d) bring public attention back to the Commons as it was the place where these investigations were made, as debates then became more informed and as the outside interest groups and the public found that pressure through the House could occasionally persuade governments to modify their policies". (83)

For just as Jowett's plans have been criticized for being idiosyncratic (84) and for "discredit(ing) later and more sophisticated plans for Commons committee work", (85) so can the 1960's generation of reformers be faulted for the superficial prognosis of the potentialities of their schemes for controlling the executive. Nevil Johnson in particular has consistently argued that "it was simply naive to assume that the House of Commons could be strengthened vis-a-vis the Executive just by improving its possibilities for scrutinising the activity of government and for making information available". (86) The experience of the

established select committees should have informed the reformers of the sixties of the inherent restrictions upon increasing parliamentary 'control' through committee investigations in the unique setting of the House of Commons. The strength of the two-party system and the dominance of the executive effectively confined committee investigations to the margins of politically controversial issues. Furthermore, the committees had no autonomous power of decision; acting purely as advisory bodies to the House as a whole. Yet for the benefits of a formal division of labour to be appreciated an essential requirement is that the specialized group of M.P.s on a committee 'control' the decisions made within their subject area. It makes little sense, if the rationale of the committee system is to provide penetrating scrutiny, for decision to be made by the totality of Members on the floor of the Chamber - most of whom are unable to comprehend the complexities, or are even unaware, of committee reports. Yet more than any other legislature in Western Europe or North America the House of Commons has seen fit to perform its major functions on the floor of the Chamber. Control of the Government has thus traditionally been exercised through debate on the floor of the House, and supporters of this tradition argue that the House "is a political forum which protracts the essential debate in the electorate, that is a representation of the people which is constantly watching Government, constantly asking it questions, striking the finger upon weak places.....(I)t does this in a particular way, it is the power to force a Minister in the Chamber to make a case and to sustain that case, whether he is arguing the question that Clause 33 of a Bill Stand Part or whether he is arguing a major matter of Government policy". (87) Even opponents to this view of 'control' are willing to acknowledge that general debates "are invaluable as occasions on which the Government is forced to explain their actions or intentions before a partly hostile audience which can gain the maximum of publicity". (88)

The continued pre-eminence of debate in the Chamber has much to do with the adversary foundation of parliamentary politics and with executive proclivity for general deliberation rather than detailed scrutiny. However, underpinning such political factors is the essential fact that the prevailing conceptions of representation in Britain all tend to stress the significance of general debate in the House. Burke, as noted in Chapter 3, clearly viewed Parliament as the "deliberative assembly of one nation". Similarly Liberal theory emphasized the importance of deliberation; to quote J.S. Mill:

"Representative assemblies are often taunted by their enemies with being places of mere talk and bavardage. There has seldom been more misplaced derision. I know not how a representative assembly can more usefully employ itself than in talk, when the subject of talk is the great public interests of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the nation, or of an individual in whom some such body has reposed their confidence. A place where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause even passionately pleaded..... (89)

The Whig and Liberal emphasis upon deliberation continues to shine through the defence of the Chamber by modern parliamentarians, Brian Walden echoed this representative tradition in claiming that "the main function of a Member of Parliament as a Member of Parliament is in the Chamber and his main duty is to have some imagination and some flair and some understanding of popular sentiment". (90) But the most trenchant defence of the role of the Chamber has rested with Michael Foot and Enoch Powell, both of whom have been willing to invoke 19th century notions of the Commons as a corporate check upon the executive.

Thus Foot maintains that: "it is only because of the power and authority of the House of Commons, of the floor of the House of Commons over the whole of the Palace of Westminster, that minorities have access to it and the ability to turn those minorities into majorities on major matters, major matters covering the whole field of politics". (91) Similarly Enoch Powell (before his membership of the 1977-78 Procedure Committee) argued that:

"The power of this House has always consisted, and must by nature consist, of vote after debate. Vote alone is potent, but.....vote upon a Question proposed at half-past three in the afternoon, because the matter has been considered by a committee, is not an effective method of discharging the control and power of the House. It is the combination of debate and vote wherein that power lies.....There is no substitute in parliamentary control for debate and vote". (92)

The conception of the House acting as a corporate check upon the executive appears somewhat anachronistic in the partisan atmosphere of the modern House. But the party clash itself can be seen as a sound justification for maintaining the Chamber at the centre of parliamentary activity. Thus Michael Foot has on occasion seen fit to wed notions of party representation to the traditional formulations of representation and to argue that debate in the Chamber should reflect the "clash at elections". (93) A similar marriage of ideas is to be found in John Mendelson's belief that "the proposal to create more and more specialist committees could completely undermine one of the major purposes of the House of Commons, namely, at all times to carry on the great national debate on the important issues of the day". His basic fear being that specialist committees would promote a

tendency towards consensus politics in the House which "could ultimately destroy the main element in the functioning of Parliament, which is the ability to mount a real political challenge by one side against the other....." (94) The spectre of consensus politics developing in select committees haunts other Labour Members, less certain of the pivotal role of debate in the Chamber. Dennis Skinner, for example, recently argued in the House that "it is hardly likely that Select Committees will go away. They have been with us for a considerable number of years. Of course, we may be upset from time to time about some of the reports that they produce, but we need to ensure that they are fashioned so that they represent conflict as opposed to consensus". (95)

Clearly behind all of these statements is a distinct view of the M.P. as a party delegate. In the Foot-Mendelson model, individual party representatives need to be active across the whole range of public affairs in accordance with the first formulation of the theory of party representation (96) - hence their emphasis upon debate on the floor of the House to the detriment of committee specialization. The Skinnerian view, on the other hand, conforms to the second statement of party theory; whereby an intra-party division of labour is permissible. Yet it may be argued that the model of reform advocated in 1975 by Skinner and the National Executive Committee's Study Group (97) is one of specialization within the House rather than simply within the party. However, if the detail, what little there is, of this scheme is examined, then in practice the departmental committees would appear likely to split into party sub-committees, each with their own political advisers and each probably producing separate reports. The impact that such internally divided committees would be likely to make on the executive (which would effectively control the majority on the committees) is open to question. What appears to be beyond

doubt, however, is that the proposed departmental committees would produce a parallel system of party sub-committees which would effectively constitute an intra-party division of labour rather than formal specialization within the House as a corporate body.

The absence within the British political culture of an accepted notion of representation which is supportive of a formal division of labour is but one more obstacle to the development of specialization. Ultimately, however, the dominance of party notions of representation and the continuing strength of Liberal and Whig 'independence' theories may prove to be a far greater impediment to specialization in the House of Commons than is presently realized. (98)

#### The 1966-70 Specialist Committee Experiment

As background to the study of backbench activity in committee, in our selected sessions of 1970-1 and 1972-3, it is of value to briefly consider the developments of the committee system in the preceding Parliament of 1966-1970. Given the hostility of the political and representational environment of the Commons it is difficult, in retrospect, to fully understand why the reformers of the 1960s believed that the 'guerilla incursion' of specialist committees would lead to a 'revolution' in the parliamentary 'control' of the executive.

Any guerilla raid is ultimately dependent upon succour from the immediate environment - but as the preceding paragraphs demonstrate the unique mix of political and representational elements in Britain was positively hostile to reform through specialization. It also helps if the guerilla battalions are adequately armed - yet the only weapons deemed necessary by the reformers were facts and information. Furthermore, the supply of such weapons was controlled by the executive - the very target of the guerilla attack. Finally, a clear strategy

is vital to the success of any insurgent group. Here again, however, there was no clear idea of the exact role specialist committees were to perform at the outset of 1966. It was hoped that the committees would make governments more accountable; it was believed that back-benchers and the public would become more informed about executive activity and at the very least it was expected that they would keep "some of the more restless among the new intake (of M.P.s) happy". (99) Essentially, therefore, the reformist strategy rested upon the executive surrendering its own prerogatives, as specialist committees themselves were clearly not designed to attack the fundamental conventions of Cabinet Government.

In practice the Government proved reluctant to relinquish any of its own powers. From the outset it was apparent that the 1966 committee experiment was controlled and judged by the Government and not by the committees themselves. And long before the end of the 1966 Parliament the Labour Cabinet appeared to have decided that it did not wish to continue with, or expand upon, the type of scrutiny committee with which it had experimented. (100) The first casualty of the executive's retrenchment became the Select Committee on Agriculture which found to its cost that the Government's reclassification of specialist committees into 'subject' and 'departmental' categories was more than a question of semantics. For, through being classified as a departmental committee the Committee was condemned to a very short life in view of the Government's decision that "departmental committees should be of limited duration". (101) The demise of the Agriculture Committee in 1969 simply highlighted the vulnerability of the specialist committee experiment to control by the executive; particularly as the Committee itself could do no more than "deplore the decision to disband the Committee.....at a time when it was becoming familiar with its task, developing its expertise, and had identified so many questions which

urgently call for further investigation". (102)

The fate of the Agriculture Committee did prompt general expressions of concern within the House; but, significantly, the 1968-69 Procedure Committee, in its examination of the system of expenditure scrutiny, contented itself with the bald statement that attention had been drawn to the problems facing specialist committees by the Agriculture Committee. (103) The Procedure Committee did proceed to list certain difficulties of the specialist committee experiment (104) without mentioning, however, that such problems were largely premeditated on the part of the Labour Government. In an attempt to rescue the specialist committee experiment from its difficulties the Procedure Committee recommended the creation of a Select Committee on Expenditure. The new committee, working through functional sub-committees, was to be charged with the consideration of the activities and estimates of the Departments of State and the efficiency of their administration. The hope was that a new coherence would be brought to the scrutiny of executive actions through co-ordination of the work of the 'specialized' sub-committees.

The new Conservative Government rapidly established the Expenditure Committee in January 1971. In part the speedy establishment resulted "from a government assessment of the role that it could play in assisting ministerial objectives". (105) However, the speed with which the Government acted did not prevent it from substantially weakening the move towards systematic specialization suggested by the Procedure Committee. The remit of the new Committee was cautiously framed so that its orders of reference were but marginally wider than its predecessor, the Estimates Committee; the sub-committees were not to be allowed to consider the expenditure projections for the Department or Departments in their fields, as initially suggested in the 1968-69

Report, and a further blow to systematic specialization in sub-committees was dealt by limiting the committee's membership to forty-nine instead of the proposed seventy-two. One reason adduced by the Leader of the House for the restriction placed upon the size of the Expenditure Committee was:

"that it was impossible to go the whole way with a very large Committee on Expenditure while at the same time preserving the Select Committee on Nationalized Industries, the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration and the Select Committee on Science and Technology all of which . . . . had provided a valuable part of the House's work". (106)

In trying to find "the best balance" between the new Committee and the existing committees the Government succeeded in simultaneously limiting the size of the Expenditure Committee and restricting the number of specialist committees allowed to continue in the new Parliament. The relevance of the adage about "killing two birds with one stone" was perhaps not lost upon the more cynical of backbench observers at this time.

#### Backbench Specialization in Parliamentary Committees

It is against this backcloth that our analysis of backbench specialization in committee takes place. Amazingly, in spite of the centrality of the debate over committee-based specialization in recent years very few detailed studies of the extent of specialization upstairs have been completed. The notable exceptions being provided in Kimber and Richardson's (107) and R.L. Borthwick's (108) studies of standing committee activity, and E. Oram's (109) analysis of

specialist committee work. Yet even these are limited respectively to a single type of committee, and each in their own way fail to fully analyse or measure specialization.

The prime purpose of the analysis of our sample's activity 'upstairs' is, therefore, to discover the pattern of specialization across the entire range of their performance in committee. To this end activity in both standing and select committee is treated as a single unit of analysis. Whilst this approach is open to the criticism that it blurs the distinction between 'investigatory' and 'legislative' duties, it does nevertheless allow for a profile of specialization to be developed for committee work as a whole. In this way it is possible to discover the extent to which backbenchers simultaneously concentrate their attention upon the same issue areas on both types of committees.

The measure of activity used to compute the index of specialization for committee work is the recorded attendance of each backbencher for each committee served upon. The data for select committee attendances was based upon the information recorded in the Returns of Select Committees. (110) Although the Returns do not provide a perfect measure of activity, in as much as they merely list the presence of a Member in committee rather than the actual amount of time or effort expended therein, they do nevertheless provide the best single piece of evidence as to activity in committee. (111) For standing committees information on attendance was gathered from the individual Reports of the Proceedings of each committee. And from these various sources the subject area of each committee a Member was assigned to, and his attendance at each committee, was recorded.

The exact extent of backbench concentration of attention in committee can be gauged from Table 8.1. The range of issues covered per M.P. is

noticeably narrow; far narrower than for any of the other procedures studied in Chapter 5; in both sessions the mean spread of attention was less than two subjects per Member and a sizeable proportion of backbenchers concentrated upon only one subject in each session. Conversely very few M.P.s were active in more than three issue areas.

TABLE 8.1 Number of subject areas covered by each Member\* in committee 1970-1 and 1972-3.

(\* Conservative and Labour Members - all Tables in Chapter 8 refer to Conservative and Labour Members only).

<u>No. of subjects</u>	<u>1970-1</u>	<u>1972-3</u>
	(n 90)	(n 85)
	%	%
1 - 3	90.0	95.3
4 - 10	10.0	4.7
11 - 35	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	100.0	100.0
Mean	1.97	1.91
Median	1.78	1.79
St. dev.	1.02	0.96

However, in contrast to the other procedures, the correlation between the number of subjects considered by each backbencher in each session in committee is noticeably weak ( $r$  0.21,  $r^2$  0.05, (n 75) significant at 0.05). So that M.P.s who focused upon only one issue in one session were liable to spread their activity more widely in the next and vice versa.

Nevertheless, the very restricted overall focus of backbench attention is reflected in the increased level of specialization in committee work: with the coefficients of variation being much higher than in any other procedure. As Table 8.2 reveals, over three-quarters of Members in the first session, and two-thirds in the second, were

considered to be highly specialized.

TABLE 8.2 Index of Specialization

<u>Level of specialization</u>	<u>Session</u>	
	<u>1970-1</u> (n 90) %	<u>1972-3</u> (n 85) %
High	76.7	65.9
Medium	23.3	32.9
Low	<u>0.0</u>	<u>1.2</u>
	100.0	100.0
Mean	5.04	4.91
Median	5.09	4.90
St. dev.	0.87	0.92

There were, however, considerable fluctuations in the level of specialization on the part of backbenchers from one session to the next. The product-moment correlation coefficient (r) highlights these fluctuations by its very weakness (0.10). Indeed this correlation is much weaker than the corresponding correlations for debates, Questions and E.D.M.s. So that, although the focus of attention is much narrower and the level of specialization is much higher in committee work, individual M.P.s do not appear to be as consistent in their concentration of attention as in the other procedures studied.

Costs of Participation of Committee Activity

The highly specialized profile of backbench activity 'upstairs' in committee is undoubtedly a reflection of the very high 'costs of participation' exacted by committee service. There can be little doubt that committee work is definitely a time-consuming, expensive procedure. Firstly, the preparation costs for legislative and

investigatory duties alike are, in theory, high. On standing committees backbenchers on both sides may be required to attend preparatory meetings to be briefed upon the purposes of particular clauses and the tactics to be adopted in committee. The frequency and importance of such meetings tending to increase in the Opposition party. (112)

On select committees the costs of preparation may be greater still; particularly for those backbenchers intent upon asking detailed and pertinent questions of expert witnesses. Such Members may be required to devote considerable effort to personal research, especially when the committee does not possess the services of a specialist adviser, (113) and the individual M.P. does not employ a research assistant. In practice not all Members are willing to expend the requisite amounts of energy, with the consequence that select committee examination of witnesses can on occasion be "superficial" and "ineffectual". (114)

Differences in the level of preparation may even be apparent amongst the membership of a single committee. For example, the effectiveness of the Conservative Members on the 1974-5 Wealth Tax Committee was attributed by Ann Robinson to the fact that not only were they "selected with an eye to existing expertise in fields connected with wealth and its administration, but perhaps more important than prior expertise was the effort they put in preparing for evidence sessions". (115)

On the other hand, Labour Members on the same committee were "generally apathetic and did not take such an active part in the questioning of witnesses".

Added to the high costs of preparation for committee work are also high costs of performance. On standing committees these latter costs vary in accordance with the number of sittings required to consider any specific piece of legislation. Some bills require only one sitting (in 1970-1 and 1972-3, 21 and 20 bills respectively) whilst others require over ten sittings (6 and 8 bills in 1970-1 and 1972-3

respectively). The Immigration Bill of 1970-1, which required 24 sittings, and the Social Security Bill of 1972-3, which needed a total of 30 sittings, were the most time-consuming measures in the two sessions under scrutiny. However, one of the best recent examples of expensive costs was provided in the intermediate session of 1971-2 with the committee stage of the Housing Finance Bill. As one Member of this committee was later to ruefully remark: "I was lumbered on the Standing Committee which considered the Housing Finance Bill and cost me precisely 257 hours of my life". (116) Although the performance costs exacted by this committee were exceptional, service on standing committees generally can be a time-consuming occupation. Indeed, the differing costs of performance from one committee to the next and from one session to another may go some considerable way to explaining the fluctuations in the level of specialization noted earlier.

The performance costs of select committee duties also appear to be comparatively greater than those incurred in the three other procedures examined in Chapter 5. Evidence sessions of the investigatory committees are especially time-consuming: so that a committee undertaking a large scale enquiry may hold one or more three-hour evidence sessions per week. (117) The expenditure of backbench time in select committees has not gone unremarked upon by critics of investigatory committees. Indeed, a common allegation made against select committees is that they harm the Chamber by drawing Members away from the floor of the House:

"The more that select committees.....proliferate, the fewer Members there are to take part in debates on the floor of the House. That is one phenomenon of our modern Parliament. As the number of committees is increased, fewer Members find it possible to attend debates on the floor

of the House". (118)

But, by its very nature, activity in committee is a cost inefficient mode of activity. Firstly, the costs of preparation and performance are uniformly higher for committee service than for activity in any of the other procedures, which entails, in theory, a greater expenditure of energy. Secondly, the opportunity to reap the rewards of such industry may be closely circumscribed - particularly in the case of government backbenchers on standing committees. For although they are required by their Whips to be briefed and regular in their attendance, prolonged intervention in debate on the part of government backbenchers is often frowned upon by their Ministerial colleagues. Opposition backbenchers on the other hand may find activity in legislative committees to be more cost-efficient in so far as the time spent in preparation and in actually being present at the committee meetings secures a tangible reward of column inches in the official Report of Proceedings of the committee. More importantly, perhaps, the Opposition backbencher may increase his standing amongst his party colleagues and even gain the respect of the Government side (119) through his reasoned contributions.

However, backbench performance in committee is not normally regarded as the most effective mode for advancing one's parliamentary career. Government backbenchers rarely endear themselves to their Cabinet colleagues through submitting government legislation and policy to detailed scrutiny - as Brian Sedgemore M.P. found to his cost in 1978 when, after an acrimonious exchange with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the general sub-committee of the Expenditure Committee, he was dismissed from his post as P.P.S. in the Department of Energy. (120) In line, therefore, with the discussion in Chapter 5, it would appear that committee service does not provide the most cost-effective

procedure for the politically ambitious backbencher to participate in. Furthermore, given that most backbenchers seemingly aspire to Ministerial office, and few are willing to play the 'maverick' role in the House: the influence of both standing and select committees may correspondingly be undermined.

Service on committee may also appear to be an ineffective form of activity for the backbencher who ranks 're-election' as his primary goal. For seldom do backbench contributions in committee receive widespread publicity; and when public interest is focused upon parliamentary proceedings it is generally directed towards the floor of the House. Even for the M.P. motivated primarily by a concern with the 'making of good public policy', committee activity may be regarded as being of limited effectiveness in view of the high costs involved. Overall, committees in the House of Commons have little direct impact upon the formulation and administration of government legislation and policy. (121) Nevertheless, in spite of such a verdict, the backbench M.P. who is concerned primarily with the goal of influencing policy may assess his own contributions to this process, not in any absolute sense but, in accordance with the relativities of the parliamentary context. Hence the very sensation of feeling to be doing something constructive 'upstairs' in committee, irrespective of the final impact on policy, may be preferable to the sensation of 'floundering' so often experienced on the floor of the House.

#### Specialization and Party

When the profile of backbench specialization is analyzed using party as the independent variable only marginal differences are to be found between Conservative and Labour Members in the sample. A weak

negative correlation between the number of subjects considered in committee activity and party allegiance - indicating a more restricted focus of attention on the part of Labour backbenchers - was found in both sessions. (In 1970-1  $r = -0.10$ ,  $r^2 = 0.01$ , not significant; 1972-3  $r = -0.20$ ,  $r^2 = 0.04$ , significant at 0.05). The slightly narrower spread of attention of Labour M.P.s is shown below. (Table 8.3).

TABLE 8.3 Number of subjects considered in committee per backbencher crosstabulated with Party

<u>No. of subjects</u>	<u>Party</u>					
	<u>1970-1</u>			<u>1972-3</u>		
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(n 49)	(n 41)	(n 90)	(n 43)	(n 42)	(n 85)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
1	36.8	46.3	41.1	32.5	42.9	37.6
2	30.6	34.1	32.2	37.2	47.6	42.4
3	22.4	9.8	16.7	23.3	7.1	15.3
4 +	<u>10.2</u>	<u>9.8</u>	<u>10.0</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>4.7</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	2.06	1.85	1.97	2.09	1.71	1.91
Median	1.93	1.61	1.78	1.97	1.65	1.79
St. dev.	1.01	1.04	1.02	1.07	0.81	0.96

In turn the index of specialization reflects the narrower range of attention of Labour backbenchers (see Table 8.4). The differences between the two parties, though still substantially small, were most pronounced in session 1972-3.

The most notable feature in Table 8.4 is not, however, the inter-party difference, but rather the change in the profile of specialization within the Conservative party between 1970-1 and 1972-3. For, even though Tory backbenchers did not significantly increase their spread

of attention, the aggregate profile of specialization decreased markedly from one session to the next. What appears, therefore, to have happened in the Conservative ranks is that the mean number of attendances increased from an average of 15 in 1970-1 to 21.7 per Member in 1972-3 (st. deviation 14.05 and 16.26 respectively) with the corollary that a number of Tory backbenchers came to concentrate their attention more evenly on various issues than had been the case in the first session. In the Opposition party on the other hand the mean number of committee attendances fell from 16.7 (st. deviation 12.72) in 1970-1 to 14.7 (st. deviation 14.03) in 1972-3. Yet this should not be taken to mean that there is a strong and simple linear relationship between specialization scores and activity levels in committee, for as Table 8.5 reveals the levels of specialization of the most active cohorts of Members are still remarkably high.

TABLE 8.4 Index of specialization crosstabulated with Party  
1970-1 and 1972-3

<u>Level of specialization</u>	<u>Party</u>					
	<u>1970-1</u>			<u>1972-3</u>		
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(n 49)	(n 41)	(n 90)	(n 43)	(n 42)	(n 85)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
High	73.5	80.5	76.7	55.8	76.2	65.9
Medium	26.5	19.5	23.3	41.9	23.8	32.9
Low	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>1.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Mean	4.91	5.18	5.04	4.73	5.10	4.91
Median	4.64	5.50	5.09	4.51	5.23	4.90
St. dev.	0.91	0.81	0.87	0.97	0.84	0.92
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.28 df 1 n sign			x <sup>2</sup> 3.07 df 1 sign 0.1		
	(exclude low)			(combine medium + low)		
	r 0.15			r 0.20 *		
	r <sup>2</sup> 0.02			r <sup>2</sup> 0.04		
	* significant 0.05					

TABLE 8.5 Index of specialization crosstabulated with the level of activity. Committees 1970-1 and 1972-3 \*

<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>1970-1</u>				<u>1972-3</u>			
	<u>Activity</u>				<u>Activity</u>			
	<u>V High</u> (n 15) %	<u>High</u> (n 18) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 19) %	<u>Low</u> (n 38) %	<u>V High</u> (n 20) %	<u>High</u> (n 15) %	<u>Medium</u> (n 14) %	<u>Low</u> (n 36) %
High	66.7	66.7	73.7	86.8	55.0	60.0	71.4	72.2
Medium	33.3	33.3	26.3	13.2	40.0	40.0	28.6	27.8
Low	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* activity measured in number of attendances at committees.  
 Low = 1 - 9 attendances                      High = 20 - 29 attendances  
 Medium = 10 - 19 attendances              V. High = 30+ attendances

Specialization and length of service in the House

The level of specialization in committee appears, from the evidence of our sample, to be largely independent of the length of service of M.P.s in the House. In both sessions only very weak, positive correlations were found (r 0.14, 1970-1; r 0.02, 1972-3). Correspondingly, when the index of specialization was crosstabulated with the parliamentary generations no significant differences between the three cohorts emerged. (See Table 8.6).

TABLE 8.6 Index of Specialization crosstabulated with 'parliamentary generations'. Committees 1970-1 and 1972-3

<u>Level of Specialization</u>	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>					
	<u>1970-71</u>			<u>1972-73</u>		
	<u>1970</u> (n 29) %	<u>1964-66</u> (n 18) %	<u>Pre 1964</u> (n 43) %	<u>1970</u> (n 24) %	<u>1964-66</u> (n 18) %	<u>Pre 1964</u> (n 43) %
High	75.9	72.2	79.1	62.5	83.3	60.5
Medium	24.1	27.8	20.9	37.5	16.7	37.2
Low	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.35, df 2, n sign (exclude low)			x <sup>2</sup> 3.05, df 2, n sign (combine medium and low)		

In contrast, therefore, to the procedures with low costs of participation (E.D.M.s and P.Q.s), where marked generational differences were observable, committee work appears to impose a uniformity of behaviour on both 'old' and 'new' M.P.s alike.

Where significant differences did emerge between the generations, however, was in the overall level of activity, as measured by attendance at committees. The more recently recruited M.P.s were seemingly more active than their longer serving colleagues, as a significant negative relationship between the number of attendances at committee and the number of years spent in the House was to be found ( $r -0.16$ ,  $r^2 0.03$ , significant at 0.05, 1970-1;  $r -0.21$ ,  $r^2 0.05$ , significant at 0.02, 1972-3). In part the greater propensity of the newer recruits to serve on committees may reflect their generally greater commitment to the establishment of a formal division of labour within the Commons. Other studies have already found that 'new' Members tended to strongly favour the development of the committee structure of the House. Barker and Rush, for example, found in their 1967 survey that the two new intakes of the 1960s were stronger supporters of an extension of the specialist committee experiment than were their longer serving parliamentary colleagues. (122) In their replicated survey of 1972 the same authors also established that the 1970 'generation' of M.P.s overwhelmingly supported the development of a system of select committees to examine major policy fields. (123) Given such orientations towards committee work it was perhaps to have been expected that the 'newer' Members in our sample should have been more active 'upstairs' than their more traditionally minded senior colleagues.

In light of the findings from the sample, a wider examination of select committee memberships for the whole of the 1970-74 Parliament was undertaken in an attempt to establish whether the espoused 'commitment'

TABLE 8.7 Membership of the Select and Specialized Committees 1970-4:  
the 'Generational' composition

Select Committees

<u>Parliamentary Generation</u>	<u>Committee</u>					
	<u>Expenditure</u> (n 74) %	<u>P.A.C.</u> (n 29) %	<u>N.I.</u> (n 22) %	<u>S.I.</u> (n 14) %	<u>Total</u> *(n 139) %	<u>Bb. pool</u> (n 451) %
1970	40.5	13.8	27.3	21.4	30.9	28.0
1964-66	19.0	51.7	31.8	35.7	29.5	21.0
Pre 1964	<u>40.5</u>	<u>34.5</u>	<u>40.9</u>	<u>42.9</u>	<u>39.6</u>	<u>51.0</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Specialist Committees

<u>Parliamentary Generation</u>	<u>Committee</u>						<u>Bb. pool</u> (n 451) %
	<u>Ov Aid</u> (n 15) %	<u>Race R.</u> (n 17) %	<u>Sc &amp; Tech</u> (n 18) %	<u>Sc. Affs</u> (n 16) %	<u>P.C.A.</u> (n 13) %	<u>Total</u> *(n 79) %	
1970	20.0	47.1	44.5	50.0	23.1	38.0	28.0
1964-66	20.0	35.3	22.2	12.5	0.0	19.0	21.0
Pre 1964	<u>60.0</u>	<u>17.6</u>	<u>33.3</u>	<u>37.5</u>	<u>76.9</u>	<u>43.0</u>	<u>51.0</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

\* Total number of M.P.s, i.e. number of M.P.s having served at any time in 1970-4 Parliament.

TABLE 8.8 Mean % attendance at Select and Specialist Committees in 1970-1 and 1972-3 crosstabulated with 'Parliamentary Generations'

(a) Select Committees

Parliamentary Generation	Committee																			
	Expenditure				Public Account				Nat. Indust.				Stat. Ins.				Total			
	1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3	
*	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten
1970	15	78.3	12	65.8	0	0.0	2	75.0	2	74.0	3	69.0	1	65.0	2	25.0	18	77.0	19	63.0
1964-66	8	68.8	12	61.4	4	47.8	4	50.8	4	77.5	4	68.8	4	74.0	3	72.3	20	65.4	23	62.3
Pre 1964	21	73.0	17	65.9	6	73.7	7	45.9	8	68.9	5	75.8	5	37.4	2	29.5	40	67.8	31	60.6

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(b) Specialized Committees

Parliamentary Generation	Committee																							
	Overseas Aid				Race Relations				Sc. & Tech.				Sc. Affs.				P.C.A.				Total			
	1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3		1970-1		1972-3	
*	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten	n	mean % atten		
1970	0	0.0	4	82.3	3	70.7	6	72.6	5	59.2	6	59.5	8	80.3	N.A.	0	0.0	2	67.0	16	71.9	18	69.8	
1964-66	3	83.3	1	93.0	5	58.3	3	90.0	2	72.0	3	74.7	1	67.0	N.A.	0	0.0	0	0.0	11	73.7	7	83.9	
Pre 1964	5	93.4	4	71.3	2	63.3	2	91.5	4	71.8	4	76.5	5	84.6	N.A.	9	60.7	8	73.9	25	79.4	18	75.8	

\* n = number of Members who served throughout the session.

of new Members actually translated into activity 'upstairs'. In fact the commitment of the newer generations to service on select committees is illustrated by their over-representation on these bodies in proportionate terms to their number on the backbenches as a whole. The 1970 'generation' was most notably over-represented in the membership of the specialist committees, whilst the 1964-1966 'generation' was over-represented on the sessional select committees. This latter point is perhaps noteworthy given that it is commonly accepted that specialist committees were created partly to keep the 1960's generation happy: for, by the 1970 Parliament, this 'reformist' generation appears to have forsaken the specialist committees for the traditional select committees (see Table 8.7). Of particular interest is the fact that the 1960's 'generation' appeared to favour the established Public Accounts Committee rather than the new Expenditure Committee throughout this period.

However, if the mean percentage attendance <sup>(124)</sup> at committee meetings is taken as an additional measure of 'enthusiasm' for committee work, then it would appear that in the two selected sessions of 1970-1 and 1972-3 the members of the pre-1964 cohort were generally no less committed to activity 'upstairs' on select and specialist committees than were their junior colleagues (see Table 8.8).

#### Subject Specialization

Backbench activity in committee is clearly specialized, both in the sense of being restricted to a narrow range of issues and also in the sense of being unevenly distributed amongst subject areas within this range. Yet, for this pattern of specialization to reap benefits for the individual backbencher and the House alike, it requires of each committee member that they concentrate upon the same subject areas over

a period of time. In this way expertise in the House is fostered. However, consistency in the attention paid to specific subject areas by backbench committee members appears to be a limited phenomenon, at least amongst the M.P.s in our sample. For although a greater proportion of Members fall within the highest category of our index of subject specialization (125) than in any of the other three procedures examined (see Chapter 5, Table 5.8), just under one-half of committee members rank as low subject specialists. Thus for most M.P.s in the sample the proportion of their activity devoted to the consideration of any one issue varies considerably from one session to another (see Table 8.9).

TABLE 8.9 Index of absolute differences in the proportion of activity devoted to subject areas between 1970-1 and 1972-3 (Subject specialization)

<u>Level of subject specialization</u>	<u>Party</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 39) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 38) %	<u>Total</u> (n 77) (a) %
High	12.8	31.6	22.0
Medium	28.2	28.9	28.6
Low	<u>59.0</u>	<u>39.5</u>	<u>49.4</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$\chi^2$  4.55, df 2, n sign.

r -0.20 \*

$r^2$  0.04

\* significant 0.05

(a) n = number of M.P.s active in committees in both sessions.

Whilst the crosstabulation in Table 8.9 does not yield any statistically significant differences between the two major parties, there is, nevertheless, a significant, weak and negative correlation to be found

between the scores of absolute difference and partisan allegiance. The direction of the correlation indicates that high absolute differences in the proportion of attention paid to any one subject over the two sessions are associated more with Tory than Labour backbenchers.

To some degree the overall fluctuations of attention, and the inter-party differences in this matter are explicable in terms of the constantly changing topography of the Government's legislative programme. One consequence of which is that backbenchers may be called upon to serve on standing committees dealing with differing subject areas from one session to the next. Government backbenchers in particular, given the greater number of committee seats to be filled, may be called upon to examine a diverse range of subjects in different sessions. Indeed as Table 8.10 reveals, over one-half of Tory backbenchers had no common subject area in their standing committee work between 1970-1 and 1972-3, whereas, just under two-thirds of Opposition backbenchers served on at least one standing committee in both sessions dealing with the same subject area. On select committees the differences between Conservative and Labour M.P.s are not so pronounced, and the consistency of attention to one or more subject areas is that much greater ( $\chi^2$  5.51, df 1, significant at 0.02 - 'total' column for standing committees v. 'total' for select committees).

TABLE 8.10    Correspondence of subject area in committee activity  
1970-1, 1972-3. /

TABLE 8.10 Correspondence of subject area in committee activity  
1970-1, 1972-3

<u>Correspondence</u> <u>of subject area</u> <u>1970-1, 1972-3</u>	<u>Type of Committee</u>					
	<u>Standing</u>			<u>Select</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 39) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 31) %	<u>Total</u> (n 70) %	<u>Cons</u> (n 13) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 16) %	<u>Total</u> (n 29)* %
One or more subject areas considered in both sessions	43.6	61.3	51.4	76.9	81.3	79.3
No subject overlap	<u>56.4</u>	<u>38.7</u>	<u>48.6</u>	<u>23.1</u>	<u>18.7</u>	<u>20.7</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

$x^2$  1.52, df 1, n sign

$x^2$  0.24, df 1, n sign

\* Number of M.P.s serving in both sessions.

'Over-specialization'

The evidence provided by the index of subject specialization and by the above table does not suggest that the committee members are exceptionally specialized in their attention to specific subject areas. Yet a constant fear held by opponents of the development of formal specialization within the House is that committee subject specialists would "monopolize debates on their particular subjects on the floor of the House and to some extent defeat the purposes of debates in the House". (126) So far, however, the only serious attempt to measure the extent to which service on committee does produce 'over-specialized' M.P.s has been provided by E. Oram, and even then his study is limited solely to an examination of specialist committees.

On the basis of a survey of parliamentary opinion on the 1966 committee experiment, and a quantitative analysis of the Index of Hansard, Oram reached the conclusion that the fear of 'over-specialization' is

misplaced. Firstly, because backbenchers themselves are sceptical of the view that committee service makes them undesirably narrow in their interests and activities; and secondly, because his analysis of the questioning and debating performance of M.P.s in the 1961-2 and 1967-8 sessions revealed that, if anything, committee Members appeared to have been slightly less specialized than other backbenchers. Unfortunately, in reaching this conclusion Oram fails to recognize that his quantitative data is not a measure of subject specialization at all and as such provides no real test of the 'over-specialization' argument. (127)

It, therefore, remains for an examination of the extent to which committee subject specialisms are carried over into other parliamentary activities to be conducted.

The methodology employed for the purposes of this examination is somewhat cruder than that used to measure subject specialization elsewhere in this study, but still provides a clear indication of the degree of subject overlap from procedure to procedure. A 'subject specialism' in the following section is taken to mean the single most important subject area for each M.P. in each procedure. A 'subject specialism' in committee, therefore, represents the subject attracting most attendances; in debate the issue occupying the greatest proportion of column inches and in Questions the area attracting the greatest proportion of oral and written Questions. Thus if a Member is truly a subject specialist, the same subject should recur as his specialism in committee, in debate and in Questions. (128)

In actuality, however, the extent of overlap of subject specialisms is remarkably limited. In the first session of our study only just over one-quarter of the sample had the same subject specialisms in debate and in committee, and only 30% of backbenchers focused primarily upon the same issue in both their questioning and their committee activity.

TABLE 8.11 The overlap of subject specialisms in Committee, Debate and Questions

(a) Session 1970-1

<u>Correspondence of subject specialisms</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debate</u>			<u>Questions</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 49) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 41) %	<u>Total</u> (n 90)* %	<u>Cons</u> (n 48) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 41) %	<u>Total</u> (n 89) * %
Specialism the same as in committee	22.5	31.7	26.7	22.9	39.0	30.3
Specialism different to that in committee	<u>77.5</u> 100.0	<u>68.3</u> 100.0	<u>73.3</u> 100.0	<u>77.1</u> 100.0	<u>61.0</u> 100.0	<u>69.7</u> 100.0
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.56, df 1, n sign			x <sup>2</sup> 2.01, df 1, n sign		

(b) Session 1972-3

<u>Correspondence of subject specialisms</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debate</u>			<u>Questions</u>		
	<u>Cons</u> (n 42) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 41) %	<u>Total</u> (n 83)* %	<u>Cons</u> (n 40) %	<u>Lab</u> (n 38) %	<u>Total</u> (n 78) * %
Specialism the same as in committee	28.6	31.7	30.1	22.5	36.8	29.5
Specialism different to that in committee	<u>71.4</u> 100.0	<u>68.3</u> 100.0	<u>69.9</u> 100.0	<u>77.5</u> 100.0	<u>63.2</u> 100.0	<u>70.5</u> 100.0
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.005, df 1, n sign			x <sup>2</sup> 1.30, df 1, n sign		

\* Excluding M.P.s with no recorded activity.

TABLE 8.12 Activity in Debate and Questions upon the same subject area as Committee subject specialism

(a) Session 1970-1

<u>Extent of Activity</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>			<u>Questions</u>		
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(n 49)	(n 41)	(n 90)*	(n 48)	(n 41)	(n 89) *
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Active upon comm subject specialism	41.8	51.2	45.6	56.3	63.4	59.6
No activity upon comm subject specialism	<u>59.2</u>	<u>48.8</u>	<u>54.4</u>	<u>43.7</u>	<u>36.6</u>	<u>40.4</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.60, df 1, n sign			x <sup>2</sup> 0.22, df 1, n sign		

(b) Session 1972-3

<u>Extent of Activity</u>	<u>Procedure</u>					
	<u>Debates</u>			<u>Questions</u>		
	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lab</u>	<u>Total</u>
	(n 42)	(n 41)	(n 83) *	(n 40)	(n 38)	(n 78) *
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Active upon comm subject specialism	52.4	51.2	51.8	55.0	52.6	53.8
No activity upon comm subject specialism	<u>47.6</u>	<u>48.8</u>	<u>48.2</u>	<u>45.0</u>	<u>47.4</u>	<u>46.2</u>
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	x <sup>2</sup> 0.01, df 1, n sign			x <sup>2</sup> 0.00, df 1, n sign		

\* Excluding M.P.s with no recorded activity.

Similarly in 1972-3 less than one-third of committee members carried over their committee specialism into either their questioning or their debating activity. The overwhelming majority of backbenchers in our sample, therefore, were not 'over-specialized' in so far as their subject specialism in committee (129) was different to the specialisms in debate and in Questions. (See Table 8.11). Indeed, only 18 committee members in 1970-1. and 16 in 1972-3, recorded the same subject specialism in each of the three procedures. And only 5 backbenchers (i.e. 6% of the total of active committee members in both sessions) had as their specialisms the same subject in all of the procedures in both sessions.

Even when the stringent requirements of Table 8.11 are relaxed to allow for an analysis of the extent to which backbenchers speak or table Questions at all in the area of their committee subject specialism - it rapidly becomes apparent that subject specialization in committee does not dramatically colour M.P.'s other parliamentary activities. As Table 8.12 illustrates, approximately one-half of committee members in the sample failed totally to speak in debate, or alternatively to table Questions, in the field of their committee specialism.

#### Membership Overlap on Select and Standing Committees

The relationship between activity on the floor of the House and concentration upon a subject area in committee has been seen to be substantially weak. Yet even within the limited realm of committee activity, seemingly little overlap between the memberships of standing and select committees examining the same subject area is to be found. The knowledge gained by members of select committees from their investigations appears to be neither consistently nor systematically brought to bear in the consideration of government legislation in

related subject fields. One reason for this low level of overlap between select and standing committee memberships may arise out of timetabling clashes, whereby M.P.s may be unable to serve on both types of committee dealing with the same issue, as the committees sit at the same time. Alternative, some Members serving on investigatory committees may be unwilling to burden themselves with additional duties on standing committees. However, the Whips appear to be largely unsympathetic to pleas for exemption on such grounds. (130) And, if anything, service on select committees far from reducing activity on standing committees, tends to be associated with greater expenditure of energy on legislative duties. (131)

But the point at issue here, however, is not simply whether or not service on select committees detracts from activity on standing committees, but rather whether concentration upon a specific subject area in investigatory committees is closely associated with concentration upon the same area in legislative committees. Unfortunately, the restricting factor in undertaking such an analysis is that so few pieces of legislation correspond exactly to the areas of interest of select committees in any one session. Thus, in examining the patterns of membership of select and standing committees in 1970-1 and 1972-3 the widest possible interpretation of select committee interest was used. The title of the committee or sub-committee became the main criterion for the classification of subject interest rather than the actual subject area of its investigations in that particular session.

Even then only six and eleven Government Bills in 1970-1 and 1972-3 respectively fell unambiguously within the area of interest of any select committee in the House. In the first session three Bills fell directly within the scope of select committees: the Coal Industry Bill was of direct concern to the Nationalized Industries Committee; the

Immigration Bill was of key significance for members of the Race Relations Committee and the Finance Bill (132) was of concern to both members of the Expenditure and Public Accounts Committees. Three other pieces of legislation, the Social Security Bill, the National Insurance Bill and the Industry Bill fell broadly within the areas of concern of either the Employment and Social Services, or the Trade and Industry sub-committees of the Expenditure Committee. Of these six measures only in the cases of the Immigration and Finance Bills was there a substantial overlap in the compositions of the standing committee and the 'interested' select committee. Over one-half (58%, n7) of the Race Relations Committee served on the standing committee examining the Immigration Bill, contributing one-fifth of the membership of the legislative committee. (133) On the Finance Bill slightly over one-third of the backbench membership of the standing committee were also concurrently members of either the Expenditure or the Public Accounts Committees. In contrast, only one member of the Nationalized Industries Committee served on the Coal Industry Bill, a measure which sought to extend the government's power to make grants to the National Coal Board as well as to increase the Board's statutory level of accumulated deficit. On the standing committees on the Social Security, the National Insurance and the Industry Bills no members from the relevant Expenditure sub-committees were to be found.

In the second session of our study members of the Expenditure Committee and P.A.C. were well represented on the committee considering the clauses of the Finance Bill. Again, one-third of the standing committee's backbench membership was drawn from the two financial select committees. (134) The other major economic measure taken in standing committee in 1972-73, the Counter Inflation Bill, also attracted members of the Expenditure Committee: with one-sixth of the seats being filled by Expenditure Committee members. However, select committee

members were less in evidence on standing committees in other policy areas. On the Coal Industry Bill only two members of the Nationalized Industries Committee served on the standing committee; and of the five Bills falling within the general scope of the sub-committees of the Expenditure Committee only two attracted a single member from the Select Committee. (135) No member of the Trade and Industry sub-committee was to be found amongst the members of the standing committee considering the Fair Trading Bill. Service on this sub-committee, which sat on a total of thirty-eight days, may have been a deterrent in itself to service on the standing committee dealing with the same issues. However, the same argument is less than persuasive in explaining why only one member of the Select Committee on Race Relations served on the standing committee considering the Pakistan Bill, which was essentially concerned with the question of citizenship.

Little overlap seemingly is to be found, therefore, between the membership of select and standing committees in the two sessions under study. This is not to say that information gathered through the investigations of select committees is not utilized in standing committees, but simply to note that select committee members only infrequently bring their specific subject knowledge personally to bear in standing committee deliberations. The effects of this disjunction of memberships could no doubt be mitigated in part through the process of subject specialization in standing committees - so that the same Members sat on committees considering the same issues over a period of years. Yet this process has remained largely undeveloped in the House of Commons. An earlier study of subject specialization in standing committees in the period 1945-1959 found a marked lack of continuity in the membership of standing committees in the areas of agriculture, pensions and national insurance and housing. In the field of agriculture

only 16% of members appointed to standing committees were appointed to four of the fourteen Bills considered, and in the area of pensions and national insurance the corresponding percentage was 11%. Only 9% of appointees to standing committees dealing with housing Bills served on four or more of the fourteen Bills. (136) In the period of our study, Bills in the areas of social security, national insurance, coal industry, civil aviation and finance were introduced in both sessions. An examination of the membership of those standing committees dealing with similar legislative measures reveals nonetheless a substantial turnover from one session to the next. The two committees considering the Social Security Bills had only one backbench Member in common (i.e. a 6% stability factor), (137) whilst the two committees examining the National Insurance Bills retained two backbench Members (a 14% stability factor). On the respective Coal Industry Bills five backbenchers served on both committees (a 22% stability factor). In the field of civil aviation the membership of the four standing committees active in 1970-1 and 1972-3 appeared relatively stable. Out of a total of forty-nine seats on these committees, twelve were occupied by just four Members (that is, each backbencher sat on three of the four committees), a further eleven backbenchers served on two committees taking up twenty-two more seats and the remaining fifteen seats were occupied by fifteen different Members. So that of the total of thirty-one backbenchers engaged in the four standing committees in the subject area of civil aviation over half of them (52%, n 16) served on two or more of these committees. But the stablest membership of all was to be found on the standing committees dealing with the Finance Bills in this period, for sixteen backbenchers served on both committees resulting in a stability factor of 48% over the two sessions. This comparatively high level of continuity of membership ties in with the earlier finding of substantial overlap of select and standing committee memberships in the field of economics, to suggest the

development of the process of subject specialization in this area upstairs. (138)

### Conclusion

The paradox of backbench activity upstairs in the House of Commons is that for most Members work in committee represents their greatest individual division of labour, yet at the same time the level of subject specialization remains remarkably low. The differentiation between legislative and investigatory committees, the minimal overlap in the memberships between the two, the lack of continuity of membership on standing committees and the relatively high turnover on select committees all serve to fragment the bases of subject specialization. Only in the field of economics and finance does there appear to be a semblance of subject specialization founded upon consistent study of the policy area in select and standing committees. In other subject areas the development of subject expertise through committee activity remains a restricted phenomenon. Thus the fears of the opponents of the extension of committee activity over the last decade, that committee members would become 'over-specialized', have largely been proved to be unfounded. Indeed, such fears were misplaced in the first place - given the structure of committees and their place in the British parliamentary system. The ad hoc growth of committees is in itself a significant pointer to their status in the House, as they have never been conceived of as a system of specialized sub-units of the House, and the House has not seen fit to discharge its main functions through committees. Hence committees, both standing and select, are not decision-making bodies in any but the narrowest of senses. Legislative committees, on the one side, are confined to the consideration of a legal draft of a Bill, as the important decisions have already been taken at the formative stage in

Whitehall and ratified at Second Reading in the House. Select committees, on the other side, as advisory-investigatory bodies merely report back to the House - where the 'decision' on their findings is made (or normally deferred). In both cases, however, activity in committee is shaped by wider political considerations, which essentially means that such activity is structured to accommodate the desires of the executive and also to fit within the partisan organization of the larger parliamentary setting. Indeed, it is only through recognizing that the committee structure is a reflection of the uneasy compromise between diverse structural principles - between the organizational principle of the division of labour, between the political realities of executive dominance and adversary procedures, and between representative principles - that the failure to develop a systematic, formal division of labour in an era of complexity can be understood.

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10. Matthews and Stimson, op cit, p.104 and p.106.
11. See L.N. Rieselbach, Congressional Politics, McGraw Hill, New York, 1973, pp.69-75, pp.95-98.
12. S.P. Huntington, "Congressional Responses to the 20th Century", in R.C. Morgan and J.E. Connor, The American Political System, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1971, p.206.
13. See L.N. Rieselbach, op cit, p.330.
14. 42% district dominant, 23% nation and district equal.
15. See R.H. Davidson, "Representation and Congressional Committees", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, January, 1974, pp.48-62.
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22. G. Lehbruch, "Party and Federation in Germany: A Developmental Dilemma", Government and Opposition, Vol. 13, No. 2, Spring, 1978, p.151.
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24. J.P. Mackintosh, People and Parliament, Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978, p.179.
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30. G. Loewenberg, op cit, p.45.
31. ibid, p.9 and p.44.
32. ibid, pp.152-153.
33. It is important to note that such Members may represent 'intra-party interests' or 'extra-parliamentary interests' or both. Loewenberg observes the tendency of West German parties to develop 'internal interest groups' to obtain the advantages of division and specialization of labour; and 'working groups' paralleling the fields of Bundestag committees. It should be noted however that these intra-party groups are intimately connected with outside associations, see ibid, pp.155-179.
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38. Memorandum by the Academic Members of the Study of Parliament Group, op cit, p.14.
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  42. Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, H.C.92, Session 1958-59, p.vii.
  43. B. Crick, op cit, p.87.
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  47. H.C. Debates, Vol. 804, Col. 95, 20th July, 1970.
  48. See J.A.G. Griffiths, Parliamentary Scrutiny of Government Bills, Allen and Unwin, London, 1974, p.52.
  49. See Chapter 5, p.
  50. op cit, p.51.
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97. See Statements to the Annual Conference by the National Executive Committee, published by the Labour Party, Transport House, London, October, 1978, pp.5-10 - which (i) recommends the creation of a system of committees to cover the work of each government department, (ii) that these committees would be staffed and advised by specialists and on party political lines.
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  112. See J.A.G. Griffiths, op cit, pp.41-42; The State of the Nation, op cit, pp.39-93.
  113. The Expenditure, Nationalized Industries, Science and Technology, Overseas Development and Race Relations Committees each have one or more specialist advisors, see H.C. 588 III, Session 1977-8, p.119.
  114. This was the charge levelled against Members of the Public Accounts Committee and their investigation into the Property Services Agency by Leslie Chapman in Your Disobedient Servant, Chatto and Windus, London, 1978, p.83.
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  120. Sedgemore's dismissal was not simply the result of his penetrating questioning of Denis Healey, but was brought about more specifically because of his use of the confidential Cabinet document "Implications for the United Kingdom of more fixed exchange rates" to launch his attack - see The Times, 9th November, 1978.
  121. See J.A.G. Griffiths, op cit, p.198. Professor Griffiths found that in the period 1967-1971 only a minute proportion of amendments agreed to in standing committees were originally moved by non-executive members. In the later period 1970-1974 whilst the Government was defeated on more occasions on vote in committee, the number still remained small at 24. Even then only 10 of the 24 defeats were ultimately accepted. See P. Norton, "Dissent in Committee: Intra-party dissent in Commons' Standing Committees 1959-74", The Parliamentarian, Vol. 57, 1976, pp.15-25. The general verdict upon the 'effectiveness' of select committees is correspondingly gloomy.
  122. A. Barker and M. Rush, The Member of Parliament and His Information, Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, Appendix 13, Table 14, p.411.
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  124. i.e. the actual attendance per M.P. divided by the total possible number of attendances, multiplied by 100.
  125. See Appendix D.
  126. A Blenkinsop, Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Procedure, H.C.303, Session 1964-5, Q.324.
  127. Oram merely determines the degree of concentration upon the single most important subject area in each procedure - irrespective of whether the subject area is the same in each, see op cit, pp.112-113.
  128. E.D.M.s are excluded from this analysis - given the distinctive profile of specialization found for this procedure; and the distinctive purposes for tabling E.D.M.s, see Chapter 5.
  129. Committee activity includes service on both investigatory and legislative committees.
  130. E. Oram found, in the 1966-70 Parliament, that on standing committees "the Whips 'whipped' and the Members served", op cit, p.115.

131. ibid, p.117.
132. i.e. those clauses dealt with in Committee.
133. The Race Relations Committee had not considered the delicate issue of immigration control, and indeed one Member in standing committee suggested that consideration of the whole question by the Select Committee would have been a much more valuable process than debate in standing committee, see Standing Committee B, 27th April, 1971, Col. 403, Session 1970-1; see also H. Rose, "The Immigration Act 1971: A Case Study in the work of Parliament", Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1972-3, pp.69-91, and G. Drewry (as an antidote to Rose, "Legislation", in Walkland and Ryle, op cit, pp.84-85.
134. Only one Member of the P.A.C. served on the Finance Bill Committee.
135. Michael Meacher, a member of the Employment and Social Services sub-committee of the Expenditure Committee, served on the committees on the National Insurance and Supplementary Benefits Bill and the Social Security Agencies Bill. The three other measures of the Employment Agencies Bill, the Employment of Children Bill and the Employment and Training Bill attracted no sub-committee members.
136. See R.L. Borthwick, op cit, pp.135-153.
137. Stability factor = the number of seats in both sessions occupied by the same backbenchers, divided by the total number of backbench committee seats in both sessions.
138. The word 'process' is stressed to make the point that subject specialization in this instance is developed through a formal division of labour and the repeated study of the same issue by backbenchers, in addition to any first hand knowledge gained from extra-parliamentary experience.

Chapter 9

Conclusion - Summary and Speculation

".....the role of the backbencher as an all-rounder.....has been typical of the British Parliament. That is not to say that there has been no specialization, but it has not been as common as it is in the United States Congress, where a Member going into Congress expects from the outset to specialize in a very fundamental way". (1)

Testing the validity of this commonly held belief has been a major objective of this thesis. Indeed Part Two of our study provides the first systematic profile of backbench specialization in the House of Commons. This profile clearly indicates the pronounced, yet still closely circumscribed, tendency for British backbenchers to informally divide their labour within the House. In fact, the pattern of specialization for most Members in our sample represents a series of concentric circles, with activity heavily concentrated in committee in the centre circle, surrounded by a somewhat wider focus in debate and encircled in turn by still more generalized activity in Questions and Early Day Motions. Overall, however, very few Members can be regarded as being highly specialized in their activity in the House; as most backbenchers appear to concentrate upon different subjects in each of the procedures. In particular the linkage between informal and formal subject specialisms appears to be remarkably loose and fragmented - unlike the position observed in the American Congress. So that subject specialization (as defined in Chapter 5) is notably weak across procedures and across time amongst our sample of backbenchers.

All the more surprising, therefore, is the finding that the majority of respondents to the postal survey of opinion considered themselves, and the bulk of their parliamentary colleagues likewise, to be highly specialized in their parliamentary work. This, of course, raises the general question of the accuracy of Members' perceptions as a guide to their actual patterns of behaviour in the House. Indeed John Mackintosh cast doubt upon the usefulness of politicians' descriptions of their behaviour when he observed that "British government is overlaid with myths which are repeated again and again by the participants themselves.....This gap between what people say about themselves and what is the case is intensified by the fact that most performers in politics are poor observers; they can perform but not describe the process". (2) Indeed, a fruitful area for further research would be to analyze the behaviour and the perceptions of a given group of backbenchers - to examine the nature and the extent of the divergence between beliefs and behaviour. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that the discrepancy between behaviour and perception suggested by our findings, mirrors a similar disjunction found in the studies of Congressional specialization.

That backbenchers do specialize in the House has never been in question - only the extent to which they divide their labour has been open to speculation. The finding that subject specialization is restricted on the backbenches is therefore of value in its own right, but it is of further significance in confirming the predictive value of the model of legislative specialization developed in Part One. For it was possible to predict a low level of specialization - given the peculiar representational and political mix in Britain. This contextual mix has effectively subverted structural reforms, needed to cope with the increasing scope and complexity of legislative business, by confronting the House with a series of dilemmas.

The first dilemma arises out of the inherent contradiction in organization theory between the requirements of authority based upon hierarchy and those founded upon the division of labour. In spite of the fact that legislatures have historically been organized in accordance with the principle of equality (as institutionalized, for example, in the equality of voting rights for all members), hierarchical structures - whether organized around party, executive or legislative roles - have in fact developed. In Britain the major roles have become conjoined in a centralized hierarchy with executive, majority party and house leaderships being conterminously located in the office of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Authority in the House basically derives from tenure of office rather than from the possession of specialist knowledge. The rights of superordinates in the executive hierarchy have come, therefore, to be asserted in the House, and these rights have been affirmed by the normative system of the Commons. Indeed, the norms of the House, as with any other dominant value system, reflect the predilections of the most powerful actors and so support the existing distribution of power and the status quo. In conforming with these norms, backbenchers have been led to accept as imperative the need for party loyalty, the primacy of deliberation on the floor of the Chamber, and, above all, the advisability of performing the generalist role within the House. Moreover, backbenchers have been socialized into the belief that conformity will positively assist their career prospects in the House, and that "it is not the narrow specialists who get to the top". (3)

Inextricably linked with the nature of the authority hierarchies in the House is the nature of partisan competition. The second impediment to specialization, therefore, concerns the adversary nature of party politics. The adversary system provides the individual backbencher with a relatively cost-free mode of decision-making - as his vote on

most issues is determined by a choice between two mutually exclusive alternatives. In adhering to the 'party-line' the backbencher is provided with a simple, yet effective, partial solution to the problem of choice in an era of complexity. As a consequence, the value of informal specialization, with its attendant costs in the expenditure of time and energy to develop personal expertise, is undermined.

The third dilemma confronting the House arises out of the contradiction postulated between the demands of organization theory for a division of labour and the demands of representative theory. Although this contradiction is normally posited in the form of universal opposition between highly specialized expertise and the principle of representation, it is in fact possible to identify a series of theoretical relationships between these two factors - not all of which are necessarily antithetical. Indeed, specialization would appear to be logically compatible with a conception of the representative role which combines a delegate style with a specific, homogeneous focus of representation. At the other extreme, however, the adoption of a trustee style in conjunction with a geographical, heterogeneous focus of representation would appear to preclude the development of extensive legislative specialization. While, in practice, these roles may be held serially or simultaneously, it still remains the case that the individualistic mix of style and focus will influence the extent of the division of labour. Indeed, where the range of the predominant representative theories in a political culture are skewed in favour of one pole of the trustee-delegate continuum, then this bias will be reflected in the levels of informal and formal specialization.

Speculation

"Whenever M.P.s discuss the need to strengthen the activities of the legislature, the idea of select committees is mentioned". (4)

Formal specialization, through a system of select committees, has indeed held the centre of the reformist stage throughout most of the 20th century. The organizational logic of this reform is impeccable - yet, as we have argued throughout this thesis, the political and representational setting of the House has proved to be far from conducive to the instituting of a systematic, formal division of labour. Only belatedly have many academics and parliamentarians come to acknowledge that the key to the structural reform of the House lies in transforming the political context in which it operates. Nevertheless, the orthodoxy of the reform movement continues to be that procedural reform is the precursor of political change. However, 'heretics', most notably Walkland and Johnson, have recently found increasing support for their view that political change is the necessary prerequisite for structural reform of the House. Their premise is that the experience of the 1960s proved that the Commons will only be revitalized to the extent to which it is willing to redefine the terms upon which the political parties interact within it. The practical implication for reform being "that a drastic change in one of the key concepts of British politics, the idea of adversary politics, has to be contemplated. We should have to turn away from asserting the value of a two-party system and the virtues of a constant competition between Government and Opposition, and recognize that the continuance of this mode of politics is the basic reason why no serious change can be made in the manner in which we manage our political life. In other words, it is adversary politics and the two-party syndrome which are inexorably destroying the political vitality of Parliament

itself". (5) Electoral reform and the fractionalization of the party system within the House, thus commends itself to Walkland and Johnson as the catalyst of change.

The assumptions of the new 'electoral reform school' need, however, to be questioned. First, implicit in their argument is the presupposition that a multi-party Parliament, in which single-party government would become improbable, would automatically redress the imbalance between the executive and the legislature. However, the existence of coalition government, in itself, provides no guarantee that backbench influence over executive policy will be reasserted, nor, for that matter, that future policy outputs will be any more 'consensual' than at present. Indeed, it is possible to contend that as each of the major parties has traditionally constituted a coalition of diverse interests and opinions, the mode of policy-making within single-party government is already characterized by bargaining and compromise. Hence the mechanism of choice in a multi-party government may not be significantly different to that operating within single-party majority government. Whether the nature of the resultant compromises in any future Liberal-Labour, or Liberal-Conservative, coalition would differ dramatically from those within single-party governments is, of course, a matter of conjecture. Clearly the advocates of electoral reform hope that policy would become firmly rooted in the mystical 'centre-ground' of British politics. Yet equally the prospect of a Liberal-Labour coalition may arguably provide a "brew (which) could prove a good deal stronger and more radical than hoped for by those who see a coalition as a happy retreat from too much government". (6)

What is perhaps more certain, however, is that multi-party government need not necessarily lead to the reassertion of the influence of the

House, as a corporate body, over the executive. A change to a multi-party Parliament may not alter the present position in which policy is the result of intra-party, rather than intra-House, compromises and in which the "House as such has been reduced to the role of a pianola playing out jaded tunes that have been recorded elsewhere". (7) Under the conditions of coalition government the bargaining process may well remain confined to Members of the governing coalition - to the exclusion of Members in the opposition parties. This would particularly be the case if the bonds of party loyalty and intra-party cohesion were to be maintained. Obviously the assumption of the 'electoral reform school' is that the independence of the individual party Member would be enhanced in a multi-party House. Yet, conceivably, as Berrington points out, the introduction of proportional representation with the single transferable vote "might actually serve to increase discipline at Westminster by enabling moderate M.P.s to defy their local parties, and to express their loyalty to the parliamentary leadership in the division lobbies. Right-wing Labour M.P.s would be able to call in the virtues of the new electoral system, to redress the imbalance of the old". (8) More generally, it may be argued that so long as the convention of ministerial responsibility persists - with governments continuing to make every major issue a vote of confidence - then rigid voting patterns would continue to differentiate the supporters of the Government (whether single-party or coalition) from their opponents in the Opposition parties. In which case the adversarial nature of parliamentary proceedings would continue. (9)

The transference of power from the executive to the legislature need not, therefore, be a logical corollary of multi-party government in the House of Commons. Neither is there necessarily a causal link between this model of government and the development of formal specialization,

as the Study of Parliament Group appears to suggest in its statement that the "model of a multi-party Parliament.....is.....normally a system in which the subordinate agencies of the assembly, especially the committee structure, tend to become the main forum through which Parliamentary influence is executed, an important point to bear in mind when specific reforms of the House of Commons are being canvassed." (10)

Equally important for the development of formal specialization is the extent to which authoritative leadership (and hence power) is centralized within the legislature. Where power is fragmented amongst distinct executive, party and house structures - in other words, where no strict hierarchy of roles exists - then formal specialization can be accommodated into the decentralized system. This process of accommodation can be clearly seen where executive roles are differentiated from party leadership, as in the West German Bundestag and, more formally, in the U.S. Congress; for the diffusion of authority derived from the possession of expertise does not pose a radical challenge to the existing centrifugal configuration of power within the legislature. However, where authority is founded upon a centralized hierarchy of leadership, as in the House of Commons, then an increase in specialization poses the classic organizational dilemma of the conflict between the requirements of hierarchy and those of the division of labour. Thus it has been our contention that the degree to which power is centralized, and the extent to which the norms of the legislature legitimize the existing distribution of power, also need to be borne in mind "when specific reforms of the House of Commons are being canvassed".

Arguably, the most radical remedy to resolve this dilemma, in favour of increased specialization, would be the formal differentiation of executive from party leadership roles through a constitutional separation of powers. Yet as John Mackintosh observes "a total separation whereby the Prime Minister and his colleagues were not in

Parliament and Parliament could never exercise its (largely dormant) power to defeat a Prime Minister, is probably too radical a departure ever to be contemplated in Britain". (11) Obviously, the major party leaders would be unlikely to countenance any such change - so long as they believed that there remained a sporting chance of securing office, and thereby exercising the prerogatives of government. Executives, and potential executives, therefore, have a vested interest in maintaining the centralization of power within the House of Commons. Any attempt to fragment the existing hierarchy of roles, through a separation of powers, can thus expect to be met with the same degree of hostility that has attended successive attempts to decentralize power through the systematization of a formal division of labour in the House. Ultimately the logic of either reform is essentially that of Catch 22; (12) as the reassertion of Parliament's power is dependent upon the fragmentation of the executive's power - but the centralization of power in the hands of the Government effectively means that it alone has the capacity to sanction the decentralization of power necessary to rejuvenate the legislature. In the parliamentary 'card-game' of reform "all the cards are stacked against the backbencher, and the Government invariably hold all the aces". (13)

The Catch 22 syndrome appears to manifest itself in the most recent scheme for reform suggested by the Select Committee on Procedure 1977/8. The objective of the Committee is to strike a new balance in the relationship between the executive and the legislature, and to bring about the position in which "the duty of the executive should be to assist the House in exercising surveillance over its own work". (14) To achieve this goal the Committee is explicit in its rejection of "changes of a fundamental or revolutionary character in the formal powers of the institutions concerned"; preferring instead "changes in practice of an evolutionary kind, following naturally from present

practices". (15) But present practices are the very ones supportive of executive dominance within the Chamber - hence the catch. The creation of twelve new, independent select committees, each charged with the examination of all aspects of expenditure, administration and policy in the field of the responsibility of a single government department, would not in itself tilt the balance of advantage in favour of the legislature. Particularly as the philosophy of their creation closely resembles that enunciated in the 1964/5 and 1968/9 Procedure Committees' Reports:

"In the long run the departmentally-related committees may well become the 'eyes and ears' of the House in relation to Government departments, drawing the attention of Members to matters which require further political consideration and providing Members with advice and informed comment which can nourish the work of the House in scrutinizing and criticizing the activities and proposals of the Executive". (16)

Where, however, the 1977/8 Report differs from its predecessors is in its recognition that its aim of providing the House with more effective means of scrutiny can only be achieved if the Government's ability to control the new committee system is closely delimited. The new departmental committees must be independent. Significantly, therefore, the Procedure Committee seeks to insulate committee members from executive hegemony, and the dominant value system, by developing a normative 'sub-culture' and an alternative career structure within the House. In this respect one of the most important recommendations, which appears innocuous enough at first sight, is that the chairmen of select committees should receive extra payment for their additional parliamentary duties. For all that the Committee seeks to present

this as an evolutionary change, (17) the radical threat to executive hegemony is revealed in the statement that:

"Although it may be premature to regard select committees as providing an alternative 'career structure' for Members there are indications that some Members do regard select committee work in this light, and our structural proposals, if implemented, are likely to further that tendency. ....We believe that (the payment of) the chairmen of select committees would be both desirable for its own sake, and could also provide some element of a career opportunity in the House not wholly in the gift of the party Leaders". (18)

But the payment of committee chairmen, taken in isolation, would be insufficient to generate new backbench attitudes towards committee service. Ultimately the attractiveness of service on committee is determined by the power and influence of that body. The experience of the existing select committees, particularly specialist committees, has revealed their essential powerlessness in the face of executive intransigence. Their very existence, their membership and chairmanship, the amount and nature of information released, and the timing of observations and debate on their reports is effectively controlled by the executive. "In a sense", as the Study of Parliament Group has been led to observe, "the impact of a committee on central government is a self-inflicted blow". (19) The Procedure Committee therefore recognizes that the masochistic tendencies of government will only be increased by a restatement of the powers of the investigative committees of the House. Consequently it recommends that all of the new committees should be appointed under permanent standing orders and

that their members should be nominated for the duration of each Parliament. While chairmen should continue to be appointed by committee members, and so be drawn from the majority party; the Committee does, however, advocate the extension of the present convention whereby Members of the Opposition parties chair certain committees. On the question of the formal powers of the departmental committees, the Report categorically states that "the powers of committees, and the procedure for enforcing those powers, need strengthening to bring them into line with the central requirement of select committees to secure access to the information held by the Government and its agencies". (20) Subsequently, select committees should be empowered by the House to order the attendance of Ministers to give evidence and also to order the production of papers and records by all Ministers, including Secretaries of State. Furthermore, to counteract the executive's propensity to delay the publication of its observations on the reports of select committees, (21) the Procedure Committee recommends that, in the future, observations should be required to be produced within two months of the date of the publication of a report. Additionally, the Committee suggested that eight days per session should be set aside for debates on reports from committees. Although the final choice of reports for debate would rest with the Government, the motions put before the House should stand in the name of the committee chairman and should be in whatsoever form the committee desired (whether simply 'to take note', or to move the approval of a report, or to seek the approval of the House for certain recommendations contained in a report).

In total the recommendations of the Procedure Committee, if they were to be enacted, would appear to provide select committees with both the means and the will to assert their independence from the executive. Nevertheless, as with preceding schemes for reform through

specialization, the Procedure Committee's recommendations are trapped by the circuitous logic of Catch 22. Clearly their intention is to redress the balance between the executive and the legislature. However, before the House can exert control over the Government it requires the executive to voluntarily relinquish its prerogatives over the appointment of committees and their memberships, along with its powers controlling the release of information, etc. The simple fact remains that the House cannot consistently control the executive unless the executive itself decides to submit to such control. Indeed, in the unlikely event of a future government accepting all of the recommendations made by the Procedure Committee, there still remains sufficient scope for it to effectively curb the independence of the new investigatory committees.

The return of a majority government in May 1979, means that the Whips in the majority party could theoretically secure the election of committee chairmen sympathetic to the Government's cause. Furthermore, the departments of state could effectively continue to refuse to release information to the House, safe in the knowledge that, under the procedure advocated by the Procedure Committee, the debate on the Motion for an Address or an Order for the Return of Papers "would be on matters of major principles of concern to Members as a whole, and possibly engaging the confidence of the House in the Government". (22) Should this prove to be the case then past experience suggests that the Government would be loyally supported by its own backbenchers. (23) Moreover, given that the discretion in the choice of reports to be debated lies with the Government, it would perhaps not be too surprising to find that it selected the more anodyne reports for debate. Indeed, whether the majority of reports would be anything other than anodyne, given the partisan composition of the committees and the sensitive areas of policy and administration within their remit, is, of course, open to question.

Obviously the Procedure Committee anticipates that the new investigatory committees would operate along bipartisan lines. Yet, bipartisanship in the past has normally been achieved by steering committee investigations away from the mainstream of contentious party issues. On the occasions when select committees have ventured into areas within this mainstream, party confrontation has tended to replace bipartisanship within the committees. (24)

The successful implementation of the Procedure Committee's recommendations, therefore, depends upon the House's willingness to surmount the obstacles which have defeated previous attempts to systematize the formal division of labour. Traditionally executives have refused to surrender any of their prerogatives to the House and the reluctance of the Labour Government in February 1979 to do anything more than simply discuss the Procedure Committee's Report suggests that this tradition continues. The fact that only three members of the Labour Cabinet greeted the Report with any kind of enthusiasm (25) is perhaps an indication of the grip of the 'executive mentality' on Ministers. Though arguably the most convincing single piece of evidence to support the existence of 'a Whitehall perspective of Westminster' is provided in Michael Foot's admission that "it is true that one's presence in the Government is bound to tinge the views that one may hold on this subject (of procedural reform)". (26) Recognition of this Whitehall perspective indeed led Ian Mikardo to express his pessimism of his party leadership's commitment to reform "because there is no sharper vested interest than that of Ministers and civil servants to keep what they know to themselves and away from backbench Members who are liable to criticize it". (27)

The new Conservative government is, however, committed to the implementation of the major proposals of the 1977-8 Report. In Opposition,

leading members of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet voiced their support for the Report; thus Norman St. John-Stevas pledged that the next Tory government would give the House the opportunity to take a decision on the proposals. So reaffirming the promises made earlier by Francis Pym (in speeches at Cambridge and at the Conservative Party Conference in October 1978) that positive proposals based on the Report would be presented to Parliament by a Conservative Cabinet. These assurances were, at the time, greeted with scepticism from both sides of the House. William Hamilton clearly believed that "if the Conservatives ever man the Government benches, they will take exactly the same conservative views on these matters as has every Government that I have seen in the House over the past quarter of a century. There is a vested interest in maintaining the enormous gulf between the executive and the legislature. It exists in executives of all political persuasions". (28) Similarly, Fred Silvester from the Conservative backbenches stated: "I have no more trust in my side of the House than in the Government side. It is true always that when they are in power, people have a completely different view of this matter from when they are in Opposition. It is true also that some of my honourable friends, tempted as they will be not only by the pleasures of office but by the legitimate desire to get through something in which they passionately believe will be less than keen to be subject to greater scrutiny". (29)

Nevertheless, the Queen's Speech of 15th May, 1979, contained the proposal that "Members of the House of Commons will be given an opportunity to discuss and amend their procedures particularly as they relate to their scrutiny of the work of government". But the enthusiasm of the new Government for an extension of the select committee system appears to stem more from its desire to allow M.P.s to monitor more effectively the activities of individual Whitehall departments, with

the accent on cutting out waste and reducing expenditure, rather than satisfying the growing demands for a redistribution of power within the House of Commons. Yet there are, perhaps, grounds for optimism that the limited objectives of the Conservative Government will be broadened by backbench pressure, as there now exists a stronger all party consensus on the need for structural reform in the House than existed at the time of the Crossman experiment. The influx of new Members, with professional attitudes of mind, at the last five general elections; (30) the experience of minority government and its wider scope for independent backbench action have contributed towards a significant re-orientation of backbench opinion in the House. Many Members no longer appear to be content with their conventional supportive role in the Commons. One manifestation of this change of attitude is the fact that the 1974-79 Labour Government suffered a greater number of defeats in the lobbies than any other in the 20th century, many of which were inflicted by its own backbenchers. Whether or not this pattern of behaviour will continue in a Parliament with a majority government is open to speculation. But the experience of the 1970s does suggest that the seed of greater independence in the House, which was planted in the first Parliament of the decade, (31) may yet bear fruit in the 1980's. The will of backbenchers to effect radical change is now greater perhaps than at most times in recent history - whether the will is transformed into action remains to be seen.

Even in the event of the Procedure Committee's recommendations being implemented, there still remains a fundamental doubt as to the capacity of backbenchers to generate sufficient levels of expertise in committees to check the actions of the executive. In the absence of justificatory theories of representation, which are capable of supporting a corporate division of labour, the will to develop specialization to its logical conclusion may ultimately prove to be lacking in the House. Indeed

the significant point about the two strongest arguments against committee specialization in the House is that they both rest upon distinct conceptions of the role of Parliament which reflect specific notions of representation. On the one side are those Members who fear that committees would blur the party divide and provide forums of consensus in the House. Clearly these M.P.s subscribe to the party theory of representation whereby individual representatives are delegates of the party pledged to support its manifesto and to assist its leadership in the fulfilment of the electoral commitments. In its strictest formulation the theory holds that each M.P. should be actively concerned in the House in the deliberation of all the issues of concern to the party (and so becomes intertwined with the second objection to committee specialization, namely that committees detract from the status of the floor of the Chamber as the forum of debate). However, in its second formulation the theory of party representation is capable of supporting a formal division of labour - but only at the intra-party level. The logic of the party theory effectively excludes an intra-House division of labour. Thus the scheme proposed by the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in 1978 for a system of parliamentary investigatory committees contains an inherent contradiction. On the one hand the N.E.C.'s working group advocates increased control of the executive by the House, yet on the other, it denies the capacity of the House to act as a corporate entity (and indeed the logic of party representation makes this conclusion inevitable). In practice, therefore, the proposed committees would be House committees in title only; effectively they would operate as party sub-committees with an intra-party division of labour:

"Membership of these committees would reflect the composition of the House of Commons. Since we see no future in consensus government by all-party committees these investigatory committees would, in

addition to being supported by the necessary secretariat, be staffed and advised by specialists and on party political lines. It is, indeed, essential for the party groups on these committees to have adequate research and administrative support.....Effectively, the establishment of such committees would disperse power in Parliament and out of it to the political parties, and to those groups and individuals who support political parties". (32)

Indeed, given the emphasis upon party factors in this schema and the continuance of the centralized authority hierarchy in the House, it is difficult to see how the party M.P.s, charged with helping "the executive push its policies through against opposition in Parliament", can at the same time be reasonably expected to "check the executive". (33)

Particularly as the N.E.C.'s proposals are neither designed to "put policy firmly in the hands of backbench Members" nor to "weaken the party political debate and with it the whole ethos of Cabinet government". (34)

Indeed, there can be no reassertion of the corporate power of the House given the tenets of the party theory of representation. (35)

The vision of the House as the corporation of the nation, with its Members acting as the trustees of the national interest, nevertheless guides the second line of attack against committee-based specialization. Those Members who see their representative duty in this way necessarily believe that the floor of the House should be the forum of national debate. Sydney Irving neatly articulated this belief in his contribution to the debate on Procedure in February 1979:

"In recommending these new-style committees, the Select Committee opts for a degree of specialization which so

far has been largely foreign to Parliament and which, over the years, many hon. Members have resisted. In taking the recommendations as they stand..... it would mean the end to the role of the backbencher as an all-rounder, which has been typical of the British Parliament.....As the subject becomes more specialized, the more will the real debate take place in committee. The House will be even less likely than it is at present to be the forum of the nation". (36)

The same sentiment was expressed by Michael Foot who chose to represent the House, on this occasion, as a corporate check upon the executive:

"".....there need not be a great conflict between having select committees and keeping the Chamber..... as the focal point of debate. I understand that argument (but).....I believe that access to the Chamber by an individual Member, throughout his whole parliamentary career, is the supreme attribute of the House of Commons which distinguishes it and makes it the place that it ought to be. I believe that if that attribute is broken, injured or impaired, great injury will be done to the House. It is no use any hon. Members believing that the establishment of these committees, with the special access to Departments, will not interfere with the position of individual Members who want to raise the subjects covered by the committees - and the whole range of Government action will be covered by those specialist committees". (37)

doctrines of representation, reverberate throughout these statements. But even those M.P.s who are prepared to argue that the scrutiny of the actions of the executive can be more usefully conducted away from the floor of the House, are willing to acknowledge the restrictions that the performance of the representative role place upon the development of legislative specialization in Britain. Thus Alan Beith was led to comment:

"The right hon. Member for Dartfort (Sydney Irving) took the view - it is a quite widespread view - that specialization would bring many dangers with it and that Members would not any longer engage in a wide range of activities and would not be the good all round chaps that he obviously thinks we are..... I have no great inclination to be highly specialized, but if I had my constituents would soon stop it. They write to me on every subject under the sun and they expect me to take an interest in an enormous range of subjects. Consequently, I do so. There are some things in which I am particularly interested, but I can never become completely specialized". (38)

Consequently, should the challenge to the dominance of the executive in Britain ever be mounted through effecting changes in the adversary procedure of the House and through a systematization of the formal division of labour, the development of adequate levels of specialization may still be impeded by the nature of the prevailing theories of representation in the British political culture. The fundamental dilemma for the legislature remains that posited by Karl Dietrich Bracher: "an elected representative cannot, by the nature of the thing, be equal to the many-sided detailed problems with which

society and bureaucracy confront him". (39) As the modern state increases in size and complexity so the need for an increasing division of labour in the British House of Commons will become even more apparent, as indeed will the contradictions inherent in the parliamentary role:

"Leaving aside the constitutional niceties, we might sum up this muddle by saying crudely that we find it difficult to decide whether our M.P.s ought to be predominantly 'us' or 'them'.....

We wish our Member of Parliament both clever and eloquent, but at the same time we want him to be a true mirror of average men and women, who are neither. We prefer him to be independent and a man of character, yet many of us are determined to make him carry our complaints before the seats of the mighty in the most slavish manner. He must be a sleepless watchdog over the Executive, and yet decently subservient to the party whip; professional enough to take on the Civil Service at its own game, and yet sufficiently amateur to know how the other half lives". (40)

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2. J.P. Mackintosh, 'Cabinet Ministers', Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1975, pp.230-231.
3. Labour M.P. quoted in A. King, British Members of Parliament, Macmillan, London, 1974, p.70.
4. Study of Parliament Group, Specialist Committees in the British Parliament, P.E.P., Vol. 42, No. 564, 1976, p.39.
5. N. Johnson, In Search of the Constitution, Pergamon, Oxford, 1977, p.61.
6. B. Crick, 'New Thoughts on New Deal', The Observer, 3rd April, 1977.
7. S.E. Finer, Adversary Politics and Electoral Reform, Anthony Wigram, London, 1975, p.14.
8. H. Berrington, 'Electoral Reform and National Government' in S.E. Finer, ibid, p.279.
9. See J.P. Mackintosh, People and Parliament, Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978, pp.177-178.
10. Memorandum by the Academic Members of the Study of Parliament Group, First Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, H.C.588 III, Session 1977-78, p.2.
11. J.P. Mackintosh, People and Parliament, p.212.
12. See J. Heller, Catch 22, Corgi, London, 1964, p.54; "There was only one catch and that was Catch 22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to".
13. D. Stoddart, H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 311, 20th February, 1979.
14. H.C.588 I, op cit, paragraph 7.27, p.cvi.
15. ibid, paragraph 1.6, p.viii
16. ibid, paragraph 5.47, p.lxiii.
17. "This innovation would not be entirely unprecedented, for the principle of payment to Members of the House for additional parliamentary duties has for many years been accepted in respect of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (who are paid from the House of Commons Vote) and in respect of the Leader of the Opposition and several of the Opposition Whips (who are paid from the Consolidated Fund)", ibid, paragraph 6.33, p.lxxix.

18. ibid; Lizanne Radice had earlier made the same point, but more forcefully. "There is a strong case of remunerating chairmen of these committees. This would introduce an interesting new dimension to parliamentary life. Members of Parliament would now have two possible alternatives open to them for advancement. Either they could hope to join the ranks of the government at some stage in their career or, equally prestigious, they could become dedicated committee members in the eventual hope of becoming chairman of one of the major committees", Reforming the House of Commons, Fabian Tract 448, April, 1977, p.10.
19. Study of Parliament Group, op cit, p.37.
20. H.C.588 I, op cit, paragraph 7.19, p.xciv.
21. In December 1975 the Expenditure Committee reported that the average interval between publication of their reports and the publication of observations since their appointment in 1971 had been between five and six months. In two cases observations from the Department of Education and Science were still pending after 23 months and 16 months respectively. See First Special Report from the Expenditure Committee, H.C.68, Session 1975-76.
22. H.C.588 I, op cit, paragraph 7.26, p.xcvi.
23. Several recent examples support this point - in particular, the events of the 10th and 11th March 1976 are worthy of note. On the 10th the Labour Government's Expenditure White Paper was defeated by 28 votes, due to the abstention of 37 Tribune Members. On the 11th, however, these Members dutifully voted for the Government on a Motion of Confidence. On the general question of party loyalty note the response of the 8 Labour Members of the Select Committee on Nationalized Industries who refused to support a Conservative Motion to approve the Committee's Report (which was critical of the conduct of the affairs of the British Steel Corporation by its chairman and also charged Mr. Eric Varley and Mr. Gerald Kaufman with misleading the Commons about the deficit prospects of the Corporation). Instead they voted for the Government on an amendment simply to 'take note' of the Report. See H.C. Debates, Vol. 945, 9th March, 1978; see also R. Butt, 'The Rise and Fall of the Select Committee', The Times, 6th April, 1978.
24. The Select Committee on a Wealth Tax Session 1974-5, provides an example of a committee being unable to agree upon a proper Report, owing to internal party divisions. The Report, H.C.696 I, Session 1974-5, includes no less than five draft reports; two by the chairman, and one each by Dr. Jeremy Bray, Mr. John Pardoe and Mr. Maurice Macmillan.
25. The Guardian, 2nd March, 1979, the three were Tony Benn, Shirley Williams and William Rodgers.
26. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 287, 20th February, 1979.
27. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 111, 19th February, 1979.
28. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 130, 19th February, 1979.
29. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 134, 19th February, 1979.

30. See M. Rush, 'The Members of Parliament', in S.A. Walkland and M. Ryle, The Commons in the Seventies, Fontana, Glasgow, 1977, pp.33-50; see also C. Mellors, The British M.P., Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978, especially p.124.
31. See P. Norton, Conservative Dissidents: Dissent within the Parliamentary Conservative Party 1970-74, Temple Smith, London, 1978.
32. Statements to Annual Conference by the National Executive Committee, The Labour Party, October 1978, p.8.
33. ibid.
34. ibid, p.9.
35. This point was acknowledged by Enoch Powell: "The House is not just a corporation, and simply to talk about the House vis-a-vis the Government is a totally inadequate description. The House comprises parties and, for most of the purposes of the House, its partisan character overrides its corporate character. If it did not, we could not be the continual, living and flexible expression of the will of those whom we represent". H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 336, 20th February 1979.
36. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Cols. 57, 58 and 62, 19th February 1979.
37. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Cols. 291, 292 and 293, 20th February, 1979.
38. H.C. Debates, Vol. 962, Col. 95, 19th February, 1979.
39. K. Dietrich Bracher, 'Problems of Parliamentary Democracy in Europe', in H. Hirsch and M.D. Hancock, Comparative Legislative Systems, Free Press, New York, 1971, p.351.
40. D. Watt, 'A Revolution in the House', The Observer, 13th August, 1978.

## Appendix A

### The Sample

The sample used in this survey was a proportionate stratified random sample of the 451 backbenchers in the 1970-1 House of Commons. Excluded from the sample were (i) Members of Her Majesty's Government (including Parliamentary Private Secretaries), (ii) Opposition Spokesmen, (iii) the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

The major stratification factors were (i) party, (ii) occupation and (iii) length of parliamentary service. The data on occupation was derived from Andrew Roth, The Business Background of M.P.s, (Parliamentary Profiles, London, 1972) and was crosschecked with the raw data utilized by Colin Mellors in his Socio-economic Backgrounds of M.P.s 1945-70 (M.A. dissertation, Sheffield University, 1972; now published as The British M.P., Saxon House, Farnborough, 1978). The four categories in the sample reflect the standard classification of occupations into four main groupings - professions, business, miscellaneous, workers. 'Primary' occupation, as defined in Chapter 5, was used as the criterion of classification. The data on length of service represents the length of service of each M.P. as of the last day of the 1970-1 parliamentary session. Backbenchers were divided into three cohorts on the basis of (i) one years service or less (entry corresponding to the 1970 general election and subsequent by-elections), (ii) two to seven years service (entry at the 1964 and 1966 general elections and subsequent by-elections) and (iii) eight or more years service in the House of Commons (entry at general and by-elections before 1964). The data was collected from A. Roth, (op cit).

The other stratification factor was the activity of M.P.s at Question Time. The aggregate data was collected from F.W.S. Craig and E.P. Craig,

The Political Companion, (Political Reference Publications, Chichester, No. 9, October/December 1971). This factor was included in the sample design to ensure that the sample generally reflected the profile of activity on the backbenches. A fair representation of activity levels was deemed necessary because one of the original research hypotheses was that the level of specialization would be anticipated to be strongly associated with the level of activity in the House.

The tables listed below provide the details of the population and the sample. (Tables A1.4 and A1.5 refer to Conservative and Labour Members only - a sample of minor party Members was used throughout the survey; data on their activity was collected and analyzed. Given the small number of third party Members in the sample, the results presented in the text do not include data for these M.P.s).

TABLES

A1.1 Composition of the House of Commons 1970-1 - Party

<u>Party</u>	<u>Backbench</u>		<u>Sample</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>%</u>	( <u>Stratification factor ↓</u> )
	n		n
Conservative	229	50.8	57
Labour	210	46.6	53
Other	<u>12</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>3</u>
	<u>451</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>113</u>

A1.2 Composition of the House of Commons 1970-1 - Date of Entry

<u>Date of Entry</u>	<u>Backbench</u>		<u>Sample</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>%</u>	n
	n		n
Pre-1964	230	51.0	58
1964+66	94	21.0	23
1970	<u>127</u>	<u>28.0</u>	<u>32</u>
	<u>451</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>113</u>

A1.3 Level of Parliamentary Activity 1970-1 - Parliamentary Questions

<u>No. of Questions</u>	<u>Backbench</u>		<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>
	<u>Population</u>	<u>n</u>		
0 - 39	262		58.1	67
40 +	189		41.9	46
	451		100.0	113

A1.4 Conservative Party 1970-1. Occupation by date of entry

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Date of Entry</u>								
	<u>Pre-1964</u>			<u>1964 + 66</u>			<u>1970</u>		
	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>
	n		n	n		n	n		n
Professions	48	39.3	12	14	41.1	3	23	31.5	6
Business	53	43.4	13	11	32.4	3	39	53.4	10
Miscellaneous	20	16.4	5	9	26.5	2	11	15.1	3
Workers	1	0.9	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0
	122	100.0	30	34	100.0	8	73	100.0	19

A1.5 Labour Party 1970-1. Occupation by date of entry

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Date of Entry</u>								
	<u>Pre-1964</u>			<u>1964 + 66</u>			<u>1970</u>		
	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Bbs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Sample</u>
	n		n	n		n	n		n
Professions	41	38.3	10	29	50.9	7	24	52.2	6
Business	11	10.3	3	7	12.3	2	4	8.7	1
Miscellaneous	41	38.3	10	12	21.1	3	16	34.8	5
Workers	14	13.1	4	9	15.7	2	2	4.3	0
	107	100.0	27	57	100.0	14	46	100.0	12

Note

There is a degree of controversy over the legitimate use of nonparametric tests in the case of stratified samples. H.M. Blalock in Social Statistics, (McGraw Hill, New York, 1960, p.405) suggests that samples, other than simple random ones, create problems in the use of sophisticated statistical techniques. Similarly J.A. Davis in Elementary Survey Analysis,

(Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1971, p.59) states that inference techniques normally assume simple random sampling. However, both authors agree that stratified samples of a given size may be equivalent in efficiency to somewhat larger random samples, and that confidence limits are broader for sophisticated probability samples than simple random samples of the same size. Indeed, Davis (pp.59-60) argues that S.R.S. formulas be used anyway as "you are using a consistent decision maker which, fallible as it is, is more objective than the eyeball method of determining significance.....Everybody does it anyway". A recent example of the use of inferential statistics in this manner is provided in K. Newton's Second City Politics, (Clarendon, Oxford, 1976, p.41 ff) where significance tests are used for a disproportionate stratified sample - even though such a sample does not meet the normal distribution assumptions necessary for such tests.

As our sample is a proportionate random sample our confidence in using tests of significance is increased, for as C.A. Moser and G. Kalton stress in Survey Methods in Social Investigation, (Heinemann, London, 1971, 2nd ed., p.85), "Stratification does not imply any departure from the principle of randomness. All it means is that, before any selection takes place, the population is divided into a number of strata; then a random sample is selected within each stratum. If the sampling fraction is the same for every stratum, this procedure is almost certain to be an improvement on a simple random sample because it makes sure that the different strata in the population are correctly represented in the sample.....Thus stratified random sampling with a uniform sampling fraction tends to have a somewhat greater precision than simple random sampling".

Appendix B

Subject Codes

01. Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.
02. Aid (Overseas).
03. Aviation (Military-Civil).
04. Animal Protection and Welfare.
05. Arts, Museums, Libraries.
06. Civil Service.
07. Constituency matter.
08. Decimals and Metrication.
09. Defence.
10. Economy, Finance and Taxation.
11. Education.
12. Environment.
13. Employment (including industrial relations).
14. Europe - E.E.C.
15. Foreign and Commonwealth.
16. House of Commons, (including electoral law).
17. Homes (Housing, rents, construction industry).
18. Health, hospitals and disabled.
19. Industry (trade, industry, nationalization and consumers).
20. Law (police, prisons, courts, 'law and order').
21. Legal (law reforms, privacy, safety, asylum).
22. Local Government.
23. Media (Press, T.V., Cinema).
24. Northern Ireland.
25. Post Office.
26. Ports.
27. Power (coal, gas, electricity).
28. Race (relations and immigration).

29. Regions (regional policy, development areas).
30. Science and Technology.
31. Scottish Affairs.
32. Sport and recreation.
33. Transport.
34. Welsh Affairs.
35. Welfare (social security, pensions).

## Appendix C

### Recorded Backbench Activity in the House of Commons

#### C.1 Questions

A quantitative content analysis of the Official Report of the House of Commons (Hansard) was performed for the 1970-1 and 1972-3 parliamentary sessions. For each Member in the sample the number of oral and written Questions appearing in his name in the pages of Hansard was counted. The subject area of each Question was coded in accordance with the coding frame outlined in Appendix B. The categories in this frame represent a refinement of those used by R. Oakley and P. Rose in The Political Year 1971, (Pitman, London, 1971, p.241). This classification was preferred to the more frequently utilized, departmentally based, categorization found in the Sessional Index of the Official Report. The latter classification produces broad categories which often represent amalgams of more discrete subject areas (e.g. after the reorganization of 1970, the Department of Environment encompassed the subjects of housing, local government, environment, transport and ports). Supplementary oral Questions were not included in the count - as the aim of the survey was to analyze the deliberate and premeditated actions of backbenchers. Thus only those Questions actually tabled by each M.P. were included in the analysis. Supplementaries were, however, used to guide the classification of the subject content of Questions where the precise subject focus of the initial oral Question was obscure. (There is an increasing tendency for backbenchers to ask the Minister concerned for a list of his engagements on a specified date; or to ask whether the Minister will visit the Member's constituency etc. - the actual subject of concern for the M.P. is revealed only in the supplementary Question).

The commonly used technique of collecting data from the Sessional Index of Hansard (see R.M. Punnett, Frontbench Opposition, Heinemann, London, 1973; P.G. Richards, The Backbenchers, Faber, London, 1972; E. Oram, Investigative Select Committees in the 1966 House of Commons, Unpublished Ph.D., University of Strathclyde, 1974; M. Keating, The Role of the Scottish M.P. in the Political System, Unpublished Ph.D, C.N.A.A., 1975) was rejected for the present study - as an accurate count and classification of Questions was required. The Index does not give an exact count of the number of Questions asked by each M.P. Instead Index references against an individual's name are to the columns of Hansard in which that Member's Questions (including supplementaries to oral Questions) are recorded. Where an M.P. asks more than one Question, but his contribution fits into a single column then the Index only records one column reference (unless the Questions are on different subjects, in which case they will be categorized separately in the Index).

The same limitations in using the Index apply, if anything more forcefully, to the analysis of written Questions. Oram has asserted, however, that "with Questions to which written answers are given..... only rarely are individual Questions not separately categorized; thus, each M.P.'s column references in the Index usually equal the number of written Questions asked". (ibid, p.490). Yet this is not in fact the case. The Index references for written Questions still refer simply to the number of columns, rather than the number of Questions; so that where more than one Question on the same issue is fitted into one column the Index will only note a single column entry, (e.g. Vol. 821, 1970-1, Col. 343 - this single column entry in the Index for Jack Ashley covers three Questions on the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act). The inaccuracy of the Index as a precise indicator of the level of activity is more vividly illustrated where three or more consecutive single column entries occur (e.g. Vol. 821, 1970-1, the

Index entries Col. 266-7, 268, 269, 270 cover thirteen written Questions tabled by Ashley on the subject of deaf children; similarly the entries for Col. 240, 241, 242-3 in the same volume cover ten Questions on hearing aids).

A further problem arising from the use of the Sessional Index as the primary source of data is the random errors that occur through printing errors (e.g. the Index entry for John Page, Vol. 824, 1970-1, p.752, lists only four entries; the remaining entries, which occupy one and three quarter columns, are listed under Graham Page's name).

## C.2 Debates

The use of the Sessional Index of Hansard to analyze activity in debate in the House is fraught with problems. The major difficulty is that for each M.P., the Index refers to any column of the Official Report in which the M.P. spoke, or was seen by the Hansard reporters to have attempted to speak. The Index does not therefore distinguish between attempted interventions, single word contributions and full column speeches per Member. Thus, as most researchers acknowledge, the Index provides only the crudest of measures of activity on the floor of the House. Some students, however, compound the inherent inaccuracy of the Index by using the length of entry under each Member's name as a measure of their activity in debate (see P.G. Richards, op cit, pp.78-81; W.D. Muller, The Kept Men, Harvester, Sussex, 1977, p.205). The results gained from such an exercise are largely meaningless, because, in addition to the problems outlined above, the length of an Index entry is as much a factor of the printing conventions of Hansard as it is an indication of the level of activity in debate.

The data for the present study for the 1970-1 Session was collected from the text of Hansard. Each contribution made by each Member in the sample was measured in terms of the column inches taken up in the Official Report. All single, isolated, contributions of less than two column inches were excluded from the total count for each Member - to eliminate attempted interventions and short interjections (which cannot be regarded as speeches as such). The figure of two column inches was decided upon after a pilot study of the activity of a small group of Members had been conducted. Two column inches represents fifteen lines of the printed Record, and effectively encompasses the vast majority of interjections. However, as with the measurement of Questioning activity, the precision of measurement gained by this process exacted massive costs in terms of the time consumed in the collection of data. Indeed, so great were these costs that a decision was taken, before the second phase of data collection, to utilize the Index of Hansard for the Session 1972-3.

In the light of the experience gained from the first phase of data collection it was decided to exclude all single, isolated, column entries in the Index as the overwhelming majority of these refer to Members' attempts to intervene, or short interjections, in debate. Where a sequential series of single column references were listed in the Index, a check was made to ensure that these references did not in fact represent a lengthy speech, fragmented by a series of interjections. Furthermore, an additional check was made on all two column references - to ensure that these entries did not simply record short interjections starting at the bottom of one column and continuing onto the top of the next column. With these restrictions in force the number of columns entered for each Member, coded by subject area, was noted. Even with these safeguards, however, the data for the 1972-73 Session represents a less accurate measure of activity in debate than that for the 1970-1

Session.

### C.3 Early Day Motions

The data for Early Day Motions for Session 1970-1 was collected from the Daily Order Papers of the House. The subject area of each Motion was noted and the number of Motions signed by each Member was recorded. As there are no cumulative lists of signatures appended to each Motion - every consecutive Order Paper had to be examined to discover which Motions the Members in our sample supported. The raw data for Session 1972-3 was provided by Professor Hugh Berrington and Dr. John Leece from the data bank of E.D.M.s held at the University of Newcastle. As with the 1970-1 data each E.D.M. was subject coded and the number of Motions signed by each Member in the sample was recorded.

### C.4 Committees

#### Select Committees

The measure of activity in select committees represents the recorded attendance of each backbencher at each committee on which he served. The data on attendance was gained from the information recorded in the Returns of Select Committees (H.C. 635, Session 1970-1; H.C. 473, Session 1972-3). The number of attendances per Member, along with the subject areas of the various committee investigations, were recorded. There are, however, inherent weaknesses in using the information recorded in the Returns as a measure of activity - not least of which is the fact that "the lists of Members present at the sittings.....do not reveal how long they actually stay. They come and go during meetings in a manner often disconcerting for witnesses" (N. Johnson,

Parliament and Administration, Allen and Unwin, London, 1966, p.22).

Neither do the Returns provide any indication of the nature of a Member's contribution when he is actually present at a committee sitting. Nevertheless, the Returns do provide perhaps the best single piece of evidence on attendance at committee sittings and the level of activity spent on investigative committee work.

#### Standing Committees

The measure of activity in standing committee represents the recorded attendances of each Member for each committee to which he was assigned. The data was collected from the Official Report of Proceedings of each standing committee; the attendance lists for every recorded sitting were analyzed. The subject area considered by each committee was also recorded.

Appendix D

Index of Specialization

As noted in Chapter 5 there are considerable failings with commonly used 'indexes of specialization'. To overcome these failings the coefficient of variation was used as the basis for the index of specialization in this study.

The formula for the coefficient of variation is simply

$$V = \frac{s}{\bar{X}}$$

or in words:

coefficient of variation of X =  $\frac{\text{standard of deviation of X}}{\text{mean of X}}$

To understand this coefficient it is necessary to comprehend the standard deviation. The standard deviation is a measure of dispersion related to the mean as a measure of central tendency and is defined as the square root of the arithmetic mean of the standard deviations from the mean. (See H.M. Blalock, op cit, p.67, fn.1; N.H. Nie, C.H. Hull, J.G. Jenkins, K. Steinbrenner, D.H. Bent, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1975, 2nd ed., p.184).

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{N - 1}}$$

The standard deviation will be zero where all scores have the same value (i.e. the value of the mean) and will reach maximum magnitude when scores are divided between the extreme ends of the scale.

The index was computed in the following manner (taking the example of Questions - the process remained the same for the other three procedures).

For each M.P.:

- i) the number of Questions tabled in each of the thirty-five subject areas was recorded
- ii) using the SPSS programme the standard deviation of the dispersion of Questions amongst these areas was calculated
- iii) the standard deviation was then divided by the mean number of Questions to produce the coefficient of variation.

The coefficient score for each Member was calculated in accordance with this procedure. In measuring the dispersion of activity across a constant number of subject areas - the index has both a maximum (5.92) as well as a minimum (0) value. A score of 0 means that the activity of an M.P. is divided equally amongst all thirty-five subject areas; and such a Member can therefore be regarded as a true generalist. In practice, however, the lowest score in the sample was 1.16. A score of 5.92, on the other hand, means that a Member's activity is focused solely upon a single subject area and he can therefore be regarded as a true specialist.

#### Examples of the computation of the Index of Specialization

##### a). The 'True Specialist'

e.g. a Member asking a total of thirty-five Questions in a single subject area. (Subject area 01).

i).  $\bar{X} = \frac{35}{35} = 1$

ii). Subject area 01

$$X_1 = 35$$

$$(X_1 - \bar{X})^2 = (35 - 1)^2 = 1156$$

iii). The remaining subject areas 02...35

$$(X_2 - \bar{X})^2 = (0 - 1)^2 = (-1)^2 \times 34 \text{ (remaining areas)}$$

$$= 34$$

iv).  $\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2 = 1156 + 34 = 1190$

v).  $\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{N-1} = \frac{1190}{34} = 35$

vi).  $\sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{N-1}} = \sqrt{\frac{34}{35}} = 5.92$

vii).  $s = 5.92$

viii).  $V = \frac{s}{\bar{X}} = \frac{5.92}{1} = 5.92$

b). The 'True Generalist'

e.g. a Member asking a total of thirty-five Questions, a single Question in each of the thirty-five subject areas.

i).  $\bar{X} = \frac{35}{35} = 1.$

ii). Subject areas 01...35

$$X_1 \dots \dots \dots X_{35} = 1$$

$$(X_1 - \bar{X})^2 = (1 - 1)^2 = 0 \times 35 \text{ (subject areas)} = 0$$

iii).  $\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{N-1} = \frac{0}{34} = 0$

iv).  $\sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^N (X_i - \bar{X})^2}{N-1}} = s = \sqrt{0}$

v).  $V = \frac{s}{\bar{X}} = \frac{0}{1} = 0$

Index of Subject Specialization

This index is based upon the measure of the absolute differences between the proportion of each M.P.'s activity devoted to each of the thirty-five subject areas in 1970-1 and the equivalent proportion in 1972-3. The proportion of activity in each subject area in 1972-3 was subtracted from the respective proportions in 1970-1; providing a score in a range from 0 to 2. The scores were, therefore, divided by 2 to bring the index within the range of 0 to 1. In this index the M.P. who devoted exactly the same proportion of his activity to exactly the same subject areas in both sessions would receive a score of 0. Whilst the Member who spread his activity across completely different subject areas in 1972-3 to those of 1970-1 would score 1. The higher the score in this index the lower the level of subject specialization.

Examples of the computation of the Index of Subject Specialization

a). The 'True Subject Specialist'

i.e. a Member whose activity is fully concentrated in the same subject area in both parliamentary sessions.

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Proportion of activity per subject area</u> <u>1970-1</u>	<u>Proportion of activity per subject area</u> <u>1972-3</u>	$ x_1 - x_2 $
	$x_1$	$x_2$	
01	1.0	1.0	0
02	0	0	0
03	0	0	0
↓	↓	↓	↓
35	0	0	0
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
	1.0	1.0	$\frac{\Sigma  x_1 - x_2 }{2} = 0$

b). The 'Non-Subject Specialist'

i.e. a Member whose activity is focused upon totally different subject areas in each of the two parliamentary sessions.

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Proportion of activity per subject area</u> <u>1970-1</u>	<u>Proportion of activity per subject area</u> <u>1972-3</u>	$ X_1 - X_2 $
	$X_1$	$X_2$	
01	1.0	0	1.0
02	0	1.0	1.0
03	0	0	0
+	+	+	+
35	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	1.0	1.0	$\frac{\Sigma  X_1 - X_2 }{2} = \frac{2}{2} = 1$

Appendix E

1975 Postal Survey

The questionnaire was sent to all 453 backbenchers in September 1975. In total 161 Members returned completed questionnaires - giving an initial response rate of 35.5%. This response rate compares favourably with other recent survey responses (see Chapter 6).

In retrospect the timing of the survey was perhaps inauspicious insofar as the questionnaire became caught in the logjam of mail confronting Members on their return to the House from holiday. Indeed typical of many replies was the letter from one senior Conservative backbencher which stated "It (the questionnaire) arrived at the worst possible moment since there was an enormous back-log of correspondence after my return from holiday, and I have been extremely busy every since". (Letter dated 13th October, 1975).

However, the greatest single reason advanced for not completing the questionnaire was that the demands made upon M.P.s in answering postal surveys was becoming intolerable. Indeed many Members returned printed letters/postcards with a statement to the effect that "Mr.....regrets that he no longer finds it possible to fill in questionnaires. Many are received and it has become impossible to deal with them".

Given the strength of feeling held by many Members against postal surveys it was decided, after the initial response, not to send out reminders to non-respondents. Undoubtedly such a procedure would have improved considerably the response rate - but probably at the expense of the goodwill of many other Members.

The survey was deliberately kept as short and as concise as possible -

on the advice of most of the Members responding to the pilot survey circulated in May 1975.

Questionnaire - list of Questions

Q.1 In your work in Parliament is there any particular subject area(s) that attracts a majority of your interest and activity in the House?

- (a) One subject (Please tick)  
(b) a few subjects (2 - 3)  
(c) 4 - 5 subjects  
(d) more than 5 subjects.

Q.2 Would you please state the subject area(s) in which you are particularly active?

Q.3 Which procedures do you find useful in pursuing this/these subjects in the House?

- Parliamentary Questions (Please number in order of preference)  
Early Day Motions  
Debate (adjournment)  
Backbench party committee  
Other (please specify)

Q.4 i) In answering question one, if you ticked box (a) approximately how much of your parliamentary time is expended on this subject?  
(a)  $\frac{1}{4}$  (b)  $\frac{1}{3}$  (c)  $\frac{1}{2}$  (d)  $\frac{2}{3}$  (e)  $\frac{3}{4}$  (Please circle).

ii) If you ticked either box (b) or (c), approximately how much of your parliamentary time is expended on these subjects?

- (a)  $\frac{1}{4}$  (b)  $\frac{1}{3}$  (c)  $\frac{1}{2}$  (d)  $\frac{2}{3}$  (e)  $\frac{3}{4}$  (Please circle)

iii) If you ticked box (d) do you spread your activity over a wide range of subjects without concentrating on any one/few in particular?

(a) Yes

(Please tick).

(b) No

(Comments)

Q.5 From which of the following sources did your original interest arise in the subject(s) you concentrate upon.

(a) Personal interest (e.g. through pre-parliamentary occupation; membership of an association or group etc).

Please specify the subject. (Comments).

(b) Constituency interest (e.g. the subject is of special importance in your constituency).

Please specify the subject. (Comments).

(c) Interest arising from discussion of this subject in Parliament.

Please specify the subject.(comments).

(d) Party interest (e.g. the subject is of particular relevance to your party).

Please specify the subject. (Comments).

(e) Other interest (please specify).

Q.6 Do you regard yourself to be an expert in any particular subject, as distinct from specializing in it in your Parliamentary activity?

Q.7 (a) Would you say that you are expert in the subject area(s) you listed in answer to question 2?

(Please specify the subject).

(b) Why do you regard yourself as expert in this /these subjects?  
(Please specify the subject).

(c) Could you name five or six backbench Members of the House  
whom you consider to be expert in particular subject fields?

Q.8 Would you say that most/quite a lot/not very many/very few/  
backbenchers specialize (i.e. concentrate their activity on a few  
subject areas). (Please tick).

Q.9 Would you consult any other backbencher for advice on a subject  
with which you are personally unfamiliar?

Q.10 In seeking such advice would the ideological 'position' of the  
backbencher be more important than his expertise on the subject?

Q.11 Do other backbenchers consult you upon the specific areas in which  
you specialize?

Q.12 i) Are the subjects on which you are particularly active now,  
the subjects you concentrated upon in your first session in  
Parliament. (Comments).

ii) Has there been any significant change in your interests in  
certain subject area(s) since you first entered Parliament?  
(Comments).

Q.13 If I may briefly move on to the topic of party backbench committees/  
groups, may I ask

i) Are you a regular attender at party subject committees/groups?  
(regular = a majority of committee meetings).

ii) Please name the committees/groups which you attend on a regular basis.

Q.14 If you regularly attend party committees/groups outside of the areas of your special interests (listed in question two) please state the reason(s) why. (Comments).

Q.15 Does your membership of a party subject committee/group increase your activity in the House on that subject?

Q.16 i) Did your interest in the subjects upon which you concentrate in the House initially arise from attendance at a subject committee/group. (If your answer is yes, please specify the subject(s) ).

ii) Did your interest in a specific subject lead you to attend a particular subject committee/group in the first instance? (If your answer is yes, please specify the subject(s)).



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Annex 2

Survey responses analyzed by length of parliamentary experience.

(Following from Chapter 6).

TABLE A2.1 Number of subjects attracting a majority of interest and activity in the House crosstabulated with 'parliamentary generations'.

<u>No. of Subjects</u>	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>Pre-64</u>	<u>1964-66</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	
	<u>(n 41)</u>	<u>(n 34)</u>	<u>(n 33)</u>	<u>(n 53)</u>	<u>(n 161)</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
1	4.9	5.9	12.1	5.7	6.8
2 - 3	51.1	47.1	45.5	30.2	42.2
4 - 5	22.0	29.4	42.4	45.3	35.5
6 +	<u>22.0</u>	<u>17.6</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>18.8</u>	<u>15.5</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE A2.2 Parliamentary time devoted to specialisms (2 - 5) crosstabulated with 'parliamentary generations'.

<u>Time spent on</u> <u>2 - 5 subjects</u>	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>Pre-64</u>	<u>1964-66</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1974</u>	
	<u>(n 29)</u>	<u>(n 24)</u>	<u>(n 28)</u>	<u>(n 39)</u>	<u>(n 120)</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
One quarter	10.4	20.8	10.7	12.8	13.3
One third	27.6	12.5	25.0	30.8	25.0
One half	27.6	33.4	35.7	23.1	29.2
Two thirds	17.2	20.8	25.0	15.4	19.2
Three quarters	<u>17.2</u>	<u>12.5</u>	<u>3.6</u>	<u>17.9</u>	<u>13.3</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE A2.3 Source of subject specialisms crosstabulated with 'parliamentary generations'.

<u>Source of original interest</u>	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	Pre-64	1964-66	1970	1974	Total
	(n 40)	(n 34)	(n 33)	(n 53)	(n 160) (a)
	%	%	%	%	%
Personal	95.0	94.1	93.9	96.2	95.0
Constituency	82.5	67.6	60.6	76.9	73.0
Parliamentary	12.5	20.6	27.3	22.6	20.6
Party	35.0	29.4	30.3	34.0	32.5

((a) % in each column totals more than 100% due to respondents specifying more than one source of interest).

TABLE A2.4 Do you regard yourself to be an expert in any particular subject, as distinct from specializing in it in your parliamentary activity? Responses analyzed by 'parliamentary generation'.

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	Pre-64	1964-66	1970	1974	Total
	(n 41)	(n 34)	(n 30)	(n 53)	(n 158)
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	68.3	58.8	70.0	62.3	64.6
No	<u>31.7</u>	<u>41.2</u>	<u>30.0</u>	<u>37.7</u>	<u>35.4</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE A2.5 Would you say that you are expert in the subject area(s) you listed in answer to question 2? Responses analyzed by 'parliamentary generation'.

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	Pre-64	1964-66	1970	1974	Total
	(n 41)	(n 34)	(n 32)	(n 53)	(n 160)
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	82.9	64.7	71.9	69.8	72.5
No	<u>17.1</u>	<u>35.3</u>	<u>28.1</u>	<u>30.2</u>	<u>27.5</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE A2.6 Could you name five or six backbench Members of the House whom you consider to be expert in particular subject fields? Responses analyzed by 'parliamentary generations'.

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	Pre-64	1964-66	1970	1974	Total
	(n 36)	(n 29)	(n 30)	(n 47)	(n 142)
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	83.3	79.3	100.0	97.9	96.8
No	<u>16.7</u>	<u>20.7</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>9.2</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE A2.7 Would you say that most/quite a lot/not very many/very few backbenchers specialize? Responses analyzed by 'parliamentary generations'.

	<u>Parliamentary Generations</u>				
	Pre-64	1964-66	1970	1974	Total
	(n 38)	(n 34)	(n 31)	(n 52)	(n 155)
	%	%	%	%	%
Most specialize	42.1	29.4	38.7	40.4	38.1
Quite a lot	50.0	58.8	58.1	48.1	52.9
Not very many	2.6	5.9	3.2	11.5	6.5
Very few	<u>5.3</u>	<u>5.9</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>2.5</u>
	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>

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