

The Ministerial Career of Anthony Crosland 1964-1977

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## Abstract

Existing studies of the career of Anthony Crosland have been biographical in emphasis or have concentrated on Crosland as a theoretician. This thesis will endeavour to examine his record as a minister and relate his conduct of ministerial office to his political principles and the wider political circumstance of the time. Crosland's attempts to frame and successfully deliver departmental policy based on his socialist agenda will be evaluated at the conclusion of the study of each ministry.

This thesis will be structured around Crosland's progression through the five ministerial posts that he held in the Labour administrations of Harold Wilson (1964-70 and 1974-76) and of James Callaghan (1976-77). In so doing more attention will be paid to policy areas which have not attracted much scrutiny even in the two major biographical studies. In particular, I have made greater use of archive material at the National Archives to shed more light on the following areas under Crosland's administration: the diversity of the Board of Trade activities; regional impact of policies at the Board and the Department of Environment; environmental concerns in the 1970s; and foreign policy decisions in central and southern Africa.

## Abbreviations

ACP – Anthony Crosland Papers.

BAC – British Aircraft Corporation.

BEA – British European Airways.

BOT – Board of Trade.

CAB – Cabinet Papers.

BTA – British Travel Association.

DEA – Department of Economic Affairs.

DES – Department of Education and Science.

DLGRP – Department of Local Government and Regional Planning.

DOE – Department of Environment.

EEC – European Economic Community.

EFTA – European Free Trade Association.

FCO – Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

JCP – Jim Callaghan Papers.

LEA – Local Education Authority.

LHASC – Labour History Archive and Study Centre.

LSE – London School of Economics.

NEDC – National Economic Development Council.

PLP – Parliamentary Labour Party.

NUT – National Union of Teachers.

PSC – Public Schools Commission.

REPC – Regional Economic Planning Council.

RSG – Rate Support Grant.

TNA – The National Archive

## Introduction

### Theoretician as Minister

In a tribute to the departing Prime Minister David Cameron in June 2016 the Conservative MP and former cabinet minister Peter Lilley spoke of Cameron as a politician ‘driven by legitimate ambitions and ideas’. For some politicians, theory and its application to their political life have taken a much more significant role as a motivation. Two examples can provide some illustration of the record of recognised theoreticians in office. Arthur James Balfour’s career totalled nearly thirty-five years and included one term as Prime Minister (1902-5). His philosophical ideas have proved a durable legacy. He published two volumes on philosophy: *The Defence of Philosophical Doubt* (London, Macmillan, 1879) and *The Foundations of Belief* (London, Longmans, 1895). In these he challenged the idea that human reason could determine truth, asserting that the propositions of science were no more susceptible to rational proof than were those of religion.<sup>1</sup> Winston Churchill, a colleague, considered that this continual intellectual analysis of issues impeded progress in government. ‘If you wanted nothing done, AJB was undoubtedly the best man for the job. There was no one to equal him’.<sup>2</sup>

Crosland was one of the leading theoreticians of the Labour party in the 1960s and 1970s and Keith Joseph contributed much to Conservative ideas in the period. He was regarded by Margaret Thatcher as a colleague, friend and ‘mentor’ who helped her to bring her conservative instincts ‘into a coherent framework of ideas or into a set of practical policies of government’.<sup>3</sup> Together they established a ‘think tank’, the Centre for Policy Studies in 1974.

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<sup>1</sup> For a study of Balfour’s career and ideas see RJQ Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee* (London, John Murray, 2007). One writer on the Victorians described him as a ‘Philosopher among politicians and a politician among philosophers’. Piers Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1979), p.77.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Brendon, *Edwardians*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York, Harper /Collins, 1993), p. 14.

This was a free market British policy ‘think tank’ whose aim was to promote coherent and practical public policy, to roll back the state, reform public services and resist threats to Britain’s independence.<sup>4</sup> Crosland was an active member of the Fabian Society but in addition to the advice of permanent civil servants, relied on his own economic advisers in government and was not dependent on the work of research institutes. A comparison with Crosland is appropriate in the context of theoreticians in ministerial office especially as they were contemporaries. Both were prolific writers who provided publications reflecting the development of their ideas often while in office.<sup>5</sup> Finally, while both were disappointed in their ambition to become Chancellor, they were appointed to super-ministries, the product of the amalgamation of smaller discrete departments: the Department of Health and Social Security for Joseph in 1970 and the Department of the Environment for Crosland in 1974 To that extent both reflected the increasing reach of the state (in Joseph’s opinion, an over-reach).

The record of Joseph’s work as Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science reveals much of the competing and conflicting priorities when in office of those who were regarded as theoreticians. In one study of Joseph in 1989, it was claimed that Joseph saw too many sides of every problem to be a decisive minister.<sup>6</sup> When faced with the continued level of subsidy required to sustain production at British Leyland, Joseph prevaricated, ignoring the importance of party considerations even though many Conservative MPs represented the

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<sup>4</sup> See Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Chesham (Bucks), Acumen, 2001), p. 240. Think tanks were organisations and institutes for research and advocacy of policy especially in social, political and economic fields. Most were non-profit organisations, although some received government funding.

<sup>5</sup> The following principal works of Keith Joseph were published by the Conservative Party Centre: *Automation and the Consumer* (1956); *The Responsible Society* (1959), *Caring for People* (1972) and *Equality* (1979). He also produced a series of pamphlets on economic issues published by Conservative Party Studies: *The Economics of Freedom* (1975), *Monetarism is not enough* (1976) and *The Conditions for Fuller Employment* (1978).

<sup>6</sup> See Maurice Halcrow, *Keith Joseph: A Single Mind* (London, Macmillan, 1989).

West Midlands. Michael Edwards, the Chairman of British Leyland at the time, summarised Joseph's dilemma when faced with the issue of future government financial intervention: 'He may change his mind, but I'm prepared to argue that he will only do so if he is persuaded by the intellectual case put to him'.<sup>7</sup> A senior minister is recorded as stating that he was a 'marvellous man but a terrible politician'.<sup>8</sup> Joseph stimulated a level of expectation which was difficult to control according to his officials at the DES. The attempted introduction of a voucher system into educational provision illustrated this weakness. Joseph was initially attracted to the idea; but eventually he became aware of the practical problems of introducing such a scheme: – complex legislation, the alienation of teacher unions and departmental unease and thus he abandoned the attempt.<sup>9</sup> At the Department of Industry the conflict between principle and pragmatism was repeated. His officials at the Department were given a reading list of nearly thirty books; it was the normal practice they felt, to offer advice to the incoming minister as opposed to enduring academic seminars.<sup>10</sup> Joseph found that he had no alternative but to act against his stated principles because economic conditions were far worse than he expected.<sup>11</sup> He realised that West German economic success was often based on government subsidies and he felt compelled to advance another one billion pounds to rescue British Leyland; but then reversed his decision in cabinet.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.148.

<sup>8</sup> Oliver Letwin, quoted in Denham and Garnett, *Joseph*, p. 372.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.372.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.334.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.340. Peter Hennessy also noted the conflict between Joseph's philosophy and the practicalities of administering these policies while at the DTI. Hennessy observed that Joseph, a genuinely humane man, 'could not let companies - state or private - which were wheeled into his casualty ward, simply be shunted towards the mortuary'. Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 432.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 339-41.



Although Joseph serves as a comparator with Crosland as a theoretician who occupied cabinet office, he failed to enjoy such an extended ministerial career. In fact, those who have been recognised as contributing substantially to political theory have rarely also occupied any of the three great offices of state. Both Nye Bevan and Enoch Powell were seen as potential leaders but never achieved that position, although Bevan's institutional legacy has been permanent. Those regarded as intellectuals but not ideologues have had more success in political life. Of Crosland's contemporaries, Roy Jenkins and Denis Healey were admired for their intellectual ability and this quality enabled them to tackle the considerable financial problems they faced as chancellors. Michael Foot and Hugh Gaitskell were also intellectuals who became leaders of their parties. Gordon Brown was the only party leader and Prime Minister to hold a Doctorate, but he is not generally regarded as a theoretician. Jim Callaghan admitted to a lack of intellectual self-confidence. His boast that he was the first Prime Minister since the war not to have attended university may even have appealed to the electorate who were not generally attracted to theoreticians or ideologues as leaders. The most successful premiers since the war have been those who have been able to master the skill of party management and public presentation. Harold Wilson, a first-class mathematician, presented himself skilfully in the media as an approachable figure. Margaret Thatcher's political demise stemmed from an inflexible determination to persevere with the imposition of the 'poll tax' in the face of overwhelming popular opposition to this fiscal measure.

Crosland was a rare example of a theoretician whose ideas are still discussed and had a significant ministerial career although he never achieved the leadership of the party. His failure to succeed in party elections was probably a result of an inability and reluctance to gain a sufficient following within the party, even though he was advised to lobby support to achieve his ambitions. With the aid of these comparative studies of theoreticians who have played a role in government, I intend to examine Crosland's record in the five ministerial positions that

he held as head of the departments to which he was appointed, and his success or otherwise in applying his ideas to the business of government while managing the limitations imposed by office and the political and economic circumstances of the time.

### Historiography

Crosland died in 1977 while Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Leading the tributes in the Commons, the Prime Minister Jim Callaghan said of his colleague and friend that he was ‘gifted beyond the reach of many of us’. It was his intellectual abilities and his contribution to the debate concerning the development of the Labour movement that have been the main focus for studies of his career. Consequently, the majority of the published material on Crosland since his death has concentrated on his role as political theoretician. In the late 1990s a more nuanced view on his role as theoretician and the relationship of his ideas to New Labour appeared. The Crosland Memorial Meeting took place in London on 13 February 1997, the twentieth anniversary of his death. Many of his colleagues in government attended and delivered papers which were eventually published as a book in that year.<sup>13</sup> One aspect of the conference was to examine how far the ideas of Tony Blair owed to Crosland. The most recent study of Crosland by Patrick Diamond concentrates on the relevance of his ideas on social democracy to the contemporary political world.<sup>14</sup> Publications on his ministerial career are by comparison limited.

In the wake of his death in 1977, those sympathetic to his ideas contributed to a review of them in a volume edited by his former adviser Dick Leonard.<sup>15</sup> It was dedicated to his memory and sought to continue to promote these ideas, especially as the Labour party was in

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<sup>13</sup> Dick Leonard, (ed.) *Crosland and New Labour* (Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Diamond, *The Crosland Legacy: The Future of British Social Democracy* (Bristol, Policy Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Dick Leonard (ed.), *The Socialist Agenda: Crosland's Legacy* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1981).

crisis and underwent a schism when four of his close colleagues, led by Roy Jenkins, left to form a new political party, the Social Democrats. The growing influence of those who favoured a traditional socialist programme convinced a minority of Labour MPs to leave and establish a party based on social democratic ideas. Other writers were more critical of his legacy and viewed Crosland as part of a generation of politicians who failed to tackle the fundamental contemporary economic and social problems.<sup>16</sup> With the election of New Labour under Tony Blair which some claimed to be a Croslandite party, Crosland's ideas received renewed attention.<sup>17</sup> Anthony Arblaster, 'Anthony Crosland: Labour's Last 'Revisionist'', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 48, 1977, which examines the basic weaknesses in revisionism and the unpredicted development of British capitalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. Jeremy Nuttall examines a neglected aim of the Labour Party – the transformation of people into more caring, rational and sensitive citizens, and the extent Crosland's writings reflect this: 'The Labour Party and the Improvement of Minds: The Case of Tony Crosland', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (2003). Nuttall also attempts to place Crosland in the narrative of the decline of social democracy since the publication of *The Future of Socialism* in 1956: 'Tony Crosland and the Many Falls and Rises of British Social Democracy', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Winter 2004. On this theme see also Stephen Meredith, 'Mr Crosland's Nightmare? New Labour and Equality in Historical Perspective', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2006, 2006 and Kevin Hickson, 'Reply to Stephen

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<sup>16</sup> See John Vaisey, *In Breach of Promise: Five Men who Shaped a Generation* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983) and David Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair* (London, Phoenix Giant, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> See: David Reisman, *Anthony Crosland: The Mixed Economy* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997); and D. Reisman, *Crosland's Future: Opportunity and Outcome* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1997).

Meredith, 'Mr Crosland's Nightmare? New Labour in Perspective', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 9, No.1, 2007.

Two biographies provide substantial studies of his work in the five ministerial positions he held between 1964 and 1977, those of his widow Susan Crosland (1982) and the historian Kevin Jefferys (1999). *Tony Crosland* by Susan Crosland was published in 1982. It was an intimate account of their life together, but the emphasis was on his work as a theoretician and minister.<sup>18</sup> It reflected relatively uncritically on her husband and his achievements throughout his political career. There are no references to sources and no bibliography. Susan Crosland was an accomplished journalist and states that her biography was 'structured like a novel' and that footnotes would have interrupted the flow.<sup>19</sup> However, it provided a detailed survey of his work in all of the departments in which he served, and is especially strong on his periods as shadow Secretary of State for the Environment and on his twelve months at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In spite of its obvious lack of impartiality, it is a valuable resource and it will be utilised throughout. Crosland, unlike his colleagues Tony Benn, Richard Crossman and Barbara Castle, did not keep a diary of political events and therefore *Tony* serves as a substitute for his personal and political observations.

In contrast, Kevin Jefferys' biography of Crosland is an academic study in contrast to the memoir of Susan Crosland. To that extent it is more a political study and, therefore, he considered his work to be a 'more detached' account.<sup>20</sup> Jefferys attempted to examine Crosland's career in the context of the debates in Labour ranks over revisionism, attitudes to

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Crosland, *Tony Crosland* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, Preface.

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Jefferys, *Anthony Crosland* (London, Richard Cohen Books, 1999), ix. Jefferys states that his work is neither 'official' nor an authorised biography although he records that Susan Crosland did not object to his project. *Ibid*, xvi.

Europe and the management of the economy. Jefferys's biography is based primarily on the collection of Crosland Papers at the London School of Economics and on Crosland's own writings. However, Jefferys does not use any other personal papers for example those of Jim Callaghan. (Those were particularly useful for insights into their working relationship when Crosland was appointed as Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1976.) Jefferys's study also draws heavily on material from the National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office). It was more critical of Crosland as Minister of State and Jefferys does provide a subjective assessment of his work in the Epilogue. As with the volume published by Susan Crosland, Jefferys's biography provides the only substantive record of his work at the Board of Trade although it is somewhat brief and limited on foreign policy.

The 1999 collection of essays (*Crosland and New Labour*) reflected on Crosland's contribution both as theoretician and cabinet minister. This volume gave summative assessments of Crosland's work at three departments which he led by those who worked closely with him as officials and advisers: Roy Hattersley, Chris Price, David Lipsey and Michael Palliser, amongst others. Although all admired Crosland, these are not uncritical accounts and they offer a useful interpretation of some of the key issues he tackled in education, environment and foreign affairs. In general, they recognised that there were inconsistencies in his thinking: he was determined to end segregation for secondary education but proposed a binary system for higher education and on transport policy his thinking was based predominantly on a simplistic interpretation of class usage. The authors did agree that his most useful contribution was in reconciling equality and liberty, and in drawing a distinction between enduring values and transitory means. This volume of work was written a year into the first government of New Labour and therefore the authors were not in a position to comment on Tony Blair's government and the possible incorporation of Crosland's ideas.

Appraisals of his work as a theoretician and cabinet minister have appeared in numerous volumes on significant figures in the Labour movement. In 1980, Gerald Kaufman provided a picture of Crosland as departmental head.<sup>21</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan included a consideration of his impact on Labour thinking in his volume on Labour leaders in 1986.<sup>22</sup> Raymond Plant contributed an essay on Crosland in a volume on important figures in the evolution of the Labour Party.<sup>23</sup> This study concentrated on his intellectual contribution and his attempt to apply his ideas to his ministerial briefs. The Labour MP Giles Radice wrote a ‘comparative biography’ of Crosland, Denis Healey and Roy Jenkins in 2002.<sup>24</sup> Radice, who became a Labour MP in 1973, admitted that these three were his political heroes and he considered that after the death of their mentor Hugh Gaitskell they became the leading revisionists and modernisers of the 1960s. They believed that Labour had to break with its nationalising tradition, adopt a less class-ridden approach and adjust its policies to accommodate changing conditions. In particular, Radice identified Crosland as the theoretician whose writings tried to show how a modified capitalism could be combined with a commitment to greater equality.<sup>25</sup> Radice believed that Crosland’s record at the Board of Trade was disappointing but that he was an innovative Education Secretary and a highly competent Environment Secretary.<sup>26</sup>

Assessments of Crosland’s work at the Department of Economic Affairs are to be found in the published material of those officials who were appointed to this department between

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<sup>21</sup> Gerald Kaufman, *How to be a Minister* (London, Sedgwick and Jackson, 1980).

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Labour People Leaders and Lieutenants: Hardie to Kinnock* (Oxford, OUP, 1986), iii.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Jefferys (ed.), Anthony Crosland, *Labour Forces: From Ernest Bevin to Gordon Brown* (London, I BTaurus, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Radice, Giles, *Friends and Rivals. Crosland, Jenkins and Healey* (London, Abacus, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Radice, *Friends*, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Radice, *Friends*, p. 268.

1964 and its dissolution five years later [Wilson considered that its functions could be best accommodated in other departments]. They were experienced in economic planning and produced, often contemporaneously, a series of articles and a memoir which explained the genesis of the department, its functions and its potential, in their opinion, for bringing direction to the national economy.<sup>27</sup> The diary of Samuel Brittan gives a detailed insight into the daily business of the DEA and Crosland's contribution to decisions made in 1964 and 1965.<sup>28</sup> In his memoir, George Brown commented favourably on the working relationship that he had with Crosland as his deputy, although there is little on the details of Crosland's work here.<sup>29</sup> Later assessments by these officials recorded Crosland's brief role in the department.<sup>30</sup> Since 1997, more impartial academic assessments have been given which relate the existence of the DEA to the interest in indicative planning in the 1960s, and the legacy of this experiment in economic management.<sup>31</sup> Andrew Blick placed the DEA in the broader context of the drive for planned

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<sup>27</sup> See Geoffrey Owen, 'The Department of Economic Affairs An Experiment in Planning', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, 1965; Eric Roll, 'The Machinery of Economic Planning: 1 The Department of Economic Affairs', *Public Administration*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1966; Douglas Allen, 'The Department of Economic Affairs', *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, 1967.

<sup>28</sup> R Middleton (ed.), *Inside the Department of Economic Affairs. Samuel Brittan: the Diary of an Irregular. 1964-6*. (Oxford, OUP, 2012). Samuel Brittan was an economic adviser appointed to the DEA.

<sup>29</sup> George Brown, *In My Way*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1971).

<sup>30</sup> Eric Roll, *Crowded Hours* (London, Faber and Faber, 1985); Fred Catherwood, *At the Cutting Edge* (London, Faber and Faber, 1995); and Donald MacDougall, 'The Machinery of Economic Government: Some Personal Reflections' in Albert Henry Halsey and David Butler (eds.), *Policy and Politics: Essays in Honour of Norman Chester* (London, Macmillan, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> See Chris Clifford, 'The Rise and Fall of the Department of Economic Affairs 1964-1969: British Government and Indicative Planning', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 11, No.2, (Summer 1997) ; Chris Clifford and Alistair McMillan, 'The Department of Economic Affairs', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (1997) ; and James E Cronin, (2001), 'Labour's 'National Plan': Inheritances , Practices, Legacies. *The European*

economic growth which was central to the agenda of Wilson's government following Labour's triumph in 1964.<sup>32</sup>

Crosland's work at the Department of Education and Science has attracted most attention by historians and educationalists and has been a result of the continuing debate over educational standards. Crosland's admission to his wife that 'If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every fucking grammar school in England and Wales and Northern Ireland' is the phrase that has defined his work at the DES.<sup>33</sup> Crosland was perceived as ideologically driven to end selection and determined to prevent the middle classes from engineering the eleven plus to their advantage. Crosland reflected upon his work at the DES in a joint interview with Edward Boyle (former Conservative Educational Minister) and the educational writer Maurice Kogan in 1971<sup>34</sup> It is particularly useful for giving an insight into the relationship of Crosland as a Secretary of State with his officials and the local authorities following the issuing of the famous circular 10/65.

Callaghan was so concerned about the quality of learning and teaching in the state sector that he initiated a 'Great Debate' on Education at Ruskin College Oxford, in 1976.<sup>35</sup>

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*Legacy: Towards New Paradigms*, Vol.6, No.2, pp. 215-232; Glen O'Hara "'Planned Growth of Incomes"' or 'Emergency Gimmick': The Labour Party, The Social Planners and Incomes Policy, 1964-70', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 60, No.1, 2007 ; and O'Hara again, *From Dreams to Disillusionment: Economic and Social Planning in 1960s Britain*. (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Blick, 'Harold Wilson, Labour and the Machinery of Government', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 20, No.3, September 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Crosland, *Tony*, p.148.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Kogan, *The Politics of Education: Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in Conversation with Maurice Kogan* (London, Penguin, 1971).

<sup>35</sup>See James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (Glasgow, Fontana /Collins, 1987), pp. 409-11 and Kenneth O Morgan, *Callaghan A Life* (Oxford, OUP, 1997), pp. 540-541.



However, educationalists and writers on the right were determined to preserve traditional standards and considered that these would be undermined by Crosland's secondary school reorganisation. In 1969 two *Black Papers* were published which stated that the decline in educational standards was a product of progressive educational practices which flourished in the comprehensive school and blamed the Labour Government for this crisis. The authors of these papers were educationalists and writers such as Brian Cox, Rhodes Boyson and Kingsley Amis. The Labour Secretary of State for Education in 1969, Edward Short', later condemned these papers as 'scurrilous documents' in a BBC programme (*Comp*, September 2005) for Radio Four, 'The Blackest Day'. The Conservative governments of the 1970s were less committed to the phasing out of grammar schools and the debate continued into the 1980s and 1990s and they often focused upon Crosland's role in the accelerated move to comprehensive education.

In the 1990s, with the apparent crisis in state education as reflected especially in the problems of the comprehensive school, several observers believed that Crosland's reforms were in large measure, to blame. Ben Pimlott, in his biography of Harold Wilson, was critical of Crosland's attempts at social engineering, which he believed restricted the advancement of the less privileged working class children.<sup>36</sup> The views of journalist Peter Hitchens were representative of those who considered that Crosland and all those who followed him at the DES had subordinated 'standards to ideology'.<sup>37</sup> Two popular studies of the educational reforms of the 1960s, reviewed the controversy surrounding the comprehensive revolution and Crosland's place in it. Andrew Marr gave an astute survey of Crosland's contribution placing it in the broader context of educational developments – *A History of Modern Britain* (London,

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<sup>36</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London, Harper/Collins, 1993) pp. 511-513.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Hitchens, *The Abolition of Britain: the British Cultural Revolution from Lady Chatterley to Tony Blair* (London, Quartet Books, 1999) p. 6.

Pan Books, 2008). Dominic Sandbrook was less forgiving of Crosland's commitment to the abolition of the 11plus and selection in *White Heat. A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London, Abacus, 2007). By contrast, Shirley Williams, who was a minister in the DES under Crosland and an admirer of his ideas, defended his attempt to use education to achieve equality in society and wrote extensively on his reforms.<sup>38</sup>

Several writers and educationalists such as Brian Simon and Clive Chitty who were committed to the ending of selection at eleven and championed the comprehensive, wrote about the growth of the comprehensive school and berated Conservatives for their attempts to retain the grammar school. Crosland's failure to employ legislation in 1965 was heavily criticised by these authors. His role in secondary school reorganisation was recognised but his contribution to this significant educational reform was relegated compared to other ministers of state at the DES. Simon and Tony Benn made this case in 1970, believing that Crosland's approach 'by bark rather than bite' favouring DES circular rather than legislation had resulted in a 'failure to grasp the nettle impairing the momentum of the comprehensive movement.'<sup>39</sup> Clive Ponting, a former civil servant and historian of the Labour movement, argued that Crosland was building on the growing support for the comprehensive school both outside and inside parliament. Edward Boyle and Michael Stewart, who preceded Crosland at the DES, had already pressed

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<sup>38</sup> Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves: The Autobiography* (London, Virago, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Brian Simon and Tony Benn, *Half Way There. Report on the British Comprehensive School Reform* (Maidenhead, McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp,40-50. Also, see Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991) and 'The Politics of Comprehensive Reorganisation: A Retrospective Analysis', *History of Education*, 1992, Vol 21, No 4, p.38; Clyde Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, (Manchester, Baseline Books, 1992) and Clyde Chitty and John Dunford (eds.), *State Schools: New Labour and the Conservative Legacy*, (London, Woburn Press, 1999).

for the abolition of selection in secondary schooling before Crosland was appointed.<sup>40</sup> Neither of the previous ministers were seen as theoreticians or who had made known in such publicised form their vehement opposition to selection and the grammar schools. Their approach was perceived as reformist rather than revolutionary and they therefore did not receive from supporters of comprehensives the criticism that was given to Crosland.

The debate concerning progressive educational practices against more traditionally didactic ones, and the retention of the 11 plus and the grammar school as opposed to the comprehensive model, intensified during the 1990s. The Conservative governments under a succession of ministers at the DES – in particular, Keith Joseph (1981-86), Kenneth Baker (1986-89) and Kenneth Clarke (1990-92) - were determined to address the crisis in education that they believed was a result of the reforms of the Labour administrations of the 1960s. A series of articles appeared that attempted to remove the discussion away from sectarian lines and provide a more nuanced view of the political background to the issues. More recently, there have been attempts to achieve a ‘balanced’ view of the origins of the comprehensive school, especially with the ‘waning of interest’ in the comprehensive model and the growth in popularity of academies which are free of local authority control. David Crook concluded that Crosland had been seeking to give the impression that the government was merely overseeing a grass-roots locally led democratic reform.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Clive Ponting, *In Breach of Promise: Labour in Power 1964-70* (London, Penguin, 1989) and Michael Stewart, *Life and Labour* (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982).

<sup>41</sup> David Crook, ‘Politics, Politicians, and the English Comprehensive Schools’, *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2013. See also Dennis Dean, ‘Circular 10/65 Revisited: The Labour Government and the ‘Comprehensive Revolution’ in 1964-1965’, *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, Vol. 34, No.1, 1998.

Crosland's reforms in higher education and the public schools have received very limited academic coverage. (By comparison, the history of the Open University has attracted far more interest.<sup>42</sup> Crosland's role was limited by his own admission and this thesis will not include a consideration of his role in this educational project.) Crosland decided to establish a 'binary system' in higher education by establishing the Polytechnics and rejecting the Robbins Report of 1963 which had called for an expanded university sector to cater for all. This led to accusations that he was introducing segregation in this area of higher education while abolishing such a system at the secondary tier.<sup>43</sup> Several writers supported the polytechnic innovation in the early 1970s basing their case often on mainly sociological grounds. They viewed the traditional universities as far too aloof and unable to cater for the demands of contemporary society. Polytechnics would help to liberate the educational system from their old class interest.<sup>44</sup> A *Young Fabian* pamphlet praised his vision for the polytechnics as a means of establishing an institution which would concentrate on vocational courses and therefore leave the universities to continue to focus on academic research. They would be able to establish their own precedents and traditions.<sup>45</sup> With the expansion of the universities and the absorption of the polytechnics after 1992, Crosland's reform was seen in less favourable light. Peter Scott explained the new educational climate in which the pursuit of higher education was

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<sup>42</sup> See Patricia Hollis, *Jenny Lee. A Life* (Oxford, OUP, 1997) for the relationship between Crosland and Lee. See also Peter Dorey, 'Well, Harold Insists on Having It!' – The Political Struggle to Establish the Open University, 1965-67', *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 29, No 2.

<sup>43</sup> See C D Goodwin, 'The Origin of the Binary System', *History of Education*, Vol. 27. No.2, 1998.

<sup>44</sup> Malcolm Weir, 'The Polytechnics: A Socialist Achievement', *Socialist Commentary*, August 1970, p.13. See also Tyrrell Burgess, 'A Policy for Higher Education', *New Statesman*, 29 January 1971.

<sup>45</sup> Colin Crouch and Stephen Mennell, 'The Universities: Pressures and Prospects', *Young Fabian Pamphlet*, No.28, January 1972.

more market driven and where privatisation was an increasing factor.<sup>46</sup> In regard to Crosland's limited attempt to tackle the reform of the public schools, even Chris Price, Crosland's private Secretary and an admirer, accepted that he did little more than appoint a Commission to examine ways to integrate boarding schools into the state system as promised in the Labour Manifesto in 1964.<sup>47</sup> There is much scope to examine his attempt to tackle this area for no government since has shown any appetite to focus on this again.

Crosland's two years as President of the Board of Trade (1967-69) have had little coverage although business leaders recognised his achievements when he left. The two standard biographies are the only substantial source for the details of his administration in this department. Crosland's appointment to the Department of Local Government and Regional Planning and then Environment (as it was termed when he returned to office in 1974) has generated much consideration about his role as Secretary of State in this period of governmental change, but little on his record while there. The challenges of administering two departments was examined by William Plowden in 1970 during Crosland's first year. William Plowden was an academic and civil servant who with Edward Heath founded the Central Policy Review Staff in 1971. This 'think tank' was designed to provide advice on strategy to the Cabinet.<sup>48</sup> Labour's return to power in 1997 renewed interest in its regional policy and this was explored by Janet Mather who examined the ambivalence of Labour's interest in devolution of power while still retaining existing central government powers.<sup>49</sup> Humphrey

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Scott, 'Robbins, the Binary Policy and Mass Education', *Higher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 68, Issue 2, April 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Chris Price, 'Chapter 7: Education Secretary', *Crosland and New Labour*, Dick Leonard (ed.), 1997, p.80.

<sup>48</sup> 'Riding Two Horses: The Crosland Ministry', *New Society*, 1 January 1970.

<sup>49</sup> Janet Mather, 'Labour and the English Regions: Centralised Devolution?' *British Contemporary History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Autumn 2000. See also H. W. E. Davies, 'Continuity and Change: The Evolution of the British Planning

Cole, an adviser to Crosland at the DOE and Bernard Donoghue who was a special adviser to Harold Wilson have both given not uncritical assessments of his work at the Department of the Environment even though they praised Crosland's efforts as Secretary of State.<sup>50</sup> Ken Livingston a committed left-wing figure, admired Crosland's determination to improve social conditions for the working classes in London and gave a useful account of Crosland's support for his programmes for housing and campaign against the location of London Third Airport at Maplin.<sup>51</sup>

In this thesis, perspectives on Crosland's conduct in the two main issues that absorbed his attention in foreign affairs, namely Rhodesia and the Cod War rely on four main sources: the autobiographies of Callaghan and Henry Kissinger, the memoir of Susan Crosland and the biography of Crosland by Jefferys. Susan Crosland gave detailed accounts of her husband's attempts to tackle the problem of Rhodesia and the crisis over Uganda. Jefferys's study focuses on the achievements in these areas and is less concerned with narrative. Callaghan and Kissinger, in their memoirs, discuss Rhodesia and depict Crosland in a mainly supportive role.<sup>52</sup> Kissinger's memoir is particularly detailed on his collaboration with Crosland in Southern Africa. Their biographers offer a more nuanced assessment.<sup>53</sup> Icelandic historians have

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system, 1947-1997', *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 69, No. 2, April 1998. See also C. Painter, 'The Repercussions of Administration Innovation: The West Midlands Economic Planning Council', *Public Administration*, Vol. 50, No.4.

<sup>50</sup> Humphrey Cole in *Crosland and New Labour*, 1999 and Bernard Donoghue, *The Heat of the Kitchen: An Autobiography* (London, Politico's, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Ken Livingston, *You Can't Say That. Memoirs*. (London, Faber and Faber, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (Glasgow, Collins/Fontana, 1988); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan, A Life* (Oxford, OUP, 1997); Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger A Biography* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992).

provided recent assessments of Crosland's intervention in the Cod War and his role in bringing it to a conclusion.<sup>54</sup> John Prescott MP for Hull West and a former seaman and involved in previous negotiations, commented on Crosland's role in his biography.<sup>55</sup>

Crosland's record as a shadow Minister of Environment 1970-74 is best covered in the two main biographies; but Patrick Bell devotes considerable space to Crosland's contribution to the discussion surrounding potential policy objectives before the 1974 election.<sup>56</sup> Bell also examined his role in opposing the Conservative Housing Finance Bill. Crosland's opposition during the passage of this last bill and to Heath's plans for an Airport at Maplin received a detailed treatment in the two standard studies of the life and career of Edward Heath by John Campbell and Philip Ziegler.<sup>57</sup>

### Sources.

The objective of this thesis is to assess Crosland as minister. As such, most of the research is rooted in an examination of archival material. Any consideration and assessment of his work as minister will be reliant upon the two biographical studies published by Susan Crosland and Kevin Jefferys. Both provided a sound narrative of his departmental policies; but they are not detailed on certain areas, for example the Board of Trade and aspects of foreign policy. Archival material, especially that from The National Archives, has shed light on these areas.

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<sup>54</sup> See Gumundur J Gudmundsson, 'The Cod War and the Cold War', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 31, Issue 2, 2006 and Sverrir Steinsson, 'The Cod Wars: a re-analysis', *European Security*, Volume 25, Issue 2, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Prezza. *My Story: Pulling no Punches* (London, Headline Review, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Patrick Bell, *The Labour Party in Opposition 1970-1974* (London, Routledge, 2004).

<sup>57</sup> John Campbell, *Edward Heath. A Biography* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1993); Philip Ziegler, *Edward Heath* (London, Harper Press, 2011).

The personal papers of Crosland (LSE, London) and Callaghan (Bodleian Library, Oxford) have been extensively used. Crosland had a long association with the Fabian Society which established the LSE. He was elected onto the executive committee in 1955 and provided lecture and pamphlets throughout out his career. Thus, the LSE became the location for the papers. Crosland's papers are located in the archival section of the university and are a collection of his personal notes, typed records of aspects of departmental administration and material relevant to his career. These *aide-memoirs* made throughout Crosland's political life compensate somewhat for the absence of published diaries which are available from his colleagues. As such Crosland's handwriting presents certain problems of interrogation (a skill I have been able to master over time). The papers of George Brown were also to be found in the Bodleian Library. I decided that these would not be consulted for he gave extensive assessments of the contribution of Crosland to the work of the DEA in his memoir. During Crosland's two years at the DES he received the Plowden Report in 1967. This was concerned with primary education. However, I considered that I would concentrate upon secondary and higher education and the issue of private schools in my thesis. Crosland showed little interest in the primary sector and therefore I would not consult the Plowden Papers although these are retained in the library of Newcastle University.

Crosland kept a series of 'Commonplace Books' throughout his time in the army and political career. These are classed as 'diaries, notes and note books' in the LSE catalogue. In these he noted down his thoughts on colleagues and their behaviour and on matters brought to Cabinet on issues such as devaluation, government cuts in public expenditure and economic policy in general. Susan Crosland has utilised these in her biography. Specific departmental issues have little mention in these 'books'.

The Crosland papers do contain several advisory notes by civil servants close to Crosland for example Wilma Harte at the DES, David Lipsey at the DOE and Michael Palliser



at the FCO. Particularly helpful are the prolific notes made by Crosland on the transport review in 1976 and the personal briefing notes on the conduct of British foreign policy. The entire archive of the Callaghan Papers was donated to the Bodleian by the Callaghan family to be available to scholars along those of Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson, and Harold Macmillan amongst other leading post-war leaders. The boxes on Callaghan's personal involvement in African affairs have proved most valuable.

Oral history was considered but presented major practical problems not least arranging a suitable date with figures who still pursue an active role in public life. Three contemporary figures of the 1960s and 1970s and ones still active in the political world are Shirley Williams, John Prescott and Roy Hattersley. They were all admirers of Crosland although not necessarily uncritical of his ministerial record. However, they have left detailed memoirs and commentaries with extensive comments on his career and therefore I felt that little additional material could be included in this thesis except for perhaps anecdotal evidence of a personal nature. Detailed appraisals of his ministerial record by officials in his departments - Christopher Price, Humphrey Cole, Michael Palliser - could be found in the volume on Crosland published in 1999 over three decades after his death.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it was considered that little more could be gained from these figures another twenty years on.

The British Diplomatic Oral History Project conducted between 1998 and 2001 with senior officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office presents a personal view of Crosland's co-operation with his civil servants. The project began in 1995 and is in its third decade. Interviews with retired officials are conducted often by former diplomats themselves and interviewees are encouraged to be as candid as possible often a result of the spontaneous nature of the one-to-one interview. Hence, they often reveal some of the unrecorded events of

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<sup>58</sup> Leonard, *Crosland and New Labour*, 1999.

diplomatic history of the twentieth century especially pertinent to Crosland's time at the FCO. This project is designed to provide a unique source of raw material for historians. All material is retained at The Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge although much is now available on line.

Memoirs and diaries of the 1960 and 1970s are plentiful and provide a personal insight into Crosland's relationship with his colleagues and his impact as a minister of state although, of course, these are less impartial than institutional and archive material. Tony Benn, Richard Crossman and Barbara Castle were colleagues and cabinet ministers who kept and later published diaries on the political events throughout the period of Crosland's ministerial career. These diaries have the great virtue that the material was recorded within hours or at least days of the events covered. Richard Crossman dictated his material into a recording machine at the weekends. Crossman died in 1974 before publication of volume three and therefore his editor played a greater role than intended in the selection of material for this volume. They give a very personal account of cabinet meetings in particular and thus add more detail and interpretation than are available in the official Cabinet records. Comments on Crosland are often based on his performance in Cabinet rather than an assessment of his role as a minister. However, personal animosity between colleague and author must be taken into consideration as a limiting factor for the veracity of the events described. Barbara Castle was no admirer of Crosland although she did respect his knowledge of economics. Tony Benn however became a close friend of Crosland. Richard Crossman's first diary was published in 1975 within one year of his death and followed a sustained legal battle to prevent publication by the then Labour government. The granting of this legal right enabled other ministers to publish their own diaries and memoirs with greater ease.

Memoirs provide a more rounded view of the period rather than the detailed description of events as they occurred in the traditional diary format. However, the memoirs I have

consulted for this thesis were mostly compiled after the retirement of the author from mainstream political life as a minister and therefore lack the immediacy of diaries. There are exceptions. Wilson's memoir appeared in 1970 and was an attempt to explain and justify governmental decisions of his first two administrations. Likewise, George Brown having finally resigned from the government on a permanent basis, published his memoir in 1971. Those written by Crosland's cabinet colleagues, in particular Benn, Callaghan, Jenkins, Healey, Stewart and Short appeared in the 1980s and 1990s after their retirement from government. In these volumes, authors have the opportunity to explain the background to decisions. In their memoirs, they are often able to respond to criticisms in print made by colleagues or political commentators.

Press coverage offers another significant source for contemporary opinion of a minister's performance while in office. Editorials provide an assessment of a minister's record; but these usually reflect the political persuasion of that paper and the party allegiance favoured by their reading public. Crosland found support in general from the *Guardian* and *Observer* – the *Times* and *Telegraph* were more ambivalent. Although Crosland was a leading theoretician of the left, the press appeared willing to assess his ministerial decisions impartially.

The detailed interview with Edward Boyle conducted by Maurice Kogan in 1971 on educational reform and the functioning of the DES in the 1960s and 1970s has provided the relevant material and therefore, consulting the Boyle Papers housed in Leeds University was considered to be unnecessary. Civil servants and officials have left accounts and diverse appraisals of his work: Bernard Donoghue, Fred Catherwood, Donald MacDougall and Eric Roll.<sup>59</sup> Much of the detailed factual material on Crosland's attempt to modernise areas of industrial and commercial life while at the BOT and the DOE – the textile industry in

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<sup>59</sup> See Bibliography.

Lancashire, the domestic tourist trade and the aero industry – can be found in the press reports of the period.

The majority of information on Crosland's departmental work is to be found in the official government records in the National Archives in Kew. Because of the abundant nature of these papers, I have had to select departmental issues which I considered relevant, contentious and ones which would reflect his personal interest. In particular the following have received detailed treatment; educational selection at eleven, higher educational reform, reform of independent schools, regional development, environmental issues, textiles and tourism, transport and housing policy, central and southern Africa (Rhodesia) and the dispute with Iceland. Other diverse areas will be omitted.

Other official sources have proved invaluable when examining Crosland's comments both in Cabinet and Parliament. Although, according to Tony Benn, Crosland could be annoyingly reticent when asked to contribute to Cabinet discussion, his memoranda in the relevant minutes on specific issues could be highly illuminating. Crosland's appraisal of a situation and the possible options available for a resolution offer a detailed view of his thinking. The official record of parliamentary business, Hansard, gives a picture of the public presentation of policy by Crosland, especially in conjunction with the Cabinet discussion beforehand. Reactions by MPs have been used to illustrate the impact of decisions and initiatives when announced in the Commons by Crosland.

The reception of Crosland's departmental policies and decisions within the party are sourced mainly from the records of party conferences both in government and opposition. Crosland's contributions are infrequent for he was never elected to the national executive; but major statements on foreign policy were given in debate as well as his contributions on economic matters (devaluation, public expenditure) which are also to be found in the meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

### Ministerial Careers: A methodology for assessment.

The assessment of the effectiveness of a minister's record in office can be based upon a multitude of criteria. A useful assessment model of the various roles undertaken by a cabinet minister was offered in a study published in the year 2000: *'Re-Assessing the Role of Department Cabinet Ministers'* by David Marsh, David Richards, and Martin J. Smith.<sup>60</sup> Following extensive research and interviews with ministers and civil servants, they identified and compiled the assessment format below selecting four generic roles.

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Executive or Managerial</b>	<b>Public Relations</b>
*agenda setting	*advocacy of	*departmental management	*overseeing department's
*policy initiation	department's	*executive decision taker	relations with
*policy selection	position in		*interests groups
*policy	* parliament/ party.		*public
Legitimation	*EU		*media.
	*Cabinet		

In this thesis I shall base my evaluation of Crosland's record while in ministerial office upon this model as far as it is applicable. In terms of the 'policy' role, a distinction is drawn between ministers who aim to change the agenda of the department and those who accept the broad policy inherited and aim only to select or prioritise certain features of the departmental line. For some ministers the objective would be merely to legitimise policies presented by their civil

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<sup>60</sup> *Public Administration*, Vol. 78, No 2, 2000, pp.305-326. Other useful studies upon the roles of ministers in office: Heady, B, *British Cabinet Ministers* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1974); James, S, *British Cabinet Government* (London, Routledge, 1992); Norton, P, *'The New Barons; senior ministers in British Government'*. Paper presented at Birkbeck College -ESRC-Civil Service, Public Service Seminar, British Academy, London, 10 July,1998;

servants or, as the authors state, admit to be fundamentally ‘a mandarin minister’.<sup>61</sup> Judgement of a ministers record of representing his department in Cabinet, party and parliament is also identified as a crucial feature of his or her performance. The increasing significance of Europe especially from the 1970s and the minister’s impact in this arena is also stressed as an addition to the traditional roles. Likewise, the increasing pressure of successfully responding to the demands of public scrutiny in the 1960s and 1970s is noted. Finally, the extent to which a minister is able to manage departmental personnel and act as a proactive executive of that ministry should be considered as a component of any assessment.

Anthony Crosland was given ministerial responsibility at a time of significant change for government policy in education, the environment, economic direction and our relations with Europe and our remaining imperial obligations in southern Africa. In the conclusion, I shall examine his legacy in these key areas. He was to play a leading role in the newly created Department of Economic Affairs an attempt to plan economic change on a more rational basis especially tackling the perennial problem of the balance of payments. As Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science he would be faced with the growing discontent with segregation in the secondary school sector a product of the eleven plus exam; and the pressing need for reform of both higher education and the independent schools. Industrial decline, especially in the north and Wales, and the possible solutions to the social and economic problems created would fall under his remit as President of the Board of Trade and as minister for Local Government and Regional Development (1969), a responsibility which he retained also as Secretary of State for the Environment (1974-1976). Growing concern for the impact of urban and economic development on the environment became central to the rationale underpinning the environmental brief especially as transport and housing were amalgamated

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<sup>61</sup>*Ibid*, p311.

in this ministry. During his brief tenure as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Crosland was to be faced with conflict with Iceland over fishing rights and the future of Rhodesia. His policy here would be one of many attempts by ministers at the FCO to bring a resolution to this decade long crisis in southern Africa.

Following the election in 1964 of a Labour government after fourteen years, Crosland received his first ministerial appointment in the newly constructed Department of Economic Affairs. He was given the title of Economic Secretary and was deputy to George Brown. This did not carry with it a Cabinet seat but provided him with an opportunity to formulate and administer economic policy. The next chapter of this thesis will examine Crosland's record for the four months he remained there.

Chapter One: Economic Secretary to the Department of Economic Affairs

(October 1964 – January 1965)

Keep up the momentum on prices and incomes...start a new momentum on restrictive practices and the wasteful use of labour...and naturally push on with all our DEA prodding and planning and bullying.<sup>1</sup>

The Department of Economic Affairs was an administrative innovation established by Harold Wilson in 1964 but one that did not last. Crosland was appointed its first Economic Secretary and Deputy to George Brown between October 1964 and January 1965. This chapter will examine several issues: the origins of the DEA; its relationship with the Treasury; Crosland's role and the working relationship with George Brown; and his contribution to the issues of the balance of payments, export drive, enhanced productivity and prices and incomes, all of which were the responsibility of this new department.

The Birth of the Department of Economic Affairs. October 1964

Wilson believed that economic planning and control could bring stability to the economy by eliminating the 'stop-go' nature of growth under the Conservatives during the previous thirteen years. The Labour Manifesto for 1964 had warned of further Conservative economic uncertainty for 'successive Conservative Chancellors have been unable to get the economy moving steadily forward. Every jerk of expansion has ground to a full stop as the Government jams on the brake in an attempt to combat inflation and rising prices'.<sup>2</sup> Although the DEA was

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<sup>1</sup> Crosland to George Brown, 'Outlook for 1965', 14 January 1965, London School of Economics (LSE), The National Archives (TNA), EW 16/1.

<sup>2</sup> *Let's Go with Labour for the New Britain* (London, Labour Party, 1964) p.6.



rumoured to have been born in the back of a taxi in a discussion between Brown and Wilson before the 1964 election, there was a much longer gestation period. Wilson himself referred to this ‘rumour’ in his memoir in 1971, stating that the ‘legend’ was not true. ‘It was in that taxi, however, that I first suggested to him that the right job for him would be Secretary of State for Economic Affairs’.<sup>3</sup> Brown supported this interpretation of the taxi ride in his memoirs: ‘That is the origin of the much-told story that the DEA was born in taxi – true, but by no means the whole truth. From then on the establishment of the DEA became a settled part of the official Labour policy’.<sup>4</sup> Brown became chairman of the Home Policy Committee of the Labour Party in 1963 and he stated in his memoirs that the creation of a separate department devoted to planning was central to discussions. ‘Out of this kind of thinking grew the idea that it would be better to have an economic department which (as I saw it) would be superior to the Treasury in determining the country’s economic priorities’.<sup>5</sup> One authority on the period commenting on the story of the significance of the taxi journey stated that the account stemmed from a commonly-held belief that the British reshaped their constitutions on the back of envelopes.<sup>6</sup> A recent popular study of the Labour governments between 1964 and 1970 has again drawn attention to the *ad hoc* nature of the formation of the DEA.<sup>7</sup>

The adoption of planning on a large scale was seen increasingly as a necessity during the First World War, and then an alternative solution to the crisis of the Depression. Planning

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<sup>3</sup> Harold Wilson, *A Personal Record. The Labour Government 1964-1970* (London, Little, Brown and Company, 1971), pp.3-4. According to Wilson, the taxi ride was from St. Ermin’s Hotel in London to the House of Commons a distance of less than a mile.

<sup>4</sup> George Brown, *In My Way. Memoirs* (London, Victor Gollanz, 1971), p 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall* (London, Fontana Press, 1990), p.182.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London, Pan Books, 2008), p. 243.

became an essential element in the strategy of total war between 1939 and 1945.<sup>8</sup> Attlee introduced a measure of planning with the establishment of the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA) in 1947. Attlee offered this new post to Stafford Cripps a post which conveyed huge powers over trade, exports and production.<sup>9</sup> The circumstances of Cripps's appointment were not dissimilar to those of George Brown in 1964. Both were senior Labour figures and were given control of economic policy through separate departments created as a means of utilising their unique abilities and as recognition of their status in the party.<sup>10</sup> Cripps was willing to collaborate with private industry rather than to coerce or threaten it. However, planning in Cripps's view, related primarily to the domain of consumption rather than to production, and rather than relying on direct planning, his main instrument lay in management through the budget and the command of capital movements.<sup>11</sup> In fact, according to Kenneth Morgan, Cripps's planning resembled not so much state socialism but something resembling the co-ordination of public and private activity that characterized Roosevelt's New Deal in 1930s America.<sup>12</sup> This ministerial innovation only lasted for six weeks for Cripps was appointed as Chancellor of the Exchequer in November 1947 following Hugh Dalton's sudden resignation as Chancellor. The short duration of the life of the MEA had illustrated the inevitable confusion in roles between such a department and the Treasury. The ambiguity about Cripps's role led to

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<sup>8</sup> James E. Cronin, 'Labour's 'National Plan': Inheritances, Practice, Legacies'. *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2001, p. 215. Cronin charts the attraction of planning for the Labour Party in the post war period based upon the move from dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the market to the demand for greater control of the economy and growth.

<sup>9</sup> Morgan, *Labour People*, p.168.

<sup>10</sup> For Brown's appointment as head of the DEA see below. Stafford Cripps became the new Minister of Economic Affairs between September and November 1947. See Morgan, *Labour People*, p.168.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.170.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

conflict with the Treasury.<sup>13</sup> This ‘conflict’ was repeated in the subsequent attempts to construct such a department and was a major factor explaining the short duration of the administrative experiment. Hugh Gaitskell occupied a similar role for eight months in 1950 and Churchill created a ministry for economic development for Arthur Salter from 1951 to 1952.

The Conservatives under Macmillan also favoured an element of planning after the disappointing performance of the economy during the 1950s. Macmillan brought employers and unions into a partnership with government when he established the National Economic Development Council (popularly referred as NEDDY) in 1961. This council was a tripartite organisation of government, business and trade union representatives and had its own secretariat. From the start, it was concerned with the search for an agreed strategy for economic growth in order to arrest Britain’s relative economic decline. This corporatist organisation was modelled on the French Economic and Social Council and represented the centrist ideas formulated by Macmillan in his book *The Middle Way* published in 1938.

Under the Labour governments of 1964 to 1970, the N.E.D.C.’s role in economic planning was largely subordinated to that of the DEA. However, it continued to provide a forum where employers and trade unionists could consult the relevant government ministers. The Labour Government enlarged the Economic Development Committees for individual industries – sometimes called the ‘Little Neddies’.<sup>14</sup> Wilson hoped that the establishment of the DEA and the increasing use of planning would enhance the level of exports following the

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<sup>13</sup> See Keith Robbins, ‘Chapter 4: Stafford Cripps,’ *Labour Forces. From Ernest Bevin to Gordon Brown*, ed. Kevin Jeffreys (London, I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.77.

<sup>14</sup> For the relationship of the NEDC to the DEA see Henry Catherwood, ‘The National Economic Development Council: A View from Industry’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 12, No.1 (1998) pp.77-81.

growth of productivity.<sup>15</sup> His enthusiasm for such a department stemmed from his belief that the Treasury would restrict expansion and that the DEA was the solution to increased growth and productivity even though there was much scepticism about this innovation.<sup>16</sup>

Wilson claimed to have gained shadow cabinet approval for the creation of such a ministry in February 1963.<sup>17</sup> Callaghan fully supported the proposal for a new economic ministry and ‘the ideas of indicative planning which we had inherited from the experience of France’.<sup>18</sup> From March 1963, there followed a series of meetings and committees within the Labour party which developed the idea of an economics ministry devoted to planning and production. A paper by the Finance and Economic Policy Sub-committee which concentrated on regional development discussed the possibility of creating a Ministry of Production (or Economic Planning) alongside a Ministry of Land Production.<sup>19</sup> The proposal to establish the DEA was finally announced on 11 September 1964 when Labour published its’ manifesto.

Brown was to become the most enthusiastic supporter of the DEA. Having chaired the Home Policy Committee of the Labour Party, he was already pushing for ‘re-styling the Government’.<sup>20</sup> Brown believed that the DEA should not be ‘subordinated to the orthodox

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<sup>15</sup> Wilson, *A Personal Record*, p.3. For the growing support for planning by both Labour and Conservative parties in the post war period see Cronin (2001), Labour’s ‘National Plan’, pp. 215-232. ‘The new respectability of planning offered Labour an unprecedented opportunity ... It meant that when Harold Wilson led the party to victory in 1964, there was support for planning that encompassed both sides of industry, crossed party lines , and even infected state officials’, pp.220-221.

<sup>16</sup> See below.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London, Collins, 1988), p.153.

<sup>19</sup> Finance and Economic Policy Sub-Committee, *Regional Administration*, RD. 597/December 1963.

<sup>20</sup> Brown, *My Way*, p.95.

financial policy of the Treasury<sup>21</sup> Callaghan, who admitted to being no economist and relied on advisers was less enthusiastic about this innovation. Crosland was the recognised economist but Callaghan still maintained that the Treasury could deliver the desired growth. Wilson's authorised biographer recounted an interview with Callaghan in which the former chancellor stated that the DEA was unnecessary in 1964 as the Treasury under William Armstrong was ready to countenance an 'expansionist' policy; also, that Callaghan's private secretary had christened the new department – the 'Department of Extraordinary Aggression'.<sup>22</sup>

The new Chancellor interpreted this development as a deliberate attempt by Wilson to encourage rivalry between these departments which Wilson termed 'creative tension'. This would lead to more efficient performances by those institutions although Callaghan personally did not consider this approach fruitful.<sup>23</sup> Callaghan pointed to the potential development of 'turf wars' between the two institutions.<sup>24</sup> Crosland was to find himself compromised by this potential conflict of interests in the four months he was minister at the DEA. Peter Hennessy stated that Wilson developed a degree of animosity towards the Treasury and admitted as such in an interview with Hennessey in 1985: 'Some of us had more success than others. I had been in the Civil Service in the war ... anyone who had had that knew a little bit about fighting back and working around them ... they still wheedled and played their little tricks'.<sup>25</sup>

An agreement over the division of responsibilities between the two departments was imperative. This agreement was termed the Concordat. The DEA was to be responsible for

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp.95-96.

<sup>22</sup> Philip Ziegler, *Wilson. The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1993), p.170.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.171.

<sup>24</sup> James Callaghan, *Time*, p.166.

<sup>25</sup> Hennessy, *Whitehall*, p. 181.

long term aspects of economic policy for physical resources, incomes policy, economic growth and regional and industrial policy. The Treasury's responsibilities would be short-term economic policy and finance.<sup>26</sup> The pressing economic crisis led to a lack of time with which to craft a suitable understanding between the departments and there was, in Callaghan's opinion, an unwillingness on the part of those involved to make it work. 'The Treasury began to regard the DEA as unrealistic, and the DEA considered the Treasury obstructive'.<sup>27</sup> Brown agreed: 'We did manage to draft something that I called a 'Concordat', but it never got itself formally accepted between Jim Callaghan, the Prime Minister and myself'.<sup>28</sup> Roy Jenkins, who became the new Minister of Aviation, termed this division of responsibilities between the departments as 'dyarchy' which he considered 'was to be the order of the day on the economic front, with George Brown given precedence as head of the new Department of Economic Affairs, but Callaghan commanding the truncated although seasoned timbers of the Treasury'.<sup>29</sup> Opinions within government and the civil service varied concerning the wisdom of the creation of the DEA. There was a concern among some Labour MPs that there would be some opposition and obstruction by the civil service to the new party of government after thirteen years of Conservative rule based on class or ideological grounds. However, these suspicions were 'largely unfounded' according to one authority.<sup>30</sup>

Douglas Jay, President of the Board of Trade, had no doubt that this arrangement would fail, as had the short-lived Department of Economic Affairs in 1947 in the Attlee Government.

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<sup>26</sup> Callaghan, *Time*, p.166.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Brown, *My Way*, p.99.

<sup>29</sup> Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London, Pan Books, 1991), pp.156-167.

<sup>30</sup> See Kevin Theakston, 'The 1964-70 Labour Governments and the Whitehall Reform', Polis Working Party Paper No. 2, University of Leeds, February 2004, p.6.

For Jay, the establishment of the DEA would be a ‘repetition of the discredited muddle of 1945-7’.<sup>31</sup> A separation of Treasury functions had been attempted in the Attlee Government. In 1947 this separation was abandoned and Cripps was made Chancellor of the Exchequer and Minister of Economic Affairs.<sup>32</sup>

Sir William Armstrong, Joint Permanent Secretary at the Treasury between 1962 and 1968, doubted the viability of dividing responsibilities between the two departments.<sup>33</sup> However, Eric Roll, who became Permanent Under Secretary of State at the DEA in 1964, wrote enthusiastically in 1966 about the importance of the need for a department which had a pivotal role to play in the development of the economy in both the public and private spheres; that ‘economic management’ by the government was therefore ‘inevitable’ and that the newly formed DEA was designed for that purpose.<sup>34</sup> In 1985, Roll commented further on the nature of the Concordat stating that ‘...The Treasury presumably cast in the role of the Pope and the DEA in that of the secular power, although George Brown on occasion liked to refer to himself as the ‘Pope’!’<sup>35</sup> Douglas Allen, Permanent Secretary of State at the DEA between 1966 and 1968, considered that the creation of the DEA reflected a widely held view that macro-economic control of the economy, in which short-term considerations predominated, did not

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<sup>31</sup> Douglas Jay, *Chance and Fortune: A Political Record* (London, Hutchinson, 1980), p.295.

<sup>32</sup> See Douglas Jay, ‘Government Control of the Economy: Defects in the Machinery of Government’, *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No.2 (1968), pp.137-9.

<sup>33</sup> For an explanation of Armstrong’s view, see Christopher Clifford, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Department of Economic Affairs 1964-69: British Government and Indicative Planning’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Summer 1997), p.99.

<sup>34</sup> Eric Roll, ‘Machinery of Economic Planning: 1. Department of Economic Affairs.’ *Public Administration*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1966), p.1.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Roll, *Crowded Hours* (London, Faber and Faber, 1985) p. 152.

deal sufficiently with the problems of the United Kingdom economy in the 1960s and that a closer system of consultation with industry was necessary.<sup>36</sup>

There was some support for the DEA within the press. Geoffrey Owen, Industrial Editor of the *Financial Times*, believed that the Treasury was overly concerned with ‘short-term financial regulation’ and that ‘.it was instinctively inclined to curb expansion rather than to generate it’, whereas the DEA was committed to faster economic growth and had the power to carry it out.<sup>37</sup> The *Economist* was more enthusiastic about the potential working relationship between the two departments in the first month of the life of the DEA, stating that ‘all soundings suggest that the two departments are so far co-operating much more sympathetically than cruel cynics had expected’.<sup>38</sup> In particular, it pointed to the economic expertise of Crosland whose appointment at the DEA along with that of Robert Neild at the Treasury had considerable significance for the management of Britain’s economic affairs and could lead to cross fertilisation of idea between the two departments.<sup>39</sup>

The death of Hugh Gaitskell in 1963 had placed Crosland in a weaker position in the party for he had been a political ally and friend of the leader. In the subsequent leadership election, he had actively supported Callaghan against Brown and Wilson the eventual winner. When Callaghan was appointed Chancellor, Crosland, who harboured ambitions for this post, feared for his future in the party.<sup>40</sup> Crosland made little attempt to come to terms with the new

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas Allen, ‘The Department of Economic Affairs’., *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No.4 (1967), p.352.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Owen, ‘The Department of Economic Affairs. An Experiment in Planning’, *Political Quarterly*, Vol. 36. No. 4, 1965, p.380.

<sup>38</sup> *The Economist*, 31 October 1964, p.475.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> See Kevin Jeffreys, *Anthony Crosland* (London, Richard Cohen Books, 1999), pp. 88-89.



leader and even considered withdrawing from politics. Tony Benn approached Crosland and tried to convince him to reconsider his attitude to Wilson.

I had a long talk to Tony about his attitude to Wilson, who he still thinks is a shit, but who has done very well and would like to help in any way he could. I must try to pass this on to Harold since Tony is too good to waste. But the simple fact is that with Hugh's death his courtiers feel out in the cold – exactly as I felt with Hugh.<sup>41</sup>

Crosland and Roy Jenkins who both perceived the Labour Party as a social democratic movement, were more supportive of Wilson after his speech at the party conference in Scarborough in October 1963. Wilson called for social reform twinned with economic growth based upon state-sponsored advanced scientific research – an alliance of 'science and socialism'. Both stood in the PLP elections to the shadow cabinet and, although they did not gain a place in the top twelve, they had indicated their ambition for advancement. Brown had come to respect Crosland's expertise in economics and in discussions concerning the establishment of a new department, Crosland had come to be accepted as the probable Deputy Minister.<sup>42</sup> Following Labour's election victory, Crosland's appointment was confirmed by Brown at a celebration party on the evening of 17 October 1964, even though Crosland still entertained hopes that he might be appointed Callaghan's deputy at the Treasury.<sup>43</sup>

Callaghan believed that there was another factor which motivated Wilson to create the DEA. He needed to find a post for George Brown suited to his economic expertise and prestigious enough for a senior figure who had been his closest rival in the leadership election

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<sup>41</sup> Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness: Diaries 1963-67* (London, Hutchinson, 1994) 10 May, 1963, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, *In My Way*, p.90.

<sup>43</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p.96.

of 1963. 'The Prime Minister had a problem of Cabinet balance and needed to satisfy the tremendous talents and energy of George Brown'..<sup>44</sup> Michael Stewart agreed that Brown's position within the party as Deputy Leader necessitated his appointment to a 'top job' in any future government.<sup>45</sup> William Armstrong also speculated on Wilson's decision regarding Crosland's appointment as Brown's deputy at the DEA. This may have been indicative of Wilson's determination to detach him from Callaghan. Armstrong considered that Wilson was concerned that if one of the foremost economists in the Labour Party and a close colleague of Callaghan had gone to the Treasury, this would have presented a formidable team both in Cabinet and one which could have obstructed Brown at the DEA.<sup>46</sup>

Crosland, however, did not attend a vital meeting on the evening of the first day of government. Wilson met with Callaghan and Brown and they agreed that there would be no devaluation of the pound. Wilson was determined that a Labour Government was not to be labelled as the party of devaluation - the party which squandered money and failed to have the confidence of the bankers. He was convinced that a Labour government should not take the 'easy way out' and that 'speculation would be aroused every time Britain ran into even minor economic difficulties' under a Labour administration.<sup>47</sup> The previous Labour government had been responsible for the devaluation of 1949 and had received much criticism. Crosland was

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<sup>44</sup> Callaghan, *Life*, p.165.

<sup>45</sup> Stewart, *The Jekyll and Hyde Years*, p.53.

<sup>46</sup> Armstrong told Susan Crosland that 'Harold was bent on divide and rule ... If Tony was with Jim, George would have had Crosland and the Treasury faced against him'. Crosland, *Crosland*, p.126.

<sup>47</sup> Wilson, *Government*, p.6. 'Within its own ranks, there were enthusiasts for devaluation who argue that an opportunity had been missed and that an early downward adjustment for sterling would have boosted exports and reduced imports and could have been blamed on the Conservatives'. Scott Newton, 'The two sterling crises of 1964 and the decision not to devalue'. *Economic History Review*, Vol.62, No. 1, 2009, p.74. An assessment of Wilson's handling of these crises is examined by Newton in this article (pp.73-98).

annoyed that he had not been involved in this decision for he was convinced that only by devaluation could exports be driven up, the adverse balance of payments addressed and growth assured.<sup>48</sup> Although he remonstrated with Brown to reconsider, it was obvious that the topic was never to be referred to again in political discussion, the issue becoming what Crosland was to call ‘the unmentionable’.<sup>49</sup> Crosland was to refer to the issue of devaluation many times to the annoyance of many of his colleagues. Samuel Brittan, who was Economics editor for the *Observer* and had joined the DEA on 1 November 1964, records in his diary that Crosland refused to obey Brown’s injunction concerning the topic of devaluation. ‘Also, (Crosland) received very severe talking to from GB for privately advocating the unmentionable’.<sup>50</sup> A reputed economist with several publications to his name, Crosland regarded the failure to devalue immediately in 1964 a grave mistake which would severely hamper the work of the DEA. Wilson, Brown and Callaghan considered the matter closed but Crosland used every opportunity to push for this measure.

#### Crosland’s contribution to the work of the DEA.

The existing DEA records for the months during which Crosland was Economic Secretary reveal his involvement in two areas in particular: firstly, the attempt to boost exports and secondly, the assistance which he gave to Brown in the formulation of a Declaration of Intent

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<sup>48</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, pp.127-8

<sup>49</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.128. Susan also records that in August 1965 Crosland suggested that all Cabinet ministers write to Wilson and give their individual views on the devaluation Question. *Ibid*, p.166.

<sup>50</sup> Roger Middleton (ed.), *Inside the Department of Economic Affairs. Samuel Brittan The Diary of an ‘Irregular’ 1964-6* (Oxford, OUP, 2012), 5 January 1964, p.72. Eventually, even though Crosland had left the DEA for the DES, his persistence appeared to be successful for Brittan recorded in his diary on 16 August 1965 that ‘Crosland said to have converted GB to devaluation’. *Ibid*, p.112.

with unions and employers on prices and incomes. During his appointment, he was given a broad brief within the department although his time was taken up with two key areas: improving domestic productivity and assisting export growth. The latter task was considered crucial to solving the undisclosed balance of payments deficit of £800m inherited from the previous government. This section will firstly examine the various methods that Crosland employed to increase productivity at home and export growth abroad. Crosland advocated a varied package of methods – modernisation of management techniques, a freeze on wages and prices, moderation of the tax regime on employers and measures to encourage union co-operation – all within the context of advice proffered by his officials.

One of Crosland's first duties was to attend the council of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in Geneva on 1 November 1964 in order to defend the decision of the Labour government to impose a fifteen per cent surcharge on all foreign imports, except raw materials, tobacco and food.<sup>51</sup> Wilson wanted an economist from the DEA to justify this measure.<sup>52</sup> Crosland explained his defence of the surcharge in a speech in the House of Commons on the night of 4 November 1964 answering the charge by Conservatives that the imposition was unjustified and did not receive the sanction of other members of EFTA.<sup>53</sup> Crosland explained that faced with a deficit running at something between £700 million and £800 million this year, all other options available to the government would be rejected:

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<sup>51</sup> Britain had applied to become a member of the European Economic Community (the 'Common Market') which had been established by six western European countries in 1956. Its failure to become part of this grouping had led Britain to form a separate trading group - the European Free Trade Association - with those outside the EEC zone in 1960. This association (EFTA) comprised of predominately Scandinavian nations with Britain, Switzerland and Austria and with its headquarters in Geneva.

<sup>52</sup> For the success of the imposition of the surcharge on imports in addressing the balance of payments in October 1964, see Newton, 'The two sterling crises', p.77.

<sup>53</sup> Crosland, HC Deb, 4 November 1964, vol. 701, cc214-347.

increased borrowing, deflation, 'stop-go', export subsidies, import quotas and tariffs. None of these measures would eliminate the deficit and all would entail associated problems for the consumer.

However, Crosland did point to the inconsistency in the international trading regulations by which the United Kingdom was bound in regard to the choice between quantitative restrictions and a charge on imports for 'the one that is most liberal the one that is least arbitrary, the one that is least rigid, and the one that allows the most consumer choice is the one ruled out by EFTA and GATT'.<sup>54</sup> Crosland urged revision. To the charge by the Conservative opposition MPs that there had been limited consultation with Britain's European trading partners, he replied that 'elaborate consultation was not possible...if by consultation one means something genuine and real and not just an additional 12 hours advance warning'.<sup>55</sup> Crosland stressed that Britain's trading connections were global – Commonwealth, the Six, the United States and the IMF – and, therefore, it was not feasible to consult them all as quickly as required to meet the pressing problem of the deficit. He concluded by condemning the Conservative government's legacy as one which had 'left the economy basically weak...an economy in which whenever we have full employment we have had a flood of manufactured imports coming in, and our exports increasing less than those of other countries'.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout his four months at the DEA, Crosland investigated ways of restraining wage levels and controlling prices by other means and supporting Brown's attempt to achieve a voluntary agreement by unions and employers to these ends. Although Crosland was an accomplished economist he was prepared to consult economists who were appointed to the department and those whom he respected. He did not refer to think tanks and would still

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

exercise his own judgement. At the end of October, Crosland received advice from Nicholas Kaldor an economic adviser and from Donald MacDougall the Director of Economics at the DEA.<sup>57</sup> Both gave their assessment of the remedies available to address the balance of payments deficit by improving the competitiveness of Britain's trading position abroad. Kaldor's prescription for this problem was a combination of internal taxation (a modified Universal Value-Added tax) which would then provide subsidies for exporters which would necessarily involve a reduction in wage levels.<sup>58</sup> Kaldor considered an incomes policy as far too lengthy a process. Crosland's annotations on this paper emphatically rejected Kaldor's advice.<sup>59</sup> MacDougall advised against Kaldor's scheme as unmanageable and unacceptable to the officials in the DEA.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Kaldor and Thomas Balogh were two prominent post-war economists both from Hungary who came to play a significant role in advising Labour Governments between 1964 and 1970. (Kaldor was eventually appointed as Professor of Economics at Cambridge University in 1966.) He championed the use of Value Added Tax and the short-lived Selective Employment Tax at the DEA. Thomas Balogh was appointed as Wilson's economic adviser in 1964. He had made his name with the publication in 1959 of his celebrated essay 'The Apotheosis of the Dilettante' which was an attack on the Civil Service which he regarded as traditional staffed and therefore as unfit to meet the economic challenges of the Britain of the 1960s. He advocated the use of more specialist advisers. This theme was taken up by the *Financial Times* economic commentator Samuel Brittan who was also an adviser at the DEA.

<sup>58</sup> Nicholas Kaldor. 'A Tax Instrument for Adjusting the Balance Of Payments'. A Note by Mr. Nicholas Kaldor'. 25 October 1964. The National Archives, EW 16/2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Donald MacDougall was Director of the National Economic Development Council in 1964 on leave from Nuffield College, Oxford. Wilson asked him to become Director at the DEA if Labour won. He was pro-devaluation.

The immediate reactions of many people will doubtless be that it is politically impossible because it is too revolutionary, appears too crackpot, and is too reminiscent of Speenhamland ... [it would be] an administrative nightmare both for the taxation authorities and for business ... [also it was] too dangerous internationally and if it were thought too crackpot to last, there might be a capital flight.<sup>61</sup>

Crosland continued to explore measures to strengthen Britain's trading position in Europe and strengthen sterling although the successful application of such measures was limited, on occasions, by the ill-defined relationship between the DEA and the Treasury. Crosland was concerned about the export of private capital which he considered should be restrained. The continuing dichotomy in the roles played by the DEA and the Treasury was highlighted in a ministerial letter sent by Crosland to Brown's office concerning this issue, which was also of concern to the Bank of England.

The matter is vitally important, but we cannot take it much further in this Department since the Treasury and the Bank alone have the detailed expertise. But a strong shove is desirable. Dr. Balogh is conducting guerrilla operations from his office. Would you please make a frontal assault by sending the attached letter to the Chancellor?<sup>62</sup>

Brown complied with Crosland's request for an uncompromising letter to be sent to the Treasury although no copy of this letter exists in the departmental files.

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<sup>61</sup> 'Note by Mr Kaldor'. MacDougall to Economic Secretary. 5 November 1964. TNA, EW 16/2. The Speenhamland System was introduced in 1795 in villages in southern England as a means of supplementing agricultural wages through a subsidy from the poor rate.

<sup>62</sup> Crosland to First Secretary of State. 'Export of Private Capital'. 21 December 1964. TNA, EW 16/1.

Crosland also favoured the use of tax incentives for exporters and he referred to an article in the *Times* which advocated a five-year plan of tax reduction on overseas sales.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, he recognised that this policy would not be popular with Britain's European trading partners if the Government was seen to be assisting British exporters in gaining an advantage by the use of this instrument. 'In case you have not seen it, I am enclosing a telegram about EFTA Working Party No. 2 which shows how carefully we must watch the international repercussions of anything we do'.<sup>64</sup> Brown saw this minute and demonstrated his belief in the concept of indicative planning and protection, as adopted by the French government, by writing on the paper, 'I'm rapidly becoming a Gaullist and EFTA can take a large share of the responsibility!'.<sup>65</sup>

Crosland also pressed the department to consider French methods of planning as an economic model for enhancing exports, and he urged officials to obtain information on the French method of aiding exports through Government purchase.<sup>66</sup> Crosland further insisted that the departmental officials give high priority to expenditure on roads leading to docks. As MP for Grimsby since 1959, Crosland would have understood the importance of this measure. Crosland had developed a genuine empathy with the importance of the fishing industry in his constituency and the part played by the extensive dock network in the economy of the town. The *Guardian* journalist Peter Jenkins had been most impressed with Crosland's knowledge

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<sup>63</sup> Crosland to Sir Donald MacDougall. 'Tax Incentives for Export'. 16 December 1964. TNA, EW 16/1. Donald MacDougall was another leading economist who had served in Churchill's statistical office in the war before lecturing in economics at Oxford University. He headed the National Economic Development Office, 1962-64.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Russel to Allen re Economic Secretary's Meeting with Allen/Catherwood on export package. 23 December 1964. TNA, EW 16/1.



and commitment to Grimsby's future while on a visit to the area.<sup>67</sup> Following on the idea of an export levy on certain industries, Crosland looked to a similar measure introduced in 1947 by the previous Labour Government. Again, the minutes of this meeting make it clear that Crosland had to be reminded that the authority of the DEA was limited by consideration of other departmental interests especially the Board of Trade.

In the four months that Crosland was deputy to Brown, the issue that dominated the work of the DEA (other than that of increasing exports and helping to address the deficit) was the attempt to come to an early agreement with employers and unions on the matter of prices and incomes. An Incomes policy seemed to be a modern dynamic way of planning economic growth by democratic agreement, capable of bringing to an end a period of uncontrolled 'dashes for growth' ending in inflation and then officially inspired deflation.<sup>68</sup> Both Brown and Wilson saw an agreement on incomes as crucial to the future success of a National Plan for economic growth under the new government and there was much support for such a policy. A planned growth of incomes was seen as an instrument that would check inflation as the economy expanded and it could be achieved voluntarily through consultations with unions and employers.<sup>69</sup> They recognised that a more independent machinery to review incomes and prices would be required and that planned expansion of incomes meant that wages and salaries would have to be related to a measurable increase in productivity.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Jenkins, 'The Train to Crosland Road', *Guardian*, 21 January 1970.

<sup>68</sup> See Glen O'Hara, 'Planned Growth of Incomes' or 'Emergency Gimmick'? The Labour Party, The Social Partners and Incomes Policy, 1964-1970. *Labour History Review*, Vol. 69, No. 1, April 2004, p.59. O'Hara examined the reasons for the eventual failure of such a policy in the 1960s citing ideological confusion and conflict, as well as the structure of British industrial relations and administration. *Ibid.* p77.

<sup>69</sup> See Labour Party, *Thirteen Wasted Years* (London, Labour Party, 1963) p.55.

<sup>70</sup> For the commitment of Brown and Wilson to the establishment of machinery to regulate prices and incomes, see Brown, *In My Way*, p.104 and Wilson, *Labour Government*, p.63.

Brown made the framing of this agreement his main priority from October and finally achieved his objective on 16 December when employers, unions and government signed the mutual *Declaration of Intent on Productivity, Prices and Incomes*. Brown was determined eventually to enshrine this declaration in statute and on 10 August 1966 a bill passed its third reading. In fact, Wilson was concerned that this aspect of the work of the DEA was becoming an obsession with Brown. The Prime Minister felt that the department had become 'so overborne by prices and incomes questions that it was not driving ahead sufficiently fast with industrial planning and productivity questions'.<sup>71</sup> Brown was to admit that Wilson was right and some warned him that '... in getting myself identified as the Prices and Incomes 'King' I was losing the chance of being identified as the general Economic Minister'.<sup>72</sup>

Crosland was given a significant role in the discussions with departmental officials leading up to the signing. It was in these discussions that Crosland was able to press for his preferred measures that should be part of any agreed strategy with unions and employers: the use of the instrument of wage 'freeze' and possibly a freeze on prices; modernisation of industrial practices; measures which would appeal to the separate demands of unions and employers. Finally, Crosland stressed that the DEA should press for a greater say in the Autumn Budget of 1964. Crosland's ideas were received with varying degrees of approval within the department in the discussions that surrounded the framing of the Declaration of Intent and that if the issue of devaluation was not an option available, then the measures above were, in his opinion, appropriate alternative strategies.

In the early discussions on the nature of an incomes policy which should be offered to the unions, Crosland continued to press the use of a freeze, but considered other features in an overall package put to employers: a capital gains tax, a 'token' increase in profits taxation,

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<sup>71</sup> Wilson, *A Personal Record*, p.5.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, *My Way*, p. 119

action on business expenses and a tax on gifts in order to stop death duty evasion. Throughout discussions, the DEA officials reiterated the line that the use of a 'freeze' was undesirable. 'A short-term freeze of wage increases was not practicable. It was also undesirable since it might increase the influence of the more militant union members ... there was a need for a long-term policy'.<sup>73</sup> Crosland was still keen to entertain the idea of a wage freeze three weeks before the declaration was signed much to the annoyance of the civil servants who advised against it. The concept of a 'guiding light' was recommended, whereby, there would be an agreed and published view from employers and unions on a permissible annual rate of increase of incomes. Reasons were advanced in this paper to explain why an immediate 'wages freeze' was considered 'undesirable': 'It merely dams up wage claims and leads to unusually large increases after the period of the freeze is over ... there are a large number of claims outstanding ... any freeze is liable to give rise to anomalies which may break down [and] it would undermine the influence of the TUC'.<sup>74</sup>

Crosland was concerned about the reaction of the unions and therefore proposed measures to gain their support. In response to wage claims higher than the so called 'guiding light' in the autumn of 1964, a new tactic was proposed – a higher increase in pay would only be granted if restrictive practices were abolished and productivity raised.<sup>75</sup> Also, there should be a new body to deal with exceptional cases for wages and salary increases. The Labour Government was committed to the abolition of the National Incomes Commission and it was recommended that any new body set up should cover a wider field than wages and salaries and

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<sup>73</sup> 'Note from Dawe to Sargent: DEA', 27 October 1964. TNA, EW 8/6.

<sup>74</sup> 'Crosland to First Secretary of State Incomes Policy', 28 October 1964. TNA, EW 8/6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

could deal with global profits.<sup>76</sup> A last measure was also urged. ‘To win the co-operation of the Unions, an Autumn Budget including a capital gains tax was highly desirable’.<sup>77</sup>

Crosland fully endorsed the measures discussed. A note to Brown encapsulated much of his political and social philosophy in urging the Chancellor to announce an Autumn Budget ‘for every political and psychological reason’.<sup>78</sup> He insisted that Callaghan as Chancellor should redistribute wealth in the interest of social justice in future budgets and he made no attempt in his introduction to the note to disguise what he considered should be the political aims of budgetary statements. ‘Herewith a brief political note on the tax changes required to create the right climate for an incomes policy - many of them are also desirable on other grounds’.<sup>79</sup> The Economic Secretary proposed a series of measures to be included in the Autumn Budget which would achieve in his opinion, a more equitable society and measures which would satisfy the unions: capital gains tax, a ‘token’ increase in profits taxation and action on business expenses. Finally, he urged the Chancellor to state that if in future profits or dividends moved ahead of wages he would either raise profits tax or introduce a profit or dividend equalisation levy.<sup>80</sup>

Crosland made further suggestions which he felt should be included in the April Budget: a full capital gains tax, a changeover from profits tax to a new corporation tax and a

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<sup>76</sup> The National Incomes Commission – known as ‘Nicky’ – was established by the Conservative Government in 1962 in order to relate wage claims to economic growth. Brown replaced this body with the National Board of Prices and Incomes in April 1965 although it still lacked statutory powers to enforce its reports and recommendations. See Peter Dorey, ‘From a ‘Policy for Incomes’ to Income Policies’, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, Peter Dorey (ed), (London, Routledge, 2006) pp.73-77.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Note from Dawe to Sargent: DEA’, 27 October 1964, TNA, EW 8/6.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Crosland to First Secretary of State’, 28 October 1964, TNA, EW 8/6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

tax on gifts in order to stop death duty evasion. This first document was to be seen by Brown solely for it was headed as ‘Top Secret’. The name of Sir Eric Roll was pencilled in but five other officials including Sir Douglas McDougall deleted. However, it was then downgraded to ‘Confidential’ and a second document was issued seemingly the same day (28 October 1964) with greater access approved for officials. Roll alone, it would seem, had Crosland’s confidence in this matter – other officials were excluded perhaps to avoid further resistance to his ideas.

The cooperation of the unions was seen as pivotal to the success of any agreement and Crosland was concerned that the inducements already offered were not enough to satisfy the union leaders. ‘It is questionable whether the above contains an adequate quid pro quo to attract the co-operation of the trade unions in an incomes policy’.<sup>81</sup> Policies to limit the profits of employers were reiterated – a new capital gains tax, corporation tax and more stringent control of business expenses. Additional other policies in Crosland’s opinion, might create the ‘atmosphere favourable to a bargain’ – but not included in an eventual agreement – were better provision for redundancy, more vigorous action against regional unemployment and the awarding of higher pensions.<sup>82</sup>

Crosland was clearly concerned that the interests of employers should also be addressed. He opposed suggestions by economic advisers that the National Economic Development Council (NEDC) should handle issues concerning prices and incomes. ‘Members of the T.U.C. would have to pronounce on individual wage claims. And it would go contrary to the whole concept of N.E.D.C. which is that it should deal only with general policy. So I fear this is no good’.<sup>83</sup> Presented with a draft statement on prices and incomes, he commented,

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> ‘Economic Secretary to First Secretary of State’, 30 October 1964, TNA, EW, 8/6.

‘Do we really want to give this rigid guarantee on total profits? I would prefer the emphasis to be rather on prices and personal incomes, with the reference to profits somewhat blurred’.<sup>84</sup> He advised against punitive taxation on company profits. He believed that this would discourage attempts to modernise industry by efficiency measures or by the increasing use of technology. He advised against monopolies and restrictive practices which he considered encouraged inefficiency, waste and high prices. Commenting on the attempt to set up a body which was to oversee the level of prices and incomes, Crosland pressed for a stronger statement than drafted to indicate that the new body should, where possible, urge wage restraint especially excessive wage increase.<sup>85</sup>

In the draft document, the government committed itself to several targets including higher investment, enhanced industrial skills, modernisation of industry, balanced regional development and higher exports for the largest ‘sustained’ expansion of production and real incomes. Before ‘sustained’, Crosland suggested the word ‘possible’, indicative that, in his view, the government might be committed to an over-ambitious target in the future.<sup>86</sup> Three days later in response to a letter from the Board of Trade concerning the wording of the draft Statement of Intent, Crosland commented: ‘I think this is a fair point. But it would be met merely by the deletion of the three words ‘a strong currency’.<sup>87</sup> (Another possible reference by the Economic Secretary to the ‘unmentionable’ of devaluation which he was to continue to advocate in the early months of the Government.) Crosland was to continue to press for the modernisation of industry in speeches in December 1964 and January 1965. He called for

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<sup>84</sup> ‘Prices and Incomes –Possible Draft of a Joint Statement’, 11 November 1964. TNA, EW 8/1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Dawe to Caulcott, 17 November 1964. TNA, EW 8/1.

<sup>87</sup> Crosland to Caulcott, ‘Incomes Policy. Board of Trade Letter of 18 November’, 19 November 1964. TNA, EW 8/1. There appears to be no record of this letter in the relevant file of the DEA.

employers and workers to abandon ‘out-dated ideas and old practices’.<sup>88</sup> In Nottingham, he accused managers of ‘inadequate’ technical knowledge which had prevented the widespread adoption of the latest equipment and machinery and he called for industry to invest in advanced research and development. These measures, he stressed, would be vital to the achievement of further growth.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout negotiations on a policy on prices and incomes, the TUC representatives predictably countered with the importance of discussing ‘more fully alternatives’ to a definitive policy that favoured employers. The union leaders stressed the need for a firmer statement on restraint on the growth of profits and dividends.<sup>90</sup> Crosland supported Brown’s assertion that agreement on a prices and incomes policy was imperative so that it would show ‘that we meant business both home and abroad’.<sup>91</sup> However, he further reassured the trade union representatives that price competitiveness would not impact adversely on workers. ‘There is no question of undercutting our competitors through a fall in living standards. The objective is to keep the increase in money incomes in line with the rate of increase of productivity and thus secure general price stability’.<sup>92</sup> The draft document of intent obliged the government to use their fiscal powers to correct any excessive growth in aggregate profits as compared with the growth of total wages and salaries. The TUC representatives were urging direct control of profits by ‘other appropriate means’. Crosland rejected this.

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<sup>88</sup> *Guardian*, ‘‘Long haul’ to efficient economy’, 19 December 1964, p.4

<sup>89</sup> *Guardian*, 16 January 1965, p.14.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> ‘Proposed Statement of Intent on Prices and Incomes’, 23 November 1964, TNA, EW 8/1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

The Government considered that direct control of profits was undesirable in the interests of encouraging greater investment and efficiency and economic growth quite apart from the practical problems involved. They had however adopted a prices policy, which had not been accepted by the previous Government.<sup>93</sup>

Crosland's suggestion that a 'freeze' on prices met with no more support from DEA officials than the use of this device for wages. The chairman of the Working Party on Incomes and Prices, diplomatically, but firmly, rejected this suggestion as policy stating that a 'freeze' was not likely to be practical or desirable at least in the absence of a comparable 'freeze' for wages.<sup>94</sup> The Chairman provided a comprehensive survey of the reasons why a price 'freeze', 'standstill' or 'pause' were unpractical and concluded in the following manner. 'As a long-term solution, however, this course runs up against the difficulty that there are some prices which are outside our control and others in which increases may need to be accepted in the best interests of the economy'.<sup>95</sup>

In the early weeks of 1965, Crosland outlined what he considered to be an appropriate programme required to tackle a predicted balance of payments deficit of £230 million.<sup>96</sup> This programme advocated the continual application of the 'surcharge' on European imports although he accepted that a system of quotas should be examined. However, his strategy now

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> 'Working Party on Incomes and Prices. Prices Policy. Note by the Chairman', E. W. Maude, 24 November 1964. TNA, EW 8/4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* Maude preferred the device favoured by the conservative administration of Harold Macmillan whereby a 'price plateau' was adopted in the autumn of 1956. However, this did not deliver the expected results for wages still rose presenting difficulties for the nationalised industries.

<sup>96</sup> Crosland to First Secretary of State, 'Outlook for 1965', 14 January 1964. TNA, EW 16/1.



included the realisation that government cuts, were necessary especially in overseas defence expenditure and the re-deployment' of those resources elsewhere. The Government should also intervene to restrict private overseas investment. He stressed again that an export-led boom anchored on export tax incentives was 'the basic solution to our difficulties'. With an agreement on prices and incomes, his strategy for the DEA had broadened to call for the acceleration of a regional development policy responding to the evident disparity throughout England in particular.

Several conclusions could be drawn from his final written contribution to the work of the DEA. Crosland was always aware of the international context of Britain's economic situation in particular the advantages that the USA, Germany and Sweden had achieved over Britain through their progressive economic and social programmes. If devaluation was not to be entertained or even mentioned then he felt that an export drive was essential to tackle the balance of payments issue and all measures that the government could adopt to assist this process were vital. Many of the records of the DEA reveal a certain frustration that Crosland felt with the attitude of the unions to negotiations over the declaration of intent. He clearly believed that employers should be relieved of punitive tax burdens which would inhibit the competitiveness of their goods abroad even though the unions considered that their members may be asked to bear a greater share of the tax burden with implications for their standard of living. Crosland was convinced that outdated practices by both management and unions in industry were a key factor hindering increased productivity and he continually urged both to adopt modern methods although always insistent that the fiscal burdens borne by industry should be lightened. His memorandum to Brown included his prescription for the departmental focus for 1965.

Keep up the momentum on prices and incomes, and be very cautious of imposing any further cost increases on exports (e.g. by higher employers' contributions). At a chosen moment, start a new momentum on restrictive work practices and the wasteful use of labour...And naturally push on with all our D.E.A. prodding and planning and bullying.<sup>97</sup>

### Evaluation

Tom Caulcott, the Principal Private Secretary from 1964, perceived Crosland's contribution to the work of the DEA during his brief appointment as mainly organisational. 'The great role that Tony played in the early days was to establish some order in which advice could be presented to George so that he would know the facts when taking a policy decision. Tony got some rational discussion going on the major issues of economic policy: devaluation – on which he refused to keep quiet – the import surcharge, economic councils, the autumn budget of that year'.<sup>98</sup> Brown later acknowledged the benefits that Crosland brought to the department. Recognising him as 'an economist of repute and an exceptional able administrator', Brown stated that Crosland had successfully managed much of the work of the department and had thus allowed Brown 'more time to be a politician as well as a Departmental Minister'.<sup>99</sup>

Some officials in the DEA were not so impressed. Samuel Brittan noted the frustration felt by Crosland concerning the departmental arrangements between the DEA and the treasury. 'Crosland causing much trouble through ignorance of how Government machinery works'.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Crosland, *Crosland*, p.132.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, *In My Way*, p.121

<sup>100</sup> Brittan, *Diary*, p.57. Brittan also objected to Crosland's interference in the use of the Honours system as an incentive to exporters. *Ibid*, p. 63.

Brittan was, of course, an ‘irregular’ and one with limited experience of Whitehall process. Crosland’s persistence over the use of a price and wage ‘freeze’ was firmly resisted by officials although Crosland’s role as an outstanding economist with no previous ministerial experience may have played a part here.

Press opinion on Crosland’s first ministerial post was, in general, favourable. The *Observer* columnist Nora Beloff had already praised ‘the tireless support of this unusually tough and talented deputy’.<sup>101</sup> The *Guardian* also commended his achievements in his first ministerial role and one that had been particularly demanding. He had proved to be one of Wilson’s ‘brightest’ junior ministers.<sup>102</sup> ‘So far his chief tasks in office have been arduous-an obstinate defensive battle to rescue the pound and as George Brown’s economic Minister’.<sup>103</sup> The *Observer* pointed to his achievements in Europe for it considered that Crosland’s departure from the DEA would be a considerable loss. He was an ‘acknowledged European’ who ‘had conspicuously found the continental politicians easier to handle than his senior (cabinet) colleagues’.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, support for Crosland’s performance in Europe was not unequivocal. The *Financial Times* criticised Crosland who it considered had ‘ducked’ the question of future possible negotiations on the surcharge. Although he may have won sympathy for the government’s existing economic dilemmas, he had not dispelled the feeling among EFTA representatives that the UK had ‘publicly scorned her free trade partners’.<sup>105</sup> The *Economist* praised the appointment as one of ‘considerable significance for the management of Britain’s economic affairs’ and was optimistic about the working relationship between

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<sup>101</sup> Nora Beloff, *op. cit.*

<sup>102</sup> *Guardian*, 23 January 1965, p.8.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Observer*, 24 January 1965, p.3.

<sup>105</sup> *Financial Times*, 6 November 1964, p.19.

Crosland and Robert Neild the economic adviser to Callaghan for ‘Both these men talk the same sort of language of economic policy than do their immediate political chiefs’.<sup>106</sup>

Crosland failed to gain any traction within the DEA or government in regard to devaluation which he maintained consistently was the key measure required to tackle the deficit. Brown rejected devaluation and considered that an incomes and prices policy was the priority and much of the focus of the DEA, while Crosland was there, was on the achievement of this agreement leaving Crosland to suggest other policies which would assist economic growth. Roy Hattersley, a friend and supporter of Crosland, considered that Crosland was right to push for devaluation in 1964 rather than have the government forced into it and that if Crosland’s advice had been accepted then ‘the history of the 1960s might well have been changed’.<sup>107</sup>

Crosland therefore strove to press for other instruments to boost exports and limit imports but had little time to implement these at the DEA. Crosland’s strategy for economic prosperity reflected his socialist beliefs for he urged Callaghan to ensure that wealth was redistributed, and that the government should address regional economic differences. While striving to ensure that Britain’s commercial success abroad should be based on price competitiveness he stressed that this should not be achieved at the cost of living standards at home.

Crosland attempted to achieve a balance between social justice for working people while encouraging entrepreneurship and therefore an increase in wages and incomes should reflect the rate of increase of productivity. He stressed throughout his contribution to the debate on the DEA’s policy in regard to relationship between management and unions that business potential should not be limited according to union demands. Industrial growth for Crosland

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<sup>106</sup> *Economist*, 31 October 1964, p. 475.

<sup>107</sup> Hattersley, *Crosland and New Labour*, p.58.

depended upon creating a suitable fiscal environment to enable business to flourish. He considered that calls for the limitation of corporate profits by the unions should be resisted. Callaghan and Brown were more sympathetic to the union position. Crosland was unwilling to develop a closer relationship to the unions, unlike Callaghan whose political success was rooted on their support.

Chapter Two. The Department of Education and Science. (Jan.1965- Aug.1967)

A Minister has the duty - indeed he alone can fulfil this duty – of trying to create a sense of impetus, of things moving, of deep concern for education, a sense that we are all actively working towards the goal of better education, a sense of positive partnership between government, local authorities and teachers...I think that the prime achievement was a matter of morale and impetus.<sup>1</sup>

If it's the last thing I do, I'm going to destroy every fucking grammar school in England, And Wales. And Northern Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

The passionate social revolutionary had been cooled and tempered by the reality of ministerial office. He quickly realised that private education was too tough a nut for Wilson's reformist administration to tackle.<sup>3</sup>

It is not too much to say that the binary policy was the most radical, most especially socialist policy the Labour government had in education.<sup>4</sup>

Harold Wilson appointed Crosland Secretary of State for Education in January 1965 following the sudden promotion of Michael Stewart to the position of Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. He was responsible for an established department and had now achieved full cabinet rank. The post had first been offered to Jenkins. However, he had declined it and opted to

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Crosland in Maurice Kogan, *The Politics of Education. Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan* (London, Penguin Books, 1971) p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Crosland, *Tony Crosland* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1982) p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Price, *Crosland and New Labour*, (ed.) Dick Leonard (London, Macmillan, 1999) p.81.

<sup>4</sup> Tyrell Burgess, *Guardian*, 6 February 1979, p. 9.

remain as Minister of Aviation citing a lack of interest in education.<sup>5</sup> Jenkins also admitted that he offered the excuse that all three of his children were at fee-paying schools and he felt that this would be an obstacle to serving as an Education Minister in a Labour government. He further admitted that his decision to decline Wilson's offer was mixed with an element of jealousy when he heard that Crosland, his 'great friend and formidable rival' had been promoted above him.<sup>6</sup> Wilson considered that the next best candidate and obvious alternative was Tony Crosland who, Wilson maintained, had always taken a keen interest in education.<sup>7</sup> Richard Crossman records the conversation with Wilson and George Wigg concerning Crosland's suitability for the post stating that Wilson also added that Crosland would also be 'a positive addition to the Cabinet'.<sup>8</sup>

Crosland was reluctant to leave the DEA where he felt that his economic training had been put to good use.<sup>9</sup> However, according to one of his biographers, here was an opportunity to direct policy at the highest of levels and in an area that was central to his version of the socialist case for equality.<sup>10</sup> This chapter will focus on the record of Crosland's attempts to administer reform in three areas which received prominence in the Labour Party Manifesto in 1964: the reorganisation of secondary schooling along comprehensive lines; the attempt to address the issue of public and independent schools and their relation to the state sector; and, finally, the expansion and reform of higher and further education.

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<sup>5</sup> See Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London, Macmillan) pp.169-170.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *A Personal Record*, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> *The Crossman Diaries*, Vol. II, January 1965, p.136.

<sup>9</sup> See Jefferys, *Crosland*, p.100.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p.101.

## The Development of State Secondary Education. 1945-1965

The period between the end of the Second World War and the 1960s witnessed significant pressures upon the provision of secondary education in the state sector both in terms of its purpose and structure of delivery. Firstly, there was a growing acceptance that spending on education represented investment in the economy, especially as Britain was facing increasing competition from its trade rivals in the West. Also, a resilient economy would strengthen our position in the developing Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Harold Wilson reinforced the linkage between education and economic prosperity in a speech before the 1964 election referring to a Britain ‘forged in the white heat of the technological revolution’ and that the education system should be reformed to provide an appropriately qualified work force.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, there was growing social demand for education as a means of meeting enhanced working and middle-class aspirations. This period saw the sustained growth of white-collar occupations and rising expectations among a wider section of the population, as most people experienced benefits from post-war recovery, especially a moderate degree of security sustained by a welfare state.<sup>13</sup> The pressure for places followed the rising levels of population growth, placed the education service under increasing strain from the late 1940s onwards.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, there was a developing

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<sup>11</sup> See Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991) pp.199-200. David Eccles was Minister of Education 1954-7 and 1959-62. His belief that education was a vital form of economic and social investment is to be found in the following: *White Paper on Technical Education*, HMSO, 1956.

<sup>12</sup> Harold Wilson, Speech to the Labour Party Conference at Scarborough 1964.

<sup>13</sup> Simon, *Education*, pp199-200.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Educational provision in Britain has been regularly associated with the requirements of the wider economy and society. This association has been termed ‘correspondence theory’ by many educationalists and social theorists. For a fuller discussion of this debate see Peter Dorey, ‘Education, education, education’ in *The Labour Governments 1964-70* ed. Dorey (London, Routledge, 2006), pp. 265-67.



conflict between the assumptions of pre-war educational psychology and post-war radical sociologists concerning the extent to which intelligence was an inherited factor compared to the influence of environmental factors and the extent that ability could be reliably predicted.<sup>15</sup> Fourthly, the ideological struggle between those who wanted selective and those who wanted nonselective ‘comprehensive’ education.<sup>16</sup> The public debate on all these affected the changing role of central government and its relationship to local authorities. Crosland summarised the changes in 1970.

From the late 1940s, the Department of Education began to take a more positive role in planning and developing the service as consumer demand increased. The Department began to take a lead in many areas perceived to be the responsibility of the local authorities: school buildings, teacher supply, pupil-teacher ratio and even more ‘untouchable’ areas such as further and higher education, school curriculum and even standards.<sup>17</sup> Crosland summarised the changes in the post war period in regard to the relationship between central government and local educational authorities as follows. ‘Before the 1944 Education Act, the Board of Education was more concerned to hold the ring between the ‘real’ protagonists, the local authorities, churches and parents, than to exercise positive influence or control. Its functions were regulatory and quasi-judicial’.<sup>18</sup>

Against this background, educational advance was promoted to accelerate the modernisation of society and the economy. Although the Conservative governments of the

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<sup>15</sup> For references see footnote 19 below.

<sup>16</sup> See David Crook, Politics, Politicians, and the English Comprehensive Schools, *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Vol. 42, Issue 3, 2013, pps. 365-380.

<sup>17</sup> David Eccles set up the Curriculum Study Group in March 1962 with the job of ‘foreseeing changes before they become apparent on the ground’. Quoted in Kogan, *Politics*, p.170.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Crosland in Kogan, *Politics*, p.170.

1950s tried to address this situation with their own modernisation strategy, many in the Labour opposition felt that the pace was too slow, the 'old order' was still in control and that the tripartite system based on selection and segregation was not 'fit for purpose' to satisfy the demands of the economy and those of the aspirational working class. Confidence grew in Labour circles that they were in touch with what the electorate desired, particularly in educational matters. Despite talk of modernisation, no Tory Government was likely to destroy the hallmarks of their ascendancy.<sup>19</sup>

Both Crosland and Edward Boyle (Conservative Secretary of State for Education 1962-3) had become convinced that the 11 plus was iniquitous in the arbitrary way that it divided children into those who were suited for an academic future and eventually university and those who failed the test and were destined for basic manual tasks in society. Edward Boyle had become convinced that comprehensive schools offered an effective solution for LEAs seeking to reorganise their pattern of secondary education especially in rural areas. In 1958 a White Paper *Secondary Education for All: A New Drive* advocated the establishment of comprehensives in new housing estates and in rural areas.<sup>20</sup> The 11 plus exam divided the secondary school population into the twenty-five percent who passed and went to the well-resourced grammar school and the seventy-five per cent remaining who were to receive their schooling at the secondary modern and technical schools which received considerably less funding. There was an increasing body of research which cast doubt on the system as

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<sup>19</sup> Denis Dean. 'Circular 10/65 Revisited: The Labour Government and the 'Comprehensive Revolution' in 1964-1965', *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1998, p.66.

<sup>20</sup> See David Crook, 'Edward Boyle: Conservative champion of the comprehensives?' *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1993, pp. 49-26.

unscientific, unjust, wasteful and divisive and this added to the unpopularity of the tripartite system.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of growing support for the comprehensive principle in some local authorities in the 1930s and early 1940s, many in the Labour Party were reluctant to abolish the grammar schools and endorsed the tripartite system established under the Butler Act 1944. The Butler Act 1944 endorsed the tripartite system of secondary education into grammar schools, technical secondary schools and secondary modern schools. All pupils would sit an exam at 11 and would be selected accordingly. The Act allowed for the establishment of comprehensive schools by local authorities – but few were to take advantage.<sup>22</sup> The Labour conferences of the 1950s finally confirmed comprehensive education as party policy<sup>23</sup> and one year before the general election of 1964, a composite resolution on education at the 1963 conference, pledged the Labour Party ‘to set up a universal system of comprehensive education and to abolish the 11plus ... [by] converting permissive into compulsory legislation’.<sup>24</sup> The Labour Party

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<sup>21</sup> See the following: *Early Learning, Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education*, HMSO, 1955; J. E. Floud, A. H. Halsey, and F.M. Martin, *Social Class and Educational Opportunity* (London, Heinemann, 1956); P.E. Vernon, ed., *Secondary School Selection* (London, Methuen, 1957); J. W. B. Douglas, *The Home and The School: A Study of Ability and Attainment in the Primary School* (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1964).

<sup>22</sup> See K. Jefferys, ‘R.A. Butler, the Board of Education and the 1944 Education Act’ . *History* (1984), pp. 415-31. Kenneth. O. Morgan explains the reluctance of the Labour Education Secretary Ellen Wilkinson to terminate selection on her deep attachment to the grammar school as a unique channel of working-class advancement and improvement for Morgan stated that in 1945 Labour believed in the grammar schools. *Labour People*, p.105.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Stewart prepared the new policy statement *Learning to Live* which was presented to the conference in 1958. This was intended to bind future Labour Governments to *require* LEAs to prepare and submit their own plans which, however, would still need ministerial approval.

<sup>24</sup> Labour Party Conference Decision 1963.

Manifesto of 1964 reflected this commitment: ‘Labour will get rid of segregation of children into separate schools caused by selection at eleven years: secondary education will be reorganised on comprehensive line’.<sup>25</sup>

### The Evolution of Crosland’s views on Secondary School Reform.

The school system in Britain remains the most divisive, unjust and wasteful of all of the aspects of social inequality.<sup>26</sup>

With this uncompromising statement, Crosland condemned the secondary education system as it existed. Consequently, he determined to draw attention to the failure of this system to deliver equality of opportunity believing that the middle class took advantage of opportunities offered by this act to the disadvantage of the working class.

The 1944 Education Act set out to make secondary education universal; and formally it has done so. Yet opportunities for advancement are still not equal...The class distribution of the grammar school population is still markedly askew.<sup>27</sup>

Crosland drew attention to research which had shown that the children of the lower working-class performed poorly in the grammar school; but he vehemently rejected the idea that innate genetic factors were a major reason that explained low performance compared to middle class children. He looked for the explanation in social factors citing ‘more crowded homes ... smaller

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Labour: The New Britain’. Election Manifesto of the Labour Party 1964.

<sup>26</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, Constable, 2006), p. 216

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 216-217.

opportunities for extra-curricular activities’ and the unsustainable financial burden.<sup>28</sup> Crosland was to reiterate these views in a heated discussion with supporters of the grammar schools in 1967 when he was invited to an education forum hosted by a popular magazine. ‘There is no scientific evidence to show that 90% of IQ is hereditary. Almost everyone agrees that environment and hereditary factors are twin features’. and he drew a distinction between the life-chances of ‘a child born in the slums with parents disinterested in education and all our children here (those of the middle class)’..<sup>29</sup>

Crosland raised serious objections to the system of selection as established by the 1944 Act. Firstly, the tripartite system was no longer suitable for British society in the post war period. Classic forms of education may have been suitable for ancient Greece, ‘but it would be distinctly odd if educational systems adapted in the one case to an idealised oligarchy of philosopher-kings, and in the other to the needs of a far-flung British Empire, were equally well adapted to a democratic, egalitarian, mid-twentieth century society’.<sup>30</sup> Again, it was exceedingly unpopular. The 11 plus examination came to be bitterly disliked and resented for it was thought that a child’s future should be decided on a single day’s test. Finally, and in Crosland’s opinion the most damning objection, the system was seriously flawed in implementation and was based on a view of society which could no longer be sustained in the post-war era. Crosland also criticised the premise of the tripartite division established by the 1944 act that there were three identifiable types of children and that numbers in each could be accurately pre-determined by exam and assigned to separate schools. In his opinion, ‘the whole business has a distinctly arbitrary air.’<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *The Women’s Journal*, January 1967, p.7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p.227.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.225.

In *The Future of Socialism*, Crosland stated unequivocally the policy required for secondary school reorganisation. The Labour Government should ‘explicitly state a preference for the comprehensive principle and should actively encourage local authorities...to be more audacious in experimenting with comprehensive schools’.<sup>32</sup> Where there was resistance to reorganisation on these lines ‘the object must be to weaken...the significance of the 11 plus examination and the rigidity of the prestige and the physical barriers inherent in the present tripartite stratification’.<sup>33</sup>

Only if...the Labour Party gives education a much higher priority than in the past and comes to see it as of far greater significance to socialism than the nationalisation of meat-procuring or even chemicals – only then will the reality take shape in the form of bricks and mortar, more and better teachers, a longer school life in ample, imaginative surroundings.<sup>34</sup>

Crosland reiterated these views in *The Conservative Enemy* in 1962 where he called for the Labour party to design a policy which concentrated less ‘upon an elite and more on the average standard of attainment’<sup>35</sup>; and, again, in July 1965 when, as Secretary of State, he emphasised that the task of the Government was to ‘include the development of individuals to their full potential’ and not to maintain an elite from one generation to another.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.232-233.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.33.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p234.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Conservative Enemy* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1962), pp.177-178

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Crosland, Speech to the Association of Education Committees, 2 July 1965, Anthony Crosland Papers, ACP, CP 5/2.

In January 1966 Crosland delivered a detailed analysis of the evolution of his thinking in a speech which touched upon such themes as ‘Social Class’, ‘Social Waste’, ‘Equality of Opportunity’, ‘The Bright Boy’ and ‘Streaming’. His opening remarks condemned the tripartite division as established in 1944 and left his audience in no doubt concerning the objective of his educational reform in the secondary sector.

For until recently our schools have been essentially middle-class institutions, and our educational system essentially geared to educating the middle class, plus a few from below who aspired to be middle class or looked like suitable recruits to the middle class. The remainder were given cheaper teachers and inferior buildings.<sup>37</sup>

He condemned the 11 plus exam as unfair to the working-class boy for ‘what we are testing by examinations was perhaps as much home background as innate intelligence’.<sup>38</sup> He was prepared to appease those who feared for the reductions of standards in the comprehensives compared to the grammar schools. ‘The essence of the operation is not to deprive the selected minority of children of a good education, but to give something better to all children’.<sup>39</sup>

Following Labour’s election victory in October 1964, Wilson appointed Michael Stewart, formerly Shadow Minister for Housing, as Secretary of State for Education and Science. Tony Benn welcomed Wilson’s decision to appoint Stewart rather than Richard Crossman who had held the Shadow Education brief. ‘He [Stewart] is a passionate believer in comprehensive education and sees the danger of allowing the direct grant schools to obstruct

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<sup>37</sup> Anthony Crosland, speech to the North of England Education Conference, 7 January 1966.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

the development of fully comprehensive education'.<sup>40</sup> Crosland later admitted that the outlines of policy for secondary school reorganisation were already worked out in Stewart's period of office for 'the basic policy of going comprehensive was of course decided before I got there'.<sup>41</sup> The Labour Manifesto had made a commitment to expansion of comprehensive education but it contained few indications of the pace of reorganisation. Some LEAs had responded to the criticisms of the existing system which had separated children into grammar schools and markedly inferior secondary modern schools.<sup>42</sup>

Stewart realised that he faced many issues other than secondary reorganisation that also would require Treasury funding and would restrict his strategy at a time of mounting economic crisis: expansion of higher education; an accelerated teacher training programme and retraining schemes for existing staff; and plans for the raising of the school leaving age. Stewart and his successors would also have to cope with the recommendations of two reports published in the early 1960s. The Newson Report called for greater attention to be paid to the educational needs of pupils with below average ability in secondary schools – the Robbins Report advocated the expansion of higher education to satisfy the demands of an economy in which science and technology would play a greater role. It was within this context that Stewart decided that the priority was to concentrate upon the ending of selection rather than tackling the question of the infrastructure (size and accommodation) for the new comprehensives. For Stewart, the most urgent task was to set the pace for the abolition of the 11 plus.<sup>43</sup> That pace would be determined by the attitude of the LEAs and a balance would have to be struck between persuading recalcitrant authorities to cooperate or coercing them by legislation if needed. This was a

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<sup>40</sup> Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness* (1963-1967), Diary Entry 6 November, 1964 (London, Hutchinson, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p.186.

<sup>42</sup> Dean, *Politics*, p.73.

<sup>43</sup> Dean, *Politics*, p.73.



sensitive issue especially one for a government with a small majority. Harold Wilson urged caution in regard to the LEAs during a Cabinet discussion. ‘Any reference to legislation should avoid any terms which could be represented by the Opposition as a threat to the independence of the LEAs and the freedom of the choice of parents. It would be better not to legislate until a need to do so could be demonstrated by the response of the LEAs to the proposed circular and there would be no need for legislation immediately’.<sup>44</sup>

Stewart records that there was general agreement in cabinet that legislation should be held in reserve and that ‘if I were questioned on the matter, I should say at the outset that the government would be prepared to legislate if that proved necessary for the carrying out of policy’.<sup>45</sup> Stewart was realistic in the progress that he felt he could make. ‘I did not think we should make a 100 percent transformation in the lifetime of one parliament; but in five years we should have got so far that comprehensive education would be the general rule and separation would be on the way out’.<sup>46</sup> Stewart’s final task before leaving the DES was to begin work on the framing of a circular which called for authorities to submit plans for reorganisation. The wording would be crucial to the progress of secondary school reorganisation along comprehensive lines. This proved to be the most pressing task for the new Secretary of State.

### Secondary School Reform.

In 1971, commenting on his impact at the DES, Crosland summarised his function while Secretary of State as the following:

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Crossman, *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol 1, Diary entry 19.1.1965 (London, Hamish Hamilton and Cape, 1975), p.133.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Stewart, *Life and Labour* (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1980) p. 132.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

My role was to influence the form, content and the style of the circular, subsequently to take the basic tactical decisions on the individual cases like Liverpool and Luton, and generally to set the mood and determine strategy of the operation.<sup>47</sup>

Christopher Price who was Crosland's Parliamentary Private Secretary (1966-67) remarked that Crosland was equally determined to reform the entire education system. 'Crosland inherited an English school and university system which had developed out of a complicated amalgam of religious foundations, class and imperialism. It was deeply hierarchical and Crosland was determined to transform it'.<sup>48</sup>

Wilma Harte, the civil servant with responsibility for reorganising secondary schooling under Crosland, noted that Michael Stewart had been committed to ensuring that policy accorded to his objectives for in regard to the civil service 'he was **not** going to acquiesce in schemes for going comprehensive that did not measure up to what he thought a comprehensive system should be'.<sup>49</sup> She drew an interesting distinction between the two Secretaries of State.

Crosland had a different personality, more open, he had been a university teacher, he liked sitting around the table chucking ideas about. Stewart was the classic 'Conservative minister', they have discussions with a view to arriving at decisions: Labour ministers have discussions with a view to arriving at the truth.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p.188.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher Price, *Crosland and New Labour*, p.68.

<sup>49</sup> Wilma Harte, 2 July 1977, ACP, 5/1, 21. This document represents a short memoir of her time at the DES in the schools branch and was dated ten years after she finished her work on secondary school reorganisation.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

Stewart had prepared a circular to the local education authorities (LEAs) concerning the Labour Government's determination to reorganise secondary education along comprehensive lines; but it was left to Crosland to finalise the form and wording of that document. Susan Crosland gave a personal and succinct summary of Crosland's approach. 'Tony took the draft out, polished it, and began the negotiations with the multitude of local-authority, teacher and other pressure groups that surround Education'.<sup>51</sup> Harte comments that Crosland's contribution was more detailed than had been suggested by his wife.

He received the draft of circular 10/65 in February. He did a fair amount of work on it himself, which ministers don't always do. He didn't change it much, more a question of changing the order of things – very much what civil servants do with drafts. If you'd been involved in writing, a fresh mind with a political view, can make improvements.<sup>52</sup>

The precise wording of the instructions to the LEAs in the circular proved to be one of the most pressing issues. Reg Prentice, the Education Minister' wanted the more forceful 'require' to be inserted in the preamble to the LEAs.<sup>53</sup> The Civil Service wanted the less assertive 'request' according to Harte 'because we didn't want to provoke the local authorities'.<sup>54</sup> She commented further on Crosland's resolution of this issue. 'Reg Prentice found it hard to believe that 'the Government' couldn't impose its will'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p144.

<sup>52</sup> Harte, ACP, 5/1, 21.

<sup>53</sup> Reg Prentice was a Minister of State at the DES, October 1964 until January 1967 when he became minister of Overseas Development.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland was to take much the same view as Stewart on ‘compulsion’. He considered that it was not necessary as ‘most local authorities were Labour controlled and sympathetic to what we were doing - as indeed were some Tory authorities. So plans were coming in at least as fast as we could cope with them. The limitation was one of human and physical resources and not one of statutory powers’.<sup>56</sup> Harte agreed that there was general agreement among authorities on the move to comprehensives and that ‘it wasn’t just a dotty left-wing idea’.<sup>57</sup>

If you had been saying that you need to impose comprehensives on local authorities, what you mean in effect is that most people don’t agree with it. And when you are dealing with a service that is locally administered, that is not a position you want to get into. So Crosland rejected compulsion.<sup>58</sup>

Crosland’s assessment of his work on the circular accords with that of Wilma Harte. ‘The circular existed in embryo when I got there. I thought it pretty unreadable and full of officialese, so I did what I have always done with documents – a great deal of redrafting of the language to try to create the kind of document that I wanted’.<sup>59</sup>

Crosland’s response to the steady flow of submissions from LEAs that followed in the wake of the circular impressed both Harte and Price in the DES. LEAs were given twelve months in which to submit but this was considered by DES officials as a ‘time scale, not as a deadline’.<sup>60</sup> She was aware that ministers at the DES wanted to achieve more than they were

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<sup>56</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p. 191.

<sup>57</sup> Harte, ACP, 5/1, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.22.

empowered to do in regard to directing the local authorities. ‘Ministers find it very hard to accept the narrow range in which they can operate. It is a local authority service. Crosland, not particularly in this field but generally, found it irksome’.<sup>61</sup> However, a solid working relationship emerged as the submissions arrived. Crosland met with officials every week and although they were allowed to deal with each case based on a formula [called ‘books’] devised by the department, Crosland ‘took every final decision on the basis of our ‘books’ and at these meetings. But I don’t believe he was excessively involved in detail’.<sup>62</sup> In Harte’s opinion, the Secretary of State played a valuable role. He was able to defend the decisions to enquiries and concerns because he had a grasp of the main details of the most contentious of these submissions.

If you have a very good memory as Crosland had and if he’s soaked in the stuff, he can both answer immediately, or, if he can’t remember for once, he doesn’t feel so embarrassed to say so. Also, in that very political operation, you want to minimise the impression that it’s all being done by the civil servants. He needed to be able to sound as if he really had done it himself.<sup>63</sup>

Shirley Williams, Minister of Education (1967-9), recalled Crosland’s willingness to involve his department officials in decision making. ‘He conducted his department collegially, so that everyone, however junior, was encouraged to express their views. Reticence or sycophancy had no place in these exchanges’.<sup>64</sup> Christopher Price remembered a similar

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London, Virago, 2009) p.175.

approach to meetings. 'He would sit there at the head of the table, puffing his cigar and taking the various points, calling on each of us to come in on cue and then sum up, always the rational being and always getting his own way but never banging the table'.<sup>65</sup>

Roy Hattersley, a friend and colleague, attests to Crosland's 'impatience' with fine detail and he stressed that for Crosland the priority was the 'ideological importance of comprehensive education'.<sup>66</sup> He recalled Crosland's annoyance with Williams' seeming obsession with examining every reservation and doubt whenever a Townswomen's Guild wanted to 'quibble about a catchment area' leading to postponement for three months.<sup>67</sup> Hattersley commented further that impatience was a 'major asset' in a minister.<sup>68</sup>

Crosland only intervened when a contentious issue arose from a submission. He was reluctant to impose a decision by direction even when pressured by his officials as the case of Ealing below illustrate. Discussions at Curzon Street were the default position. Harte admired the way Crosland tackled submissions considered unacceptable by the officials especially from Labour controlled authorities. Such authorities expected approval automatically. Liverpool was such a case.

This was a great test: could a Labour government say no to a Labour authority who wanted to go comprehensive all in one go...Crosland showed enormous courage. After all the Labour Party suspected that Labour ministers would be gobbled up by the right

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<sup>65</sup> Price, *Crosland and New Labour*, p.73.

<sup>66</sup> Roy Hattersley, *Ibid*, p.62.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*.

wing civil servants and lose touch with the grass roots. By rejecting the scheme, he earned an enormous amount of credit in the educational world.<sup>69</sup>

In the opinion of the officials in the DES, the plan for reorganisation of secondary schools in the Borough of Ealing illustrated the inadequacy of submissions by some LEAs. This ‘botched’ submission, if approved, could have set a precedent for other authorities in England for it would have run counter to the intentions of the Labour Government as outlined in their manifesto.<sup>70</sup> The discussions over the Ealing Plan also reveal how far the process was driven by senior officials and the level at which Crosland intervened.

Harte and her team handled the initial correspondence concerning Ealing’s proposals. The strategy of the Joint Parents Committee of Grammar Schools of Ealing was to prolong the existence of their schools by claiming a procedural irregularity on the part of the Local Authority namely the lack of proper consultation by the authority as stated in circular 10/65. This was the basis of their appeal.<sup>71</sup> When no reply was received, the Parent Committee addressed their grievance to the Secretary of State. Under the title ‘Is there a conspiracy of silence?’. The committee asked whether the DES would stand by the recommendations in the department’s own circular on the Reorganisation of Secondary Education, No. 10/65 regarding consultations with the supply of information to parents and teachers. ‘The Department does not reply to this specific point. Why not?’.<sup>72</sup> The Parents Committee pressed their case further with a more forceful censure of the Secretary of State’s position on this matter. ‘On the face of the

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 5/1, p. 26.

<sup>70</sup> See above p.6.

<sup>71</sup> Joint Parents Committee of Grammar Schools of Ealing, ‘Reorganisation of Secondary Education in the London Borough of Ealing’, 16 October 1965, TNA, ED 147/1318.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 30 October 1965.

facts, it is manifest that the Ealing Authority is to be allowed with impunity to avoid its obligations under Circular 10/65'.<sup>73</sup> They also threatened to inform the parents in the Bournemouth and Surrey Education Authority areas that they would be offered the evidence in their possession of the repudiation by the Secretary of State of the obligations purported to be imposed by Circular 10/65 'as further justification of the decision of their representatives not to accede to the requirements of the Circular'.<sup>74</sup>

Harte and her team had overseen such correspondence with enquiries from concerned bodies within Ealing. It was only when their submission from the Ealing Authority arrived at the DES in late 1966 that Crosland became involved especially as the details of their reorganisation became evident. In a briefing paper circulated among her officials, Harte stated categorically that 'the Ealing Plan must rank with that of Brent (in its original form) for sheer incompetence and slovenliness of thought and presentation'. The outer London LEA of Ealing was made up of the 'old borough of Ealing, respectable middle class; Acton, very far to the left; and Southall, rather run down with a large immigrant population'.<sup>75</sup> The Acton and Southall plans were considered acceptable to the DES.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the Secretary of State's decisions on the Ealing proposals were critical in her opinion because they would set a precedent on the question of what minimum size could be regarded as satisfactory for 11 to 16 schools and their sixth forms. For Harte 'the Ealing version is secondary modern education for all. And pretty poor secondary education at that'.<sup>77</sup> Harte took an uncompromising position

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 January 1966. Bournemouth and Surrey were two LEAs that were in dispute with the DES over the rejection of their original submissions. Harte regarded that by Bournemouth as a 'joke'. See ACP 5/1, 21'

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, Leadbetter to Harte [Ealing Plan], 6 December 1966.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*



that the principles adopted by the Labour administration in regard to educational reform would be enforced by the civil servants at the DES when faced with sloppy reorganisation plans. To accept these 'would make nonsense of the many public statements by Ministers and other Labour spokesmen that grammar school education will not be destroyed by the Governments policy but will on the contrary be made available to all'.<sup>78</sup> She made a strong plea to Crosland that he should be prepared to impose his decision by direction if the authority choose to defy him.<sup>79</sup>

In a draft letter to the Ealing town clerk, Harte stressed that the proposals were 'alien' to the Governments purposes and that the Secretary of State had concluded that 'it would not be educationally advisable, in the light of staffing available, both in country as a whole and Ealing in particular, to attempt to run comprehensive five-year schools as small as those proposed in Ealing'.<sup>80</sup> However, further discussion within the department led to a redrawing of the letter and the adoption of a more emollient tone in the name of the Secretary as advised by a senior official. He made two observations in another note circulated within the department. These, he believed, would hamper the progress of Labours plans. Firstly, he pointed out that, in regard to Ealing a Labour controlled authority, 'it would be an odd situation if the Secretary of State found himself exerting legal powers to prevent a Labour-controlled Authority going comprehensive, while unable to force a Conservative-controlled Authority even to produce a plan'.<sup>81</sup> Secondly, Ealing had co-operated with the DES requests in part but they would still

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> 'Draft Official Letter to The Town Clerk, London Borough of Ealing', 6 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/138.

<sup>81</sup> 'Ealing comprehensive Plan'. Leadbetter to Rossetti, 7 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/1318.

receive a letter ‘fiercer in tone’ than other authorities that had submitted ‘non-plans’.<sup>82</sup> He urged that in this case ‘.the Secretary of State should offer discussion at Ministerial level’.<sup>83</sup>

Revisions made by Crosland to the letter reflected a more flexible approach. Crosland offered a conciliatory addition to the tone of the redraft removing the phrase ‘serious objection’ in relation to the Ealing proposals.<sup>84</sup> ‘He [the Secretary of State] notes that the Ay (Authority) have already introduced a comprehensive system in the Acton area with effect from September 1966’.<sup>85</sup> However, Crosland was not prepared to tolerate more delay by the authority and requested them to reconsider their arrangements again. He deleted the relevant section in the letter and stressed that a meeting with the officials was the only remaining option. The letter concluded in an uncompromising fashion for he removed the phrase ‘if the Authority so desires’ and emphasised that he would conduct the discussion.<sup>86</sup> In a minute to selected officials circulated by Harte, Crosland explained the rationale behind his amendments to the redraft and the tactics he considered appropriate in the case of Ealing: ‘I think that we must give at least an outline reason for rejecting, as we did with Liverpool ... Meanwhile we must keep them talking probably at Ministerial level’.<sup>87</sup>

Having sanctioned one part of the Ealing submission, the final letter sent to the Ealing town clerk on the 18 December 1966 concluded with two definitive statements which reflected a position upon which Crosland was not prepared to compromise. In this paragraph, Crosland laid down the DES policy on attempts by authorities to reorganise secondary schooling by the

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> ‘Redraft of the second page of Mr. Leadbetter’s draft letter’. (Undated) TNA ED 147/1318.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> ‘Minute sheet. Ealing Secondary Reorganisation’. (Undated) TNA ED 147/1318.

exclusive use of existing buildings. This approach would obviously entail a minimum degree of disruption to the authority but would violate the spirit of the comprehensive principle as he envisaged.

He [Secretary of State] has concluded that it would not be educational advisable, in the light of the staffing situation, both in the country as whole and in Ealing in particular, to attempt to run comprehensive five–year schools as small as those proposed ... These proposals [arrangements for three sixth form colleges based on existing grammar schools] are therefore also unacceptable at the present time.<sup>88</sup>

The decision of the DES to reject the ‘Ealing Plan’ led to an immediate adverse response from two local concerned bodies, one professional and one political. Both required Crosland’s personal attention. The Ealing Association of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) stated unequivocally that they supported a ‘truly comprehensive system of secondary education in the Borough of Ealing’.<sup>89</sup> Crosland’s refusal to approve the scheme submitted would, they felt, ‘inevitably lead to a prolongation of the period of uncertainty which can do nothing but bring harm to the educational service in the borough’.<sup>90</sup> The N.U.T. also complained that Crosland had been unable to meet an association delegation before he had made his decision. Crosland instructed a senior official to reply emphasising that the DES had

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<sup>88</sup> Department of Education and Science to Town Clerk (Ealing), 13 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/1318.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Copy of Press Statement for the Times Gazette and the Acton Gazette’, Ealing Association, N.U.T., 18 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/1318.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

complied with procedure in 10/65 whereby interested bodies were to consult with the relevant local authority and not directly with the Department.<sup>91</sup>

Criticism by the local Labour Constituency Party presented a more delicate problem. The local party, with the backing of the MP William Molloy, ‘deplored the manner’ by which the decision was made and considered that Crosland’s refusal to approve the Ealing submission compromised the party.<sup>92</sup>

The terms of the rejection, which ignore firmly held local labour and majority teacher opinion and accept most of the criticisms made by local Tories and Grammar School parents, play into the hands of our political opponents.<sup>93</sup>

They also called upon Crosland to exercise his influence outside his brief as Secretary of State and ‘consult privately’ with the Labour group within the Council concerning amendments for the ‘present decision is highly damaging to the Labour Party in view of the national interest which has focused on Comprehensive education in Ealing’.<sup>94</sup> Crosland’s response came on 21 January and comprised a short note to Molloy offering him an opportunity ‘to have a word with you about Ealing’.<sup>95</sup>

Crosland, when asked to intervene by his officials, was prepared to be conciliatory in tone but unyielding on the principle that even a Labour authority should comply with the

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<sup>91</sup> ‘Redhead to NUT’, 30 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/1318.

<sup>92</sup> Ealing North Constituency Labour Party, 21 December 1966, TNA, ED 147/1318. Molloy was Labour MP 1964-79.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Crosland to Molloy, 2 January 1967, TNA, ED 147/1318.

intentions of the Labour government and with the rationale of its secondary school reorganisation. Therefore, he was not prepared to compromise even if this placed the local party in an invidious position. His terse but polite note offered little to the local MP although there is no further correspondence in the relevant file. Crosland employed alternative tactics in regard the Ealing NUT. He was able to cite Circular 10/65 concerning the obligatory consultation that authorities would have to undertake over reorganisation plans. Thus, while welcoming their support for a truly comprehensive system, he was able to avoid direct contact with the union stressing that the NUT should address their concerns to the authority and that he would then respond to the authority's communications.<sup>96</sup> The NUT claimed that the DES and Ealing Authority were only really concerned with 'the furtherance of sectional interests'.<sup>97</sup>

The Ealing submission proved to be particularly challenging for the department; but such submissions were rare. Most plans did not require Crosland's intervention and the official team were entrusted with authority to manage submissions. The limits of power of the DES were highlighted by the Ealing Plan when Crosland was needed to intervene. The case of Hounslow Authority, a London borough adjacent to Ealing would appear to be routine and offers an appropriate contrast. The consultation process conducted by the authority as required by Circular 10/65 was wide ranging and included contributions from teacher unions, Liberal and Socialist groupings and even the Communist Party which presented a lengthy and detailed statement. A petition of concerned parents was considered by the DES but the officials were able to deal amicably with the points raised by the various committees and a delegation from Hounslow was received in Curzon Street in September 1966. In regard to the Hounslow submission, a senior official in the Schools Branch at the DES commented in an internal memo

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<sup>96</sup> Probably a relief in view of his infamous remark concerning the future of grammar schools to his wife following a fractious meeting with the teacher unions.

<sup>97</sup> 'Press Statement', NUT, 18 December 1966.

upon the plans of the two authorities: ‘There has been public reaction to the Authority’s [Hounslow] proposals but has been nowhere near the scale experienced in Ealing’.<sup>98</sup> There is no indication of Crosland’s involvement in the archive material available for the Department of Education and Science between 1965 and 1967. In fact, there would appear to be a general agreement amongst all sections of the community upon the plans finalised by the authority for Peter Blake Chairman of the Borough Education Committee referred to the ‘goodwill built up between the authority, parents, teachers and the general public’.<sup>99</sup>

Although Crosland intervened when his officials considered it appropriate, he allowed them to use their own discretion in most of the submissions received and apply their own judgements when administering prescribed government policy. Harte explained her rationale as leader of the team: ‘I thought that because we were evolving dogma and theories as we went along, as we learnt about it, it was enormous strength to have a small, closely knit team. Its astonishing how quickly individual civil servants can get out of line with received truth, simply because they are getting on with their own work’.<sup>100</sup>

Harte was convinced that Crosland’s time at the DES in regard to secondary school reorganisation had been significant in the permanent establishment of the comprehensive system. She admitted that in terms of the Labour Government’s determination to press ahead with comprehensive reform, they should aim to bequeath an educational environment whereby ‘most people felt that to be comprehensive was the normal and that to be selective required

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<sup>98</sup> Mercer to Schools H.M.I., undated, TNA, ED 147/1320.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Year’s delay in going comprehensive is proposed’, *Middlesex Chronicle*, 25 November 1966. The Headmistress of one Secondary Modern school acquiesced in the reorganisation and, addressing parents at a school prize giving, advised the following: ‘Re-organisation is coming...Comprehensive schools may be the answer, but they must provide an education that is better than that which we have now’.

<sup>100</sup> Harte, ACP 5/1.

defence [and] this they had achieved’..<sup>101</sup> In her opinion, Crosland had overseen a reform that could not be reversed even though he left the DES in 1967.

By that time precedents had been established, it had settled down almost to a routine the fireworks atmosphere had gone out anyway. The great push had taken place – but by the time he left the important work had been done – no, in this field it wouldn’t have been much different if he had stayed – the great push had already taken place.<sup>102</sup>

The *Times Educational Supplement* stated that on Crosland’s departure from the DES in August 1967 ‘a great shove towards comprehensive schools had been given’.<sup>103</sup> Although his tactics won approval from his officials as stated above’ some of his colleagues in the DES and the party were critical. Prentice considered that more forceful methods would have accelerated the process if the circular had ‘required’ LEAs to produce plans for comprehensive reorganisation and legislation. Crosland’s successor Edward Short was preparing a bill for this purpose before Labour’s defeat in 1970.

Price, Williams and Hattersley recognised Crosland’s passionate commitment to the elimination of segregation in education. Hattersley considered Crosland’s decision to insert the injunction ‘request’ rather than ‘require’ in the circular 10/65 the correct one for ‘being voluntary [it] would survive a change of government’.<sup>104</sup> With the steady application by conservative authorities as well, even the new Minister of Education, Margaret Thatcher, found herself unable to reverse the decisions between 1970 and 1974. This justified Crosland’s

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Times Educational Supplement*, 1 September 1967.

<sup>104</sup> Hattersley, *Crosland and New Labour*, p. 62

preamble to the circular 10/65 which emphasised the voluntary nature of compliance. Hattersley further stressed that Crosland did eventually resort to an ‘element of coercion’ in 1966 for permission for new secondary school building was granted only to authorities which were in the process of ‘going comprehensive’.<sup>105</sup> Price also believed that his educational initiatives also reflected his determination to tackle social divisions in Britain. The establishment of Educational Priority Areas was an attempt to eradicate unacceptable disadvantages in urban areas: The Social Research Council would provide administrators with evidence for further reform.

In terms of the education delivered in the comprehensives, opinion was divided. Although Crosland opposed ‘unnecessarily early and rigid streaming’ at the primary level, he accepted that *there* might be a place for it in the comprehensive.<sup>106</sup> In this he was not supported by a Labour Party Conference decision in 1965 that ‘the educational system can only become genuinely comprehensive if the practice of selection (streaming) is actively discouraged...’.<sup>107</sup> Tony Benn doubted Crosland’s real conviction over the comprehensive especially on streaming for he ‘may be weak on comprehensives, behind hand on the real issue of streaming versus non-streaming’.<sup>108</sup> He called for greater flexibility in curriculum matters in the comprehensive so that the Newsom child and the ‘bright boy’ could be catered for - more imaginative teaching for the former and increased opportunities for an academic education for the latter especially pupils from working-class homes.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Anthony Crosland, *North of England Education Conference*, 1966, ACP, 5/2.

<sup>107</sup> *Conservative and Labour Party Conference Decisions 1945-1981*, ed. FWS Craig (Chichester, Parliamentary Research Services, 1982) p. 192.

<sup>108</sup> Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness: Diaries 1963-1967* (London, Hutchinson, 1994) p.208.

<sup>109</sup> Anthony Crosland, *North*, 1966.



Departmental ministers at the DES, immersed in the endless negotiations and compromises over details with individual authorities over comprehensive reorganisation, could find the ultimate objective and rationale obscured by such a lengthy process. Crosland seems to have avoided this weakness as witnessed by his predecessor. ‘The Minister is usually someone who, to reverse the common phrase, cannot see the trees for the wood. He has a good general picture in his mind of the nature of the problem and where he has to go’.<sup>110</sup> Michael Stewart’s comment on policy objectives and departmental achievements might well apply to Crosland at the DES. The establishment of the comprehensive was his overriding target as an exercise in social engineering. Educational delivery within the new ‘common’ school was of less concern. However, the existence of the private sector was still an obstacle to equality of opportunity for those below the privileged classes.

#### Independent Schools.

Crosland had written in 1956 that even if state education was reformed on comprehensive lines, the existence of the independent sector would impede social equality for ‘we shall still not have equality of opportunity as long as we maintain a system of superior private schools, open to the wealthier classes but out of reach of poorer however talented and deserving’.<sup>111</sup> Crosland’s original stance as outlined in his book *The Future of Socialism*, favoured the integration of the public schools with the maintained sector by opening them up on meritocratic grounds for the ultimate objective was ‘100% competitive entry’ and ‘the ablest pupils [to be] creamed off and given superior training’.<sup>112</sup> As the campaign against selection developed, however, he now saw the priority as social integration and wrote in *The Conservative Enemy* in 1962 that private

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<sup>110</sup> Stewart, *Life*, p.135.

<sup>111</sup> Crosland, *Future*, p. 260.

<sup>112</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1956) pp. 264-265.

school places should be allocated by 'free choice'.<sup>113</sup> Crosland commented further that they offended against any ideal of social cohesion.<sup>114</sup>

This privileged stratum of education, the exclusive preserve of the wealthier classes, socially and physically segregated from the state education system is the greatest single cause of stratification and class-consciousness in Britain... It is no accident that Britain, the only advanced country with a national private elite system of education, should also be the most class ridden.<sup>115</sup>

The Labour Manifesto had given a firm commitment to the reorganisation of the secondary state sector along comprehensive lines. There was no such clearly stated objective in the manifesto in regard to the public schools beyond that of setting up 'an educational trust to advise on the best way of integrating the public schools into the state system of education'.<sup>116</sup>

The demand for educational reform that had surfaced during the war especially that of universal free secondary education, saw the role of the public schools come under scrutiny as well. Brian Simon described in detail the growing volume of criticism of a leadership broadly recruited from the ranks of the public schools especially in the wake of the evacuation of the British army from Dunkirk in May 1940.<sup>117</sup> Harold Dent editor of the *Times Education Supplement* in the summer of 1941 called for total reform 'based on a new conception of the place, status and

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<sup>113</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Conservative Enemy. A Programme of Radical Reform for the 1960s* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1962) p. 181.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p.174.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>116</sup> The Labour Party Election Manifesto 1964.

<sup>117</sup> Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991), pp. 34-54.

function of education in a democratic state not a patching and padding of the present system'.<sup>118</sup> He was supported by other educationalists and writers who despaired of a system that perpetuated the idea of public school products who were regarded as manifesting 'special fitness to rule'.<sup>119</sup> Cyril Norwood formerly headmaster of Bristol Grammar School and Harrow, chaired a committee on secondary education established by Butler the Minister for Education. In 1943 its report called for the establishment of a 'tripartite' system of schooling – grammar, technical and secondary modern. Writing in 1942, Norwood had stressed that the state drew its leaders from one class only and, therefore, was 'not a democracy but a plutocracy' which resulted in a damaging division in the nation. The tripartite system was designed to cater for a range of abilities and aptitudes.

In July 1942, R. A. Butler President of the Board of Education appointed a Committee to advise the government on the relationship of the public schools to the general education system. Lord Fleming, a Scottish politician and formerly Scotland's Solicitor-General was appointed chairman. The report, which was published in 1944, failed to deal with the philosophical questions surrounding the provision of private education and focused instead on boarding a fundamental feature in many of the public schools. The Report recommended that twenty-five per cent of all residential places in such schools should be made available to pupils from the maintained sector who qualified on several criteria and that bursaries should be made available from public funds to finance this. Simon pointed out that Butler had avoided the democratisation of this sector thus nullifying the attack on their privileged position.

The incoming Labour government broadly endorsed the terms of the Butler Act of 1944 and accepted the terms of the Fleming report. The new Minister of Education Ellen Wilkinson was given the task of implementing the Fleming proposals but, according to one writer, the

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p.36

<sup>119</sup> Charles Dowe, Headmaster of Rugby School. Quoted in Simon, *Education*, 1991, p.40.

national machinery established by Wilkinson was so weak that it soon faced real difficulties and there was no centralised scheme in which the Ministry rather than the LEAs played the main role.<sup>120</sup> To many of her Labour critics, Wilkinson was seen as too conciliatory towards the private sector which they considered exclusive bastions of privilege. She claimed that reducing the number of approved independent schools that would receive public funding and raising the income level below which children qualified for admittance constituted an attack on that privilege stressing that ‘in many cases the direct-grant schools provided the only available grammar schools in the area’.<sup>121</sup> Matt Perry, writing on Wilkinson’s Education Act of 1946, commented on the conservative nature of the features of the Act ‘which maintained the educational consensus with the Conservatives, entrenched the position of religious institutions in state-funded education and ignored calls for the abolition of independent schools’.<sup>122</sup>

There were other problems in the wake of Wilkinson’s death in 1947: the assisted places scheme was a national scheme but it was for day pupils only; the bursaries were offered on an *ad hoc* rather than a structured basis; and, the participating schools retained control over whom to admit.<sup>123</sup> The Conservative Government that was elected in 1951 did not expand the scheme despite promises to the contrary.<sup>124</sup> This scheme, in the opinion of Hillman, ‘lingered on in a desultory form’..<sup>125</sup> Hillman’s conclusion was that it failed due to a lack of political will,

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<sup>120</sup> Nicholas Hillman, ‘Public Schools and the Fleming report of 1944: shunting the first-class carriage on to an immense siding?’ *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Volume 41, Issue 2, 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Vernon, *Wilkinson*, p.224.

<sup>122</sup> Matt Perry, ‘Red Ellen’ *Wilkinson. Her Ideas, Movements and World*. (Manchester, MUP, 2014) p.375.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

inconsistent support from the independent boarding schools and LEAs and the problems over the selection of pupils. Even the Public Schools Commission declared in 1966 that ‘as an instrument of national policy, the Fleming Report rapidly became a dead letter’..<sup>126</sup> In regards to the attitude of the Labour party to the position of the public schools in the British society, Hillman identifies three strands of thinking. One strand opposed the concept of private schooling altogether. A second strand focussed on integrating the public schools with the rest of the educational system. A third strand of thinking accepted people’s right to pay for education and assumed that schools should be left relatively untouched.<sup>127</sup>

In *The Conservative Enemy*, Crosland had suggested a strategy for reform of the public schools that consisted of three basic objectives: assimilation into the state sector; democratising their entry; and limiting the purchasing power of the rich to acquire a privileged education by ‘creating a genuine equality of opportunity’.<sup>128</sup> However, Legislation posed a problem for him. ‘The object of legislation would be *not* to prohibit all private fee-paying, which would be an intolerable restriction of personal liberty, but, regulating the *conditions* under which education is brought and sold to secure a more equitable distribution of educational resources between the different classes of the nation’.<sup>129</sup> According to Susan Crosland, he (Crosland) had elaborated further on this point stating that a democracy could ‘not forbid people to found schools and charge for them.’<sup>130</sup> He had also cited practical reasons against abolition for ‘parents and teachers would find way to get round the law’ and many highly qualified teachers would

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<sup>126</sup> Public Schools Commission, First report, 1966.

<sup>127</sup> Nicholas Hillman, ‘The Public School Commission: Impractical, Expensive and Harmful to Children?’ *Contemporary British History*, Vol 24, Issue 4, 2010.

<sup>128</sup> Crosland, *Conservative Enemy*, p.180.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p.182.

<sup>130</sup> Susan Crosland, *Crosland*, p.149.

emigrate.<sup>131</sup> Crosland's view was that a reformed state system was the key factor when confronting the determination of those from the middle classes who wish to seek an expensive education.

Once the state system is strong enough to compete, if parents want to send their children to some inferior fee-paying school for purely snobbish reasons, that's their affair. Why should they be denied the freedom to spend their money buttressing their egos if that's is what they want.<sup>132</sup>

In spite of Crosland's strong feelings concerning the public schools, as minister he became aware of the many practical difficulties involved in radical reform and he informed Cabinet of these.<sup>133</sup> The government was expecting to have to educate two million additional children over the following few years due to the rising birth rate and the planned increase in the school leaving age. The reorganisation of secondary education and higher education would involve funding for building construction and increasing staff demands. Wilson voiced these concerns as well. 'I am not sure we need to do anything in a public sense just now. There is a growing feeling in the country that we are stirring up too many things, not of equal priority'.<sup>134</sup> While Crosland acknowledged these concerns accepting that 'the political grounds for postponement are over riding',<sup>135</sup> in July he challenged the idea that Labour's commitment to reform should

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>133</sup> Anthony Crosland, 'Public Schools', Paper to the Cabinet Ministerial Committee on Social Services, 17 May 1965, TNA, T 227/2321.

<sup>134</sup> Note from D J Mitchell to G F Cockerill, DES, 17 May 1965, TNA, PREM 13/2069.

<sup>135</sup> Anthony Crosland to Prime Minister, 'Public Schools', 26 May 1965, TNA, PREM 13/2069. TNA.

be abandoned: ‘to sacrifice basic socialist principles for a few million pounds which cannot fall due for at least four years would suggest a certain lack of faith in our economic policies’.<sup>136</sup> Later he admitted that abolition was unfeasible. ‘It would cost a lot of money, and while you’ve got slum schools and so on it’s difficult to argue that this should be a top priority’.<sup>137</sup> Wilma Harte acknowledged the dilemma facing a Labour Party committed to both liberty and equality: ‘We always knew... that the Labour government had no real political will to deal with the ...independent schools. This was partly because of the old problem of freedom of the individual, partly because of the religious problems but more importantly because they could never make up their mind whether these schools were so bloody they ought to be abolished or so marvellous they ought to be made available to everyone’.<sup>138</sup>

Although Crosland was convinced of the unacceptable position of the public schools in the Britain of the 1960s and that a majority in the Constituency Labour Party were fundamentally opposed to their elitist nature, he, as a cabinet minister, was aware of the practical difficulties of outright abolition. In 1965 the Labour Party Conference carried a resolution stating that it was ‘essential to integrate the public school structure with the state education system’.<sup>139</sup> The following year a motion calling for the integration of the public,

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p197. Wilma Harte acknowledged the dilemma facing a Labour Party committed to both liberty and equality: ‘We always knew... that the Labour government had no real political will to deal with the ...independent schools. This was partly because of the old problem of freedom of the individual, partly because of the religious problems but more importantly because they could never make up their mind whether these schools were so bloody they ought to be abolished or so marvellous they ought to be made available to everyone’. Wilma Harte, ACP, 5/1.

<sup>138</sup> Wilma Harte, ACP, 5/1.

<sup>139</sup> Craig, *Conferences Decisions*, p.192.

direct grant and other fee paying schools into the state system was remitted to the National Executive as well as welcoming the appointment of a Public Schools Commission.<sup>140</sup>

He was also constrained by the work load that that Department had undertaken as a result of the reorganisation of the secondary sector. He admitted that a compromise solution was required, one that avoided the two extremes of abolition and non-intervention and, in effect, ‘just let in a handful of state pupils and fiddle around a bit with tax concessions’.<sup>141</sup> He was obliged to carry out the responsibility of the election manifesto: but the details of the terms of the Commission were to be his alone. ‘The Labour Party manifesto committed us to setting up a Commission. My role was to write the terms of reference, which was quite unusually long and detailed, and to choose the Chairman and the members’.<sup>142</sup>

Crosland was not bound by any existing work of the department when he came to tackle the position of the public schools. Apart from the policy document ‘*Signposts for the Sixties*’ there was nothing substantial on the party’s position on the independent sector.<sup>143</sup> Most of the initial thinking on the nature of the solutions available for the reform of the public schools was therefore his. In a briefing paper on the Independent Schools prepared for his Minister of State Reg Prentice, Crosland explained the rationale for reform. He laid out three key arguments for action: on ‘merit’, for they were ‘a denial of equal opportunity...[and] they reflect and perpetuate class divisions of a kind we are pledged to abolish’; on ‘educational’ for ‘we cannot

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p. 197.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>143</sup> *Signposts for the Sixties*, Labour Party publication, June 1961. This document rejected the idea that only a minority of children are potential leaders and promoted the ‘socialist attitude to education’ based upon the conviction that there were ‘great potentialities of hidden talent in the British people’ and all should be given the same educational opportunity.



introduce a comprehensive system in the state sector while leaving the private sector completely untouched'; and 'political' for 'inaction would be especially ridiculous at a time when Headmasters and the Governing Bodies of the schools themselves are publicly asking to be reformed'.<sup>144</sup>

Crosland gave a detailed rejection of two extreme positions still favoured by many in the Labour party - abolitionists and squeezers - even though the Manifesto had pledged the Labour government 'to go further'. He considered that the withdrawing of tax concessions and weakening of the link between Oxford and Cambridge as a means of 'squeezing' the public schools, unrealistic: 'Given the pattern of middle class spending and aspirations...the 'squeeze' policy will not come near to attaining our objectives'..<sup>145</sup> Therefore, his objectives as proposed for the Cabinet were more nuanced: to limit the possibility of buying educational privilege; to ensure that entry to private schools was socially mixed by terminating segregated schooling; to ensure that the private sector fitted in with the national policy of comprehensive education; and to ensure that 'the considerable capital in the private sector contributes to the needs of the nation as a whole'..<sup>146</sup> These would form the basis of the memoranda submitted to the cabinet. He was not prepared to compromise on selection 'this is the thorniest aspect of the whole problem – the rock on which all previous reformist ideas have foundered'.<sup>147</sup> For Crosland, the 'comprehensive principle' was non-negotiable even when dealing with small schools. These would be the Commission's guiding principles to ensure that their detailed work and recommendations are 'consistent with our fundamental objectives'.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Anthony Crosland, 'Independent Schools', 5 May 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

He suggested that the Commission must balance various criteria including avoiding academic selection, producing socially mixed entry, satisfying demand for boarding and justifying the cost for these particular children. However, having set the principles, Crosland referred back to the conclusion of two other bodies – The Alexander Working Party in 1960 which concentrated on parents who were frequently absent and the Newson Report of 1963 *Half Our Future* on the education of average and below average 13 to 16 year old pupils. These groups, Crosland felt, would benefit from boarding facilities.

As these proposals became known, Crosland faced particular criticism from his minister Reg Prentice and Cabinet colleague Richard Crossman. Crosland felt compelled to meet their strongly held views by compromising on the guiding principles of the Commission. Prentice hoped for greater pace of change and advocated legislation suspecting that Crosland's proposals were insufficient to tackle radical reform of the public schools. Prentice pressed for teacher quotas for the public schools and stated that 'legislation would be required, unless we content ourselves with an appeal for voluntary co-operation'.<sup>149</sup> Likewise, he expressed a concern over the large number of public school entrants into Oxford and Cambridge universities and urged that '[we] ask them to consider a quota system'.<sup>150</sup> Prentice insisted that direct grant schools be included in the Commission's brief.<sup>151</sup> Crosland's minister of state was sceptical that the Commission would deliver on reform and urged him to take responsibility immediately

I think the major political question is this: how far should we do these things independently of the setting up of the Commission or should we allow the Commission

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<sup>149</sup> Reg Prentice to the Secretary of State, 'Public Schools', 21 September 1965.TNA, ED 148/11.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Prentice to Secretary of State, 'Public Schools Commission,' 26 October 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

to advise on these aspects of the problem before making up our minds? On the other hand it would be good to do something definite to reduce the irrational privileges of the Public Schools, particularly as the Commission's main operation is likely to be a slow one and we would like to show everyone that we mean business<sup>152</sup>

Crosland resisted Prentice's suggestions and was determined to pursue a more cautious and pragmatic line. Although Crosland had agreed to his Minister's suggestions on building control and reduced tax relief for the private sector, he was still 'inclined to favour the voluntary appeal on teacher quota' and was convinced that they should 'not take any overt action till the Franks Committee had reported back'.<sup>153</sup> Crosland was not swayed on the inclusion of the direct grant schools for the following day in a meeting on the draft Cabinet paper the first comment on the summary of the discussions was an emphatic dismissal of Prentice's advice. 'Direct grant schools are to be outside the Commission's net'.<sup>154</sup>

The issue of the direct grant schools aroused the attention of Crosland's cabinet colleague Richard Crossman who presented his own critique when given a copy of the draft public schools paper by Crosland. Crossman's comments ranged over several issues in this detailed analysis. In particular, he attacked the lack of precision in the definition of the fundamental objectives of the guiding principles. Crossman accused Crosland of obfuscation 'presumably because any kind of precise definition would spark a major disagreement between those who want to integrate the public schools as institutions into the state system and those who want to destroy their existing structures as a whole by taking over their buildings and land

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<sup>152</sup> Prentice to Secretary of State, 'Public Schools,' 14 October 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>153</sup> Crosland to Prentice, 'Memo on Public Schools,' 24 September 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>154</sup> 'Meeting with Secretary of State on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1965, r.e. Draft Cabinet Paper,' 28 October 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

as assets'.<sup>155</sup> Crossman suggested that Crosland should select the membership of the Commission to achieve the desired result or make more precise terms. He likewise called the decision to exclude the direct grant schools from the Commission's brief 'indefensible'.<sup>156</sup>

As with criticisms of Prentice, Crosland accommodated his colleagues' criticisms by compromising on certain issues. On the issue of direct grant schools he held firm maintaining that they should be excluded because they present a different problem and, above all, because to include them would strongly discourage them from coming into the local comprehensive schemes.<sup>157</sup> His solution was to state that the direct grant schools would be considered but that the Commission would deal with the boarding schools first.<sup>158</sup> Crosland also conceded the accusation by Crossman that the definition of the fundamental objectives had been left deliberately vague to satisfy in some part the two groups identified by his cabinet colleague. 'The final solution will then inevitably be a rather muddled compromise between the two'.<sup>159</sup> Crosland was determined that the Commission should not sound merely like a repeat of Fleming proposals for, in his opinion, it would be quite unacceptable to a large part of the Labour Party.<sup>160</sup> The guiding principles would remain; but again he acknowledged the thrust of Crossman's arguments: 'I have amended the wording of my Paper in a number of respects to try and meet your presentation of this difficulty [the wording of the guiding principles]'.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Dick Crossman to Tony (Crosland), 14 November 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

The issue of the direct grant schools led to greater pressure on Crosland by two bodies one political and one professional formed to advocate opposite views on the question of inclusion. The Public Schools Committee (PSC) was formed by leading public figures in the academic and political world who were 'sympathetic' to the Labour Party and who wished to see the integration of the public schools on the basis of 100 per cent entry from the maintained system.<sup>162</sup> This committee asserted that 'If this is not the case, [they] were sure that integration will fail to achieve the change in the social character and educational role of these schools which the Labour party had called for again and again'.<sup>163</sup> They made a public appeal to Crosland to ignore the case made by the chairman of the Headmasters Conference (HMC) that the direct grant schools should be included for they considered that such schools were already covered by the terms of the comprehensive circular.<sup>164</sup> The PSC further stressed that inclusion would be completely unacceptable to the mass of the Labour Party and would represent a 'pernicious answer' to this issue.<sup>165</sup>

There is no record of his response to this appeal; but one does exist to a letter from the HMC and the Governing Bodies Association (GBA) the latter representing the independent sector for girls. The warden of New College Oxford, who chaired the GBA, justified the case for inclusion by emphasising the character of this group which had very strong boarding element.<sup>166</sup> Crosland, however, countered this point by stating that 'in the main ... the direct grant schools are local day schools and it is right that their future should be linked with that of the maintained system'. He completed his defence of his decision to exclude these schools in

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<sup>162</sup> Press Statement released by The Public Schools Committee on the 13 December 1965, ED 148/1.TNA

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Warden of New College to Secretary of State, 26 January 1966, TNA, ED 148/1.

a more robust manner. 'I am convinced that had I brought these schools within the scope of the Commission it could only have led to confusion'.<sup>167</sup> Crosland eventually rejected an attempt by these bodies to force the Commission to consider a research project conducted under their supervision fearing that it would influence the Commission's decision to the detriment of the objectives set by the government.<sup>168</sup> Initially, Crosland stated that he would recommend their findings to the Commission. Then, presumably realising the potential consequences, he deleted 'would support' in his draft reply.<sup>169</sup>

Crosland had no experience of formulating and presenting a White paper or of establishing a Commission. He relied heavily upon his civil servants to assist him in this exercise. They provided the advice that was required in three areas; wording of the commission, the details of pilot schemes for selected schools and precedents for previous Commissions. A senior official advised that the White Paper would have to be revised for the quite different purpose it was to serve. A ministerial paper argued the case for reaching a certain decision, whereas, the purpose of White Paper was to announce a decision that has been reached and should do so in a way most likely 'to make friends and influence people'.<sup>170</sup>

The discussions within the team of officials also focused on the pilot schemes that would be vital to the delivery of a programme of full-scale integration. They offered a strategy to ensure that these independent schools did not open their doors exclusively to the most academically gifted arguing that their merits were not simply academic, but also social and

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<sup>167</sup> Crosland to Sir William Hayter (HMC/GBA), 4 February 1966, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 October 1965. Initially, Crosland stated that he would recommend their findings to the Commission. Then, presumably realising the potential consequences, he deleted 'would support' in his draft reply.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Rossetti to Secretary of State/ Leadbetter, 18 May 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

character building.<sup>171</sup> The Commission could monitor the impact of these pupils who lacked the social background which was common to the majority of public schools. Therefore, the officials suggested that the top public schools might not be the most suitable ones and that ‘fairly run of the mill schools with good reputations for social qualities might be the better choice’.<sup>172</sup> They further advised that these ‘experiments’ should involve ‘substantial’ numbers.<sup>173</sup> Crosland finally received advice that his proposed terms of reference for the Commission were too lengthy compared past examples and would be open to extensive critical comments.<sup>174</sup> Crosland, however, was not convinced and ‘decided not to be deterred by precedent’.<sup>175</sup>

Crosland brought his proposals to Cabinet where they were discussed between July and November 1965. Cabinet’s conclusion represented a similar determination on their part that the Commission should do more than previous attempts.

It would be important to make clear...that the Government would not consider acceptable recommendations which amounted to no more than an extension of the scheme for the entry to public schools of the proportion of pupils from the State schools recommended by the Committee on Public schools (the Fleming Committee)<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Dovey to Leadbetter, 14 July 1965, TNA, ED 148/1. Dovey even commented that ‘I am told that some Harrovians never managed to get any ‘O’ level passes’. *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Leadbetter (?) to Gibbs, ‘Public Schools’ 26 October 1965, TNA, ED 148/1.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* Note added by Leadbetter dated 28 October 1965.

<sup>176</sup> CAB/128/39/80. 25 November 1965.

The Cabinet also added certain provisos for Crosland to consider which had received attention during Crosland's ministerial discussions<sup>177</sup> The question of tax privileges raised issues of policy which the Cabinet decided should be considered in a wider context. Finally, there was cabinet insistence that the composition of the Commission should draw on personnel 'from outside the educational system with practical experience of administration'.<sup>178</sup> These comments may reflect a determination by a majority of cabinet colleagues that the Commission should not present another diluted version of previous attempts at reform of the public schools.

Crosland announced the details of the Commission to the Commons on 22 December 1965 stressing that 'integration' was the main objective and that the headmasters of the independent schools stated that some reform of them was 'vitaly necessary'.<sup>179</sup> Conservative MPs suspected that 'fundamental, changes in the status and character of the independent schools was Crosland's ultimate aim despite Crosland's assurances'.<sup>180</sup> The first meeting of the Commission was in March 1966 and it did not report till July 1968 by which time Crosland had served ten months as President of the Board of Trade. Crosland had no contact with the Commission or John Newson and failed to attend the lunch at the first meeting citing a prior engagement.<sup>181</sup>

### Higher Education: Polytechnics

The demand for increased higher education provision in the post war era stemmed from the increased birth rate and an acceptance by both parties that it was an economic necessity. The

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<sup>177</sup> See above.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> HC Deb 22 December 1965 vol 722 cc2107-17

<sup>180</sup> Edward Boyle *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> 'Minutes of the Public Schools Commission,' 23 March 1966, TNA, ED 148/2.



Labour party in particular also viewed this development as socially desirable. A committee set up under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins recommended in its report in 1963 that the growth should come from within the university sector, the unitary approach, even though this meant that many areas maintained by the state, for example the Colleges of Education, would be absorbed by the universities. The Conservative government was quick to accept most of the recommendations of the report especially the 'unitary' dimension. Edward Boyle, Minister of State for Education until October 1964, explained that the haste with which the Conservative government accepted the report was a result of 'bad conscience' concerning their quarrel with the universities over the size of grants and university pay in 1962. However, he was also committed to the concept of equality of opportunity for such expansion would enable more places for working class students.<sup>182</sup>

However, the universities were under increasing pressure with the post-war bulge in the birth rate. The creation of seven new universities in the period 1963-1967 and the upgrading to university status of a number of CATs (Colleges of Advanced Technology) did not satisfy the burgeoning demand for higher education. One contemporary writer on education commented that, 'Further expansion was unavoidable. What was all-important however, was the shape which that expansion would take'.<sup>183</sup>

Labour's thinking on this was encapsulated in the report of the Taylor committee, of which Crosland was a member, entitled *The Years of Crisis: Report of the Labour Party's Study Group on Higher Education* published in September 1963. The report urged the expansion of higher education and insisted that Britain's prosperity and standard of living could no longer depend on abundant supply of raw materials or a pool of unskilled labour for:

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<sup>182</sup> See Kogan, *Politics*, p. 93.

<sup>183</sup> Malcolm Keir, 'The Polytechnics: a Socialist Achievement', *Socialist Commentary*, August 1970, p.13.

...the primary asset is the brain-power and skill of its scientists, engineers, research workers and technicians, administrators and professional men and women...Economic expansion is only possible if university and technological education expands rapidly and continuously to provide the necessary brainpower and skill.<sup>184</sup>

The committee proposed a short-term ‘crash’ programme to create 150,000 places and a long-term plan establishing some seventy universities over twenty years providing another 700,000. A succinct policy *Labour and the Scientific Revolution* based on the Taylor Report was put to the Labour Conference at Scarborough in September 1963 and unanimously approved. Harold Wilson fully endorsed this policy referring to ‘the Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of this [scientific] revolution’.<sup>185</sup> Educational reform was to be the main instrument in this revolution and a sustained attempt was made by Labour to take the ‘high ground’ as the main ‘modernising’ party in terms of science and technology and its application through education.<sup>186</sup>

Following the Labour victory in October 1964, Michael Stewart became the new Secretary of State in the Department of Education. The Labour government broadly accepted the expansionist view of Robbins in the 1966 election manifesto. Stewart, however, had already modified the Robbins plan. Upon the urging of Weaver, who was concerned about the future of non-university education and fearing that there would be a ‘rat race’ for institutional

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<sup>184</sup> *Years of Crisis*, pp. 7-9.

<sup>185</sup> Harold Wilson, *Labour Party Conference Report*, 1963, 133ff, Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC), Labour History Museum, Manchester.

<sup>186</sup> Brian Simon, *Education and the Social Order 1940-1990* (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991), p.230.

promotion to university status, Stewart announced in the Commons that colleges of education would not be drawn into the orbit of the universities as schools of education.<sup>187</sup>

Crosland publicly aired his intentions in regard to higher education reform and the Robbins recommendations in a speech at the Woolwich Polytechnic on 28 April. He rejected the Robbins vision of a university dominated higher education sector and supported the ‘binary’ system favoured by Weaver and his officials. Crosland stated that the DES would continue the ‘twin’ traditions which had created the existing higher education institutions - autonomous universities and the public sector represented by the leading technical colleges and the colleges of education.<sup>188</sup>

The Government accepts this dual system as being fundamentally the right one, with each sector making its own distinctive contribution to the whole. We definitely prefer it to the alternative concept of a unitary system, hierarchically arranged on the ladder principle, with the Universities on the top and the other institutions down below.<sup>189</sup>

Crosland believed that the ‘dual’ system was preferable for four reasons. There was an increasing demand for vocational, professional and industrial courses in higher education that could not be met by the universities. Secondly, a system based on the ladder concept would

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<sup>187</sup> HC Deb 11 December 1964 vol 703 cc 1971-7. Toby Weaver had been responsible for (public sector) higher education since 1962 See C D Goodwin (1998), ‘The Origin of the Binary System’, *History of Education*, Vol. 27, No. 2, p.181.

<sup>188</sup> Anthony Crosland, ‘Woolwich Polytechnic Speech’, 28 April 1965, London School of Economics (LSE), Anthony Crosland Papers (ACP) Part II, 5/2.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

inevitably ‘depress and degrade’ both the morale and standards in the non-University sector.<sup>190</sup> Thirdly, it was desirable for a substantial part of the higher education system to be responsive to social and economic needs and therefore should be under public control. Fourthly, in a fiercely competitive world ‘the accent is more and more on professional and technical expertise’.<sup>191</sup> He rejected the unitary system for this could not cater for a rapidly changing world socially, economically and politically. Such a system, Crosland argued:

Would be characterised by a continuous rat race to reach the first or university division and a certain inevitable failure to achieve the diversity in higher education which contemporary society needs.<sup>192</sup>

Simon described this speech as delivering a ‘sledgehammer’ blow to the Robbins concept of a unitary system of higher education.<sup>193</sup> It resulted in a criticism not only from universities but also from ‘many who saw the Robbins concept of a unitary system as the basis for a broad based democratic advance’.<sup>194</sup> The universities complained about the lack of consultation while many within the Labour Party considered that this speech presaged the imposition of a divisive policy on higher education, a division which Crosland had endeavoured to eliminate from the secondary sector. This contradiction was compounded for Crosland had been a member of the Taylor Committee himself and while accepting responsibility, claimed that he had been pushed into making this speech prematurely by his

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p.247.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.248-249.

officials. In 1971 he admitted that the speech was an appalling blunder from which he learnt a lesson that he should never make a policy statement until he had settled into office for at least six months.<sup>195</sup> While he was ‘utterly convinced that the [binary] policy was right’, the speech ‘put people’s backs up unnecessarily’.<sup>196</sup> Crosland later claimed that officials wanted to get the policy on record as soon as possible.<sup>197</sup> Crosland admitted further that when he finally mastered the subject, he became a ‘passionate’ believer in the binary policy and polytechnics and did as much as anyone else to push the policy through.<sup>198</sup>

Crosland elaborate further on the relationship between Toby Weaver and Crosland and the development of the idea of the polytechnic.

Toby Weaver was now the senior official concerned with higher education. He proposed the binary policy to Tony. Tony seized it, amended it, made it his own...the next thing was to determine where to move from there. With the help of Weaver and others, he invented the polytechnics as a makeweight to the universities

Brian Simon characterised the relationship as one whereby ‘the eminence grise [Weaver]...successfully pressurised Crosland’ to make the Woolwich speech.<sup>199</sup> Weaver was determined that the DES would be strengthened in its control of higher education in relation to the universities and this would please the LEAs. The creation of the polytechnics offered a less expensive solution to the expansion of higher education a crucial factor in a period when

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<sup>195</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p.193.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p.194

<sup>199</sup> Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, p.249.

resources were under great pressure.<sup>200</sup> The debate concerning the official influences on Crosland's reforms in the higher education sector has continued. A more recent study considers that Crosland, who 'was not especially interested in education and more ambitious for an economic ministry, simply fell in line'.<sup>201</sup> The figures who helped to form Crosland's ideas included Eric Robinson, chairman of The Association of Teachers in Technical institutions, Alexander Clegg, Director of Education in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and William Alexander, chairman of The Association of Local Authorities. These individuals swayed Crosland towards maintaining local authority control over much of higher education in the form of the binary system.

Crosland finally presented the details of the establishment of the polytechnics in a White Paper in May 1966. To meet the needs of the 700,000 students that the government wanted to attract in both full-time and sandwich courses, the paper stated that 'a considerable measure of concentration is therefore essential'.<sup>202</sup> This was the justification for the creation of the polytechnics whereby a 'limited number of major centres would be designated...in which a wider range of both full-time and part-time courses can be delivered'.<sup>203</sup> A White paper on Technical Education in 1956 had led to the introduction of a four-tier system of Colleges of

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<sup>200</sup> For an assessment of the motives of Weaver and his officials when advising Crosland on higher education reform see: Goodwin, Origin of the binary system, pp.183-184; Simon, *Education and the Social Order*, pp.249-250; and Toby Weaver views as expressed in an interview reported in *Education*, 20 August 1965.

<sup>201</sup> Richard Taylor and Tom Steele, *British Labour and Higher Education 1945-2000: Ideologies, Policies and Practice* (London, Continuum, 2011). See also review by Michael Shattock, *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, Vol 41, No. 1, 123-126, 2012.

<sup>202</sup>The White Paper emphasised that this was greater than the 51,000 recommended in the Robbins Report and reflected the aims of their 'National Plan'. *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges: Higher Education in the Further Education System* (May 1966), ACP 5/2.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

Advance Technology (CATs), Regional Centres, Area Colleges and Local Colleges. Apart from the CATs, which would now be transferred to the university sector as recommended by Robbins, the remaining institutions would form the core of the new polytechnics of which there were to be thirty in number. Again, the paper stressed that ‘As comprehensive academic communities they will be expected to cater for students at all levels of higher education’.<sup>204</sup> The White Paper also stressed that the existing system had two major weaknesses which would now be addressed: an institutional distribution which could not sustain high academic standards or a satisfactory corporate life; and an uneconomical use of resources.<sup>205</sup>

Initially, there was much support for Crosland’s reform of higher education especially from contemporary writers on education. Colin Crouch and Stephen Mennell published a *Young Fabian Pamphlet* defending the binary system in the wake of the establishment of polytechnics stressing that Crosland was left with no alternative.

One is therefore forced to the conclusion that the binary system, or something like it, is unavoidable if we are both to respond to contemporary pressures and preserve those distinctive characteristics of the universities which are considered of value.<sup>206</sup>

In answer to the charge that the policy of ‘separate but equal’, in regard to institutional reform, ‘has a most unfortunate political history’, the authors predicted that the ‘polys’ would eventually achieved ‘parity of esteem’.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Colin Crouch and Stephen Mennell, ‘The Universities: Pressures and Prospects’, *Young Fabian Pamphlet*, no 28, January 1972. Copy in ACP 5/2.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

What Crosland did in bidding the new polytechnics to become major institutions in their own right was to begin the process of creating a new institutional form of higher education. These powerful establishments are to seek academic weight and prestige, not by eventually being promoted to university status, but by making a place for themselves in their own right, establishing their own precedents and traditions.<sup>208</sup>

Although they criticised Crosland for making a ‘crude distinction between academic and vocational education’, they praised the binary system for it was ‘as a system of diversity, secured by institutional differences, that the policy has its true relevance’.<sup>209</sup> However, Crosland was accused of imposing a division on higher education while attempting to eliminate such a division in secondary education (Grammar/Secondary Modern). He rebutted this argument as a ‘false analogy’. ‘They said that if you were against the 11-plus, you should be against an 18-plus. But at 11-plus an entire age group is moving up to a different level of education and the question is whether it does so in a selective or non-selective fashion. At 18-plus nothing of the sort is happening’.<sup>210</sup>

Writing in the *Socialist Commentary* in 1970, Malcolm Keir, a lecturer in Government in the new polytechnic system predictably praised Crosland’s answer to the expansion of higher education as a ‘great social and educational advance’.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, p.194

<sup>211</sup> Malcolm Weir, ‘The Polytechnics: a Socialist Achievement’, *Socialist Commentary*, August 1970. See ACP 5/2.



Above all higher education has cease to be the preserve of an elite. No longer need full-time education stop at eighteen for those who do not go to a university or a college of education. A major advance has thus been made not only in economic terms but in opening up freedom of choice and giving reality to the notion of equality of opportunity.<sup>212</sup>

Nevertheless, he was concerned that the polytechnics needed to develop a ‘personality of their own’ and one which would challenge society for these new institutions should still be characterised by ‘a pursuit of dedicated, disinterested scholarship’.<sup>213</sup> Crosland feared that the vocational origin would stifle ‘a radical spirit of enquiry’.<sup>214</sup>

Tyrrell Burgess, a writer on educational matters whose views Crosland greatly respected,<sup>215</sup> enthused about the nature of the expansion introduced by the Labour Government under the new Secretary of State at the DES. ‘It is not too much to say that the binary policy was the most radical, most specifically socialist policy the Labour government had in education’.<sup>216</sup> Burgess considered the universities had failed to meet the needs of those especially from the working class who required work-related courses. ‘The British universities are and always have been middle-class institutions... their tradition is aloof, exclusive, conservative and scholastic’.<sup>217</sup> Burgess criticised academics especially those on the left-wing

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<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> See Crosland, *Crosland*, p.158.

<sup>216</sup> Tyrrell Burgess, ‘A Policy for Higher Education’, *New Statesman*, 29 January 1971, pp.133-134.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

who ‘sneered’ at ‘mere vocational education’. which would be delivered at ‘low status institutions’. According to Burgess:<sup>218</sup>

The only Labour Secretary of State who ever understood this [the need and demand for vocational education] was Anthony Crosland... What Tony Crosland sought to preserve and extend was the open, ‘comprehensive’, educational tradition of the technical college.<sup>219</sup>

Observing the development of the polytechnics over the following decade, however, Burgess became disillusioned with their progress and considered that Crosland should share responsibility. While crediting him with ‘the challenge to the intellectual climate of the early 1960s whereby universities were perceived as the dominant form of higher education as reflected in the Robbins Report, he drew attention to the weakness in the White Paper.<sup>220</sup> For Burgess, Crosland’s policy had fallen short and there existed a discrepancy between his speeches and the White Paper.<sup>221</sup> Burgess had identified what he termed ‘academic drift’ as ‘the process by which institutions in the service tradition seek to move towards the autonomous [university sector]’.<sup>222</sup> He now felt that Crosland’s higher education reform had failed to arrest this process.

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<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Tyrrell Burgess, ‘Crosland’s policy has fallen short and the polytechnics stand as a rather half-hearted example of alternative purpose in higher education’, *Guardian*, 6 February 1979, p.9.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

If Robbins could be said to have institutionalised academic drift, the White Paper encouraged the process while seeking to stop it short institutionally with the designation of the polytechnics.<sup>223</sup>

Criticism of Crosland's plans as enshrined in the White Paper came foremost and most vociferously from Lord Robbins in a speech in the House of Lords. While praising the impressive figure cited for higher education expansion, he found fault with most of the other features of Crosland's plans.<sup>224</sup> There was to be no minister of higher education as he recommended nor were the colleges of education to be freed from LEA control. Robbins reserved his main criticism for the polytechnics or 'binary abracadabra' as he termed it. By cutting the State controlled sector adrift the government were creating 'an educational caste system more rigid and hierarchical than ever before'.<sup>225</sup> He was convinced that binary systems would not succeed and he called on Crosland to think 'long and earnestly before continuing on a course which can bring no pleasure to anybody except a few snobs at the centre and a few bullies at the periphery'.<sup>226</sup>

Edward Boyle also came to question the 'binary system'. At first he supported Crosland's innovation for it had the merit of efficient use of resources. Further, he conditionally endorsed the list of thirty polytechnic announced by Crosland in April 1967.

As the Secretary of State knows, we on this side have always recognised that it is right to concentrate costly resources in fewer centres and to designate a limited number of

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> HL Deb 1 December 1965 vol 270 cc 1249-67.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.* See also Peter Preston, *Guardian* 2 December 1965, p.3.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

polytechnics as the main centres for the future development of full-time higher education outside the universities.<sup>227</sup>

Nevertheless, he had a number of reservations concerning Crosland's proposals. He stressed that students other than those attending full-time university courses should be given parity of esteem: the Secretary of State should 'attach great importance to the part-time student as well as to the full-time student'.<sup>228</sup> He also urged Crosland 'to feel his way cautiously over the rundown of the higher education colleges other than polytechnics'.<sup>229</sup> By 1971 Boyle had come to doubt the artificial distinction between university and polytechnics and the impracticality of this reform of higher education.

I agree that the binary system as we have it today, is inherently unstable...Any attempt at precise articulation of the difference between what a university is for and what a polytechnic is for doesn't stand up. There is considerable overlap.<sup>230</sup>

Boyle also considered that the two institutions would inevitably co-operate in terms of research needs and that there would be 'close relationship' between departments. Financial reasons would dictate this.

In the same interviews with Maurice Kogan in 1971, Crosland made an equally strong case for the polytechnics stating categorically that there continued to exist a 'need for institutions which cater not only for the traditional full-time degree course but for the part-time

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<sup>227</sup> HC Deb 5 April 1967 vol 744 cc 151-5.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> Kogan, *Politics*, 1971, p.128

student, the sub-degree course and the kind of education which has its roots in the technical tradition'.<sup>231</sup> A year later Crosland reaffirmed his belief in the 'Polytechnic ideal' speaking at a conference on the future of the polytechnics in 1972.<sup>232</sup> He was aware of the mistakes that had been made while he was Secretary of State citing the disparity in salaries between university and polytechnic staff that had led to the loss of high qualified staff to the autonomous sector: similarly, the polys had favoured full-time degree courses in order to retain such staff. These developments had resulted in a reduction of diversity. He warned that the polytechnics should 'resist the insidious Establishment pressures which try to force the polytechnics into the university mould'.<sup>233</sup> He believed that these mistakes were not irredeemable and urged the Conservatives to adopt 'positive government discrimination in favour of the Polytechnics'.<sup>234</sup> Crosland concluded with a robust endorsement of their position in higher education provision. 'I believe in them on grounds of equality, of choice, of opportunity of relevance to the modern world. I am more convinced than ever of their enormous potential'.<sup>235</sup>

Crosland's contribution to the development of higher education has been much debated since his tenure of office at the DES. Christopher Price, who was Crosland's Private Parliamentary Secretary between 1965 and 1967, complimented his decision to produce a White Paper which 'became the vehicle of expanding the participation rate in higher education from 10 per cent to 30 per cent'.<sup>236</sup> He elaborated further on Crosland's achievement in 1997.

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<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p.195.

<sup>232</sup> Anthony Crosland, '*The Future of Polytechnics*', The City of London Polytechnic's School of Navigation, 9 June 1972. ACP 5/2.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> Christopher Price, 'Chapter 7: Education Secretary', Dick Leonard (ed), *Crosland and New Labour* (London, Macmillan, 1999) p.82.

The binary polytechnic policy provided an alternative model of what ‘peoples universities’ could be like; little by little they were copied by more orthodox universities and enabled expansion to take place. The polytechnics did quite as much to open up education to the disadvantaged as the abolition of the 11 +.<sup>237</sup>

With the transformation of polytechnics into universities in 1992, Crosland’s reform and the lasting impact of the binary system on the history of higher education in Britain has been reassessed. One writer on education suggested three possible interpretations: Robbins’s proposal of a system dominated by universities was rejected and replaced by Crosland’s binary system; Crosland’s system was an ‘aberration’ and was ‘progressively eroded over the years’.; and finally, differences between the two systems have been ‘overstated’ and were more concerned with ‘second-order’ matters for example governance and management.<sup>238</sup> His conclusion was that the third interpretation was the best fit. ‘Robbins envisaged that future higher education would be dominated by large comprehensive multi-faculty institutions. In fact, that is what happened, not belatedly in the 1990s but from the start in the 1970s’.<sup>239</sup> Crosland’s achievement consisted in the creation of institutions which were more diverse and this ethos was to be adopted by the more traditional universities.

If the former polytechnics had not been allowed to shelter behind the binary *cordon sanitaire* for a quarter of a century, they would have been unlikely to achieve the self-

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Peter Scott (2014), ‘Robbins, the Binary Policy and Mass Higher Education’. *Higher Education Quarterly*, Vol 6, 2014.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

confidence and dynamism they now display as post-1992 universities...UK universities are still described as either 'pre-1992' or 'post-1992' and they are still divided into so called 'mission groups' [the Russell group amongst others] Maybe we still live in a binary world – Crosland's world.

The development of the idea of the Open University was one initiative within the DES into which Crosland had virtually no input. This was the work of Jennie Lee who was Minister of the Arts a ministry under the auspices of Crosland as Secretary of State. Wilson was enthusiastic for this 'university of the air' and supported Lee throughout.<sup>240</sup> Crosland considered this of limited importance – it would consume funds which were needed for other far more vital schemes in particular the schools building programme and the raising of the school leaving age.<sup>241</sup> Roy Hattersley, a close friend and colleague of Crosland, wrote that Crosland 'had no enthusiasm [for the OU] and would have gladly sacrificed it if the money it cost could have been switched to pre-school education'.<sup>242</sup> Crosland's biographer characterised the relationship with Lee as 'distant' and stated that Crosland would complain in private about that 'bloody woman'; but that he had left her free to develop the OU concept well aware of her popularity within the wider Labour movement as Bevan's widow.<sup>243</sup> He complained that Lee gave him very little support over the comprehensive programme for she considered that

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<sup>240</sup> See Wilson, *Personal Record*, pp.685-686. Wilson had transferred Lee as Minister of the Arts to the DES in January 1965.

<sup>241</sup> See Patricia Hollis, *Jennie Lee. A Life* (Oxford, OUP, 1997) p. 315, interview with Ted Short.

<sup>242</sup> Hattersley in Leonard, *Crosland and New Labour*, p.63.

<sup>243</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p.109. Crosland was a supporter of Hugh Gaitskell. Gaitskell and Bevan were rivals for the Labour leadership and disagreed vehemently over many party issues in the 1940s and 1950s.

comprehensives schools were impractical.<sup>244</sup> ‘He [Crosland] encouraged the belief that we could have a classless education in a class society’.<sup>245</sup> In regard to the OU Lee considered that he was disdainful of the whole project as well as irritated by the way she had hugged it to herself.<sup>246</sup> In fact, he eventually gave her invaluable help. He argued alongside her when confronting the Treasury over funding and his suggestions on the wording of the White Paper on the OU made the programme more attractive.<sup>247</sup> In fact when Crosland left for the board of Trade in 1967 he complimented her efforts in regard to the OU stating that ‘don’t let anything stop you. It was one of the last pleasures to have got money in the Public Expenditure exercise which gives the green light’.<sup>248</sup>

### Evaluation

Critical assessments of Crosland’s work at the DES have tended to focus on his reform of secondary education especially the abolition of the 11plus exam and the accelerated establishment of the comprehensive structure. Shirley Williams was in no doubt that his drive to end selection was the product of his social philosophy. ‘The Crosland vision ... was one of an inclusive cohesive society of which schools were the building blocks ... He cared passionately about equality and was driven by a controlled danger against the privileges, patronage and preferment that so clutter up British Society’.<sup>249</sup> She further stressed that he had changed society for the better by the achievement of his socialist aims.

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<sup>244</sup> Hollis, *Lee*, p.357.

<sup>245</sup> Jennie Lee papers, undated jottings, 1982-5, quoted in Hollis, *Lee*, p. 358.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, p.315.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, p.360

<sup>248</sup> Crosland to Lee, 7 September 1967, Jennie Lee Papers.

<sup>249</sup> Williams, *Bookshelves*, p.176.



In that short time he had changed the character of the department into one suffused with the comprehensive idea: he had given the Labour Party a goal to work for; and he had put into practice the tenets of social democracy, equality of opportunity and social justice ... He had begun a process that had a lasting effect on British society.<sup>250</sup>

Although, Crosland never deviated from his ideal of comprehensive education, he accepted political reality and compromised on the instruction to the LEAs by requesting their compliance rather than requiring them in spite of the objection of his minister Reg Prentice. When faced with recalcitrant authorities which attempted to sabotage the comprehensive model he and the DES envisaged, he adopted an uncompromising stance.

Williams also pointed to the fact that he was never in a position to further these objectives again and his contribution at the DES was vital to the success of the reform. However, much of the groundwork on comprehensive education had been laid down by others. Both Boyle and Stewart at the DES had provided momentum to the campaign to end selection. Williams stated that he had transformed a department with his determination for the comprehensive model; but Harte and her team were fully committed to the achievement of this 'goal'.

Price agreed that Crosland's approach to the wording of the circular was correct in terms of the longevity of abolition of selection 'Founded on the rock of a Crosland value judgement, the abolition of selection at the age of 11 became politically irreversible'.<sup>251</sup> He also credits Crosland with introducing an element of 'spin' into the promotion of the DES policy of comprehensive schools and abolition of selection. Price explained how Crosland

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, p.179.

<sup>251</sup> Price, *Crosland and New Labour*, p.77.

favoured press releases that were succinct and gave the impression of a ‘snowballing tide of educational change’ and that this development was unstoppable.<sup>252</sup> Price does admit that Crosland was ‘lucky’ for the ground had been prepared with the increasing unpopularity of the 11 plus with the post-war burgeoning middle class whose demand for increased grammar school places could not be met.

Nevertheless, Price considered that Crosland’s ministerial contribution to educational reform was to be admired. ‘Crosland’s legacy is that without legislation and without any new resources ... he encouraged local education authorities to consolidate comprehensive schooling as a principle’.<sup>253</sup> Price writing in 1999, admitted the ‘bloom’ had faded on the comprehensive revolution in the three decades following the mid-sixties but that this was in no part Crosland’s fault. For Price, the cause was a failure of succeeding governments to match curriculum and teacher training to the demands of the diverse intake into comprehensives and Crosland’s attempt to tackle curriculum and training programmes had met with hostility from the teaching establishment.

Tony Benn, who had regretted Stewart’s departure from the DES, was more critical of Crosland especially his indifference to the teaching regimes within comprehensives ones, which Benn felt, should not imitate Grammar schools. Although Crosland opposed ‘unnecessarily early and rigid streaming’ at the primary level, he accepted that there might be a place for it in the comprehensive.<sup>254</sup>

Crosland’s appointment as Secretary of State at the department of Education and Science provided an opportunity to advance the cause of equality in society. He regarded education as the most important instrument for this and continually wrote on this theme.

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, p.76.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, p.77.

<sup>254</sup> Anthony Crosland, *North of England Education Conference*, 1966, ACP, 5/2.

However, utilising education as a means of social engineering became the dominant motivation and strongly influenced his decisions often leading to contradictions in the delivery of his policies. The ending of educational selection and consequent segregation of pupils after the age of eleven was the fundamental feature of his programme of reform; but he was to find this more difficult to achieve recognising that practical compromises had to be made. Crosland's obsession with countering middle class influence in education illustrates the limitations of a theoretical approach to reform. Crosland knew little of the internal dynamics of secondary school teaching and made no attempt to intervene in curriculum matters although he did take an interest in the innovative methods advocated by the Schools Council.

Secondary school reform was the focus of Crosland's work at the DES and his determination to 'destroy every fucking grammar school'. Nevertheless, he opted for the less forceful 'request' rather than the 'require'. Reg Prentice considered this was an opportunity lost for achieving this objective and that it would allow authorities to delay. In fact, the process of establishing comprehensives was well advanced before Crosland arrived and he did intervene where necessary to add weight to the department's administration of the process of managing submissions. The benefits of comprehensive reorganisation were accepted by Conservative controlled authorities as well and Margaret Thatcher was unable to deny further requests when she became Minister for Education in 1970. Some educationalists considered that his rhetoric was not matched by his accomplishments and that Michael Stewart had contributed more to reorganisation of schools on comprehensive lines. Crosland's colleague Tony Benn criticised Crosland's indifference to the practice of streaming in schools for Benn considered that this was as important as selection in the achievement of equality in education.

Crosland's reform of higher education was driven by a combination of theory and practicality. He considered that the universities were institutions that only provided a traditional academic education for those from the public schools and did not cater for those students who

desired a more vocational preparation. Departmental influence pressed Crosland towards the idea of polytechnics before he had become convinced of this solution; but he eventually embraced this approach to higher education reform. However, he was criticised for creating segregation at this level when he had condemned it for secondary schools. He hoped rather unrealistically that the polys would not become subject to 'academic drift' whereby these new institutions would aim for university status. The division that Crosland created was meant to be accepted in the academic world as one of parity. Eventually the polytechnic he was to establish was abandoned in the 1990s as part of government policy although the vocational element became a permanent feature of university programmes of study. Crosland's biographer stated that his efforts in the field of higher education reform met with 'mixed fortunes' although he accepted that the pressure on polytechnics to become universities 'had more to do with a drift in policy after Crosland left the department'. He applauded Crosland for 'championing' greater access to higher education for working-class students, part-timers and women. He summarised his contribution as follows: 'Crosland deserved credit for at least moving beyond the old conception that universities alone were synonymous with higher education'.<sup>255</sup>

Crosland's reforming zeal was not extended to the public schools. The Labour manifesto of 1964 stipulated that a trust would be established to consider the best way to integrate these into the state system. Crosland's sole contribution to this process was to lay down the terms of a public school commission (PSC) and to stress that the commission must reject the two extreme solutions of 'abolition' and 'squeezing'. Although the Commission reported after he had left the DES, his legacy was very limited for one who placed such an emphasis on the achievement of equality as fundamental to a socialist society. Criticism was made of Crosland's decision to set up a Commission for the Public Schools by Prentice and

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<sup>255</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, pp.109-110.

others who anticipated a more robust approach. They expected Crosland to adhere to a policy based on principle and not one on pragmatism for it was felt in Cabinet that financial imperatives ruled out yet more reform.

### Chapter Three: President of the Board of Trade. (August 1967-October 1969)

‘The drive of the long-distance runner who is now in charge’.<sup>1</sup>

Crosland’s appointment to the Board of Trade (BOT) presented a different challenge to that at Department of Education and Science. As Secretary of State for Education he believed that he could further the goal of equality of opportunity in society by educational reform. This could be achieved by the following measures: the elimination of selection at eleven; the growth of the Comprehensive; broadening working-class intake via the polytechnics; and integration of public schools within the maintained system. The BOT offered few opportunities for the furtherance of his agenda programme. Susan Crosland recognised that this did not appeal to her husband. ‘In most departments morality and objectives are married. Redistribution of wealth, central to Croslandism, scarcely arose at Trade where morality is only indirect – affecting other people’s jobs which could be lost’.<sup>2</sup> He rapidly immersed himself in a department which offered a chance to tackle some of the pressing issues of the economy.

This study will then concentrate upon those areas that attracted his attention in particular and assess his effectiveness as a minister: external trade and negotiations with EFTA, inward investment especially from America, Monopolies and Mergers policy, and support for the business community. Crosland’s brief also included transport and he was faced immediately with three contentious decisions: the purchase of the BAC 2-11 for BEA; the status of Stansted Airport and the threat to the launching of the liner Queen Elizabeth II. Crosland’s involvement in industrial growth, focused on the fate of three industries while at the BOT: the manufacture of cotton textiles in Lancashire; the establishment of an aluminium industry and the growth

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<sup>1</sup> George Bull, *The Director*, August 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 190.

and management of domestic tourism. The Board of Trade had traditionally overseen British imperial dominance of world commerce in the mid and late nineteenth century a product of an industrial revolution which led the world. Many notable Presidents were also committed supporters of free trade policies which helped entrench this supremacy.<sup>3</sup> By the 1960s the British economy was suffering from foreign competition and many well established industries were in serious decline. Crosland's appointment entailed designing regeneration projects for these and promoting diversity by the introduction of innovative industrial programmes.

### Appointment and the Board of Trade

By October 1967, Crosland had viewed his two and a half years at the DES as more than satisfying and hoped to continue his work there. His wife stated that he felt that 'he was in sight of accomplishing many, if not all, of the things he had set his heart on'.<sup>4</sup> Crosland included in this list of achievements the acceleration of the comprehensives to the point that it was irreversible, the establishment of the polytechnics and a report on the public schools to be published within the year. Harold Wilson had other plans for him and contacted him on holiday in Cyprus in August 1967. Wilson explained that he wanted Crosland to be involved in tackling the balance of payments. The DEA was to be wound up and Crosland's expertise was required at the Board of Trade for this would be the ideal department for Crosland to assist economic development: 'I was anxious to bring Tony Crosland into the economic team'.<sup>5</sup> Crosland confided to Richard Crossman that it had always been 'his nightmare that he might be pushed into this ghastly ministry which was nobody's business' and where any restructuring to make

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<sup>3</sup> William Huskisson, John Bright, William Gladstone and Joseph Chamberlain all in the nineteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> Crosland, *Crosland* p.182.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Wilson, *A Personal Record. The Labour Government 1964-1970* (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1971) p. 427.

it more effective would be an ‘appallingly dreary task’.<sup>6</sup> However, Crosland eventually admitted to his wife that ‘on balance’ this was the right move to make.<sup>7</sup>

He wanted to be in a stronger position to influence central economic policy. He’d always dreaded being landed with the Board of Trade. Yet he knew he’d be better placed there ... to press the devaluation issue and influence the economic strategy on which Education and every other domestic spending departments ultimately depended.<sup>8</sup>

The Trade portfolio was traditionally regarded as useful preparation for the Chancellorship which had always been Crosland’s ambition.<sup>9</sup> Jim Callaghan assured him that this would enable him to achieve this objective. Writing to Crosland he congratulated him for this appointment was a ‘step nearer the centre’.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, any optimism concerning promotion to the chancellorship was crushed within three months when Roy Jenkins entered Number 11 replacing Callaghan as Chancellor who became the new Home Secretary. Following devaluation in November, Callaghan decided that he would have to resign although he was persuaded to accept another of the key Cabinet posts. A straight swop avoided any need for Wilson to undertake a major reshuffle and Jenkins was a recognised economist.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume II, Lord President of the Council and the Leader of the House of Commons 1966-1968*, 5 September 1967, p.464.

<sup>7</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.182.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> See Kevin Jeffreys, *Anthony Crosland* (London, Richard Cohen Books, 1999) p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> Callaghan to Crosland, 29 August 1967, ACP, 5/3.



Crosland was reluctant to take on a department which had such a disparate portfolio. Crosland considered it to be ‘a ragbag of things that didn’t relate to one another’.<sup>11</sup> The BOT was also responsible for other areas of the British economy especially international trade; regional policy; Monopolies and Mergers; the Office of Fair Trading; policy towards technology and civil research and even the insurance industry.<sup>12</sup> Crosland eventually concentrated upon the first three of these for he believed that it was here that he could boost the performance of British industry and increase export trade especially following the opportunities provided by devaluation finally announced in November 1967. Crosland had argued for devaluation since 1964 a measure which would have enabled the DEA to deliver the export drive that Crosland had worked for. However, as a trade minister, he joined the steering committee on economic affairs and was able to press for devaluation.<sup>13</sup> The decision by the government had resulted in humiliation for Wilson and even a possibility that Callaghan might resign leaving the way open for Crosland to become chancellor. Callaghan did leave the Treasury for the Home Office but it was Jenkins who was promoted to the Chancellorship and Crosland, disappointed again, remained at the Board.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 190.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Hennessy points out that the poor performance of British Industry since the war had led to a temptation by Governments to make adjustments to the Whitehall machinery designated to cope with it. The Board of Trade had been responsible for virtually all policy making but significant areas of the new industrial policy had been apportioned to departments such as the Ministries of Fuel and Power and Transport. Wilson had continued this process with the establishment of the DEA and the Ministry of Technology. Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall*, London, Fontana Press, 1990) p. 433.

<sup>13</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, pp.125-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* The decision to appoint Jenkins rather than Crosland may have been personal for, according to Pimlott, Wilson seemed more at ease with Jenkins than Crosland. See Pimlott, *Wilson*, p.488.

### Transport: Planes, Boats and Airports.

A decision that required his immediate attention concerned the aircraft industry and involved a triangular struggle with the Minister of Technology (Tony Benn) and the First Secretary of State (George Brown). Disagreements with Brown had characterised their partnership at the DEA in the brief time Crosland was there. Such instant decisions on future policy were rarely a feature of his responsibility at the DES. In December 1967, Crosland found himself isolated and eventually instructed to make an announcement in the Commons with which he profoundly disagreed. On this occasion, there appeared to be no 'leaks' from Cabinet.

In July 1966 the Government had refused BEA permission to purchase the Boeing 727 aircraft. BEA had subsequently asked for permission to buy the BAC 2-11 an aircraft developed in Britain. The decision that Crosland eventually faced along with the Cabinet was whether the Labour Government should accept this request or whether they should instruct BEA to instead purchase the Trident 3B from Hawker-Siddeley an independent British company. This was the effective alternative and one which had the virtue of being substantially less expensive. The BAC 2-11 was a two-hundred passenger seater plane which would cost £120 million to develop by the British Aircraft Corporation. The Trident 3B, seating only one hundred and forty-six passengers, looked a more attractive proposition at a cost of £15 million to the Government. A ministerial committee had met in the week before a full Cabinet meeting and Crosland had dissented from the majority recommendation to refuse BEA's request for the BAC 2-11. Crosland made a plea to the Cabinet to reconsider. Brown had first pressed the case against the BAC 2-11 citing that the scale of the cost to the Exchequer which would be even more difficult to justify after devaluation and that the Government was now pursuing the 'development of major aircraft only on the basis of an assured European market'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Aircraft Industry: Re-equipment of British European Airways,' 14 December 1967, TNA, CAB 128/42.

Crosland reiterated that there were ‘powerful arguments’ in favour of the BAC 2-11 which was the choice of BEA. If this request was refused a second time, this would severely ‘impair morale’ in BEA. The company had selected the BAC 2-11 for very sound reasons: it was intermediate size between existing types of aircraft and the Airbus; it was the first generation of quieter aircraft; lower operating costs were guaranteed; and with devaluation, there were ‘greatly improved export prospects’.<sup>16</sup> He concluded by pointing out the considerable attraction of this deal to the Government. Rolls Royce favoured the development of the engine designed for the BAC 2-11 (the RB 211) for this could be sold in America. Again, developing the BAC 2-11 was a form of ‘insurance policy’. If the European Airbus project was abandoned then we would be left with no option but to buy American aircraft for there would be no outlet for Rolls Royce’s ‘new technology’.<sup>17</sup>

Crosland’s final statement in Cabinet encapsulated his strategy for export growth and sound public finances and one, which he stressed, could not rely on devaluation alone as a means of addressing the balance of payments issue or one which called for public expenditure cuts.

There were two general considerations which argued in favour of developing the BAC 2-11. First, we could not regard devaluation as being sufficient in itself to solve our balance of payments problems and we should still be prepared to incur Government expenditure where this would yield worthwhile results in terms of foreign exchange. Second, it was wrong to think that in our present conditions it was necessary to reduce public expenditure indiscriminately; we should consider all forms of expenditure from

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

the point of view of their effect on the balance of payments, and from this point of view expenditure on the BAC 2-11 was fully justified.<sup>18</sup>

Crosland's summary drew on his belief in the opportunities that would accrue from devaluation and his championing of the beneficial effects of maintaining the existing level of public expenditure as a means of promoting economic growth. He had argued this economic strategy continually in Government and now applied this approach to the areas overseen by the Board of Trade. Crosland found himself virtually alone and faced Tony Benn who as the Minister of Technology supported the arguments of George Brown. Benn was not impressed by Crosland's support for the judgment of BEA 'since a large Government subsidy was involved and past experience showed that government would be unlikely to recover the major part of it'.<sup>19</sup> Countering, what he seemed to regard as Crosland's risk strategy, he dogmatically insisted that 'It was wrong to develop any major aircraft unless there was an assured market for it with at least three major airlines'.<sup>20</sup> Wilson summarised the discussion without recognising the merit in any of the arguments put forward by Crosland. His final statement precluded any compromise with BEA's wishes. 'It was unlikely that an aircraft designed to meet domestic requirements alone would be successful in world markets'.<sup>21</sup>

In the House of Commons, Crosland duly announced the Government's decision to deny authorisation of the purchase of 30 BAC 2-11 aircraft and to agree to meet a share of the launching costs of Trident 3B from Hawker Siddeley. He cited two reasons for this decision- 'no certainty of sufficient foreign sales to justify public investment' and 'the urgent need to

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

limit new public expenditure at this present time'.<sup>22</sup> Reaction to Crosland's announcement was anything but favourable and he found himself forced to defend a brief for which he had no appetite. MPs, in particular Conservative ones, speculated pessimistically on the future of the domestic aircraft industry raising such doubts as the following: the damage to the morale of BEA staff and management; the effect on the long-term sales of prospects of British aircraft and engines; the impact on the British aero-industry; and the future, if any, of the European Airbus.<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Ridley, for the Conservatives, focused on the BEA and the impact of this decision on their future freedom of action in aircraft selection. 'What is the point of continuing to have BEA as an independent airline if the right hon. Gentleman is going to take all the major decisions for it, and what is more, probably take them wrong?'.<sup>24</sup>

As a minister Crosland, was obliged to voice the consensus within the Cabinet even though he had advocated an alternative policy. In the Commons, he relied on the arguments in which he had relegated as subordinate to the potential benefits of BAC 2-11 the day before. He now stressed that Trident 3B was attractive in terms of running costs and that the Government was not necessarily under an obligation to choose aircraft the Corporation had preferred.<sup>25</sup> He rejected the claim that this decision was the 'death knell' of the industry and concluded by emphasising that the Conservative opposition had gained what they had called for.

But all these factors—the more attractive noise element, the more attractive operating costs, and so on—at the end were easily outweighed by a difference in launching costs between £120 million in the one case and £15 million in the other. Hon. Members

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<sup>22</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 15 December 1967, Volume 756, Columns 779-84.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Guardian*, 16 December 1967, p.14

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 15 December 1967, Volume 756, Columns 779-84.

opposite who are constantly urging us to economise on public expenditure cannot in all conscience say that we should have taken on the extra million burden.<sup>26</sup>

Even if Crosland was unable to convince the Cabinet, he found support in the aircraft industry for there was general agreement that Crosland's announcement did not augur well for the British aircraft industry and that an opportunity for export sales had been lost. Sir Anthony Millward (Chairman of BEA) said that he had learnt with 'great regret' of the Government's decision which he believed was a 'major blow' to BEA as well as to the airframe and engine business of Britain.<sup>27</sup> Freddie Laker, chairman and managing director of Laker Airways, who had announced that he was willing to buy three BAC 2-11s, was more blunt.<sup>28</sup> 'The Government decision is totally and shamefully wrong. This short-sighted policy will force me to buy the Boeing 727'.<sup>29</sup> Autair International, which would have bought three BAC 2-11s, stated that they would look to American companies for further equipment. Crosland's announcement was given moral support by a ministerial colleague. John Stonehouse, Minister of State in the Department of Technology, defended Crosland's position stating that 'if the British aircraft industry is not to bankrupt itself...we must have the courage to discard techniques that do not pay off'.<sup>30</sup> In view of the possible negative impact of the decision on the British Aircraft Corporation, Crosland assured MPs that the Government accepted full

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Times*, 16 December 1967, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* The *Guardian* reported that the impact of this decision was even greater for Laker 'whose policy of buying British was well known'. and that he would now buy American alternatives in an apparent 'snub' to British companies. *Guardian*, 16 December 1967, p.14

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

responsibility for finding alternative work for employees who would be affected. Crosland was to engage with another issue in his first few months which would again test his resolve but one in which his judgement was finally vindicated and supported

Crosland made another early decision, this time on his own initiative, when in the first few months he ordered that case for Stansted as the third London airport should be re-opened. Stansted, a base for bomber command in the war, was taken over by the Civil Aviation authority in 1949 and by 1966 was a major departure point for charter flights offering lower costs than either Heathrow or Gatwick. With the popularity and growth of air travel, the government looked to Stansted as a possible third London airport to relieve excess congestion from the other two. A lengthy inter departmental review had been conducted by officials which had taken five months and this had come to the same conclusion as a similar study under the Conservative Government in 1964. The case for Stansted, it concluded, was indisputable and officials within the department thought that the matter was closed. Douglas Jay, the former President of the Board of Trade, supported this stating in a meeting of the Labour Party: ‘In all cases, Stansted, although not ideal, presented fewer or less acute difficulties than the alternative sites suggested’.<sup>31</sup>

However, many backbenchers in that meeting had their doubts concerning the case as presented for Stansted.

It was considered that the government’s decision had been unduly influenced by outside pressures. That many of the facts put forward in support of the Stansted site were open to dispute and time should be given for a careful examination of these details. Too much

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Stansted – Site of Third London Airport’, LHASC, Minutes of the PLP, 21 June 1967.

attention had been given to the advice of civil aviation and air traffic concerns and too little consideration given to the views of Planning Authorities.<sup>32</sup>

Their criticism continued questioning the arguments put forward, many of which they felt had been inexplicably ‘changed or distorted’.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Crosland’s decision was not taken in isolation from significant feeling within the party. He pressed his case further in Cabinet stressing that ‘a number of developments ... made it desirable for them [cabinet] to reconsider the matter’.<sup>34</sup> Central to his reasoning were several factors: the need for realignment of the runways at Stansted still posed new problems; the possibility of strong opposition in the Lords especially as this might obstruct the Government’s negotiations with that body for reform; and, above all, the revelation to the cabinet that vital statistical information had been suppressed.

It now transpired that no cost/benefit analysis had in fact been made until after the Government’s decision had been announced...It was not possible to be sure in these circumstances that even now all the relevant facts were available to Ministers.<sup>35</sup>

Crosland, who received qualified support from the Minister for Housing and Local Government, Anthony Greenwood, called for a small independent committee to be established. Crosland was directed by Wilson and the Cabinet to investigate two of the issues he had raised – realignment of the runways and the release of a ‘refined’ version of the cost/benefit analysis to interested parties. Within three months and following the results of the examination of these

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> ‘The Third London Airport’, 9 November 1967, CAB 128/42/64. TNA.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



issues, Crosland was able to announce to the Commons that there would now be a new full inquiry into the siting of the Third London Airport. He cited as justification that any adjustments arising from these assessments amounted ‘to such a radical departure from the early proposals as to constitute virtually a new project’.<sup>36</sup> Crosland explained that a full public enquiry would therefore take place and claimed the credit for this decision ‘.for no public and objective inquiry such as the one I am proposing was ever conducted’..<sup>37</sup> His statement stressed that there was genuine public concern and desire for this reappraisal and that the Government still regarded a Third London airport as a necessity by the middle of the 1970s as commercial and social demand increased which justified Crosland’s support for the BAC 2-11 and its greater capacity.

The government have taken this decision in response, not merely to the very legitimate pressure of the House, but to the clear signs, both locally and nationally, which have emerged over the last few months that public anxiety and debate still continues.<sup>38</sup>

Crosland’s claims were substantiated by the comments from across the floor of the House. In fact, many Conservatives welcomed his announcement but claimed the credit for this *volte face* and denied that it was down to his initiative. The only real disapproval of Crosland’s decision came from his departmental officials who had worked solidly on the Stansted proposal for many months. Susan Crosland recorded that her husband’s determination to reopen the case and effectively reject their decision, greatly strained relations with the Board’s officials at the beginning. He admitted to her the following.

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<sup>36</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 22 February 1968, Volume 759, Columns 667-74.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

I shall never forget the row of black faces! The officials thought that they had finally got Stansted sown up and were enraged to have the whole wretched matter reopened. They thought that I was mad and wrong. My relations with that group of people were pretty bad for some time.<sup>39</sup>

Faced with another pressing decision in his first days at the Board, Crosland made an instant decision unrelated to the wider context or the opinion of Wilson. Cunard was in financial trouble and threatened to scrap the launching of the Queen Elizabeth II by the Queen nine days before the ceremony. Crosland, as President, considered that there was no case for tax-payers' money to be used to keep Cunard in business. Richard Crossman commented on Crosland's casual reference to the financial crisis for Cunard and the possible benefit to the government stating: 'Let them go bankrupt and afterwards the Government could buy up the remains cheaply. However, others felt that this would be unfortunate for the Queen'.<sup>40</sup> Harold Lever, Financial Secretary of the Treasury, came up with a plan to save the liner without costing the government. Crosland listened to Lever's scheme and, in spite of the expressed disapproval of officials, took the scheme to Cabinet where it was sanctioned. The credit for averting this potential publicity disaster for the Labour Government, Crosland assigned to Lever.

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<sup>39</sup> Maurice Kogan, *The Politics of Education. Edward Boyle and Anthony Crosland in conversation with Maurice Kogan* (London, Penguin Books, 1971) p. 182.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Crossman, *Diaries, Vol 2*, p.471, 11 September 1967. Crossman also noted that the Government were more concerned with the cargo and container side and that Wilson was relying on Cunard to buy two container ships from British shipyards. This policy had been agreed by Cabinet in July of 1967. *Ibid.*

The Prime Minister said that they were all very grateful to the President of the Board of Trade of this swift and competent action ‘Very little to do with me,’ replied the President of the Board of Trade, one hand waving it away, ‘whole credit belongs to the Financial Secretary’.<sup>41</sup>

Ironically, the *Times*’ editorial praised the Board of Trade for securing a deal ‘without putting a heavier burden on the taxpayer’.<sup>42</sup> Crosland received special merit and his promotion to the Board vindicated. This was seen as a ‘*coup*’ for the new President.

Any doubts about his business acumen must now be resolved. He is believed to have taken a leading part in the refinancing – and by any standards he has done it well. The deal will raise his stature in the business community.<sup>43</sup>

Crosland’s insistence that Cunard should not be treated as a separate case continued. In the Cabinet meeting called for 26 October, he proposed that legislative provision for the further assistance to the shipping company should not be included in the Industrial Expansion Bill but should form the subject of separate legislation.<sup>44</sup> The shipping industry was entering a difficult period. Wilson was informed by Sir Basil Smallpiece, the new chairman of Cunard, that there was a likelihood of the lay-up of many famous ships. Wilson considered that Government participation in Cunard was essential.<sup>45</sup> Crosland disagreed arguing that:

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<sup>41</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 193.

<sup>42</sup> *Times*, 20 September 1967, p.23.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *Record*, 1971, p.423.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

It would give an unfortunate impression of the aims of the Industrial Expansion Bill if one of the first projects to be promoted under it was directed not to industrial expansion but to helping a firm in financial difficulties.<sup>46</sup>

Crosland suggested that financial support could be found in the Civil Contingencies Fund and that any other legislation designed to help Cunard would only result in ‘further congestion of the Parliamentary timetable’.<sup>47</sup> Wilson accepted Crosland’s argument and George Brown was requested to form an inter-departmental committee to consider whether the Bill [Industrial Expansion] should cover Government assistance to the Cunard Shipping Line.<sup>48</sup>

#### Business Policy, Trade and Investment.

The increasing incidence of takeover bids in the 1960s raised issues of the economic impact of mergers and monopolies. Crosland took a positive view of such developments as beneficial to economic growth but found he had to make concessions to those who doubted their benefits. The *Guardian* financial editor William Davies noted that ‘the year is less than six weeks old, but the market value of take-over bids already exceeds the total for the whole of 1967’ and he warned that ‘1968 looks certain to go down as the biggest year for bids and mergers’.<sup>49</sup> Aware of the benefits of mergers, he asked the question ‘Are there too many mergers?’<sup>50</sup> Davies was not confident that Crosland as the President of Trade would ‘probably show little interest in

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<sup>46</sup> President of the Board of Trade, 26 October 1967, TNA, CAB 128/42.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> William Davies, *Guardian*, 8 February 1968, p.12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

mergers even if he was at home'.<sup>51</sup> Crosland faced with several high profile takeovers (Unilever – Allied Breweries and Rank-De La Rue), summarised the increase of takeover applications as 'on balance a beneficial trend which had led to badly-needed restructuring of many industries'.<sup>52</sup> Later still he stated that the merger 'race' was unacceptable<sup>53</sup> and in a speech in Manchester used more emotive language fearing that mergers could become a 'fashion'.<sup>54</sup>

There have been signs recently of 'merger fever,' which may lead to ill-considered unions and a disproportionate expense of time and energy by top management in plotting and resisting takeover bids.<sup>55</sup>

Crosland, while continuing to stress that he still regarded most mergers as 'neutral or beneficial', took several steps to assure those who were equally concerned that the powers of the 1965 Act would be invoked when needed to provide a sufficient restraining influence.<sup>56</sup> Crosland stated that he would publish guidelines which would help the businessman to understand the Board of Trade's criteria in judging mergers<sup>57</sup> Crosland reiterated this intention to provide the necessary assistance to those considering a merger by stating to a meeting of the Industrial Reorganisation Committee that he intended to 'publish a handbook on mergers latter in the year in order to make clearer to companies the kind of information which they would be

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Crosland was on a visit to India.

<sup>52</sup> *Times*, 1 February 1969, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> *Times*, 10 February 1969, p.13.

<sup>54</sup> *Guardian*, 1 March 1969, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

expected to provide before a decision was reached on whether to refer their propose merger to the Monopolies Commission'.<sup>58</sup> Crosland made it clear that he and the Government were concerned about the establishment of 'conglomerates' which would have an unfair impact on the market and could lead to a monopoly. To further reassure the business community of the Board's determination to monitor the situation, he promised that the government would appoint several new members to the Monopolies Commission.

Crosland attempted to maintain a balance on this issue - responding to companies concern over the growth of 'conglomerates' while recognising the necessity to the economy of the development of such business models – and his attempts were acknowledged in the business press. Anthony Harris in the *Guardian* stated that the President's actions were necessary 'to refute the charge of inconsistency and to give industry some guidance, short of hard-and-fast criteria about which mergers are likely to be judged'.<sup>59</sup> Harris also detected another possible motive in Crosland's posture for, Harris suggested, the President of the Board of Trade was making a last minute bid for more departmental influence in merger policy in the future.<sup>60</sup> It was obvious to Harris that the role of all departments involved in the development of the economy (Treasury, DEA, BOT) were soon to be clarified and he considered that Crosland had foreseen an opportunity to extend the responsibility of his domain.

The issue of inward investment in the British economy especially by American corporations presented a difficult challenge for Crosland. Trans-Atlantic interest in the home economy raised the prospect of American control of British firms and involved once again the question of mergers and monopolies. The impact of American investment was seen as a threat on a wider stage in the opinion of the *Economist*.

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<sup>58</sup> Anthony Crosland, 'Mergers Policy,' Minutes of the IRC lunch, 28 March 1969, TNA, BT 258/2335.

<sup>59</sup> Alan Harris, *Times*, 1 March 1969.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

General de Gaulle's view of Britain as the American Trojan Horse has been fostered by many things. One of the most important has been its high propensity to attract American capital. Although the proportion of British industry in American hands is increasing, this argument has less force than previously, since the growth of *le defi Americain* has been more dramatic on the continent.<sup>61</sup>

The *Economist* believed that government support and the IRC had a part to play in the modernisation of British industry, but that if these industries were to compete successfully in the international market, 'they must be encouraged to compete on a world scale rather than to seek special assistance in the U.K'.<sup>62</sup> A strong advocate of the benefits of inward investment, Fred Catherwood, who was Director-General of the National Economic Development Council, had worked with Crosland at the DEA and now attempted to convince the President of the many benefits of such investment. Catherwood was the main speaker at an Anglo-American conference in Oxford and said 'that Britain should continue to welcome American investment'.<sup>63</sup> He offered Crosland a briefing paper on North American trade and one on Mergers following the conference. Crosland's policy lacked consistency encouraging inward investment which could benefit the economy and yet attempting to protect British commercial interests.

By April 1969 Crosland had sanctioned a draft minute for Wilson in which he tackled the contentious issue of the government's position on the nature of its powers to prevent foreign

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<sup>61</sup> *Economist*, 1 March 1969, p.56.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Times*, 24 February 1969.

takeovers.<sup>64</sup> Crosland provided Wilson with a choice of control mechanisms either the Monopolies and Mergers Act or Exchange Control. The former he characterised as an ‘uncertain instrument’ which gave ‘no powers permanently to prevent the takeover’ if not censured by the Monopolies Commission.<sup>65</sup> However, the latter mechanism, Crosland concluded, was a more direct method of control, the only requirement being Treasury permission before a British company passed into the hands of non-residents.<sup>66</sup> Crosland favoured light-touch management rather than legislation of the Exchange control mechanism. In reference to inherent weaknesses in this latter instrument Crosland stated that

any attempt to eradicate them [operational flaws] would involve legislation that would be highly controversial and would be taken as an indication that the Government intend to pursue a more restrictive policy towards inward investment; and I would prefer to leave any consideration of the possibility of legislation until we [Board of Trade] have had a chance to consider the results of the inward investment study which my department has been doing.<sup>67</sup>

This minute almost certainly reflects Crosland’s instructions for he had expressed his concerns in a meeting on inward investment with departmental officials on 29 April 1969. Although conceding that there were ‘minor gaps in our powers’ of the Exchange Control Act, any further

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Powers to Control Foreign Takeovers’ (Draft Minute for the President to send to the Prime Minister), 29 April 1969, TNA, BT 258/2335.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*



legislation 'would put foreign firms on notice and cause publicity' thereby deterring possible investment.<sup>68</sup>

Crosland favoured increased American investment but his approach met with some hostility from unions. A resolution by the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union objected to increased American takeovers. Crosland was given emphatic support by officials in the BOT. James Jack, an official, warned of the possible adverse consequences if the government supported this line and rejected the idea that 'foreign investment in the UK should always take the form of minority holdings'.<sup>69</sup> He further warned of possible retaliatory measures against British 'outward investment'. One area which did prompt Crosland to question the influence of American investment was in the field of UK publishing. An announcement by McGraw Hill Publishing USA that they intended to increase their holding of ten per cent in Penguin did not meet with his approval. Before Crosland left the Board of Trade, he expressed concern of a previous investment by a US publishing company and the threat posed to the independence of UK publishers.<sup>70</sup>

One of Crosland's reasons for apprehension in regard to his appointment was the diversity of responsibilities inherent in the position of President of the Board of Trade. He found himself indirectly involved in the survival of the cotton textile industry which was under the threat of growing competition from cheap cloth imports especially shipped from developing countries. Management and unions expected support from the Labour Government. They looked to Crosland's appointment for some measure of protection - one that they felt they had not received from Douglas Jay and hoped that Crosland's appointment might promise a new start. 'Whether we get a better deal from Mr Crosland than from Mr Jay remains to be seen, but we

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<sup>68</sup> 'Inward Investment' (Private Office Minute No. 303), 29 April 1969, TNA, BT 258/2335.

<sup>69</sup> Untitled document from 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, James Jack, 7 August 1969, TNA, BT 258/2335.

<sup>70</sup> 'Penguin Publishing Company Ltd', J R Morley, 10 November 1969, TNA, BT 258/2335.

could hardly have a worse one'.<sup>71</sup> Jay's departure and Crosland's appointment was literally greeted with the flying of flags at cotton mills in Rochdale, Oldham and Royton. The Chairman of the Shiloh Spinners Group, Edmund Garside stated: 'We are glad that Mr Jay has gone, and we are hoping for a new policy from Mr Crosland'.<sup>72</sup>

Crosland was presented with a new challenge and one which would require his negotiating skill in pacifying the strength of feeling within the Lancashire textile community in particular. As with the aircraft industry, Crosland as minister, was faced with the demands of meeting the expectations of these two vital industries within the context of Labour Policy. Crosland's initial response was to meet the pleas of the textile community by indicating to union leaders that he would 'go a long way to meeting many of their demands'.<sup>73</sup> They made a robust demand at the 1967 Labour Conference in Scarborough for 'anti-dumping' measures, import controls and for special help to protect their industry – help which they felt had been given to the 'tough miners' lobby' which had achieved a 'stay' of pit closures.<sup>74</sup>

Crosland's first response was to embark on a 'fact-finding' visit to the mill towns of Lancashire and Cumberland. He was met by increased criticism by textile managers who complained of the failure by the government to take action to protect the industry and also unions who described their 'shabby treatment' compared to the protection offered to the miners. The textile community felt that the government retained little interest in their plight.<sup>75</sup> Crosland and the Labour government were faced with pressure from India and other Commonwealth countries. These nations pressed for freer access to rich markets for their

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<sup>71</sup> Joseph Minogue, *Guardian*, 30 August 1967, p.12.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> R W Shakespeare, *Guardian*, 5 October 1969, p.23

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Times*, 14 November 1967, p.22.

products.<sup>76</sup> Following his visit, Crosland held out little hope for immediate action to meet the demands of the cotton textile community. Nor did he offer the consolation of conferring development-area status on the declining textile towns.

In fact, his attitude hardened after studying the report of the textile council on productivity and efficiency. Crosland appreciated the endemic problems of the cotton textile industry in the north-west but insisted that assistance would only come if the industry undertook measures to increase productivity.

If the industry will play its part on the side of productive efficiency, the Government will fulfil their responsibility for an adequate policy on imports. I am absolutely confident that if all those involved in this problem play their part, we can create an industry which will continue to play a major role in the national economic life.<sup>77</sup>

These comments evoked a hostile reaction from the textile council. The Council stated that the Labour government had failed 'to appreciate the full significance of the problems which have faced the industry for the last 10 years' especially the 'huge burden of imports, mainly duty free from developing countries in volume five or six times greater than those admitted by the EEC countries'.<sup>78</sup> Disillusionment with Crosland grew within the textile industry. In response to Crosland's call for greater efficiency, one union leader stated that 'Mr Crosland is wrong - he is miles off the target'.<sup>79</sup> The *Guardian* had some sympathy with

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 13 December 1967, Volume 756, Columns 434-573.

<sup>78</sup> William Martin, *Guardian*, 15 December 1967, p.18.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland especially when faced by a bid from the giant textile company Courtaulds for a dominant position in the market.

Mr Crosland seems to have been pushed into an odd and potentially dangerous constitutional position. He is being asked, in effect to decide the future structure of the industry, although he has no legal authority to do anything of the kind... There is no doubt that Mr Crosland will deliver the best judgement he can, and he is as competent as any Minister to do the job.<sup>80</sup>

It also recognised that the Government could hold to account those companies seeking profitable mergers by threatening them with referral to the Monopolies Commission which could become 'a bogeyman in case of bad behaviour'.<sup>81</sup> In the wake of the Monopolies Commission report on the trade in cellulosic fibre, Crosland was able to broker a deal whereby Courtaulds agreed to end their cartel arrangement with EFTA producers an arrangement which had restricted competition in this raw material.

Crosland's fluctuating relationship with the textile industry culminated in a decision by the Board of Trade to find a degree of accommodation with the council by offering limited protection. The report by the textile Council was completed by the start of 1969. Accepting much of the Council's recommendations, he announced the imposition of a 15 per cent tariff on imports of cotton textiles from the Commonwealth countries from 1972. This would replace the existing system of quotas. He stated that the tariff would offer the industry a margin of protection that would help to stabilise the market enabling the industry to plan ahead with confidence. This measure combined, with the temporary continuation of quotas, would offer

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<sup>80</sup> *Guardian*, 20 January 1969, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

the industry the opportunity to invest further in order to compete successfully. Crosland's policy was to give the large firms the stability they needed so that they could proceed with their internal reorganisation and integration. At the same time, he encouraged a necessary amalgamation amongst the smaller firms<sup>82</sup> He also promised a sympathetic consideration to the textile Council's recommendation for higher depreciation allowances for older plant worked on a multi-shift basis – although he rejected the plea for a 40 per cent investment grant for firms in the traditional textile areas. Crosland made an exaggerated claim for the policy of the BOT in reinvigorating a traditional industry.

Successive Governments have failed to come to grips with the industry's basic problems ... I hope that the decisions that I have announced provided that they are accompanied by a clear determination on the part of both sides of the industry to carry out the changes recommended by the Textile Council, will enable the Lancashire textile industry once again to take its place in the forefront of British industry.<sup>83</sup>

There was general agreement within the Commons on the pressing need to afford the textile industry a measure of protection but opinions varied on the most suitable method. MPs suggested there were alternative instruments available to Crosland and government for supporting the textile industry. The abandonment of the quota system was questioned by some MPs while they were concerned that EFTA members would benefit if tariffs were imposed.<sup>84</sup> Two prominent conservative MPs questioned the impact on established commonwealth trade links. Keith Joseph pointed out the international ramifications of the Government's imposition

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<sup>82</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 22 July 1969, Volume 787, Columns 1507-16

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

of a tariff for this was ‘a departure from the Ottawa Agreement ... although it is in connection with the textile industry which occupies a unique position in our international trade’.<sup>85</sup> Julian Amery an ardent imperialist continued this theme stressing that the quota system had the advantage of discriminating in favour of the Commonwealth producers and considered that Crosland’s adjustments would ‘sacrifice the interests of Pakistan, India and Hong Kong to Japan, Korea and equally more or less underdeveloped countries’.<sup>86</sup> When questioned on the most appropriate balance of his package between the interests of developing and developed countries, Crosland stated confidently that it was a ‘solution which preserves a balance between these various factors’.<sup>87</sup>

In Cabinet, Crosland had received broad support for the measures proposed although views on the level of aid to India were divided. The abandonment of quotas was accepted for, with falling consumption, quotas were bound to become less effective.<sup>88</sup> Wilson stated later that these measures were necessitated and justified by the increasing threat from imports from abroad. ‘Overseas competition much of it manifestly unfair, had for many years inflicted the most serious damage on the morale of the cotton and associated industries, with all that meant for their confidence in the future’.<sup>89</sup> However, as Wilson noted and predicted, there was a great outcry from the exporting countries.<sup>90</sup> A delegation from the United Nations Association led

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* The Ottawa Agreement was signed in 1932 by all members of the British Empire. It guaranteed free trade between all states a system designated as ‘imperial preference’. Joseph was a former minister under Harold Macmillan and opposition spokesman on Social Services and Labour under Heath.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* Julian Amery had served as under Secretary of the Colonies in Macmillan’s Government and believed that supporting Commonwealth trade was vital to the economy of Britain.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Cabinet Memorandum: Lancashire Textile Industry, 16 July 1969, TNA, CAB 128/44/33. C (69)79.

<sup>89</sup> Wilson, *Record*, p.685.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

by Humphrey Berkeley, confronted Crosland at the Board of Trade protesting against the tariff. ‘We believe that this [tariff] is a contradiction of the principles underlying aid to developing countries, in so far as it will create an obstacle to the improvement of their export earnings’.<sup>91</sup> Crosland claimed that no precedent would be set and that other developed countries had resorted to such measures.<sup>92</sup>

This protectionist measure was criticised in the press. The *Guardian* drew attention to this ‘unprecedented step which flies in the face of world-wide liberalisation policy’. Nevertheless, it approved of the package of measures for they illustrated Crosland’s ‘blueprint’ for the future of the textile industry.<sup>93</sup>

In effect, yesterday’s proposals are yet another lease of life to the cotton textile industry to give it what must be surely be a last chance to solve its problems. The industry has been given very largely what it asked for and it is now up to individual firms to invest in new machinery and pursue other rationalisation measures.<sup>94</sup>

Crosland’s responsibilities as President covered not only the traditional industries such as textiles but also a growing sector of the service industry tourism. From supporting an ailing regional industry his attention was drawn to the development of one which was rapidly becoming a useful source of foreign earnings. Tourism within the United Kingdom was another of the ‘ragbag’ of responsibilities which were part of the Board of Trade responsibilities. Until the 1960s the body which had promoted the tourist industry was the British Travel Association,

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<sup>91</sup> *Guardian*, 29 July 1969, p.12.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Victor Keegan, *Guardian*, 23 July 1969, p.10.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

a voluntary body to which the Government had provide a steadily increasing grant to enable it to continue its work. However, Crosland realised that with the increase in numbers coming to Britain and the possibilities for foreign currency earnings, there was need, in his opinion for a statutory basis to the organisation. In a speech during the budget debate in March 1968 he illustrated the importance of tourism to Britain stating that over four million visitors had come to these shores and he had estimated that they had spent about £240 millions. By 1970 he projected the figure of over six million visitors and he stressed that ‘we must be able to provide adequate accommodation for them, as well as for our own holidaymakers’.<sup>95</sup>

In a statement to the Commons in November 1968 concerning the proposed legislation for the tourist industry, Crosland laid down the justification for a restructured tourist body. ‘Tourism is making a steadily increasing contribution to our foreign currency earnings. I hope that these substantial proposals for reorganisation will increase that contribution still further’.<sup>96</sup> Crosland supported the establishment of a new body The British Tourist Board. This would have overall responsibility for the United Kingdom and two national boards for Wales and Scotland. The Board would be accountable to Crosland as President. This Board would concentrate on the two vital aspects: promotion to attract visitors and development of facilities.

Crosland’s proposals did meet with a number of objections. Conservative MPs defended the traditional way whereby the tourist trade had relied on self-regulation. Some considered that the real problem inhibiting growth was the existence of Selective Employment Tax (SET). This was a measure introduced by Labour in 1966 and was designed to favour the expansion of manufacturing rather than service industries by taxing the number of employees in the tertiary sector. The intention was to drive employees to the manufacturing sector which was considered a high productivity sector and therefore could increase revenue from exports

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<sup>95</sup>Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 20 March 1968, Volume 761, Columns 430-552.

<sup>96</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 13 November 1968, Volume 773, Columns 407-16.



far more than the service sector. Following the introduction of SET by Callaghan in 1966, the Conservatives led the opposition stating that it was unworkable and disproportionate.

Keith Joseph made the comprehensive case against Crosland's proposals defending at the same time the previous Government's record in this area. Joseph urged the Labour government to withdraw the Selective Employment Tax and doubted that these organisational reforms were really necessary and, inevitably, more costly. He asserted that the opposition would need convincing that it was right 'to substitute a statutory body and a new bureaucracy for the British Travel Association which has done such an excellent job'.<sup>97</sup> Conservative MPs considered that the tourist boards that Crosland wished to create reflected neither economic nor geographic balance of the tourist industry and that public funds to the newly created statutory boards would be allocated on a discretionary basis.<sup>98</sup> The contributions from many MPs reflected their own regional associations especially from the north of England which they felt would not receive adequate representation with the relegation of the original BTA.

Crosland did offer help to the tourist service sector in the form of grants through a Hotel Development Incentive Scheme. He elaborated on this scheme publicly in an apparent attempt to satisfy those who considered that he had neglected the service sector. On a visit to York, he stated that government plans included assistance to hoteliers and a general scheme for the classification of hotels via a dossier or handbook of accommodation facilities. 'After all they [hotels] are the first essential for the development of tourism'.<sup>99</sup>

The representative of the British Resorts Association defended the BTA claiming that this body had proposed a classification of minimum standards over the preceding two years, but that time had not been granted for this exercise. The Consumer Council welcomed

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> HC Debates, 27 February 1969, Volume 778, Columns 1940-2053.

<sup>99</sup> *Guardian*, 1 February 1969, p.5.

Crosland's plans for comprehensive registration and classification citing the regular practice of this abroad. However, the Council also claimed that the BTA already possessed the machinery for inspection.<sup>100</sup> The fear of controls which, it was felt, would come in the wake of classification, was the concern of the management of the prestigious Imperial Hotel in Torquay.<sup>101</sup> The *Times* travel correspondent considered that Crosland's plans for a classified register would generate much controversy for 'how is a Government body to compare the advantages of a large hotel in a seaside resort or city against a small boarding house or the mass of unregistered accommodation masquerading as private houses'.<sup>102</sup> An editorial expanded upon the doubts raised by the Conservatives in the Commons. While recognising that Crosland was now following the example of other countries, it emphasised that the BTA had performed its functions 'admirably' and restructuring was not required. 'Past experience of statutory bodies gives good reason to fear bureaucracy, unnecessary interference, incompetence and waste...Mr Crosland would do well to bear in mind the danger of provoking the hostility of the industry he wants to help'.<sup>103</sup>

Crosland did receive support from Bill Rodgers his minister with special responsibility for tourism. He explained that specialists from outside the industry would man the boards. Furthermore, he stressed that the aim of these officials was to 'modernise, revolutionise and regenerate' Britain's tourist industry.<sup>104</sup> There was still much scepticism in the House of Commons that the replacement of the British Travel Association by the Tourist Board would address local needs especially in the north of England. They were not enthusiastic about the

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<sup>100</sup> 'Three tourist boards to be set up', *Times* 14 November 1968, p.1.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> 'Not the best way to help', *The Times*, 14 November 1968, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p1.

hotel incentive scheme offered as compensation. Opposition came from both sides and some Conservatives MPs considered that restructuring was unimportant compared to the abandonment of SET.

Crosland had identified the tourist industry as one which could, if managed well, increase foreign earnings. He had proposed that government supervision would achieve this and that The Tourist Board would bring an element of planning to this sector one which, ironically, the Labour government had identified as of less importance than the manufacturing sector and therefore subject to SET.

### Europe and EFTA.

Crosland's relationship with EFTA, strained over his defence of the import surcharge while he was at the DEA, was tested again over his plans to expand Britain's aluminium industry. Crosland saw a role for government intervention in his regional policy. This was part of a programme of economic planning a strategy favoured by the Labour Party. Crosland aimed to build aluminium smelters in areas which were in serious industrial decline as part of regeneration policy for these regions. Predictably, Norway and Sweden regarded this as a threat to their own well-established aluminium industry especially if the British government were to provide financial assistance to these areas which would be a violation of EFTA rules.

Both countries accused the British Governments of favouring their domestic industry with subsidies a measure forbidden by EFTA's rules. In fact, the Norwegians attacked British policies over several years which they felt had caused difficulties for other member countries. An officially approved editorial in a Norwegian newspaper stated that the understanding and patience of 'Britain's most loyal partner in Europe were about to be undermined'.<sup>105</sup> A ten per

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<sup>105</sup> *Times*, 18 November 1968, p.23.

cent tariff on fish fillets imported from Norway was seen as a further breach of the spirit of the EFTA agreement. The aluminium issue was the latest ‘shock...which has been caused by our friends on the other side of the North Sea, be it an import surcharge, devaluation, or subsidised aluminium smelting’.<sup>106</sup>

Crosland’s strategy for the aluminium industry was a combination of generous financial support from the government but support which was predicated upon the active cooperation by management and unions in the rationalisation of their industries.<sup>107</sup> An Industrial Expansion Act was designed to provide this support in areas designated as ‘development areas’. Norway questioned the legitimacy of this funding to the emerging aluminium industry which impaired the growth of their own industry. Norway had complained to the Council throughout protracted negotiations with Crosland over several months. The Council supported them.

Commenting on a White Paper, Crosland robustly explained that the policy of the Board did not amount to government subsidy. The assistance to companies that were involved in smelter construction constituted loans granted under the terms of the Industrial Expansion Act. He further stressed that these contracts were framed so as to anticipate possible objections under GATT and EFTA rules and that imports from Canada would be more likely to suffer than Norway which would probably increase.<sup>108</sup> GATT was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and was an organisation within the United Nations signed in 1948 with the aim of encouraging free trade between nations by reducing tariffs, subsidies, quotas and regulations that discriminate against imported products.

In a final meeting in Vienna, he defended Britain’s devaluation in the strongest of terms stating that the measures had to be taken by the Government ‘as a consequence of the greatest

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> ‘Minister’s Carrot and Stick’ Anthony Crosland, *Times*, 17 March 1969, p.15

<sup>108</sup> ‘Smelter contracts framed to avert EFTA objections. *Times*, 7 November 1968, p. 24.

monetary crisis' especially in view of the pound's role as a reserve and trading currency.<sup>109</sup> The issue of the tariff of ten per cent on Norwegian frozen fish fillets was an area where Crosland was prepared to debate but unwilling to yield. However, he did achieve a compromise with the EFTA states over a joint communique concerning any constructive interim proposals put forward by the Common Market in relation to trade arrangements between the two organisations.

The construction of aluminium smelters in the United Kingdom was vital to Crosland's strategy for regional regeneration and Crosland was determined that this project would succeed.<sup>110</sup> Three smelters would be built in the north-east of England (Blyth-Lynemouth), Scotland (Invergordon), and Wales (Holyhead). Crosland justified his policy in the Commons. 'A large part of the object of the entire regional policy is to attract industries and firms to the [development] areas'.<sup>111</sup> Crosland predicted that by the 1970s over £30 million would be saved in aluminium imports.<sup>112</sup> The only adverse comments concerned the delay in securing the necessary deals with the companies concerned. Crosland responded, 'We are considering here the creation of an entirely new industry in Great Britain which involves the most intricate questions of regional policy, fuel policy and international policy'.<sup>113</sup>

His tenacity in establishing these three sites was recognised by the areas Labour MPs. In anticipation of the smelter construction, Eddie Milne from Blyth stated that the decision would be 'hailed with delight' by all in Northumberland.<sup>114</sup> He paid tribute to Crosland and his

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<sup>109</sup> *Times*, 23 November 1968, p. 14.

<sup>110</sup> Alcan Aluminium (UK), Rio Tinto Zinc and the British Aluminium Company.

<sup>111</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 24 July 1968, Volume 769, Columns 582-6

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 29 May 1968, Volume 765, Columns 1797-800.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

team for all the hard work in bringing Alcan to the area and stated categorically that ‘this opens a new era in the industrial history of south-east Northumberland’.<sup>115</sup> Other Conservatives expressed their concerns about the commercial viability of Crosland’s deal. Nicholas Ridley asked if the construction of the smelters depended upon the investment grant of twenty 25 per cent. He questioned whether the deal was value for money for the British tax payer. ‘Does he not think that this a subsidy which ill befits the British people to have to pay?’.<sup>116</sup> Likewise, Sir Keith Joseph asked if, in view of the generous arrangements that the three companies had been granted with the suppliers of power, ‘other large continuous industrial users of energy could make similar arrangements with the electricity industry?’.<sup>117</sup> The issue of the subsidised electricity involved in the package prompted some MPs to ask for an assurance from Crosland that there would be no need for tariff protection of home smelted aluminium against competitors when transitional support was withdrawn. Crosland stressed that the numerous benefits to the three regions would take precedent in the establishment of this industry.

Crosland faced criticism from cabinet colleagues who were concerned that the extra funding that he sought to ground this strategy was against the spirit of the programme of government reductions in expenditure. Crosland argued that a reduction of 5 per cent in the rate of investment grant in the development areas would be badly received and would cause acute difficulties for the aluminium smelters, particularly for Alcan.<sup>118</sup> He pressed for transitional funding at a higher level as construction on succeeding stages of the Alcan smelter in Blyth continued even though he recognised that there would be a sharp reaction from our

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> The President of the Board of Trade, 24 April 1969, TNA, CAB 128/44.

partners in the European Free Trade Area; but that increased smelter capacity was vital.<sup>119</sup> There was limited support from his Cabinet colleagues for treating Alcan as a special case. Transitional relief extending as widely as Crosland had proposed for the development areas, would, it was felt, ‘whittle away’ the savings already made. Nevertheless, Crosland did manage to obtain a postponement to the date when the relief was terminated. Crosland persuasive arguments had won concessions for the aluminium industry in the north-east, a project which he had supported against the opposition of EFTA members.

Throughout 1968 Crosland had targeted increased foreign earnings from enhanced exports. This was an area that he identified as crucial to the balance of payments issue. Greater opportunities for trading growth were offered following the devaluation of the pound in November 1967 and he was determined that the Board would lead the business community in capitalising on these. However, he saw the role of the BOT as supportive supplying the services to allow companies to compete successfully abroad. Limited funding was provided but government involvement stopped there.

Crosland introduced a series of measures to assist companies with export development. He helped to establish a Permanent Committee on Invisible Earnings which were now recognised to constitute over thirty-three per cent of all exports and Crosland ensured that these figures were included in the monthly trade figures.<sup>120</sup> In November 1968 he announced facilities to support companies in their efforts abroad.<sup>121</sup> An overseas project group were set up to encourage companies with roughly the same size but not marketing competing products to

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> See statement on ‘Invisible Earnings’ by Anthony Crosland in the Commons. HC Deb 13 March 1968 Volume 760 Columns 1353-5.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Fresh measures to boost UK exports’, *Times*, 12 November 1968, p.22

establish joint representative overseas. (This replaced a scheme whereby large companies supervised smaller ones.) Crosland secured greater funding for the export services it provided.

Crosland attempted to contribute to the free trade movement by involving Britain in bilateral trade deals with overseas trading bodies. Although his relations with EFTA were at times fraught, he engaged in the international attempt to liberalise trading arrangements. Crosland committed Britain to the tariff cut in international trade in the Kennedy Round Agreement. His commitment was dependent upon the agreement of the major trading groups of the world the USA, Japan, the EEC and EFTA. Even Keith Joseph had to admit Crosland's participation looked to be a 'constructive initiative in the face of the growing threat to world trade expansion'.<sup>122</sup> He did question Crosland's willingness to expose some industries to 'damaging' competition during the accelerated reduction of tariffs.<sup>123</sup> Crosland admitted that he was aware of the risk but warned of the greater risk of 'a downward spiral due to an endless series of retaliatory measures' which had been avoided since the war.<sup>124</sup>

### Evaluation

As President of the Board of Trade Crosland was provided with the executive authority as departmental head to assist economic growth in key industrial sectors. At the DEA he had acted as deputy to Brown. At the BOT he was able to pursue his economic ideas for regional development ones which he continued to follow when appointed as Secretary of State at the Department of Local Government and Regional Development in 1969. He committed himself to regeneration projects in particular often underestimating the opposition of his cabinet colleagues while arguing for special financial support. He was also unwilling to acknowledge

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<sup>122</sup> 'Kennedy Round Tariff Cuts', HC Debates 14 March Volume 760 Columns 1638- 43.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*



and be bound by policy measures already drafted in the department. This was to become a feature of Crosland's style as he embarked upon each new ministerial brief.

Crosland was faced with three pressing decisions when he assumed his responsibilities at the BOT. In each of these he took the initiative and proposed policies which did not receive automatic Cabinet approval. His attempt to convince Cabinet of the viability of the purchase of BAC 2-11 failed. This was the first occasion in which he had faced clear opposition from the Cabinet to a carefully argued case for the benefits which he believed would arise from his judgement as departmental head. (Crosland had received broad support within Cabinet and from Labour MPs when announcing educational reforms). He then found himself in the Commons having to defend a collective decision from which he had dissented. He still managed to present a rational, coherent and seemingly committed case for his colleagues' decision even though many of the comments made by MPs who were critical of his statement and echoed those he had voiced in Cabinet the day before.<sup>125</sup> Crosland clearly accepted the doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility and, presumably, was unwilling to sacrifice, at this stage, a career in the ascendancy.<sup>126</sup> Crosland's failure to press for the BAC 2-11 was

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<sup>125</sup> The *Guardian's* Parliamentary correspondent, Norman Shrapnel commenting on his performance, observed that Crosland was 'very calm', in rejecting complaints by one MP of 'shabby treatment' of the House of Commons. Also, he 'did his best' to advocate the Government's case. Shrapnel attests that this decision was predicted by the press and that Crosland's announcement was expected. 'That the announcement –one could hardly say news-of this anti-Christmas present should be slipped in on a Friday morning angered some Tories...[Crosland] said he was anxious to prevent a weekend of speculation, a weekend of wondering if they could believe what they had been able to read in all of the newspapers'. *Guardian*, 16 December 1967.

<sup>126</sup> Crosland's struggle to support the case for the BAC 2-11 against his colleagues received no coverage in the two biographies published since his death and yet it was given significant press coverage at the time. Therefore, I have treated this issue in some detail in my examination of his tenure at the Board of Trade.

condemned by leaders of the aircraft industry as a wasted opportunity to secure Britain's future in the jet age.

Crosland's decision to open the case for Stansted as the third London airport was resented by his civil servants; but on this occasion he did not meet resistance from the Cabinet. A senior civil servant in the BOT confided to Crosland's wife that his decision to re-open the case was a brave and ultimately correct one in the eyes of his sceptical officials and that 'we would have incurred immense expenses ten to fifteen years in advance of the need...If at the end of the day Stansted is concreted over, the case for doing so will have been intellectually examined, not just allowed to slide through'.<sup>127</sup> His decision was proved correct for the Roskill Commission, appointed in 1968 to consider the siting of the third airport, considered four locations none of which were Stansted.

Crosland's reaction to the crisis over the prospective launching of the Cunard liner the QEII was uncharacteristically spontaneous and uncompromising. He misjudged the mood of Wilson and the Cabinet which appreciated the embarrassing position in which the Queen would be placed if a Labour government cancelled the launch. Crosland's justification was that the government should not support companies in serious difficulties even ones as prestigious as Cunard. In fact, he had surrendered responsibility as a departmental head allowing a cabinet colleague to find a solution acceptable to all.

Cunard eventually emerged from a difficult period having secured assistance from the Labour government. By April 1968, its resurgence as a company seemed assured in the wake of the sale of The Queen Elizabeth I for over £3 million. However, the *Times* shipping correspondent gave the credit for its improvement to the Chairman of Cunard and Crosland's role questioned. In terms of the relationship between the two new heads of their respective

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<sup>127</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.192.

organisations, the newly installed Chairman seemed to have outmanoeuvred his opposite number at the Board. In the negotiations during the crisis in the third week of September' Sir Basil Smallpiece, it was recorded, had employed 'the old Cunard magic' which involved 'that of dipping Cunard's hand into the public purse'.<sup>128</sup>

For Sir Basil persuaded Crosland not only to increase the Government loan on the Queen Elizabeth II from £17,600,000 to £24m, he also persuaded him to secure it on the passenger fleet only, which was put into a separate subsidiary for the purpose.<sup>129</sup>

Crosland's policy towards mergers was ambivalent. While stressing their potential benefits he had to declare publicly that he would ensure that the government would ensure the viability of such takeovers to ease the fears of smaller companies. In regard to the textile industry of Lancashire he saw mergers as a way of restructuring and modernising a traditional manufacturing base as crucial to enabling the industry to face competition. As President of the Board of Trade, Crosland had undertaken a major challenge in tackling the serious problems which faced the textile industry in the 1960s – a proliferation of small and medium sized firms, aging plant, numerous unions and, above all, fierce competition from developing countries. His appointment was initially met with much goodwill by employers and workers alike; but this was quickly dissipated when it was obvious that he was unwilling to make concessions without a thorough study of the status and shape of this industry so vital to the economy of Lancashire in particular. He resisted the temptation to advance aid without assurances from owners of a corresponding effort on their part to invest and modernise. A desire for restructuring and rationalisation underpinned his strategy. For this, he advocated that a tariff should be imposed

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<sup>128</sup> 'Sir Basil's change of course for Cunard', Michael Baily, *Times* 6 April 1968, p.13.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

(although he was under some pressure in Cabinet and the Commons to consider other measures). This would provide the security that the industry demanded while it carried out these reforms. Crosland achieved acceptance of his strategy in dealing with the textile industry: urging them to take the necessary measures to make it more competitive while giving them the space and time in the form of a protective tariff to undertake significant changes. He hoped that a restructured industry could continue to grow.

Crosland's ambivalence extended to foreign competition for although he supported moves towards the global liberalisation of trade he was only too willing to entertain protectionist measures when appropriate. He saw the benefits of American inward investment but objected when such holdings threatened the integrity of the UK publishing industry. Again, a measure of protection in the form of a tariff was offered to the textile industry as a means of enabling the industry to survive against imports from the developing world especially the Commonwealth countries. A charge of inconsistency was levelled at Crosland in the press. Although his instinct was to favour unfettered trade he adopted a more realistic policy.

His attempt to encourage the development of a domestic aluminium industry as part of regional regeneration programme depended upon extra government funding which came to be regarded by Sweden and Norway as violating EFTA rules. Crosland's reputation suffered further in Europe as the *Times* noted:

The aluminium smelter issue and the Swedish claims of purchasing discrimination in EFTA are only two features of the government's somewhat tainted image in EFTA dating back to the import surcharge, imposed suddenly and without full consultation with the EFTA partners.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> 'Britain's attitude worries EFTA', *The Times*, 21 May 1968, p.23.

Crosland's policies had further ramifications for the editorial warned that Britain's prospects of joining the EEC would be much reduced for 'historical precedents die hard in international trade'.<sup>131</sup> If Britain were seen as a 'rule breaker' in one organisation there would be 'less full acceptance of into another community'.<sup>132</sup> The responsibility of the Board of Trade in the deteriorating relations with EFTA was highlighted.<sup>133</sup> The existence of a perceived 'buy British' policy running through purchasing by public bodies in Britain was strongly denied by Crosland and the Board; but the *Times* considered that this suspicion had undermined the credibility of Britain as a *bona fide* member of the trading group.<sup>134</sup> His reputation within some EFTA states for placing national interests first had been reinforced. Some commentators considered that he had exacerbated Britain relations with the EEC impairing the future chances of a successful applications. Crosland was not a Europhile even admitting that he was agnostic on the issue of entry.<sup>135</sup> In line with many in the Labour Party Crosland regarded the issue of entry into the Common Market as less important than the struggle to defeat the Conservative government and divisions over this impaired the effectiveness of their opposition in Parliament. In Crosland's opinion, membership of the Market was secondary to economic and social reform at home. Roy Jenkins led the pro-Marketees in the Labour Party and asked Crosland to support

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* Britain had applied to become a member of the European Economic Community (the 'Common Market') which had been established by six western European countries in 1956. Its failure to become part of this grouping had led Britain to form a separate trading group - the European Free Trade Association - by those outside the EEC zone in 1960. This association (EFTA) comprised of predominately Scandinavian nations with Britain Switzerland and Austria. Its headquarters was in Geneva.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Press statement by Crosland, 29 October 1971, ACP 4/9

entry when the conservatives pressed for UK entry in Parliament.<sup>136</sup> Crosland was in favour of Britain's membership but would not comply with Jenkins plea if this brought about party disunity and entailed voting with the Conservative Government. He abstained in the crucial vote in parliament in October 1971 leading to much criticism by Jenkins and Bill Rogers and those on the right of the party who were euro enthusiasts.

A recurring feature of Crosland's *modus operandi* when appointed to a new ministry was to inform himself of the necessary background to the problems which underpinned the relevant issues. A decision would only occur once this process had taken place. He frequently referred to his appalling blunder, over the Woolwich speech when he rushed into an announcement on polytechnics before a detailed personal examination of the case for them.<sup>137</sup> Instant decisions ran counter to his preference to engage in a lengthy intellectual and rational analysis of issues. His instinct proved correct over the citing of Stansted but not when reacting to the QEII crisis where he failed to appreciate the delicate nature of the national context.

Crosland had come to realise that the Board could be used to take advantage of the new economic climate following devaluation (a measure he had always pressed) and he had made a major contribution to enabling the Board to exploit the opportunities for export growth. However, his approach was frequently inconsistent. At times he favoured allowing the market to prevail and thereby allowing Cunard to fail. On other occasions, he would entertain government intervention by the use of a tariff to protect an ailing industry such as the manufacturing of cotton textiles. He had to accept political reality and make concessions or even abandon his proposals when faced by the lack of Cabinet support.

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<sup>136</sup> Jenkins, *Life*, p.318.

<sup>137</sup> See above Chapter Two.

Chapter Four: The Department of Local Government and Regional Planning (1969-1970) and the Department of the Environment (1974-1976)

He knows absolutely nothing about local government and has no interest in the job...He is a macro-economist, interested in the budget, a natural Chancellor, in fact, a disappointed Chancellor.<sup>1</sup>

Harold always makes things sound better than they turn out to be. I've not become cynical – just world weary. I couldn't bring myself to ask him about the status of the job.<sup>2</sup>

We have to come to terms with the harsh reality of the situation which we inherited. The party's over.<sup>3</sup>

If I stayed in this bloody job for another two years, I could actually *advance* something. Not solve it. You can't solve anything. But start things moving in the right direction.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1960s Crosland's career had reached a point where he was concerned that advancement to the higher offices of state seemed to be receding. He had failed to achieve the Chancellorship in 1967 and Crossman reflected on the nature of his manner which possibly impeded his progress. Even in 1970 Crossman believed that he had become disenchanted and

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume Three, Secretary of State for Social Services 1968-60* (London, Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, 1977) 9 October 1969, pp.671-2

<sup>2</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Crosland, Speech to Association of Local Government Authorities, Manchester, 1975. Quoted in Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p.184.

<sup>4</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 294.

was ‘a man with no future outside politics who makes himself awkward in politics’.<sup>5</sup> Crosland was appointed to head an amalgamated ministry the Department of Local Government and Regional Planning. Crosland was confronted with the task of running two departments housing and transport but still administered as separate entities. *The Economist* realised the enormity of the challenge commenting that Crosland had acquired ‘the task of creating a more compact empire out of his tangled inheritance’.<sup>6</sup> Crosland held responsibility for environment twice as Secretary of State (1969-70, 1974-76) and once as shadow minister 1970-74.<sup>7</sup> Crosland was therefore minister of environment for seven years an exceptionally long time for one politician to hold the same portfolio.

Environmental concerns were becoming a significant issue in British politics. Many pressure groups were pressing for government intervention to protect the environment by reducing pollution and also ensure an improving quality of life for those in urban areas. Housing and transport were now recognised as major factors impacting on the environment and therefore a single department was required to co-ordinate their administration. Crosland, unenthusiastic at first, attempted to utilise the opportunity of the Department of Local Government and Regional Government to further his ideas on housing and transport development. As Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment he found that any policies he had for housing and transport were severely restricted owing to recurrent economic

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<sup>5</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol 3, 15 February 1970, p. 819.

<sup>6</sup> *Economist*, 18 October 1969.

<sup>7</sup> Originally this department was called Local Government and Regional Planning (DLG/RP) in 1969-1970 by Harold Wilson. Edward Heath gave the new title Environment (DOE) in the Conservative administration of 1970-1974.



crises. He had to persuade local authorities that they had to curb their spending plans warning them in 1975 that ‘the party’s over’.<sup>8</sup>

### Appointment as Secretary of State

Crosland’s third Cabinet post arose from Harold Wilson’s decision to amalgamate several ministries into larger departments in 1969. In another round of government reform, Wilson believed that certain areas of government, (for example local government and regional development) could be administered more effectively.<sup>9</sup> Changes to the machinery of government were seen by Wilson as reforms which would enable the more efficient delivery of planned economic growth, the aim of the DEA. Both he and Edward Heath believed that structural redesign in central government would solve deep-seated economic and policy problems especially if they represented the fashionable philosophy that ‘bigger was better’.<sup>10</sup> Central to Labour’s policy agenda was the drive for planned economic growth in the period 1964-70. The first round of administrative innovation, between 1964 and 1965, saw the establishment of the DEA, the Ministry of Overseas Development, the Ministry of Technology and the post of Secretary of Wales. Later, in 1968 and 1969, larger amalgamated departments were announced – the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Employment and Productivity and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Crosland was appointed Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning in October 1969.

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<sup>8</sup> See above reference.

<sup>9</sup> See Andrew Blick ‘Harold Wilson’ Labour and the Machinery of Government’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 20, No. 3, September 2006, pp.343-362.

<sup>10</sup> See Kevin Thompson in *The Labour Governments 1964-70*, ed. Peter Dorey (London Routledge, 2006) pp.166-7; and John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A Biography* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1993) p. 222.

Crosland was informed of the prospective appointment by Wilson in September 1969 and headed a department representing the merger of several ministries. He explained to Crosland that the DEA was to be wound-up and the Board of Trade was to be reduced in importance. Wilson gave a lengthy explanation of the decision to 'bring the DEA experiment to an end' after five years in his memoir in 1971 citing the unfavourable economic context of a balance of payments deficit and hostile speculative activity. One of its perceived successes, regional planning, was now transferred to Crosland's new department.<sup>11</sup>

The new department (which did not receive a name at this point) would combine responsibility for housing, transport, local government and regional planning. Crosland was asked specifically to concentrate upon the pressing issues of local government reform and pollution. Wilson stated that he considered Crosland to be an appropriate choice for tackling environmental questions. 'He had identified himself in numerous speeches and writings with environmental questions and the quality of life and he was widely regarded as the right choice'.<sup>12</sup> Crosland's ideas on the environment were expressed in numerous articles after his appointment in 1969 and formed the contents of the chapter on the environment in the volume *Socialism Now* published in 1974. Apart from his comments to his wife, Crosland made few if any public statements on the subject before 1969.

Another motive for Wilson's decision could have been a decision to punish Crosland for participation in the 'July crisis' and consequent possible conspiracy against the Prime Minister by presenting Crosland with an impossible task as Secretary of State.<sup>13</sup> A panic on the foreign exchanges in July 1966 led to a split in the Cabinet on the best measures to deal with this crisis. Castle, Jenkins, Benn, Brown, and Crossman joined Crosland in calling for

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<sup>11</sup> Wilson, *Record*, p.710

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 711.

<sup>13</sup> See Kevin Jeffreys, *Anthony Crosland* (London, Richard Cohen Books, 1999) p. 142.

devaluation. They were opposed by Wilson, Callaghan and the rest of the Cabinet. Wilson became increasingly suspicious that a 'conspiracy' was hatched to remove him while he was in Moscow and that Crosland was heavily involved. Jeffreys states that there was no evidence for Crosland's participation in such a movement; but Wilson's suspicions remained.<sup>14</sup> However, the economist and academic William Plowden suggested that it was a sound appointment merging responsibilities for regional planning, local government, and transport. This acknowledged the relationship between land and motorway construction vital to regional economic growth.<sup>15</sup>

Crosland's reaction to this move was stoical admitting to his wife that he was sceptical about the status of the new department.<sup>16</sup> Even though Crosland did not see this move as a step up in Cabinet ranking, Richard Crossman considered that it was. 'Crosland is promoted to the gigantic job of running Housing and Transport with Tony Greenwood under him'.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Crossman acknowledged that Crosland's real ambition was the Treasury. Before the press learnt of Crosland's new Cabinet post, there was much speculation that he was to be demoted. His omission from the initial list in the reshuffle prompted the *Observer* columnist to speculate on Crosland's future citing a persistent rumour in Whitehall that he might be 'dropped' from the Cabinet.<sup>18</sup> As Benn perceived, he had been given the job of Secretary of

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<sup>14</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, pp. 115-6

<sup>15</sup> See William Plowden, 'Riding Two Horses: The Crosland Ministry', *New Society*, 1 January 1970. William Plowden was attached to the Board of Trade in the 1960s and published the *Motor Car and Politics* in 1971.

<sup>16</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 206.

<sup>17</sup> Crossman, *Diaries, Vol 3*, 5 October 1969, p.666.

<sup>18</sup> 'Ministers angered by reshuffle tactics', Nora Beloff, 5 October 1969, *Observer*, p.1.

State for England, coordinating transport and housing and that he was 'very sick about it because he doesn't think there is anything in the job'.<sup>19</sup>

### Local Government Reform and Regional Development.

Crosland was given the responsibility for preparing legislation to implement the report of the Royal Commission on reform of local government which had been established in 1966 and was chaired by Lord Redcliffe-Maud. Harold Wilson accepted the recommendations in principle and committed the Labour Government to the legislation introduced 'as early as possible, probably in the 1970-71 session after a general election'.<sup>20</sup> Redcliffe-Maud proposed the amalgamation of town and country districts under all-purpose unitary authorities with the establishment of metropolitan authorities for the large conurbations.<sup>21</sup> Wilson termed their proposals 'the first thorough analysis of local government - unchanged in its main structure since the Acts of 1888 and 1894'.<sup>22</sup> The report stressed that town and country were interdependent and therefore the separate administration of urban areas and their rural hinterlands was no longer required or feasible.

The report also suggested the establishment of eight provincial councils which would draw up strategic development plans and these would take over the existing Regional Economic

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<sup>19</sup> Tony Benn, *Office Without Power, Diaries 1968-72* (London, Arrow Books, 1988), 5 October 1969, p. 204, 5 October 1969.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *Record*, p.678.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* See G W Jones, 'The Local Government Act 1972 and the Redcliffe-Maud Commission,' *Political Quarterly*, vol. 44, Issue 2, April 1973, pp. 154-166. Jones stated that the existing areas of local government did not fit the facts of social life. Town and country were now socially and economically interdependent but still fragmented administratively. Therefore, in his view, the fatal defect of local government was the division between county and county borough. See p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Planning Councils (REPC). The Government's consideration of this feature was to present problems for Crosland in his relationship with the existing bodies both at regional level and local for these organisations were concerned about the security of their existing programmes for development and investment.<sup>23</sup>

Crosland summarised the various options which the Government could take. He suggested that there were four effective alternatives: to adopt Maud 'undeviatingly'; to abandon Maud altogether and go for what he termed the 'Senior' national two-tier system (see below); create more unitary areas by dividing up some of the proposed Maud areas; and creating more metropolitan areas by amalgamating some of Maud's unitary areas.<sup>24</sup>

Crosland acknowledged that any radical reform would be 'bitterly resisted'; but that an easy solution would be to follow Maud undiluted for this would automatically have the authority of the Royal Commission behind it. Crosland's preferred choice was the alternative he called 'Senior'. Derek Senior was a member of the Commission who dissented entirely from the proposals and put forward his own Memorandum of Dissent. He advocated a two-tier system with 35 city-regions along with 148 districts which would be grouped into five provinces.

This has great attractions for me [Crosland] and for some of my colleagues. It would give upper tier authorities of a much better size for planning, transportation, and (often) education; while the lower tiers would have a genuine local function to fulfil.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See below p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Redcliffe-Maud: the Options', undated, ACP, 5/4. The areas under consideration were: Central Lancashire, Tyneside-Wearside' West Yorkshire, Sheffield-Doncaster, Derby Nottingham and South Hampshire. The criteria for these were that they were either conurbations, or potential conurbations, or had close geographical links.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland published the white paper on the reform of local government in February 1970. In the House of Commons, he stated that the Government accepted that wherever possible all local government would be in the hands of a single authority and that the unitary authorities would cover both urban and rural areas and of the size recommended by the Commission.<sup>26</sup>

Crosland made two revisions to the recommendations of the Commission. Education would now be the responsibility of the top-tier rather than the second-tier authorities.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, two more metropolitan areas should be added to the three suggested by Maud – West Yorkshire and South Hampshire. Conservative reaction to the White Paper was relatively limited. There was more concern over the issue of the imminence of the Crowther Report on constitutional reform in the United Kingdom. This report would focus on the issue of devolution measures for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the rise of nationalist parties in these areas.

Peter Walker, who became Secretary of State for Environment in 1970, considered that Crosland should delay progress on local government reform for it was more advisable to have ‘Crowther before Maud rather than Maud before Crowther’.<sup>28</sup> Another MP voiced the concerns of those who represented rural constituencies citing the threat to such areas if a unitary authority was imposed for ‘local government must remain local and not become remote ... [for this would be] an abuse of principle’.<sup>29</sup> Crosland firmly rejected these points stressing that the

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 04 February 1970, Volume 795, Columns 430-42

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, Redcliffe-Maud recommended that the top-tier should be responsibility for ‘physical environment services’, for example planning and transport; and that the second tier for ‘personal services’ - education, social services, health.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*. MP Robin Turton, Malton and Thirsk.

Crowther Commission had been set up to consider ‘functions which might be transferred, not from local government to provincial, but from central government to provincial’.<sup>30</sup> Crosland’s stated priority was local government reform.

Labour MPs were more critical of the details of the proposals in the Crosland’s White Paper although these focused more upon the possible impact upon vested party interests rather than the broader constitutional issues. Fred Blackburn, while accepting the necessity for reform, observed that ‘it would appear that the Government has fallen into the same mistake that the Redcliffe-Maud Report has in thinking that mere size is the criterion of efficiency’.<sup>31</sup> Arthur Blenkinsop pressed for the creation of Tyneside as a metropolitan area for here there was ‘complete isolation of urban from rural communities’.<sup>32</sup> These two MPs repeated these concerns in a Labour Party meeting a week later.<sup>33</sup> There was broad support for Crosland’s White Paper and a recognition that reform of local government was long overdue.

However, on examination of Crosland’s proposals, there was concern that these could damage the Labour Party in a number of ways. Accepting that there were no votes in these proposals, there was a fear that the increase burden which the larger unitary authorities entailed might deter ordinary members of the working classes from standing for office. ‘Something ought to be done to protect the working-class councillor who found it difficult to keep his job when it was necessary to have so much time off’.<sup>34</sup> This raised the issue of salaries for those elected to local government an issue that many felt had not been addressed. Fears were also raised concerning the need for boundary changes if the Maud proposals became law. Such

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* Labour MP for Stalybridge and Hyde.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* Labour MP for South Shields.

<sup>33</sup> LHASC, PLP minutes 1969-70, 11 February 1970.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

changes might have ‘adverse’ results for the Labour Party for ‘Politically the new system would not help to spur on the activities of the Party machine’.<sup>35</sup> Crosland, while assuring the attenders that full consultation with constituencies had been conducted, insisted that ‘on balance’ he considered that the constituency parties in the country to be ‘more in favour of the proposals than the Parliamentary Party’.<sup>36</sup> He also defended his decisions by reminding the meeting that ‘his freedom of action was to a certain extent limited by the recommendations of the report and the timetable already imposed’.<sup>37</sup>

Crosland faced less criticism in Cabinet than at PLP meetings and his suggestions were accepted. The only major area of dispute centred on the number of metropolitan areas to be included in the white paper. Here, Cabinet accepted the recommendation of Crosland’s ministerial committee that West Yorkshire and South Hampshire should be added; but firmly rejected the addition of Central Lancashire ‘for this would represent a derogation from the unitary principle favoured by the Royal Commission in the direction of two-tier local government’.<sup>38</sup> Cabinet also accepted Crosland’s advice that there should be ‘positive line’ taken on the possibility of salaries for councillors although he did recognise ‘the need for substantial improvements in allowances to encourage individuals from different social backgrounds to take part in local government’.<sup>39</sup>

Crosland appeared to have no strong feelings concerning reform in this area in contrast to those he held on transport and housing reform ones which were to draw more criticism when he resumed his brief at the DOE in 1974. (See below) Although he did favour the dissenting

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> ‘Local Government Reorganisation’, 13 Jan 1970, TNA, CAB 128/45/1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



view of Derek Senior who favoured retaining a two-tier system, Crosland never pressed this in Cabinet and managed to achieve the general acceptance of the conclusions of the ministerial committee which he chaired. Wilson's preference for Maud assisted the passage of the draft White Paper in Cabinet as well. Crosland's left many issues open in the White Paper – the impact of Crowther and local government finance - for fear of opposition when legislation was drafted.

Crosland latter commented that this was his main achievement at the Department of Local Government and Regional Planning especially as he felt that he had improved the style of the White Paper.<sup>40</sup> This was his first white paper as minister. Richard Crossman complimented Crosland on the skill he had shown preparing and presenting the White Paper and his management of the committee.<sup>41</sup> Ironically, Crossman also noted that prospects for legislation were limited in view of an impending election and that enthusiasm for reform had waned for 'in either in 1971 or 1972, we shan't be in power'.<sup>42</sup>

When the Labour government was elected in 1964, one of its first tasks was to set up a new regional planning machinery. This was originally under the supervision of the Department of Economic Affairs. It was also necessary to secure acceptance of the importance of the regional and economic dimensions in planning both at national and local level. Within months, eight Regional Economic Planning Councils (REPC) and their parallel Regional Planning Boards had been established. These bodies were given the tasks of advising the Government on the implications of national economic policies for the regions and on the ways in which the

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<sup>40</sup> 'L.G & R.P 69-70', notes by Crosland, ACP16/7.

<sup>41</sup> *Crossman Diaries*, 17 November 1970, pp.733-4.

<sup>42</sup> *Crossman Diaries*, 5 February 1970, p. 806. Richard Marsh, who had lost his post as Minister of Transport to Crosland remarked on the thankless task set for Crosland that he 'sits with a secretary, a telephone, four volumes of the Maud Report and nothing to do'. Cecil King Diary, 11 May 1970, quoted in Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p.143.

resources of each region could be fully realised.<sup>43</sup> Each Council was instructed to assess the needs of their respective region and by the end of 1968 studies had been published for the eight. The next task for the REPCs was to design regional strategies to provide a framework for investment considerations and for the major planning work and executive decisions of local authorities.<sup>44</sup>

Within this structure for economic planning, the DEA had also identified areas which required special assistance owing to industrial decline and all the associated problems which this had brought in its wake. These areas were designated as Special Development Areas (SDAs) and contrasted with ‘Congested’ areas where development was rapid. In between were ‘Intermediate’ zones. It would now be one of Crosland’s tasks to consider when SDA status was to be conferred on an area and, conversely, when progress was sufficient for an SDA to be ‘delisted’. Assistance was graded accordingly to the three types of area.

Much of his nine months as Secretary of State was spent encouraging the REPCs to promote developments in their regions while attempting to placate these various bodies in the wake of the government’s support for the Redcliffe-Maud conclusions. Although Crosland accepted some specific recommendations of a study group that delivered in April 1970, he questioned the underlying rationale. Crosland considered that the report reflected a strategy still based on the problems and solution suited to the issues of the 1950s and 1960s rather than

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<sup>43</sup> ‘An Introduction to Regional Planning in England’, 24 March 1970, FK 1/1. TNA. See also Janet Mather (2000) ‘Labour and the English Regions: Centralised Devolution?’, *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 42, No.3, 10-38. Also same author, ‘English Regional Policy’ in *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, Peter Dorey (ed.) (Oxford, Routledge, 2006) pp.25-47.

<sup>44</sup> The Town and Country Planning Act of 1968 made the economic aspects of planning an integral part of these studies and required local planning authorities to have regard to current policies with respect ‘to the economic planning and development of the region as a whole’ and to ‘the resources likely to be available’..

those of the 1970s.<sup>45</sup> Further, it drew a simplistic interpretation of a North-South split while underestimating the impact of new technologies and overestimating the benefits of new town development especially to the north. Crosland finally criticised the report as adopting ‘a backward-looking instead of a forward –looking view’.<sup>46</sup> He agreed that the priority over the following years was to reduce further regional disparities in unemployment; but thinking had clearly moved on and the officials had not, in his view, revised their policy imperatives.

It is misleading in 1970 to present regional policy in the context of a narrow contrast between development areas and congested areas in parts of the South and the Midlands...there has been a growing realisation that regional needs are much more complex and varied than the ‘black and white’ of the development areas and the more prosperous South East.<sup>47</sup>

In fact, he observed that the document ‘largely ignores the development of a policy for the intermediate areas’.<sup>48</sup> Crosland focused on another theme which he also felt had likewise escaped from their attention – the rate of technological change. ‘One of the new problems for the Seventies is likely to be the rapidity of further technological change which reduces the scope of labour-intensive manufacturing industry. It is bound to have important implications for job creation associated with the flow of firms to areas of high unemployment’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Anthony Crosland, ‘Study Group Report on Regional Planning Policy’, 6 April 1970, TNA, FK 1/1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland had trenchant views on demographic changes and movements within the United Kingdom and their impact on strategic planning policy. Crosland was sceptical of the simplistic solutions offered by his officials to the unemployment problems of the north especially those based on the building of new towns and the encouragement of internal migration. He doubted whether the creation of more new towns in the less prosperous regions would attract population from the South for 'it is difficult to see how the less-prosperous regions could benefit by this population movement when their inhabitants need new jobs and new houses themselves'.<sup>50</sup> He warned that the Labour Party should not acquire the label of a party that was prepared to acquiesce in the dismantling of established communities. Whatever the potential benefits of such migration, he considered it an unrealistic policy 'for the Seventies and perhaps the Eighties'.<sup>51</sup> His final comment stressed again that regional policy was pivotal to planning for the future but that a holistic approach must 'bring together economic, industrial, environmental and social policies'.<sup>52</sup>

We are trying to demonstrate that we are not prepared to force people from North to South by lack of employment, but do we now wish to lead people in the South to think that the Labour Party are in favour of pushing people from the South to the North?<sup>53</sup>

Crosland did recognise that the report was correct in acknowledging the close link between economic, physical and social elements when planning for the regions and that the new ministry of which he was head would enable a comprehensive strategy to be executed. He

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

also supported the official report in its promotion of a more effective link between the REPCs and local planning councils. However, he had to convince both the REPCs and the local planning authorities that their authority was not threatened by the new Ministry of Local Government and Regional Planning and that the overarching supervision it provided was to their benefit. In a meeting called to allay these fears, Crosland assured the Chairman of the eight regions that his responsibility for regional policy as a whole together with transport and housing would 'make for more efficient co-ordination'.<sup>54</sup> He also stressed that in line with Wilson's statements in Cabinet, a new emphasis on environmental factors was vital even though the term 'economic' was to remain in the title. The chairmen were obviously unconvinced. They had worked with the DEA and the Board of Trade before when information had flowed freely. They feared for their independence in the formulation of industrial policy especially as the Redcliffe-Maud proposals for local government reform called for a new tier of councils for eight new provinces in the UK. The Chairmen expressed concern that another layer of bureaucracy would inhibit their authority. Ignoring speculation on the future relationship with the new provincial councils, Crosland exhorted them to focus on their main role.

In the post-Maud and post-Crowther period however, the central task for the Councils would seem to be to concentrate on regional strategies, to survey the extent to which there was a strategy and, in cases where this had not yet been developed, to assess whether there was the machinery required for this work. The ultimate aim would be to build up a comprehensive picture for the whole country.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

With the publication of the White Paper on the reorganisation of local government, the REPCs were given a new phase of developing firmer regional plans linked with specific physical planning.

To this end the government intends to make arrangements to develop the cooperation between the Councils and standing conference, or other groupings of local authorities for planning purposes, in order to ensure both that their aims and policies are increasingly harmonised and that their methods of planning at regional level are more securely based.<sup>56</sup>

Even before the White Paper, Crosland had embarked on regional visits to encourage local standing conferences to cooperate with the REPCs; but the publication of Crosland's Paper, made his task more urgent. These two bodies were to exchange information and to work out joint machinery for reaching agreement on a strategy which would provide the essential framework for government and industry investment decisions and the regional setting for local authority development plans. Crosland laid out the focus of the Government's planning objective for the regions in the press in April 1970. It was to 'even out the disparities in employment, real income, and opportunities between the more prosperous and the less prosperous regions. There has been real progress though not complete success in achieving this aim'.<sup>57</sup>

Crosland explained the weakness of the existing planning machinery. In his opinion there had been a separation between economic planning which had come under the DEA, and physical land use planning which was under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Local

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<sup>56</sup> Government White Paper on Local Government Reform.

<sup>57</sup> *Guardian*, 20 April 1970, p.5.

Government – ‘one department trying to attract industry to a certain region and another department taking decisions about new towns and overspill schemes’.<sup>58</sup> He confidently announced that the creation of the Department of Local Government and Regional Planning had brought to an end the ‘unreal distinction’ between economic and physical planning and that now they had been amalgamated in a single central group.<sup>59</sup> This would eliminate unnecessary duplication between the studies and plans for the regional councils and the standing conference of local authorities. The task for Crosland was to convince the two bodies to work in collaboration to reach an agreed framework within which to set the local authority plans.<sup>60</sup> Much of his nine months as Secretary of State was engaged in convincing these local planning authorities of the necessity of working with the REPCs to construct a framework for producing a coordinated regional plan. He was to meet with mixed success.

Both in the North and Midlands he was to meet predictable resistance from bodies who were suspicious of the perceived threat to their local development programmes. In November 1969, Crosland embarked on visits to the north-east where there was increasing criticism of government policy. This region presented Crosland with generic problems of unemployment, pollution and the absence of specific investment which many felt was tailored to their needs. Crosland’s policy for these regions proved unpopular for he was not prepared to invest in the creation of jobs in traditional industries or to extend SDA status indiscriminately but rather to encourage the evolution of a diverse economy drawing upon technological innovation. In speech at Redcar in November 1969 he laid his programme for the future of the north-east.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

Jobs are of course crucial to development areas. But the number of jobs created for the immediate future cannot be the only yardstick by which to measure the success of development area policies. The quality, variety and durability of employment are equally important. The fact is that many of the problems of the development areas stem from their narrow industrial base. It is essential that this base should be broadened. – that they should share in the modern, capital intensive science-based industries as well as in the more-labour-intensive industries.<sup>61</sup>

Bill Rodgers, who had worked under Crosland at the DEA and was MP for Stockton-on-Tees, had warned Crosland of the hostility to government policy for Teesside. In particular, the decision to locate the headquarters of the General Steels Division of the British Steel Corporation in Scotland and not Teesside. He warned Crosland that ‘There is a considerable history of Teesside losing (or apparently losing) white collar employment to Scotland’.<sup>62</sup> The area still lacked a university. Also, Crosland would have to answer the claim that the government’s investment grants did not generate enough jobs. Rodgers advised Crosland that he would have to stress in answer to this the potential for further employment that would be generated through an emphasis on capital intensive industry. Rodgers recommended a ‘confident’ speech which placed some responsibility on local people for ensuring that they made the most of ‘present advantages and trends’.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>‘Mr. Anthony Crosland Defends the Government’s Programme of Financial Incentives to Industry in the Development Areas’, Speech to the Teesside Chamber of Commerce (prepared for publication), 21 November 1969, TNA, FK 1/4.

<sup>62</sup> Bill Rodgers to Tony Crosland, 5 November 1969, TNA, FK 1/4.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



Crosland's speech in Redcar to the Chamber of Commerce was a robust defence of the government's strategy for development areas. The rapid creation of jobs was considered by the majority in the Chamber of Commerce to be an essential feature of any regional policy. He made an uncompromising reply to the accusation that the government policy was 'too broad brush' and that by providing across the board assistance to industry, needless expense had been incurred.<sup>64</sup> Crosland was not prepared to compromise on this approach and he asserted that the priority was to improve the total industrial structure of the development areas. Crosland was not prepared to compromise on DOE policy for our assistance would cover the whole spectrum and not be related solely to numbers of jobs created even though the regional employment premium over £100 million was still awarded to the area for continuing labour-intensive investment. In the event, the speech from the President, A. G. Simon, of the Chamber of Commerce was more supportive of the long term benefits of the grant investment programme for capital-intensive industry than the local MP. However, he did express disappointment that the Headquarters of the General Products Division of BSC were to be taken to Scotland. The President considered that 'Teesside can advance an almost indisputable claim to be considered in this connection'..<sup>65</sup>

Crosland concluded with praise for their efforts to improve their local environment especially in regard to the ICI works in Billingham. In a rather ironic way of complimenting the campaign to 'Clean up Teesside', he finished by stating

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<sup>64</sup> 'Mr. Anthony Crosland Defends the Government's Programme of Financial Incentives to Industry in the Development Areas', Speech to the Teesside Chamber of Commerce (prepared for publication), 21 November 1969, TNA, FK 1/4.

<sup>65</sup> 'Draft Speech of the President of the Teesside Chamber of Commerce', 21 November 1969, TNA, FK ¼.

Even when it is cleaned up, Teesside will perhaps not vie with Monte Carlo as a holiday resort. But that is not the point or the purpose. What you are striving to do is create the kind of environment in which people who earn their money on Teesside can also enjoy.<sup>66</sup>

Crosland's efforts to convince the audience that the Government had their best interests at heart met with a mixed response according to the Teesside *Evening Gazette*.<sup>67</sup> The report of the speech concentrated upon the delay of the improvement to the A19, the main road artery linking the industrial areas of Teesside and Wearside. Local feeling was reflected in the 'bursts of laughter' which greeted Crosland who rejected criticism of the Government on this matter.<sup>68</sup> Although there was grudging acceptance of the DOE efforts to balance investment to both capital and labour intensive industries, the paper quoted the President's statement that the region would have to rely as always on their own efforts whatever the regional structure and that Teesside's 'amalgamation' in the proposed reform of local government could not work.

Crosland had attempted to promote his strategy for regional regeneration through the development of capital intensive investment which would be of benefit in the long term. On Teesside this received only limited support. The main concern here was for the creation of employment during the transition to a new economic base which would be on a longer time scale. On Tyneside, which Crosland visited after Teesside, there was greater support for the potentialities offered by the creation of a metropolitan borough in the Redcliffe-Maud report endorsed by Crosland's White Paper. In contrast to Teesside, there was frustration that

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> The Labour Party agent of the Cleveland Constituency described the Gazette as 'extremely anti-Labour' in a short note to Crosland on 23 November 1969 when forwarding a press cutting of his speech.

<sup>68</sup> *Evening Gazette* 22 November 1969.

Tyneside would not be allowed to integrate local authorities in advance of national reorganisation. The *Evening Chronicle* in an article titled 'We cannot wait that long', had hoped that Crosland, now installed as Secretary of State with a remit for regional development, would permit advanced local development plans for Tyneside.<sup>69</sup> The *Evening Chronicle* had expected more from Crosland than the two previous incumbents of this post Richard Crossman and Anthony Greenwood. Crosland had failed to give a 'priority' to Tyneside.<sup>70</sup> This decision had effectively shed responsibility on to the next Government. Crosland's inaction was considered 'intolerable'.<sup>71</sup> The Tyneside paper placed Crosland's decision in national context.

Vast sums of money are being spent annually by every local authority on developments that may or may not make sense when at last Greater Tyneside and the other local large authorities come into being.<sup>72</sup>

Sunderland had long called for SDA status to combat the continuing decline in traditional industries and the consequent rising unemployment. Crosland was not convinced that to confer this was justified and resisted all attempts to persuade him. The issue was complicated by the involvement of another department that of technology and this resulted in a conflict of interest that Crosland resolved by direct appeal to Wilson. A campaign by the

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<sup>69</sup> *Evening Chronicle*, 24 November 1969.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* Crosland was approached by the Tyneside developer and local politician T. Dan Smith, Chairman of the Northern Economic Planning Council as well chairman of the Peterlee Development Corporation where Smith had plans for a Science Centre as a hub for regional regeneration. There was no record of a planned meeting but T Dan Smith's strategy for the region would have accorded with that of Crosland.

Northern Group of MPs in the early months of 1970 presented the grievances of Sunderland in a meeting with Crosland and Tony Benn, who was the Minister of Technology. Suggested action included a deceleration of pit closures, expansion of the regional housing programme to boost the construction industry, a review of the ten per cent increase in the price of steel and further dispersal of government offices to the north.<sup>73</sup> Both Sunderland MPs, Gordon Baggier and Fred Willey ‘drew attention to the anomaly of Sunderland’s proximity to SDAs and urged that similar status be accorded to Sunderland’.<sup>74</sup>

Local press reaction was inevitably supportive of the efforts of the Sunderland MPs and in particular praised Wedgwood Benn for his determination to press their case for SDA status with the Prime minister. Although both Benn and Crosland were reported to have promised to take the matter to Wilson, the *Sunderland Echo* gave The Minister of Technology the credit for this initiative.

Sunderland has asked for – and been refused – Special Development Status so often that it comes as a shock (albeit a pleasant one) to learn that the Minister of Technology has agreed to put the proposal to the Prime Minister...He is to be congratulated as recognising the strength of Sunderland’s case.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, Benn took the lead in assisting the campaign and Crosland’s role was relegated in further coverage of the meeting. The new ministries of Benn and Crosland overlapped in certain areas. The Ministry of Technology absorbed some of the responsibilities of the Board of Trade and Crossman had warned Crosland that this would cause problems for his department. Benn

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<sup>73</sup> ‘Draft Report to the Prime Minister’, Northern Group of Labour MPS, 25 February 1970, TNA, FK 1/20.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> ‘A Pleasant Surprise’, *Sunderland Echo*, 26 February 1970.

now oversaw aspects of regional planning which would hinder housing plans and industrial development.<sup>76</sup>

There is no record of this issue reaching Cabinet level or of Wilson agreeing to a consultation with the fifteen northern MPs. The only response was a letter apparently from the Prime Minister's private office which said that he recognised that the pace of improvement was not quicker but that 'no useful purpose [of a meeting] would be served at that time.'<sup>77</sup>

Crosland's reluctance to advocate the case for the promotion of Sunderland to SDA status in as robust a manner as Benn may be explained in a document sent to Wilson. This document was marked 'Confidential' and entitled 'Special Development Areas'.<sup>78</sup> Although undated, it refers to the issue of the possible expansion of the scheme and Sunderland's inclusion. Crosland reported to Wilson the results of a review by his officials into the impact of SDAs since their establishment in 1967. The report recorded success in these areas although some may have attracted industry but not necessarily from congested areas. On the advice of his officials, Crosland urged that Sunderland should not be added to the list for, with an unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent (8.8 per cent male), it did not meet the original criteria for SDAs of eight per cent. In fact, the officials recognised that anomalies had emerged in that Scotland was disadvantaged by this system as work remained in the South; and it was difficult to justify 'the continued exclusion from SDA status of areas with moderate

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<sup>76</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, Vol Three, 9 October 1969, pp. 670-1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 'MPs take Troubles to the Summit'. Another local paper reported that Wilson, while refusing to meet the group, had, nevertheless, urged his ministers to 'get cracking on the problems of the North'. 'North MPs press for aid', *The Journal*, 26 February 1970.

<sup>78</sup> 'Prime Minister/Special Development Areas', undated, TNA, FK 1/20.

unemployment when certain areas with low levels of unemployment were still included'.<sup>79</sup>  
Crosland's advice to Wilson was unequivocal.

There were no overriding cases for adding further areas. While the case for delisting was strong in a number of cases, it was undesirable to make changes at this stage...it would increase the pressures from the excluded areas if change were made now and the number of those dissatisfied would increase in total.<sup>80</sup>

While Benn had decided to champion Sunderland's case for inclusion in the list of SDAs, Crosland appears to have lobbied quietly against the delegation from Wearside. Crosland's decision was heavily influenced by the review conducted by his departmental officials and his advice to Wilson was uncompromising in regard to the expansion of the SDA programme. When a similar group of MPs from the North East met with ministers in April 1970 to protest against the closure of the Palmers-Hebburn ship repair yard, Crosland's department was not represented although the Ministry of Technology was.<sup>81</sup> Crosland's confidential document may have influenced Wilson's decision.

While the potential benefits of local government reform were welcomed on Tyneside, the reaction to the Redcliffe-Maud report and Crosland's White Paper were greeted with suspicion by local authorities in the West Midlands. There was much trepidation on the part of

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> The closure of the yard would lead to the loss of 1100 jobs according to the minutes of the meeting. The MPs warned of serious consequences for the Labour Government. 'A new 'Jarrow March' in what could be election year would be disastrous for the Government and seized upon by the Opposition'. 'Palmers Hebburn' Note of meeting in the House of Commons Thursday' 23 April 1970, TNA, FK 1/20.

the Standing Conference of Local Planning Authorities which represented Birmingham City Council and surrounding County Councils. These authorities feared that their voice would be lost amid the expanding authority of the West Midlands Regional Economic Planning Council. The *Birmingham Post* suspected that Crosland was preparing to use the REPC for the West Midlands to usurp the power of its 'rival' the West Midlands Planning Authorities Conference which represented local authorities.<sup>82</sup> *The Birmingham Post* warned of the possible tactics to be used by Crosland in a proposed meeting of the two bodies planned for March 1970.

Although the meeting is primarily intended to bring these two bodies closer together, it is also seen as part of the Government's plan for reorganisation of local government... [However] The Government's White Paper has not accepted the Provincial Councils [of the Maud report] ... suggesting that the regional overlords should be the eight Economic Planning councils set up by George Brown in 1965.<sup>83</sup>

The paper stressed that these existing Regional Economic Councils were not comprised of members democratically elected unlike the Provincial Councils proposed by the Maud report. These members would be appointed by the Government Minister and would be obliged to sign the Official Secrets' Act. Also, the meetings were not open to the public.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 'Suspensions over Crosland talks with 'rival' planning bodies', 6 March 1970, *The Birmingham Post*. For the tension between local authority planning bodies and regional machinery in the West Midlands in the 1960s' see C Painter, 'The Repercussions of Administrative Innovation; the West Midlands Economic Planning Council', *Public Administration*, pp.467-484.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Both bodies had embarked on studies of the region and the best development strategy for the future. Co-operation between the two was crucial. This was Crosland's objective but one which involved a difficult diplomatic approach. 'Danger: to be avoided at all costs: that these studies should turn out [to be] mutually inconsistent. E.G. Conference Study sent to Government without effective consultation [with] REPC'.<sup>85</sup> Crosland's opinion was unequivocal however. The West Midlands was of crucial importance to the economy of the UK and, therefore, there was a need for a firm strategy which only the REPC could provide. Long term delay as the two planning authorities consulted was unacceptable and could result in the unfortunate situation with the government acting as arbiter.<sup>86</sup>

Crosland's task would be to engage on a diplomatic mission to encourage the leaders of the Standing Conference and the West Midlands REPC to subscribe to this 'joint venture'. Working within the advice given by his officials, Crosland focused his attention on two key figures on these bodies: Alderman Griffin on the Standing Conference and Michael Higgs who was the Chairman of the Standing Conference but was also a member of the West Midlands REPC. Crosland asked his advisers the best way of 'squaring' him (Griffin) so that his support would be assured before letters inviting the two bodies to a meeting.<sup>87</sup> Crosland was warned that Griffin was a 'shrewd politician and a successful operator in his field', but probably open to an approach from the Secretary of State even though Birmingham City Council feared for the relegation of the role played by the Standing Conference to the REPC.<sup>88</sup> Crosland used the potential siting of the new National Exhibition Centre in the City of Birmingham as an inducement for Griffin's co-operation in persuading the Standing Conference to comply with

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<sup>85</sup> Notes by Crosland, 'W. Mids: region of crucial importance to country', FK 1/10 TNA.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Heaton to Stevens, 11 December 1969, TNA, FK 1/9.

<sup>88</sup> Rogerson to Heaton, 19 December 1969, TNA, FK 1/9.



the strategy of the REPC although Crosland was advised by officials that he ‘.should be careful to avoid giving him [Griffin] the impression that the Government had already decided to support Birmingham’..<sup>89</sup>

In a letter to Higgs, Crosland emphasised that his main priority was to achieve a rapid ‘co-ordinated and comprehensive’ strategy between the two bodies and that of Coventry for the future prosperity of a region of major importance to the country.<sup>90</sup> This strategy was to also to include environmental aspects. ‘Needless to say, the framework must not only provide a basis for physical and social planning but must effectively meet the needs of industry and commerce on which we are dependent for the maintenance of standard of living, employment and resources’.<sup>91</sup>

Throughout the letter, the underlying message was the imperative nature of conforming to the thrust of the plans of the West Midlands REPC as the senior economic body. Any delay, Crosland stressed, ‘would have serious consequences, not the least being the continuance of piecemeal decisions not adequately related to each other and possibly inconsistent with good general planning criteria’.<sup>92</sup> Although Higgs maintained that all future recommendation by the REPC would be ‘not binding’ on the Standing Conference, Crosland claimed success.<sup>93</sup> Crosland, in a press statement following the meeting, considered that the objective of his department had been achieved. Future regional studies in Britain were to be conducted jointly

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<sup>89</sup> Rogerson to Stevens, ‘National Exhibition Centre’, 5 January 1970, TNA, FK 1/9. There is no record that the Minister of Housing Anthony Greenwood had been consulted during this process.

<sup>90</sup> Anthony Crosland to Sir Michael Higgs, 8 January 1970, TNA, FK 1/9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Brian Vertigen, ‘Suspicious over Crosland talks with ‘rival’ planning bodies’, *The Birmingham Post*, 6 March 1970.

by each region's economic planning council and the relevant local planning authorities' conference. This was the first of such agreements and Crosland hoped would act as a model for the rest of the regions for the agreement would minimise the danger of the two bodies arriving at contradictory conclusions.<sup>94</sup>

Higgs had prevented Crosland from achieving his immediate objective of a rational economic plan for the region and one which would not be compromised by local interests. Clearly, Crosland faced a reluctance on the part of local authorities within the orbit of the REPCs to comply with his overarching rationale for regional development. His tactics to gain the support of local interests by personal contact and correspondence had met with limited success and illustrated the obstacles to planning on a national scale. Birmingham and authorities in the North-East may have decided that a possible incoming Conservative administration would be more sympathetic to local agendas than a regime of national planning imposed from new regional 'overlords' as envisaged by Crosland's White Paper.

#### Pollution and the Environment.

When Crosland was appointed as Secretary of State for the Department of Local Government and Regional Planning, Harold Wilson had given him a brief to take on responsibility for problems arising from environmental pollution an issue that was gaining greater traction with the public. The issue of environmentalism was not identified as a specific problem in the Election Manifestos of the Labour Party in the 1960s or the party conferences. Only in 1970 was the Labour Party Conference to pass a motion citing 'with alarm the increasing pollution of land, sea and air' and calling upon all sections of the party to demand the necessary controls.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Regional affairs Correspondent, 'Avoiding rival plans', *Guardian* 14 March 1970, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Craig, *Decisions*, p. 229.

The main issue dominating the debate between the environmental lobby and governments in the 1970s was the possible adverse impact of continuous economic growth on the environment. Crosland, appointed as minister responsible for tackling pollution of the environment, was faced by this dilemma for he saw economic growth as essential to rising living standards and as the fundamental element for addressing the balance of payments issue.

Wilson offered Crosland's department a permanent unit composed mainly of scientists to assist him in co-ordinating inter-departmental work and to monitor any signs of new dangers to the environment.<sup>96</sup> Wilson also announced that there would be a standing Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution to advise on matters both national and international concerning the pollution of the environment; on the adequacy of research in this field; and the future possibilities of danger to the environment.<sup>97</sup> Equipped with these tools, Crosland was to submit a White Paper on this latter in the year.

That Crosland was to undertake responsibility for the environment and its protection was seen by many as ambiguous. Susan Crosland defended this perceived ambiguity in her biography. Conservationists were to applaud his decision over Stansted and eventually rejection of the site for Maplin airport. Nevertheless, environmentalists were to oppose him vigorously on other issues. One Labour MP, Bruce Douglas-Mann, remarked on his unpopularity with this environmental group. 'The fact is that the man I want to see lead the Labour Party is more hated by environmentalists than any man I know'.<sup>98</sup> Ironically, this 'hated' man was a passionate supporter of most conservation and environmental causes. 'Greedy men,' he [Crosland] wrote, 'abetted by a complacent government, are prowling over

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<sup>96</sup> Wilson, *Record*, 1971, pp. 732-733.

<sup>97</sup> Harold Wilson, HC Debates, 11 December 1969, Volume 793, Columns 638-45.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 254.

Britain and devastating it'.<sup>99</sup> He recognised that that commitment to the 'environment' was not without its contradictions. The desire to preserve rural beauty spots, for instance, conflicted with the need to acquire land for over-spill housing.<sup>100</sup>

Although Crosland loved 'uncongested countryside' he opposed the environmentalists over their hostility to economic growth and their apparent indifference to the needs of the working classes.<sup>101</sup> Crosland argued that much of the contemporary environmental problems arose from Britain's industrial legacy-slum housing, polluted rivers and factory smoke. Only economic growth would provide the wealth to rectify these problems. His perception of conservationists was that they were middle-class activists who wanted to preserve the countryside for themselves. His conclusion was that a compromise was imperative between 'despoiling the land and keeping it the preserve of the fortunate few'.<sup>102</sup> He stressed that the economic growth should have equal priority with environmental considerations. 'We can't ignore the need for economic growth while there is so much poverty. Any amenity enthusiast who totally neglects economic considerations is not only wrong-headed but immoral'.<sup>103</sup> He also warned of an over-enthusiastic campaigning for an unpolluted environment citing the possible impact on his own constituents. 'We have in the middle of Grimsby a fish finger factory which is smelly and noisy. But my council is not unnaturally nervous of turning the screws too tight for fear the firm will go to Hull or Aberdeen'.<sup>104</sup> Crosland admitted that the environment was now a major political issue and that he was appointed to the tackle the

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>103</sup> *Observer*, 22 March 1970, p.2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

problems raised. He also stressed that it was only the Labour party which could be relied upon to put 'social control over free enterprise, which is ready to impose unpopular burdens on industrialists and which does not regard cuts in public expenditure as the overriding priority'.<sup>105</sup>

Crosland's response to his new brief from Wilson was to commit the government to a raft of measures to improve the environment.<sup>106</sup> Crosland's strategy to tackle river pollution included a national survey to discover the scale of the problem an attempt to persuade river authorities to co-ordinate their efforts and acceptance of scientific advice on the right methods. In May, reacting to pressure from professional and rural authorities he announced that a circular of 1968 would be withdrawn thereby allowing an immediate increase in spending on small sewage schemes amounting to £12 million. More money would be diverted to eliminate derelict land. Legislation was prepared to make pesticide control mandatory. Crosland stated that the battle for clean air had largely been won for 'there hasn't been a bad fog in London for seven years' - although he appeared to claim this as a victory for the Labour administration.<sup>107</sup>

All this was enshrined in a White Paper introduced into the Commons in May. The Paper entitled 'the Protection of the Environment' gave details on the government strategy to combat pollution via tighter legislation covering vehicle exhausts, the emission on industrial pollutants and permitted noise levels from vehicles and aircraft.<sup>108</sup> Crosland's claims that the government was 'intensifying efforts all along the front of environmental pollution' would appear substantive.<sup>109</sup> Aircraft noise was to be halved as new standards would be imposed on subsonic jets via the establishment of an Advisory Noise Council. Finally, there was an

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Times*, 29 May 1970, p.24.

<sup>107</sup> *Observer*, 22 March 1970, p2.

<sup>108</sup> *The Times*, 29 May 1970.

<sup>109</sup> *Times*, 14 May 1970, p.4

international commitment by the government to protect the global environment by ratifying an agreement to award compensation for damage by oil pollution at sea.

Inevitably, the Rural Districts Councils Association gave their approval to Crosland's decision, although the additional sum of £6million was considered insufficient for the whole country.<sup>110</sup> The President of the Association of River Authorities also welcomed Crosland's statement concerning withdrawal of the circular allowing for wider use of funds for sewage control; but he was still sceptical of the Labour Government's commitment to the detoxification of river water which had been under greater threat from urban development since the war and a threat which had outstripped 'the development of sewage disposal plant needed to match it'.<sup>111</sup> A seemingly sceptical President, Lord Nugent, stressed that 'it would be a test of the Government's practical contribution to European Conservation Year' to see how far a real programme of rapid improvement in the quality of water in rivers was announced and funded.<sup>112</sup> (Nugent added that a European Conservation 'Decade' was required if the problem was to be tackled successfully.)

Wilson had confidently stated in December 1969 that the White Paper later in the year would illustrate 'how much has so far been achieved under existing arrangements which our new proposals will greatly reinforce'.<sup>113</sup> Wilson also announced the establishment of a Royal Commission on Environmental Protection to begin work in 1970. The Conservative David Lane had predictably warned that Crosland should be aware that 'what the public want is not advice, consultation, or co-ordination, but action'.<sup>114</sup> Crosland's measures, in the limited time

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Guardian*, 22 May 1970, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Harold Wilson, HC Debates, 11 December 1969, Volume 793, Columns 638-45.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* MP for Cambridge.

given to him, certainly relied on referral to consultative bodies often newly established; but additional money was made available for river improvement and the reduction of derelict land. Similarly, the Government made a firm commitment to international movement to tackle continental pollution.

Crosland's commitment to the task of protecting the environment was genuine; but the measures announced appeared to be strongly motivated by professional pressure and public concern especially in rural areas and 1970 was European Conservation Year. Crosland reminded the Commons that 'the United Kingdom was already recognised as one of the leading nations of the world in the development of pollution control' and that it would participate fully in promoting associated activities throughout the year.<sup>115</sup>

What Crosland did contribute to the debate on the environment and the resolution to conserve it, was what he regarded as a sense of reality. Environmental protection would come at a price. Launching the European Conservation Year, Crosland pressed this point home. 'We must accept higher prices if we compel manufacturers to design quieter engines or install expensive plant for the control of smoke or effluent'.<sup>116</sup> He also criticised those who were oblivious to this reality stating that public attitudes would have to be discriminating. 'Some of the current protests have a note of negative hysteria about them as though the whole picture was doom-laden and all change for the worst. But we cannot stop the world and get off'.<sup>117</sup> Crosland and the Duke of Edinburgh formed an unlikely combination to launch the European Conservation Year. The Duke prophesied a bleak future if evidence was ignored; but Crosland tempered this with a prediction that the public would have to pay more to combat pollution.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 27 January 1970, Volume 794, Column 325.

<sup>116</sup> *Times*, 17 December 1970, p.3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

The *Times* was obviously impressed by Crosland's efforts on environmental protection in the brief time given to him as government minister. Commenting on the rising levels of pollution, the article stated: 'For six months of the year one knight in shining armour Anthony Crosland, strove manfully with improved if still rusty weapons, in making sallies from a beleaguered castle quaintly styled the office of the Secretary of State for Local Government and Regional Planning, but also fighting a defensive battle against ministerial colleagues who had not yet been converted to the faith'.<sup>119</sup>

#### Shadow Minister for the Environment. 1970-1974

In June, the Labour Party returned to opposition having lost the general election. The Conservatives under Heath gaining an overall majority of thirty seats. Crosland had campaigned on a theme of responsible government, economic recovery and social reform.<sup>120</sup> With four days to go trade figures began to show a deficit after nine months of surplus and Heath's accusations that the economic recovery was unfounded impacted upon public opinion.

In spite of defeat Crosland determined to persevere with his political career retaining the brief for Local Government and Regional Planning throughout the period of opposition between 1970 and 1974.<sup>121</sup> The department was now entitled 'Environment' by the Conservative government and it contained three ministries: Housing and Local government, Transport and Public Buildings and Works. Peter Walker was appointed head of the department in November 1970. Heath looked to new managerial techniques in government stressing the need for rationality and efficiency in policies. The White Paper in which the DOE was

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<sup>119</sup> *Times*, 31 December 1970.

<sup>120</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p.144.

<sup>121</sup> Susan Crosland records that he had considered looking for jobs in industry or even returning to the academic world. Crosland, *Crosland*, pp. 146-7



announced contained repeated references to concepts such as strategy, objectives, policy planning, output budgeting and central capability.<sup>122</sup>

This period is significant in the ministerial career of Crosland for two reasons. Firstly he was able to enhance his reputation as an effective shadow minister and for commitment to the issues which were covered by this enlarged ministry especially opposition to the Conservative Housing Finance Bill in 1972 and the siting of a possible airport for London at Maplin. Secondly, he was able to develop his political strategy and philosophy in relation to two policies which came to dominate his tenure as Secretary of State of the Environment when the Labour Party resumed office in 1974 – housing and transport.

In the first months of 1972, Crosland assumed responsibility for opposing the Conservative's Housing Finance Bill. This was designed to divert monies from subsidies to council house tenants to fund the building of new homes or the improvement of old ones. The Labour Party intended to portray the Government as reactionary and divisive even though Heath and Peter Walker regarded it as a major piece of progressive social reform.<sup>123</sup> During one of the longest committee stages in post-war politics, Crosland led the opposition in all-night sessions. His efforts impressed many in the Labour Party who came to admire his passionate devotion to a cause for which he felt strongly. The *Guardian* agreed stating that he had 'enhanced his standing in the party by showing more talent for ... hard political slog than some had given him credit for'.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See Martin J. Painter. 'Policy Co-ordination in the Department of the Environment, 1970-1976', *Public Administration*, Volume 59, Summer 1980.

<sup>123</sup> Crossman told Peter Walker Minister at the DOE and responsible for the Act, that the Bill was 'more socialist' than he would have dared to propose. Quoted in John Campbell, *Edward Heath: a Biography* (London, Pimlico, 1993) p.378.

<sup>124</sup> *Guardian*, 5 May 1972.

Crosland attacked the bill as an assault on working class families under pressure from exorbitantly high rents and a means test. This would result, he warned the Commons, in these families applying for ‘charity’.<sup>125</sup> Crosland’s analysis of the bill exposed the unintended consequences for poorer council house tenants compared to the objectives which underpinned the legislation. Having pointed out that in his opinion the bill was the first time in British social history means testing would be conducted on such a scale, it would be a denial of the principle that ‘the relief of poverty and the maintenance of incomes is a national responsibility’.<sup>126</sup> Crosland’s leadership and incisive attack upon the Bill led to some concrete results. Two Conservative ministers were moved by Heath to other areas having struggled to combat Crosland’s tactics in Committee.<sup>127</sup> Crosland claimed that the opposition had forced crucial concessions and that rent rises were not likely to be as punitive as would have been the case.

Crosland’s parliamentary campaign against the Bill was a significant episode in his political career. Some saw him as indecisive and that he was talented but unlikely to live up to his potential.<sup>128</sup> Crossman stated that in the late 1960s Crosland seemed to have become disenchanted and was ‘a man with no future outside politics who makes himself awkward in politics’.<sup>129</sup> Now he had proved his ability to work in a team of MPs of varying background and even won the admiration of the vocal left-winger Dennis Skinner an achievement in the Labour party of the 1970s where the left wing was increasingly vocal and critical of the government. Skinner, Labour MP for Bolsover in Derbyshire, was a committed socialist and joined Crosland’s team on the Standing Committee. Although of vastly different backgrounds,

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<sup>125</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 13 March 1972, Volume 833, Columns 39-119.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Julian Amery, Minister of Housing, was switched to the Foreign Office; Peter Walker was moved to Trade.

<sup>128</sup> See Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p. 145.

<sup>129</sup> Crossman, *Diaries*, vol 3, 15 February 1970, p. 819.

he came to admire Crosland who came from ‘the greener side of the hill’.<sup>130</sup> Skinner, suspicious of members of the Shadow Cabinet, cited Crosland as ‘a frontbencher whose intellect I respected’.<sup>131</sup>

This campaign also focused Crosland’s attention on the perennial question of housing – or rather adequate housing at a reasonable rent and in greater numbers for those underprivileged working-class families whose interests he represented in Grimsby. Crosland’s frequent references to his constituency’s interests presented difficulties for one who was perceived as a theoretician. During 1972 and 1973 he outlined the basis for a Labour programme in office. He pledged to repeal policies that he said were causing inflationary rent increases. Efforts would be made to boost the low number of council house completions by the Tories and to prevent the land speculator from making ‘outrageous fortunes at the expense of the buyer’.<sup>132</sup>

The question of a second London airport arose again in 1972 when Edward Heath, pressed for its siting at Maplin, a remote location at Foulness in Essex. Maplin and the Channel Tunnel were two major development projects to which Heath personally attached great importance identifying them as far sighted investments in national infrastructure. Crosland’s determined resistance helped to obstruct the second reading of the Maplin Bill in February 1973. When Heath fell so did Maplin which was seen by the Labour government in 1974 as one of Heath’s, ‘follies’ and scrapped.<sup>133</sup>

Crosland had termed it ‘Heathograd’ for the complex was to incorporate a town as well. According to his wife, Crosland thought that there were much more ‘higher priorities that

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<sup>130</sup> Dennis Skinner, quoted in Susan Crosland, *Tony*, 1982, p.233.

<sup>131</sup> Dennis Skinner, *Sailing Close to the Wind. Reminiscences* (London, Quercus, 2015) p.86.

<sup>132</sup> Transcript of Party Political Broadcast, 27 November 1973, ACP 13/24.

<sup>133</sup> See John Campbell, *Edward Heath: a Biography* (London, Pimlico, 1993), pp.380-381.

should not be sacrificed to this lavish scheme'.<sup>134</sup> In Parliament, Crosland robustly attacked the choice of Foulness as 'totally wrong' citing the damage to the environment and the probable escalating cost involved.<sup>135</sup> He further prophesied that by the time it was built, it would not be required. In an article in the *Guardian* he described Maplin as 'the wrong airport in the wrong place at the wrong time'.<sup>136</sup> Crosland stressed that because vertical take-off planes were nearing production, a third London airport would be unnecessary and that provincial airports should be established assisting regional growth outside the South East. He further warned that this 'enormous white elephant of Maplin ...illustrates beyond any doubt that no additional airport capacity in the South East is needed before 1985'.<sup>137</sup> This line of criticism was in denial of Crosland's previous comments as President at the BOT concerning the growing numbers of tourists visiting the UK and the need for extra carrier capacity. Crosland placed far too much faith in the potential for vertical take-off planes for which he had limited knowledge and there was no reliable evidence for the significance of 1985 as a crucial date in airport development. Crosland's main objective was to expose Heath's favoured project to ridicule.

Crosland's determined resistance to the project from the opposition benches throughout the year, helped to seriously impede the progress of the Bill. The Second Reading was postponed from January to February and the Bill only just managed to pass a third Reading in June. Combined with pressure for public expenditure cuts, Rippon, the Secretary of State for the Environment, made a partial concession and postponed the planned opening of Maplin by two years from 1980 to 1982.

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<sup>134</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.254.

<sup>135</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 08 February 1973, Volume 850, Columns 664-795

<sup>136</sup> *Guardian*, 28 April 1971.

<sup>137</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 08 May 1973, Volume 856, Columns 206-13.

The period of opposition provided Crosland with an opportunity to prepare his next work on the development of socialism, *Socialism Now*, which was published shortly after Labour's return to power in March 1974. This was mainly a compilation of articles or speeches that had appeared in journals and newspapers over a period of years since 1970. The focus was on the areas of policy that had been of most concern to Crosland as a politician in and out of government: education, the environment and housing. Dick Leonard, who was his PPS and edited the volume, stressed that Crosland was able to bring the benefit of ministerial experience to his conclusions. In terms of Crosland's career, this work was written in very different circumstances. When Crosland published *The Future of Socialism* in 1956, he had no official position within the Labour Party and possessed only five years' experience as a backbencher. His expertise was as an academic economist. As author of *The Conservative Enemy* (1962) as well, he was now regarded as the leading revisionist writer on socialism. From 1964 onwards, departmental issues were to dominate his attention especially as he became a full-time member of the cabinet from 1965. *Socialism Now*, therefore, focused upon areas over which he held ministerial responsibility. In Leonard's opinion, Crosland the theoretician was able to combine creative innovation with administrative experience.<sup>138</sup>

Crosland was able to develop his ideas on the environment and its protection following his attendance at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in the summer of 1972. He reiterated his belief that economic growth did not entail ecological disaster. Challenging the idea that zero growth was imperative to environmental protection, he wrote that 'contrary to what the doomwatch school assert, we are not in an *either-or* situation where

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<sup>138</sup> Anthony Crosland, *Socialism Now and other essays*, introduction by Dick Leonard (London, Jonathan Cape, 1975) p.11.

we have to choose between the two. Growth does not inevitably mean a worse environment more often a better one'.<sup>139</sup>

Central to his observations on housing, was an admission that a balance had to be struck between the needs of the tenant and the motivation of the private landlord for 'No post-war government has produced a policy which combines a reasonable protection for the tenant with a commercial profit for the landlord so the sector has been the scene of continuous tension and dispute'.<sup>140</sup> Admitting further that he was no friend of the commercial owner, he then attacked the rationale which he believed was the basis of the Conservative attitude to public housing and established the principle which he asserted must be followed by a Labour Government.

A labour housing policy should be imbued with a philosophy of free choice. It must wholly reject the Tory philosophy...that some people should be council tenants and others owner-occupiers, that council houses are only for certain categories of person and not for others.<sup>141</sup>

For Crosland, housing was at the core of his socialist objectives. Homelessness, overcrowding and slums were a feature of poverty and squalor and the elimination of these should be Labour's priority. He was opposed to the Conservative belief in a market solution to the housing problem. 'Some part of the housing stock must be leased or owned at less than the economic cost; and the government must bear a final responsibility for the overall housing situation'.<sup>142</sup> He did not rule out what he termed 'municipalisation' which would entail a large scale transfer

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p.152.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p.134.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, p.123.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p.118.

of the ownership of private property to local authorities and the acquisition of development land.<sup>143</sup> He also advocated the ‘rehabilitation’ of old stock rather than its destruction. Communities needed to maintain their integrity for ‘there had been too much of the bulldozer’ in housing regeneration schemes.<sup>144</sup> Crosland attempted to reconcile a fair rent for tenants with a reasonable return for the landlord was ambitious but realistic if the rented market was not to contract. Another distinctive feature of Crosland’s approach to housing reform was the reluctance to create new housing estates although this may represent a ‘romantic’ view of working-class communities not supported by those who inhabited them.

Crosland presented the essence of this programme at the Labour Party Conference in October 1973 its third and last in opposition. Citing housing as ‘one of the bitterest sources in this country of misery, of family tension, and certainly inequality’, he advocated three measures that involved public ownership: land ‘which would do more for greater equality, more for redistribution of wealth and power, than any other single act of nationalisation I know’, private rented property and the construction industry which could fall under local authority building departments.<sup>145</sup> He concluded his speech that these measures would solve the housing problem and thus Labour would have taken ‘a giant step on the road to a more socialist society’.<sup>146</sup> Crosland the revisionist was now advocating an element of nationalisation having relegated this in *The Future of Socialism*.

His speech was well received by the evidence of the applause especially for the measures announced from the Shadow Environment Secretary. The speeches that followed

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<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p.135.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115.

<sup>145</sup> Anthony Crosland, Minutes of the Labour Party Conference, 3 October 1973, pp. 211-212. LHASC Manchester.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*.

supported Crosland's programme; but many called for further measures such as public ownership of building societies. This would provide the money 'to allow the full nationalisation of the building industry and a planned socialist building and housing programme'.<sup>147</sup>

Crosland's performance in opposition had impressed many in the Labour Party but this was not reflected in his attempt to secure a place on the National Executive Committee. He failed narrowly in 1970 and in 1971 and, following the resignation of Roy Jenkins from the Shadow Cabinet in April 1972, Crosland was passed over for the position of Shadow Chancellorship. Instead Denis Healey was appointed.<sup>148</sup> When Crosland stood for the vacant position of Deputy Leader with Jenkins' departure, he came third to Foot and Short although he did manage to capture a creditable sixty-one votes. The only indicator of progress in the party ranking came in the Shadow Cabinet elections in autumn 1973 which saw Crosland achieve fourth place one ahead of Jenkins.

#### Secretary of State for Environment: Housing and Transport.

Heath, facing a second miners' strike in two years and a deteriorating economic situation, called a general election for February 1974 challenging the electorate on the question of 'Who Governs?'. Heath asked the question: should the nation be led by its elected representatives or 'held to ransom' by the miners?<sup>149</sup> Wilson campaigned on the Conservative government's poor

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p.214. Ron Wallis (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Hove).

<sup>148</sup> As Heath prepared to present the European Communities Bill in parliament, Wilson attempted to clarify Labour's position. A vote of eight to six in the shadow cabinet supported a referendum on entry if Labour returned to power. Crosland voted against the proposal stating that it was unwise to reopen this issue. Jenkins, a keen advocate of Britain's application, resigned in protest.

<sup>149</sup> Heath's biographer states that Heath was not averse to meeting the claims of the miners but that it should take place within the framework of the government's Stage Three strategy to limit inflation. John Campbell, *Edward Heath A Biography* (London, Pimlico, 1994) pp. 593-7.



record on unemployment and inflation and Callaghan made the case that only Labour could ensure industrial peace. Labour emerged as the largest party but with only four more seats than the Conservatives and no overall majority. Wilson became Prime Minister for a third time and Crosland returned to the Cabinet as the Secretary of State for Environment. Crosland lacked the 'exhilaration' he felt in 1964 for, as well as industrial unrest, there was soaring inflation a product of the Arab- Israeli war.<sup>150</sup> Crosland nevertheless felt that there were always 'things we can do', although he admitted that radical change would have to wait until another election delivered a workable majority.<sup>151</sup>

Housing was to be one of the issues that Crosland was to concentrate upon when he returned to the renamed Department of Environment in October 1974. This was an area that he was determined to tackle as opposed to the issues which he had inherited - local government reorganisation and pollution. These had dominated his time as Secretary of State in Local Government and Regional Planning but the Conservative had delivered the terms of the Redcliffe-Maud report although with significant adjustments. Before launching a housing review, he had to resolve the matter of the disqualification and fining of councillors who had defied the law enshrined in the Finance Act 1972. This had obliged local authorities to increase rents in line with those in the private sector. Crosland found himself with the unenviable responsibility of upholding the law as Secretary of State against councillors who had refused to impose the rent increases on their tenants especially as he had led the campaign against this Act in parliament. His task was made more difficult by the mood of the Party conference and the attitude of his permanent secretary.

Crosland found himself with a difficult situation made worse by a resolution in the Party Conference of 1973 which had pledged support for councillors who defied the law. In

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<sup>150</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, 1982, p.260.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

particular, the representatives elected in Clay Cross Derbyshire had made a well-publicised stand against imposing a higher rent. Crosland was faced with three issues: recovery of rent lost by all recalcitrant authorities; lifting the disqualification from public office imposed on councillors who refused to comply; and, whether to uphold the fine imposed on Clay Cross councillors who were liable for fees following the appointment of Housing Commissioners in Clay Cross (In Wales, two authorities, Bedwas and Machen were also chargeable for this.)

On the question of the surcharge, Sir Idwal Pugh his Permanent Secretary informed his Secretary of State that ‘you should know that as required by law’ the Clay Cross councillors were liable for ‘remuneration’ of expenses and that this would have to be done by the end of the month when the debt passed to the ‘unfortunate’ new authority North East Derbyshire District Council.<sup>152</sup> In a memo to his PPS, Crosland commented on this uncompromising advice that it was ‘rather twisting the knife’.<sup>153</sup> However, Crosland ‘reluctantly’ agreed that action had to be taken ‘although with a minimum degree of publicity’.<sup>154</sup> Crosland regarded Pugh as a ‘blunt’ Welshman. Pugh admired Crosland’s leadership and believed that his impact on the department would be lasting.<sup>155</sup> Pugh considered that although he was courteous with him, Crosland required little more than factual information to support his policy objectives which Crosland had already formulated.

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<sup>152</sup> Pugh to the Secretary of State. ‘Clay Cross Housing Commissioner’s Remuneration and Expenses’, 26 March 1974’ TNA, AT 52/22.

<sup>153</sup> Andrew Semple [PPS] to Sir Idwal Pugh/other officials, ‘Clay Cross – Housing Commissioner’s Remuneration and Expenses’ 28 March 1974’, TNA, AT52/22.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.266-267.

I felt he didn't look on civil servants as his real advisers on fundamentals...He looked upon civil servants as people who are natural conservative. He presented a closed shop. 'This is what I want to do. Tell me how to do it'. We always talked about business on the basis of an agenda. It was always very proper.<sup>156</sup>

Some of his civil servants agreed with Pugh. 'Some felt that he [Crosland] used them as books' to be consulted but nothing more.<sup>157</sup> He did not have the informal relationship with any of his advisers that Pugh desired, one where you 'meet late in the evening over a glass of whisky or a cup of tea and talk about this and that'; but Crosland liked Pugh's 'straight blunt manner'.<sup>158</sup>

Crosland decided that a balance had to be struck between reinstatement of those councillors disqualified and respect for the law. The tone of Pugh's memo would appear to regard compliance with the law as his priority. Crosland had to find a suitable resolution which also recognised the feeling of the party as expressed in the Conference while avoiding a damaging accusation of ignoring the Government's legal obligations as imposed by the Housing Finance Act. He prefaced his paper to the Cabinet accordingly.

The Prime Minister also said that the law of the land must be obeyed. We are committed to removing the sanction of disqualification. But, in other respects, we should seek a solution which upholds the rule of law.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Susan Crosland recorded that an outside adviser Bill McCarthy who understood this utilitarian approach to brains told her 'You don't tell a book your purpose, you rifle through it' *Ibid.*, p.267

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Secretary of State for the Environment, 'Late Implementation of the Housing Finance Act', 1 November 1974, CAB 129/179/34.

Wilson's injunction that the law must be obeyed (albeit one made by the previous Conservative Administration) was non-negotiable in the opinion of the Prime Minister; but the reaction within the party would be overwhelming if some leniency was not extended to the recalcitrant officials. Crosland stressed in Cabinet the arguments against recovery of rent on such a scale. This would inevitably end in bankruptcies and much hostility from councillors; 'The processes are bound to drag on for a long time with continued publicity and controversy; and that it is necessary to avoid further bitterness'.<sup>160</sup> An *ad hoc* solution was acceptable in view of the 'complexity' of the situation that would result from the reorganisation of local government. Councils could be empowered to make up losses from future rents or rates. The surcharge on the Clay Cross councillors would remain although all other charges would be waived. The Cabinet agreed with this compromise. Crosland duly proposed a general amnesty for hundreds of councillors who had been late in implementing the Act. He lifted the disqualification from the Clay Cross councillors who continued to defy the Act; but he did not lift the surcharge of £6000. In November he introduced a bill to replace the Housing Finance of 1972.

In the Commons, Crosland followed the rationale adopted in Cabinet claiming to support the law but stressing the iniquity of the legislation passed in 1972. 'As democratic socialist I am profoundly committed to the rule of law but could not condone let alone encourage defiance of the law'.<sup>161</sup> He based his decisions on the demands of natural justice for the Conservatives had broken the 'two-way bargain between government and governed' which grew from 'a tacit agreement as to what was permissible and what was not'.<sup>162</sup> Opposition MPs

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 6 November 1974, Volume 880, Columns 1076-87.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

were not convinced. One Conservative deplored Crosland's actions in lifting disqualification stating that 'this was a sorry day for the constitution of this country, for the rule of law and, indeed for the Labour Party'.<sup>163</sup> David Steel for the Liberals attacked the claim that the defiant councillors were to be admired for their stand. In fact, they were merely 'cardboard martyrs' who had looked to their 'friends in high places' to legalise what they had done.<sup>164</sup>

Crosland recognised the possible consequences of his attitude to the Clay Cross problem for he was 'treading a fine line between observing the law and respecting party feeling'.<sup>165</sup> In his private notes, he recognised that Clay Cross had been a 'wretched bore; but someone had to do it – only option was to resign'.<sup>166</sup> Tony Benn also noted Crosland's anxiety. 'Tony said he found it distasteful but he hoped to present it to the House in such a way that Dennis Skinner did not walk out'.<sup>167</sup> His decisions in regard to Clay Cross were heavily criticised in sections of the press. *The Sunday Times* leader called his decision to reprieve the Clay Cross councillors an 'evil mistake' for it illustrated how far he was prepared to go 'to accommodate the Left which neither understands nor believes in the rule of law'.<sup>168</sup> It accused Crosland of 'weasel' words when it came to defending the law.<sup>169</sup> The left wing of the labour were increasingly critical of the party hierarchy and its perceived reluctance to support the working classes against the repressive legislation of the Conservative government. The Finance Bill was seen as a test of the Labour Government's socialist credentials.

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* Hugh Rossi, Conservative MP for Haringey and Hornsey.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, 1999, p. 180.

<sup>166</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, 1982, p.281.

<sup>167</sup> Benn, *Diaries*, 5 November 1974, p.258.

<sup>168</sup> *The Sunday Times*, 10 November 1974, p.16.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland had returned to Government in 1974 to face a major challenge: how far to follow the party line as urged in conference, one that supported defiance of the law; and whether a Cabinet minister should implement legislation, (although unpopular even within Conservative ranks) as passed by Parliament. Crosland was convinced that he had found a balance between the conflicting aims of ‘tempering justice with mercy’ and the other of observance of the law.<sup>170</sup> Crosland’s strategy found support in Cabinet and some in the party, but he faced criticism by Opposition and press alike. He rejected the accusation that his solution to the Clay Cross would encourage the growth of lawlessness in society as claimed by Steel. Skinner accused Crosland of deserting the councillors in Clay Cross. The surcharge was to remain and this caused considerable distress to the officials concerned. Skinner’s comments in the Commons revealed his disillusionment with Crosland’s compromise. ‘Is it not sad that within the Labour establishment we now say that those who fight valiantly and give in will be excused; but that to some degree those who fight valiantly to the bitter end will be ostracised?’.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Skinner stated in his autobiography that the disqualification continued for the eleven councillors because they were unable to pay the surcharge and therefore were unable to stand for public office. Although the Finance Act was repealed, the question of retrospective legislation ‘was scuppered by some traitors on the Labour benches’.<sup>172</sup>

Much of the focus of Crosland’s work at the DOE was on tackling the issues of housing provision in Britain. Crosland stated that he wanted to make councils understand the importance of diversity in peoples’ lives. He believed that society was damaged in all kinds of

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<sup>170</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 6 November, Volume 880, Columns 1076-87.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Skinner, *Sailing*, 2015, pp. 92-95.

ways by herding people into estates built to standardized specifications, often appallingly managed by a remote and insensitive bureaucracy. Old properties, he asserted, should be redeveloped, not bulldozed, wherever feasible, allowing the tenants more choice. He hoped to encourage Councils to buy from private developers creating 'mixed' estates in which those renting were not branded as socially apart from home owners. Finally, he aimed to enable tenants to form co-operatives to decide much of their built environment.<sup>173</sup>

Crosland outlined the means by which he would increase the supply of housing. Councils would be urged to renovate existing housing stock rather than embark on demolition for such destruction 'accelerated astonishingly beyond the rate of public construction'.<sup>174</sup> There would be special schemes to help the first-time buyers. He intended to press ahead with plans for the selective nationalisation of development land and immediate efforts would go into providing security of tenure for tenants in furnished accommodation. Crosland was considered by some in his department as particularly equipped to tackle the many issues surrounding the provision of housing. The section on housing in the Labour Party Manifesto were, in the opinion of Humphrey Cole the Chief Economic Adviser at the DOE, a reflection of 'the thinking of his [Crosland] own' and a result of 'his genuine expertise in this area'.<sup>175</sup>

Crosland decided to establish two reviews on housing. One would consider the methods of raising revenue to fund housing development. A committee was established in the summer of 1974 to review the whole system of local government finance under Sir Frank Layfield. This would examine the rating system and the alternative instrument of a local tax however administered. A second review would eventually provide a comprehensive study of all aspects of the housing industry. Crosland took a personal interest in participating in these sessions and

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<sup>173</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.183.

<sup>174</sup> *Guardian*, 15 April 1974, p.5.

<sup>175</sup> Cole in Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, p.89.

devoted much time to attending their meetings Crosland also returned to the question of nationalization of development land in an attempt to prevent escalating land values which increased the cost of housing. Labour governments had attempted to achieve suitable legislation to this effect twice before in 1947 and 1967. Crosland was determined to rectify this.<sup>176</sup> The Labour Government made no specific commitment to nationalisation of development land in the manifesto of February 1974. Two previous attempts had limited success and the Conservative government had repealed the 1967 Act. Crosland's attempt was presented to Cabinet in September 1974 and formed the basis to a commitment to 'public ownership of land' in the manifesto of October 1974 for it would 'get rid of the major inflationary element of the cost of housing'.<sup>177</sup> Crosland's paper stated categorically that 'public ownership of development land puts control of our scarcest resource in the hands of the community and enables it thereby to take an overall perspective'.<sup>178</sup> Crosland introduced the term 'positive planning' which would enable facilities to be built where the community required them and at a 'fair' price rather than the inflated value desired by private speculation.

These proposals met with very little enthusiasm even in the sympathetic press. The *Observer* considered Crosland's bill 'completely unworkable' for his proposals would burden local authorities with responsibilities for purchase, conveyancing, management and other

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<sup>176</sup> Acts of 1947 and 1967. See 'Labour's Flawed Land Acts 1947-1976', V H Blundell, *Economic and Science Research Association*, August 1993. Blundell cites several factors for the failure of these acts: legal complexity; confusion over the economic and legal definition of the word 'land'; provocation of landowners to the aggressive thrust of the Labour acts; and the tendency of these acts to encourage landowners to hoard their resource. See also J B Cullingworth and V Nadin, *Town and Country Planning in Britain* (London, Routledge, 1997) who also examine the defaults in these acts.

<sup>177</sup> Labour Party Election Manifesto October 1974.

<sup>178</sup> Draft White Paper on Land 1974.



services.<sup>179</sup> Positive planning was considered no more than a ‘rhetorical device’ likely to bring the planning system to the point of complete collapse and that this latest attempt by Crosland to nationalise development land would perpetrate a ‘bureaucratic fiasco’ worse than the failed solutions of 1947 and 1967.<sup>180</sup> By contrast, the *Times*’ leader recognised the attractions of Crosland’s plan for the proposals were simple and would command wide assent; to take from private individuals into the community purse the wealth realised from values created by the community.<sup>181</sup> However, the leader doubted whether the local authorities could cope with the volume of work. It urged Crosland to broker an agreement with opposition parties so that any legislation passed would not inevitably face repeal following a change of government. The *Times* also raised the possibility that existing development might ‘actually be impeded rather than assisted’ by these proposals, a criticism voiced by opposition MPs in the Commons in the January 1975.<sup>182</sup>

The Layfield Committee on local government finance reported in March 1976. Humphrey Cole considered the setting up of this committee a possible political move on the part of Crosland in response to the shadow spokeswoman on the Environment Margaret Thatcher who demanded the abolition of local rates in the Commons in June 1974.<sup>183</sup> He believed that Crosland had conceded to this review ‘.since there was no real alternative to the

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<sup>179</sup> *Observer*, 3 November 1974, p.12.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Times*, 13 September 1974, p.17.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* Tim Sainsbury Conservative MP for Hove claimed that the White Paper had ‘already delayed forward housing programmes’. HC Debates, 15 January 1975, Volume 884, Columns 430-2.

<sup>183</sup> See Cole, Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, pp. 90-91. Thatcher claimed that it was cheaper to assist people to buy homes with a mortgage - whether by a subsidised mortgage rate, or by help with the deposit or by mortgage interest tax relief - than to build more council houses through municipalisation’. Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London, Harper/Collins, 1995), pp. 243-4.

rates and [he] expected Layfield to say so'.<sup>184</sup> Cole speculated that the recommendation of the Layfield report for a greater proportion of rates to be raised locally would not have pleased him and consequently, the conclusions of the report were ignored by Crosland. Thatcher favoured the introduction of a poll tax to replace the rating system and, eventually as Prime Minister, would attempt to raise this tax in Scotland in 1989.

Contemporary opinion was divided over the solutions proposed to the many problems facing housing in the 1970s: the increase in owner occupation which was extending down the social ladder; the decline of the private rented sector; falling average household size with their special needs and the need for the rehabilitation of older stock.<sup>185</sup> In the opinion of Humphrey Cole, who attended many of the committee meetings, the policy proposals were numerous but not radical. He doubted whether Crosland would have approved although 'he would have been proud of the thoroughness and quality of the analysis'.<sup>186</sup> Cole considered that the opinion of one contemporary authority on housing issues was far 'too savage'. 'Instead of attempting to develop policy changes appropriate to the current and developing situations, appeasement of the largest number of relevant interests became the overriding consideration'.<sup>187</sup>

Some of those who worked with Crosland, believed that the review served to shelve highly sensitive issues such as the effect on the housing market of mortgage interest tax relief.<sup>188</sup> Bernard Donoghue, senior policy adviser to Harold Wilson and James Callaghan between 1974 and 1979, admired Crosland's intellectual input to the Cabinet and especially his 'ability to place discussion of policy issues within the philosophical structure of a democratic

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<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Cole, Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, p.96.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> J B Cullingworth, *Essays on Housing Policy* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1979) p. 121.

<sup>188</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p. 184.

socialist movement'.<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, Donoughue was disappointed with the resulting review stating in 1987 that there had been accusations that the Secretary of State had failed to give a 'strong enough lead'.<sup>190</sup> The review had been promised in 1975 but was only complete in the following year and that it 'had run into the sand and ended as a feeble package'.<sup>191</sup> Donoughue also criticised the DOE and Crosland for their failure to support the sale of council houses a project which Donoughue states was fully endorsed by Wilson. He quotes Wilson as commenting to him that Crosland and his officials 'had made up their minds on council housing in 1965 and their minds have been closed ever since'.<sup>192</sup> Donoughue concluded that Crosland 'seemed not really to enjoy getting involved at the pit-face of politics or government and was a slow and reluctant decision maker'.<sup>193</sup> In respect of council house sales and the possible electoral benefits, Donoughue accused Crosland and many in the Labour party of failing to understand the 'changing spirit and priorities of our own natural supporters'.<sup>194</sup> Crosland's retort was that it would alienate many of their traditional supporters.<sup>195</sup> (Ironically, Margaret Thatcher had responded in a similar manner when presented with a proposal for council house sales from her advisers in 1987) However, Crosland's refusal to entertain the idea of council house sales was an inconsistent position to be adopted by the leading labour revisionist. This measure was designed to appeal to those who aspired to house ownership the very section of the electorate that Crosland's revised socialism was designed to attract.

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<sup>189</sup> Bernard Donoughue, *The Heat of the Kitchen* (London, Politicos, 2003) p.127.

<sup>190</sup> Bernard Donoughue, *Prime Minister* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1987) p.105.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Donoughue, *Heat*, p.174.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p173.

<sup>194</sup> Donoughue, *Prime Minister*, 1987, p.109.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland's relations with the local authorities were tested immediately when he returned to the DOE. An order prepared by the Conservative administration concerning the rate support grant (RSG) was waiting for submission to parliament. Inflation, rating revaluation and local government reorganisation had combined to make this subject 'a political minefield' in the opinion of Humphrey Cole.<sup>196</sup> The Conservative proposal favoured mainly the rural areas. Crosland rejected this and argued that the burden on hard-pressed metropolitan areas should be lightened in spite of the fact that his own constituency of Grimsby would suffer.<sup>197</sup> Crosland invoked the Labour Manifesto upon which the February election was fought to endorse his decision.

This is not an easy decision, but I concluded that on balance – and it was only on balance – it would be right to make the change, because it helps the hard-pressed inner cities where so many of our social problems come together, and it has long been Labour policy – and a policy to which I personally have been deeply committed – to give these inner-city areas more assistance.<sup>198</sup>

Crosland admitted that this was 'rough justice' but that 'no one should doubt that the results overall are socially equitable and just'.<sup>199</sup> Many in his own party were critical of his judgement and Michael Foot is recorded as acknowledging that Crosland endured a difficult time when revealing his plans for the new basis to the rate support grant to the PLP. Foot told Susan Crosland that, in this tense meeting, Crosland made a determined 'socialist defence of the rates

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<sup>196</sup> Cole, Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, p.90.

<sup>197</sup> Anthony Crosland, HC Debates, 25 March 1974, Volume 871, Columns 149-199.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

decision...It was made in exactly five sentences. Socialist and succinct'.<sup>200</sup> Dennis Skinner also supported him in the PLP meeting even though the non-metropolitan areas that would suffer included his own Derbyshire constituency. He told Crosland's wife that he and other left-wingers admired his long-term judgement and that Crosland was the only one that this group could imagine as leader after Wilson.<sup>201</sup> Some Labour MPs gave him valuable support even when their constituencies would be disadvantaged. One northern Labour MP stated that, although his constituents were 'seething', nevertheless he felt that 'by far the greater responsibility for the massive increase in rates rests with the right hon. Lady's [Margaret Thatcher] administration, not with my right hon. Friend [Crosland]'.<sup>202</sup>

The *Times* criticised the Conservative government for a 'general tendency to take away from householders in inner city areas the benefits which other adjustments in the formulae were designed to bring'.<sup>203</sup> Crosland, by contrast, had 'wisely decided not to make any far reaching changes in the distribution formulae or in the amount of Exchequer grant' and it broadly supported the 'egalitarian purposes' that would be the objectives of the DOE under his leadership.<sup>204</sup> Even Crosland reminded the Commons that the *Economist* had written that his system was 'probably fairer than the Tories' proposal'.<sup>205</sup> Crosland acknowledged the dilemma

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<sup>200</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, 1982, p. 265

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> HC Debates, 25 March 1974, Volume 871, Columns 149-199. Thomas Urwin, Houghton-le-Spring, County Durham. Thatcher had drawn attention to the dissension in the Labour ranks congratulating Crosland for 'no other minister in his government has invoked such opposition from his own backbenchers within such a short time'.

*Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Times*, 24 March 1974.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Economist*, 23 March 1974, p.82

facing him: ‘Now clear: redistribution of the RSG morally and socially absolutely right, but politically definitely wrong. Good and socialist policies *not* electorally popular’.<sup>206</sup>

In an effort to improve relations between the DOE and the local authorities, Crosland created the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance in 1974. This became a meeting place between Ministers of the domestic spending departments (Environment, Education, Home Affairs and Health) and the leaders of local authorities. Humphrey Cole observed that ‘he thus helped greatly to improve relations and understanding between central and local government when they might have got worse’.<sup>207</sup> David McDonald, a senior official in the DOE, was impressed with the *rapprochement* that he established with the members of this Council. ‘The local authority representatives knew he knew his subject inside out. They respected him. He acquired respect from them. He made the process of consultation work’.<sup>208</sup>

The understanding that was forged on this consultative body helped Crosland to persuade the local authorities to curb their spending plans which had increased following the reorganisation of local government under Edward Heath. The surge of local government spending under the Conservative administration had continued through the first year of Labour’s return to office. The rapid increase in inflation in the first few months of 1975 had led to the announcement of a significant package of cuts by the Treasury. A deepening world recession resulted in a slump in British exports, a sharp fall in economic growth, and rise in unemployment. With inflation running at over twenty per cent, Healy announce a package of cuts to public spending amounting to one billion pounds and a raise in income tax.<sup>209</sup> Crosland had responded by framing a letter to Wilson and his colleagues stressing that Labour’s

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<sup>206</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.266. (Emphasis made by author)

<sup>207</sup> Cole in Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, p.91.

<sup>208</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.295.

<sup>209</sup> See Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p. 181.

objectives should be maintained; but accepting that selective cuts were necessary although a more rational approach should be adopted whereby certain priority areas would be protected.<sup>210</sup> However, his DOE officials were concerned that, as Secretary of State, he seemed more interested in policy-making than on concentrating all his attention on his department. Crosland's forays into general policy dialogue and the promotion of his socialist principles illustrate the factors which impacted upon his work as an effective minister. Speaking to a gathering of local authority associations in Manchester in May 1975 he announced that urgent action was required and that they would have to curtail their spending plans. 'We have to come to terms with the harsh reality of the situation which we inherited. The party's over'.<sup>211</sup>

Crosland's second major review while Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment concerned transport. Although he had confessed to his wife that he considered the subject was a 'great bore', after immersing himself in the papers given to him by his officials, he then admitted that he, 'had forgotten Transport is so interesting'.<sup>212</sup> She further elaborated upon his main objectives in order to 'produce a practical, socialist transport policy'. His priority was to focus less on building more motorways which he considered were mostly used by better-off business travellers. Railway passengers should have to pay more and he wanted to move away from the regressive policy of subsidising the better-off who could afford to live in country comfort and commute to London. More money was to be allocated to coach and to local bus service. Road tax would be abolished and replaced by higher petrol tax, on the principle that working people only use their cars largely at weekend, family visits should not have to pay the same tax as those who use the roads daily.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> This became known as the Chequers Letter.

<sup>211</sup> Quoted in Jeffreys, *Crosland*, p. 184.

<sup>212</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.308.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, p.309.

His officials were impressed with his diligence in studying the material relating to the review. His Second Permanent Secretary Sir Idwal Pugh commented that ‘We’ve never had a Minister who took a subject apart like this, rethought it and re-presented it in this way’.<sup>214</sup> Humphrey Cole remarked that the latter stages of the review would have benefited from his greater ‘personal guidance’ at that stage; but that he was reluctant to contribute until he was able to devote himself to the task completely. Cole also noted that Crosland continually stressed that the content must reflect a clearly socialist policy although he was against an ‘integrated transport policy’.

Indeed, he told us not to use that term, for he felt the phrase enshrined too well what he disliked about much instinctive Labour thinking on transport – the command approach that had little time for user choice and often pushed sectional interests in the name of planning.<sup>215</sup>

Much of the review focused upon the issues of fares and subsidies. Crosland favoured a flexible practical approach combining the features of concessions, subsidies and variable pricing regimes appropriate to urban or rural environments. He was more dogmatic when the issue of the growth of car usage was examined for his solutions to the resultant environmental problems were simplistic if not uncompromising. Crosland accepted that fares had been held down for political and inflation reasons.<sup>216</sup> However, to the question ‘Why subsidy’, he suggestion a solution. ‘Why not let every mode cover its own resource costs? Especially

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<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, p.308.

<sup>215</sup> Cole in Leonard (ed.), *Crosland*, p. 94.

<sup>216</sup> Comments by Anthony Crosland to Cole, ‘Transport Review’, 7 January 1976, ACP, 5/10.



because subsidies produce undesirable side effects which [were] bad for efficiency'.<sup>217</sup> In regional terms, he stated emphatically that there was no case for general indiscriminate subsidies, although he conceded that temporary ones were acceptable when innovative policies were introduced innovation.

Crosland justified his opposition to the increasing growth of the usage of the car by emphasising the problems this development created for the environment. He urged that subsidies should be directed to public use of transport. 'Anti- congestion, environment, energy saving require modal switch from cars to public transport...subsidies to fares much less effective than physical or fiscal or financial direct restraint on cars'.<sup>218</sup> The increased ownership of cars had resulted in the centralisation of shops, schools and other amenities which disadvantaged those especially among the working class who did not own one.<sup>219</sup> A dual pricing system was proposed for urban areas; but if that failed then 'must make a political choice between subsidies and reduction of services'.<sup>220</sup>

The issue of subsidies represented the reality of the plea to local authorities to curtail their spending plans in 1975. Crosland agreed that 'general subsidies' were needed to maintain services for people without cars although limited subsidies could be used only when appropriate. He recognised the complex nature of cutting subsidies. London represented the 'fastest-growing' subsidy; and yet '80% goes to above-average incomes'; but a resultant increase in fares would be a 'harsh burden' on poorer commuters.<sup>221</sup> In terms of environmental

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> Crosland's even suggested a more extreme solution. 'Should we not also seek in the long run to reduce need for, and advantage of, mobility – ban hypermarkets, go back to smaller schools and hospitals?'. *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

protection, Crosland supported the rather blunt tool of traffic restraint to combat congestion and stated categorically that ‘.still more cars would impede public transport, [also] restraint will produce local environmental advantages (noise, fumes, possibilities of pedestrianisation)’..<sup>222</sup>

The issue of existing departmental policies which he considered, favoured the car owner divided Crosland from his officials in the DOE for ‘ [they] go strongly counter to our Manifesto commitments and to my beliefs’.<sup>223</sup> In particular, he insisted that a transfer of funding of £100 million be made from roads to subsidies for bus and commuter services and rail investment ‘avoiding some (but not all) rail closures’.<sup>224</sup> He accused his officials of persevering with a road programme when the public transport system required proportionally more funding. His abhorrence of the ‘savage things we are doing to public transport’ led to the rejection of the Departmental line.

Given that we have a very decent road system already (and in many parts of the country a lavish one) and that much of what we are proposing for public transport will be extremely painful for many of our citizens, I am not willing to accept it. For I believe (if I may become a Benthamite for a moment) that we are more likely to achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number by cutting £100m off roads than off public transport.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>223</sup> Anthony Crosland to Sir Idwal Pugh, 5 February 1976, ACP 5/10.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

He outlined two priorities. The first was to concentrate all efforts and financial supports on providing public transport ‘for the diminishing but substantial number of people’ who could not afford a car.<sup>226</sup> For this purpose spending should be directed towards the ‘less well-off’ rather than the ‘better-off’. Secondly, protection of the environment should also receive a ‘high priority’. He drew a sharp distinction between a Labour policy and that of the Conservative approach and at the same time emphasised that civil servants should take their lead from the government and not *vice versa*.

We reject the Tory philosophy of a free-for-all in transport, which would inevitably lead to the worst off losing out. At the same time, we reject the approach of those who would manage transport so that traffic was allocated between modes by administrative *fiat*. The job of Government is to set a framework for pricing, investment, taxes and subsidy, and regulation which reflects the full range of environmental and social factors involved.<sup>227</sup>

Determined to retain in government hands the planning and regulation of transport policy, he rejected the TUC’s suggestion of a National Transport Planning Authority and urged instead the establishment of a National Transport Council which would retain ‘democratic’ control of transport. This covering note then accompanied the consultative document which was given to the Cabinet.<sup>228</sup> In an undated document in the Crosland Papers numbering seven pages,

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<sup>226</sup> Cole to Departmental officials, ‘Transport Policy’, Paper by the Secretary of State for the Environment, 12 February 1976, ACP, 5/10.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland wrote extensive notes on every clause of the Consultative Document given to him by his officials. His concluding comment was ‘whole thing too pro-road and anti-rail’.<sup>229</sup>

When the ‘Consultative Document was introduced in the Commons by the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Peter Shore, opinions varied on the features of the recommendations. There was general agreement that Crosland was to be praised for encouraging a national debate on the aims of a national transport policy. The *Financial Times*’ leader recognised that the document raised more questions than answers, but nevertheless ‘he has at least tried to make sure that the debate gets off on the right lines by re-stating the objectives of a national transport policy’.<sup>230</sup> The leader in the *New Statesman*, in what it termed his ‘last will and testament as Environment Secretary’, complimented Crosland. ‘It is probably the most complete review of transport ever done in this country by a government in power’.<sup>231</sup> The *Sunday Telegraph* praised Crosland for ‘having brought the problems of transport into the centre of the political stage ... [and] This document has settled the lines of what will be an important debate’.<sup>232</sup>

The lack of any detail concerning proposals was highlighted by several papers. Although the *Guardian* praised Crosland’s realism for identifying the transport problems faced by society especially the growth in car ownership and freight, ‘It is notably light on global solutions – its recommendations tend to be piecemeal and hesitant’.<sup>233</sup> The *Times* leader echoed similar criticism of other broadsheets. Commenting on Crosland’s efforts, it stated that ‘After all the labour and the high expectations, the Government’s transport review is noticeably short

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<sup>229</sup> Document entitled ‘C. D’., ACP 5/10.

<sup>230</sup> *Financial Times*, 14 April 1976, p.16.

<sup>231</sup> *New Statesman*, 16 April 1976, p.1.

<sup>232</sup> *Sunday Telegraph*, 18 April 1976, p.16.

<sup>233</sup> *Guardian*, 15 April 1976, p.14.

of policy proposals'.<sup>234</sup> The *Daily Telegraph* also found that the consultative paper 'failed to provide a searching and rigorous examination of the economics of transport in Britain' and was 'not a document of any great weight, for all that it says some very sensible things'.<sup>235</sup> There was little support from the socialist press. The *Morning Star*, supporting the trade union call for an integrated transport policy, criticised Crosland for advocating a 'plan which is little short of a programme for integrated collapse'.<sup>236</sup> It condemned Crosland's proposal for a national transport council rather than the planning authority representing the trade unions. It concluded that 'labour must reinforce its demands for an integrated transport system and stressed that 'public ownership is the key, public control the method and public service the aim'.<sup>237</sup> Alan Watkins in the *Observer* noted ambiguity in Crosland's perspective on the modes of transport. Once, Watkins observed, the 'party line' had been that 'railways were virtuous, roads viscous; trains good, cars and lorries (especially lorries) bad'.<sup>238</sup> Now Watkins detected that the line, according to Crosland, was that trains were 'bad' all the time because they were 'used predominantly by the middle classes'.<sup>239</sup> Cars were still wicked; but 'buses are virtuous because they are used by the working classes'.<sup>240</sup>

Crosland completed his work on the transport review on 15 March 1976 expecting to manage the passage of a Transport Bill through the Commons. Within a month following

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<sup>234</sup> 'Fares, Subsidies and Taxes', *The Times*, 14 April 1976, p.19.

<sup>235</sup> 'How should we travel?', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 April 1976, p.16.

<sup>236</sup> *The Morning Star*, 14 April 1976, ACP 5/10.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Alan Watkins, 'Why trains are wicked and buses virtuous', *Observer*, 18 April 1976, p.5

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

Wilson's resignation as Prime Minister, Crosland was appointed to a new Cabinet role as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary under Jim Callaghan as Premier.

### Evaluation

It was unusual for ministers to retain their ministerial brief for the seven years and Crosland's continued responsibility for the environment is unique in this period. He was able to lay down the basis for developing housing and transport policy during opposition. These he had elaborated upon in *Socialism Now*. On returning to government, Crosland adopted an uncompromising position on certain issues which caused some tension with his officials. Their prepared position on Maplin and the transport review both of which were complete or nearing completion, were challenged by their Secretary of State. They were forced to comply. It would seem that Crosland was not a minister to be led by his civil servants.

His attempts to convince elected regional bodies of the benefits of the Government's policies met with less success. Local interests would seem to be too entrenched. Predictably, local authorities were unwilling to co-operate with the regional planning authorities established by the Labour government in the first Labour administration. In fact, suspicion was the key element in the relationship between the DOE and local authorities and Crosland's personal diplomacy failed especially in Birmingham a crucial economic area.

It was claimed that Crosland hoped to achieve 'practical and socialist' policies although these may have been irreconcilable. Both the housing review and that for transport were heavily weighted towards social justice for working class members of society and a determination to advance their interests. Officials were convinced that his determination to favour public transport rather than roads distorted the review's recommendations. Crosland perceived transport in simplistic terms stereotyping usage according to class. His perception was that the

working class restricted the use of their car until the weekend and motorways were the preserve of business men. Consequently, he suggested punitive measures against car owners whom he regarded as mainly responsible for environmental problems in the cities. There was even a degree of inconsistency in his reasoning advocating subsidies for public transport such as rail and yet perceiving those who used rail as able to afford to live in rural comfort and yet commute to work. In his opinion it was not the duty of a Labour government to provide financial assistance.

Crosland's views on housing, were in some ways, prescient. He rejected the wholesale destruction of inner-city residential areas for new development and pressed for renovation and the establishment of diversity in housing with socially mixed estates. In spite of political pressure, he opposed the sale of council houses. However, his socialist perspective on the expansion of housing provision may have been unrealistic for membership of the owner-occupier class was the aspiration of an increasing section of traditional Labour supporters. Bernard Donoghue and Harold Wilson considered his opposition to the sale of council housing as an opportunity that would be lost in the struggle for a changing electorate. For a theoretician who based his revisionist works on the changing needs of the working class since the war, he seemed unwilling to acknowledge that home ownership was now their prime objective.

There was a disconnect between the radical programme on housing that Crosland advocated at the 1973 conference and the nature of the White Paper when it finally appeared. Crosland ideas were diluted and, in particular, tax relief on mortgage payment were left untouched. The resultant Green Paper which was published in 1977 under Crosland's successor Peter Shore has been described as a 'very conservative' document.<sup>241</sup> The political reality of

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<sup>241</sup> Green Paper. Housing Policy. A Consultative Document. DOE 1977.

retaining the support of the burgeoning class of new home owners had led to the emasculating of Crosland's objectives.<sup>242</sup>

Crosland persevered with policies that advanced his socialist objectives often against resistance on pragmatic grounds. He ignored the findings of the Layfield Committee when it supported the increase of the rating contribution locally. Again, he recognised the possible damaging electoral consequences of switching rate support grants from urban to non-metropolitan areas as 'politically wrong' although 'morally right', but nevertheless continued to press for them. As minister, he seemed willing to be bound by inquiry results when they failed to uphold his theoretical position on social justice.

In regard to his regional policy there exists a contradiction. His approach encouraged the modernisation of the economic traditions of northern areas by diversifying through science-based capital-intensive industries. However, he objected to the destruction of local communities by housing development and supported a regional strategy which would assist wealth redistribution. Susan Crosland cited her husband's frustration with the process of Departmental progress. In a reference to his ambition for his future at the DOE, he stated to her in 1975 the following.

If I stayed in this bloody job for another two years, I could actually *advance* something.

Not solve it. You can't solve anything. But start things moving in the right direction.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> See Paul N Balchin and Maureen Rhoden, *Housing Policy: An Introduction* (London, Routledge 2002) pp. 98-100.

<sup>243</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 294.



Chapter Five: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office. 1976 (April) -1977 (February)

‘When I pop off,’ Tony said to the Prime Minister, ‘and they cut open my heart, on it will be engraved ‘Fish’ and ‘Rhodesia’’.<sup>1</sup>

The British press have been unanimous in the criticism of Callaghan for putting Crosland into the job instead of Roy [Jenkins]. I have been impressed by Crosland’s capacity for rudeness coupled with his complicated character, his unpredictability and his manifest charm’.<sup>2</sup>

The Foreign Office has every essential for a good foreign policy except muscle.<sup>3</sup>

Crosland’s last ministerial position was Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a Cabinet post which he was to hold for only ten months before his death in February 1977. This chapter will examine firstly the circumstances surrounding his appointment following the announcement of Wilson’s resignation as leader and Callaghan’s election. Secondly, Crosland’s thoughts on the role of Britain in the post-war world will be explored. Two issues dominated his time as Foreign Secretary: the ‘Cod War’ with Iceland and the attempt to find a political settlement to the future of Southern Rhodesia and much of this

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<sup>1</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Henderson, *Mandarin: The Diaries of an Ambassador 1969-1982* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1994), 10 April 1976, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> David Lipsey, ‘Secretary of State. Personal and Confidential’, 22 December 1976, ACP 5/13.

chapter will concentrate on these areas and his success in finding diplomatic solutions to these problems.

### Appointment as Secretary of State

Wilson announced on the 15 March 1976 that he would resign as leader. This led to a leadership election in which Crosland was persuaded to stand. Roy Hattersley, a close friend and colleague warned that a humiliating result could severely damage his career aspirations. Crosland considered that he could appeal to the common ground that united left and right and that he should show ambition as one of the senior cabinet members. However, he had never held one of the three major offices of state and was pitted against two other centre right candidates for votes. His campaign was further limited by his overall reluctance to cultivate support in the party.<sup>4</sup> Out of six candidates in the first round he came last with only seventeen votes out of a possible three hundred and fourteen and therefore was eliminated. Callaghan eventually triumphed after two more rounds of voting defeating Michael Foot and thus becoming Prime Minister.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Crosland was offered the position of Foreign Secretary by Callaghan within days. Callaghan's decision was a combination of regard for Crosland's assistance and friendship over the years and the need to place centre-right politicians in the three key positions in his Cabinet.<sup>6</sup> Crosland had supported Callaghan in his first leadership campaign in 1963 and had arranged for Callaghan to meet distinguished economists when he was appointed Shadow

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<sup>4</sup> For details of the election see Jeffreys, *Crosland*, pp.188-96 and Giles Radice, *Friends and Rivals* (London, Abacus, 2003) pp. 234-9.

<sup>5</sup> Callaghan won by 176 votes to 137.

<sup>6</sup> See James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (Glasgow, Collins/Fontana1988) pp.399-400.

Chancellor in 1963. Callaghan also felt that Jenkins' appointment as Foreign Secretary would be unacceptable to several anti-Marketeters in the new cabinet.<sup>7</sup>

The *Observer* agreed with Crosland's appointment even though Roy Jenkins appeared to be the obvious choice. 'Because of Mr. Jenkins's unique reputation in Europe, however, the Foreign Office would, for him, have provided a worthwhile task. For Mr. Crosland, it will be a waiting room for the Treasury'.<sup>8</sup> The appointment did not meet the approval of some. Nicholas Henderson, British Ambassador at the UN was critical of Callaghan's decision commenting on Crosland's inappropriate conduct in the first month as Foreign Secretary.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Crosland had now achieved one of the three key posts in government. His political future seemed more promising. There was even a possibility that Healey at the Treasury and Crosland at the Foreign Office might exchange roles allowing Crosland to become Chancellor. A challenge for the leadership in a few years was now no longer improbable.<sup>10</sup>

His new position presented a unique challenge compared to the other cabinet posts which he had held. Apart from an interest in matters connected with international socialism, Crosland's previous ministerial work had focused upon domestic issues. By contrast, Jim Callaghan had developed a sound understanding of international relations in opposition and for the last two years of government.<sup>11</sup> While at the DOE, Crosland was able to pursue policy objectives and achieve a tangible improvement in peoples' lives. 'At the DOE, Tony could

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Observer*, 11 April 1976, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> See quote above.

<sup>10</sup> See Jeffreys *Crosland*, p. 198.

<sup>11</sup> Callaghan's expertise in this area was to become a significant factor in Crosland's handling of the Rhodesian question. (See below)

pose questions with some control over the answers, get his raw material, focus on it, come up with logical coherent conclusions'.<sup>12</sup> The Foreign Office offered a stark contrast.

The whole thought process at the Foreign Office is very different from the domestic department, in some ways much easier. Instead of persuading and directing, most of the time one is reacting to the moods of people from highly varied cultures.<sup>13</sup>

John Weston who was a senior Civil Servant at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and worked with Crosland, made a similar early judgement. In respect of Crosland's introduction to the department, he commented that:

Initially rather uncertain about the Foreign office, feeling that he had left a job where he could design a transport policy for the entire United Kingdom ... and he would just put out his policy and the minions would make it happen, and he could get on with designing another wonderful policy. But he didn't actually have to rub shoulders with a lot of people he didn't know.<sup>14</sup>

Crosland showed an impatience with the formalities of the Foreign Office especially the established protocols. He felt that much time was wasted with functions with foreign ambassadors and this even extended to the required dress code for specific occasions.<sup>15</sup> This irreverent approach was a cause of irritation to his civil servants. Sir Michael Palliser, who was

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<sup>12</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 338.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 339.

<sup>14</sup> John Weston interviewed by Liz Cox, 2001, *British Diplomatic Oral History Project*.

<sup>15</sup> See Jeffreys, *Crosland*, 1999, p. 201.

Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office between 1975 and 1982, cites a greater problem initially. As with previous Cabinet appointments, Crosland was determined to master the background to the pressing issues of the department and this would take time. However, as Palliser noted, often time was not available.

In Foreign Affairs, however important the issues, the devil is in the detail; and Tony Crosland was ever reluctant to reach a decision until he had mastered the detail; this often meant for him several hours – sometimes days – of careful reading ... This meant, inevitably, that to some of his officials he seemed overly cautious and a shade dilettante.<sup>16</sup>

#### Crosland and the Role of Britain in the 1970s

Crosland set out his priorities in regard to the conduct of British foreign policy in briefing notes: national security, the reduction in tension in international relations between east and west in Europe; lessening the risk of war in the world; furthering human rights; and protection of British citizens abroad.<sup>17</sup> These would form the context for his management of British foreign affairs. His officials did not always agree and there were clashes in areas where civil servants had strong views, notably on free trade and on the EEC.<sup>18</sup> Crosland's perspective also differed from that of his officials in another significant way. The Foreign Office considered that foreign policy transcended party politics and officials had traditionally responded to those

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<sup>16</sup> Michael Palliser, *'Crosland and New Labour'*, ed. Dick Leonard (London, Macmillan, 1999), 'Chapter 9: Foreign Secretary', p.99.

<sup>17</sup> 'Objects. F.P'.(Foreign Policy), ACP 5/13

<sup>18</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, 1999, p. 201.

ministers who advocated respect for British interests especially Ernest Bevin and George Brown.

Both shared a quality that endeared them to officials: both saw their job in terms solely of advancing British interests abroad. Tony did not. This was maddening for officials – constantly having to take account things they thought irrelevant.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, in his briefing notes, there is no mention of British interests. He emphasised a role for Britain that was supportive of the international community and its pursuit of peace through international bodies and the balance of power. Recognising the reality of Britain's position in the world he accepted that Britain's independent action was limited and therefore Britain should join and strengthen international bodies such as the EEC, NATO and the UN.<sup>20</sup> Mixing realism with a measure of optimism and recognising the continuing Russian threat in central Africa, he asserted that the West should attempt to maintain a military balance.<sup>21</sup> The nuclear superiority of the West over the communist world was no longer sustainable and, therefore, he considered that a nuclear first strike was 'most improbable' and a regional balance was crucial.<sup>22</sup> His final comment on the global geo-political position was the essence of *realpolitik*. 'Détente essential to satisfy West public opinion and prevent CND etc: Governments must be seen to be 'trying' for peace: strong but conciliatory'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Crosland, *Crosland*, 1982, p. 382.

<sup>20</sup> 'Objects of FP', ACP 5/13.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

He was also aware that in respect of the protection of the rights of British citizens, there was ‘a strict limit to what can and should be done’.<sup>24</sup> His notes further reflect the notion that foreign policy conducted by a Labour Government should have an ethical basis. He posed the question ‘How far should foreign policy, especially under Labour, be based on morality?’.<sup>25</sup> His response, reviewing conduct in the nineteenth century, was to examine the arguments for and against such a policy and the case for having no foreign policy. He noted that traditional foreign policy of the Foreign Office ‘shifted from morality mid-19th Century to cynicism post 1914’.<sup>26</sup> He contrasted this evolution with the ‘mixed’ tradition of the Labour Party, a combination of pacifism, anti-imperialism and support for socialist internationalism although leaders could never ignore public opinion.

Crosland accepted that responding to party and public opinion was a vital element of his new role. David Lipsey, who was special adviser to Crosland at the DOE and subsequently the Foreign Office, offered him some initial advice in April 1976 following his appointment advice that Lipsey considered might well assist his future political ambition. He stated that dealing with the press would be much easier at the Foreign Office where coverage would be on the front page as long as he pursued ‘an active policy and a Socialist philosophy’.<sup>27</sup> In a document which provided a subtext for Crosland’s next career move, he advised him to support socialist groups in Europe which would be popular with the party and in this context he stressed that contact with the trade unions was vital and that he should involve those responsible for

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> David Lipsey, ‘Secretary of State: Chat with Dick Leonard/Dereck Gladwin – Conclusions’, 22 April 1976, ACP, 5/12.

international relations in the unions.<sup>28</sup> In terms of departmental organisation, he advised Crosland to give every minister ‘a bit of each but do Africa yourself’, Africa and the United Nations being identified as ‘glamorous jobs’.<sup>29</sup> His final comment on the Foreign Office was a realistic assessment of its influence in contemporary international relations: ‘The Foreign Office has every essential for a good foreign policy except muscle’.<sup>30</sup> In December 1976, as Crosland was about to assume the Presidency of the European Council of Ministers in January 1977, Lipsey concluded:

I should avoid getting over-involved in your work as President of the Council; I [Lipsey] could make little useful contribution. I [Crosland] should instead use my time to concentrate even more on those non-Community issues from which your attention will inevitably be deflected, and on the domestic political situation (particularly with the possibility that you might become Chancellor in mind.)<sup>31</sup>

#### The Third Cod War. 1975-1976.

Crosland’s apparent reluctance to prioritise the protection of British interests in his foreign policy was tested when faced with the continuing fishing dispute between British fishing trawlers and the Icelandic coastal authorities. The attempt by British trawlers to fish close to Icelandic shores had been resisted, often by force, throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One Scandinavian historian draws a distinction between *fish-surplus* states in the north of the North Atlantic and *fish-deficient* in the south. The latter, including Britain and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> David Lipsey, ‘Secretary of State. Personal and Confidential’, 22 December 1976, ACP 5/13.



Germany, could not meet the increasing demand for fish and therefore had to encroach on fishing grounds to the north especially Iceland a pattern followed through to the post-war period and still continuing.<sup>32</sup> Icelandic historians consider that there were ten ‘Cod Wars’ dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when English fisherman first visited Icelandic waters.

On the 18 November 1973, an agreement had been signed ending the ‘Second Cod War’. This limited British fishing activities to certain areas inside a fifty-mile limit. This agreement would expire in November 1975, but the Icelandic government announced its intention to extend its fishing limits to two hundred miles in July of that year. The British government did not recognise this extension to the exclusion zone and a ‘Third Cod War’ followed lasting over a year (July 1975-June 1976). This conflict, which was the most hard fought of the cod wars, saw British fishing trawlers have their nets cut by the Icelandic Coast Guard and the attempted ramming of Royal Navy escort frigates.

For Crosland and other members of NATO this dispute was perceived as a threat to the Western Alliance. The Icelandic Government threatened to close the NATO base at Keflavik which would have severely impaired the ability of the alliance to defend the Atlantic Ocean from the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> The dispute was intensified in February 1976 when the Icelandic government severed diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom. Jim Callaghan as Foreign Secretary until his victory in the leadership election in April 1976, had handled the increasing tension between the two countries. It was left to Crosland to attempt an interim agreement with the Icelandic minister of Foreign Affairs Einar Augustsson in Oslo during May. The basic terms of the agreement were settled on the 6 June. The agreement was to last for a period of six

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<sup>32</sup> See Jon Th. Thor (2000), ‘The quest for cod: Some causes of fishing conflicts in the North Atlantic’, *Acta Borealia*, Vol. 17, No.1, pp. 41-50.

<sup>33</sup> For the implications of the Cod Wars for NATO and the Western Alliance see GuDmundur J. Gudmundsson, ‘The Cod War and the Cold War’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, Vol. 31, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 97-118.

months. The British were allowed twenty-three or twenty-four trawlers at any one time, the inshore fishing limit in certain areas would now be twenty and thirty miles instead of twelve and twenty as in the 1973 agreement and the EEC would be invited to assume responsibility for longer term arrangements.<sup>34</sup>

Crosland acknowledged that concessions would have to be made. These concessions included acceptance of Icelandic conservation areas ‘without exception’ a considerably reduced fishing effort and concessions as regards ‘distances from the coast’.<sup>35</sup> Crosland stated to Augustsson that ‘the terms of the likely agreement were already being represented as a sell-out in the British press and it was clear that we could not go much further’.<sup>36</sup> Both ministers were aware that the matter would finally fall to the EEC to produce a workable relationship and Crosland stressed that nothing contained in their bilateral agreement should ‘prejudice’ these future negotiations.

Reaction to the terms was broadly hostile perceiving the agreement as harmful to British interests; but there was also a recognition of the reality of the situation which limited Crosland’s negotiation strategy and that he had handled a delicate issue with equanimity to both sides. The *Guardian* leader reflected this: ‘Iceland has won outright and no harm comes of acknowledging this. But Mr.Crosland was right to accept the peace terms on offer; the alternative was a further long period of costly and ineffective naval protection’.<sup>37</sup> It concluded by stating that the settlement was less than ‘catastrophic’ and that Crosland was right to accept it ‘in spite of its

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<sup>34</sup> The normal number of vessels was a total of one hundred and five – thus only forty-six or forty-eight could carry on a day-to-day basis.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Icelandic Fisheries Talks Oslo 31 May 1976. First Plenary Meeting’, 31 May 1976, TNA, FCO 73/207.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> ‘Cold coley and colder comfort’, *Guardian* 3 June 1976, p.12. Coley was a substitute for cod but was not as popular because it was not pure white. Nevertheless, the *Guardian* recommended it to its readers.

baleful effect on some of his constituents'.<sup>38</sup> A latter comment in the same paper pointed to the difficult nature of Crosland's task. 'Britain has admitted defeat in the cod war with Iceland and accepted surrender terms which ought to make the government blush. In the final negotiations, Mr Crosland made the best he could of an impossible situation'.<sup>39</sup> There was support for the notion that Crosland's task was made worse by the last Secretary of State:

Had his predecessor as Foreign Secretary, Mr. Callaghan, showed as much good sense and courage at the beginning of the dispute as Mr Crosland showed at the end, much better terms could have been obtained.<sup>40</sup>

The leader then urged Crosland to concentrate on reforming the EEC's Common Fisheries Policy and move as fast as 'decently possible' towards a two hundred mile limit to protect our stocks of fish.<sup>41</sup>

The reaction of trawler men was predictably less nuanced on hearing of the prospective terms before they were confirmed in public. When the representative of the British Trawlers Federation heard the terms Crosland proposed, he stated that his only reaction could be 'Oh God! At the very most, it would be possible to operate in all only twice the daily average of trawlers permitted'.<sup>42</sup> Crosland had prefaced his announcement of the prospective terms by stating that the negotiating team were on 'a hiding to nothing' and that he had come to the

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> 'Cod Surrender', *Guardian*, 6 June 1976, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> 'Meeting with Trawler Industry Representatives', 25 May 1976, TNA, FCO 73/207.

conclusion that there ‘really was no other option’.<sup>43</sup> The representative of the Transport and General Workers Union accepted Crosland’s line on this for he considered that even though it was a bad deal, nevertheless it would not possible to get a better agreement than Crosland had secured.<sup>44</sup> Although he advocated adequate compensation for losses sustained by the fisherman, he further urged all other representatives to support Crosland and that they should be ‘progressive and look forward’ to negotiations with the EEC.<sup>45</sup>

Crosland was aware that a crucial test for his diplomacy would be the reaction in Grimsby, his constituency, and on Humberside two areas where the fishing industry was a key component of the local economy. He received full support from Labour Party officials in Grimsby in spite of warnings that his 5,000-plus majority could be under threat at the next general election. Matt Quinn, secretary of the Grimsby Labour Party, justified Crosland’s agreement by stating that ‘this was not a local issue [for] Mr. Crosland had to take NATO into consideration’.<sup>46</sup> On Humberside, Crosland described the pessimistic predictions for the industry as ‘ridiculous’ and reiterated that there was no alternative for any continuation of the Cod War would have to be met ‘with increasing cost to our defence budget’.<sup>47</sup>

His announcement of the terms in the Commons drew strong criticism from the Labour member for Hull East James Johnson who said that there would be ‘dismay and disgust’ felt by the people of Humberside. The City Council and fishing families in particular felt that they had been let down.<sup>48</sup> Crosland had stressed again that the Law of the Sea Conference was about

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Mr. Cairns, Representative of the Transport and General Workers Union.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> ‘Trawler owners seek State aid’, 3 June 1976, *Guardian*, p. 22.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> HC Deb 07 June 1976 vol 912 cc936-47.

to meet and he pointed out that the ‘the trend towards a 200 mile limits was now clearly irreversible’.<sup>49</sup> There was little to be gained from ignoring the reality of the need for a compromise with the Icelandic government.

Recriminations about the past will do no good to anyone. They will not save a single job on Humberside or in Fleetwood. This agreement has been as passionately denounced in Reykjavik as it has been on Humberside. I regard it as a concession to common sense.<sup>50</sup>

Crosland’s strategy, set within the implications for the Atlantic Alliance, seemed to have gained significant traction in the Commons. Francis Pym for the Conservatives accepted that the two-hundred mile limit was inevitable as Crosland said but that the government should present a strategy to ensure that alternative employment was eventually provided.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in Scotland, the SNP member accepted the reality of the situation. George Thompson urged the Government to take as tough a line over the Common Fisheries Policy as they had with Iceland.

Crosland also received considerable support from John Prescott MP for Hull East who believed that Crosland had ‘got the best possible deal out of the mess he inherited’.<sup>52</sup> Replying to the comments made by his Labour colleague for Hull West, Prescott rejected the ‘hysterical’ claims that 9000 men would be made unemployed as a consequence of the agreement. In fact, Prescott had embarked on an unofficial information gathering exercise to Iceland in the spring of 1976, before Crosland was appointed as Foreign Secretary. Prescott had worked as a seaman

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

in the merchant navy and had represented the seamen's union. He was sympathetic to the Icelandic position in regard to exclusive fishing rights off the continental shelf.<sup>53</sup> Prescott had formed the impression that Icelandic public opinion was unaware of the potential hardship that the UK fishing industry would suffer if fishing rights were drastically reduced. He believed that the Icelandic Government had done nothing to educate their population about this. Consequently, Prescott advised the following to Crosland.

The Icelanders were TV addicts and if an explanation of the UK case could be put across on Icelandic TV... it would be very helpful. When the Icelanders saw the magnitude of the UK problem they would be more sympathetic to the negotiation of a transitional agreement.<sup>54</sup>

Prescott laid claim for the 'deal' that was eventually struck having discussed at length the issue with the Icelandic home minister and had come to some resolution before April. He says that he went to see Crosland after his appointment and told him of this 'deal'.

He [Crosland] didn't seem to know much about it [the deal]. I said it must be lying in some drawer in the Foreign Office, covered with dust ... He asked if I considered the Icelanders would still agree to my deal. I said I thought they would, so he decided to start new negotiations. In the end a deal was done, based on a limited number of fishing trips, which was the principle I had been working on.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See John Prescott, *Prezza My Story: Pulling No Punches* (London, Headline PG, 2008), pp.127-131.

<sup>54</sup> Fergusson to Fretwell, 'Icelandic Fisheries Agreement', 2 September 1976, TNA FCO 73/209.

<sup>55</sup> Prescott, *Prezza*, p. 131.

There seems little in the archives to support this interpretation (apart from the reference above) and neither of the biographies mention the part played by Prescott.

Any evaluation of the effectiveness of Crosland's management of the crisis of the Cod War must be assessed against the criteria that he had stated in his briefing notes. Although Crosland recognised that his deal was being portrayed as a 'sell-out' in the press, he seems to have satisfied two of his cardinal principles of foreign policy namely the lessening of international tension by the preservation of peace between Iceland and the United Kingdom and the strengthening of security in the North Atlantic. Both Crosland and Prescott were convinced that the continuation of the standoff between the Icelandic coastguard and the Royal Navy would lead to a dangerous escalation and a costly one at that. The security of the North Atlantic Alliance was a significant factor. Crosland's willingness to find an agreement with Agustsson, even though concessions had to be made, was a price worth paying and one applauded by NATO. Sir John Killick, Britain's permanent representative at NATO wrote to Crosland citing the Icelanders' high regard for his responsible attitude to the negotiations and the 'high standing with your NATO colleagues'.<sup>56</sup> Crosland's deal had restored diplomatic relations between Iceland and the UK - severed while Callaghan was Foreign Secretary - and ensured that Icelandic naval facilities were available for NATO use.

Crosland's intervention and diplomacy could be interpreted as serving British interests as well. He stated several times that there were no alternatives to the compromise solution he constructed with Agustsson. British interests were not served by a prolonged armed conflict which would eventually endanger lives and lose support in NATO and the EEC 'and our bargaining position within the Community over the common fisheries would be seriously complicated'.<sup>57</sup> One recent study supports the view that Crosland had no option but to enter

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<sup>56</sup> John Killick to Secretary of State, 'The Icelandic Settlement', 8 June 1976, ACP 5/13.

<sup>57</sup> Crosland, 'Iceland (Fisheries Dispute)', HC Deb 07 June 1976 vol 912 cc936-47

into a conciliatory agreement.<sup>58</sup> Even the critics of Crosland's diplomatic conduct accepted that the imposition of a two hundred mile limit was inevitable throughout the Economic Community. The accusation that his negotiations with the Icelandic authorities represented a 'sell-out' are not born out by a study of the minutes of the meetings with Agustsson who was equally pressured by public opinion in Iceland which regarded the agreement as unacceptable and generous to the British.<sup>59</sup> On the implications for the domestic industry Crosland had stressed that the British fishing industry would now enter a long period of 'adaption' which other fishing industries would have to face and that the government would help in this restructuring necessary. His claim that few if any jobs would be lost was probably optimistic and rejected by the trawler representatives he met and by opinion in the coastal towns. The trawler union did recognise that there was a perceived benefit in that a reformed common Agricultural Policy would strengthen the move towards the 'decasualisation' of labour prevalent in the fishing industry.<sup>60</sup>

### Rhodesia 1976-1977

On the 11th November 1965 The Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia Ian Smith issued a unilateral declaration of independence for this self-governing British dependency ruled by a white minority. This was against the wishes of the British government which had insisted on

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<sup>58</sup> See Sverrir Steinsson, 'The Cod Wars: a re-analysis', *European Security*, Vol 25, Issue 2, 2016, pp.256-275. Steinsson maintains that the British economy was not at all reliant on its fishing industry and able to manage the loss of the Icelandic fishing grounds and welcomed relief from all the costs associated with the dispute.

<sup>59</sup> It was reported in the *Guardian* that Icelandic Trade Unions had called for a mass protest against the agreement and that opposition parties had called it a 'treasonable giveaway' of Icelandic fish to foreigners. *Guardian*, 3 June 1976, p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> See Cairns statement 'Meeting with Trawler Industry', 25 May 1976. TNA FCO 73/207.



the widening of the franchise to include the black population. This decision by the Rhodesian Front led by Smith was seen as completely unacceptable to the Commonwealth as well. Harold Wilson had refused to grant independence unless Smith promised to allow unimpeded progress to majority rule and the ending of racial discrimination. Wilson's response was to impose sanctions on imports from Rhodesia and an embargo on oil exports to Rhodesia hoping to force Smith to back down. Wilson engaged in further talks with Smith in 1966 and 1968; but the Rhodesian leader refused to co-operate and accept the formula of 'NIMBAR'.<sup>61</sup> In the 1970s the black opposition war against the Rhodesian Front intensified especially as the new Marxist government in Mozambique now offered a base for cross border African guerrilla activity. At this point, Henry Kissinger, American Secretary of State, announced that he would intervene and attempt to find a solution to the problem and would visit frontline presidents. Kissinger embarked on a mission to visit African states with the intention of resisting increased Soviet influence. His biographer states that Kissinger was determined to transform American policy which would be based now on emphatic opposition to white minority regimes and on financial support for the emerging black nations.<sup>62</sup>

Jim Callaghan as Foreign Secretary handled relations with Rhodesia until his election as Party leader and Prime Minister in April 1976. He had made little headway but laid a marker for any negotiations with Smith in the Commons on 22 March 1976. He stated that if Britain were to play a constructive part in the discussions, the Rhodesian Government would have to accept the following: majority rule; elections in 2 years; and an interim government with black

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<sup>61</sup> No Independence Before Majority Rule. One writer has stressed that the Labour Party had much to lose if it failed to take retaliatory action as a result of its anti-colonial and anti-racist stance. See Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, ed. Peter Dorey (London, Routledge, 2006) p.145.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger. A Biography* (New York, Simon and Shuster, 1992), p. 686.

Prime Minister. Callaghan appointed Crosland as the new Foreign Secretary but was to retain a close interest in matters.

In October 1976, the *Guardian* leader produced a most derogatory *critique* of Crosland's diplomatic management of the attempt to find a solution of the Rhodesia question since his appointment the previous April. With reference to his working relationship with Henry Kissinger the American Secretary of State who had devoted himself to the rapid resolution of this issue and under a title of 'Mr Crosland's diffident diplomacy', it stated the following:

If Dr Kissinger had done a more thorough job, and if the British Foreign Secretary had contributed more to the proceedings than an appearance of supercilious distaste, the present disorderly approach to the Rhodesian settlement might have been avoided ...[Crosland] had made little attempt to influence events [and] there is no hint of any plan or coherent strategy.<sup>63</sup>

Crosland's handling of the Rhodesian issue during his thirteen months at the Foreign Office has been overshadowed by the collapse of the Geneva Conference in December 1976, the degree of progress made by David Owen who succeeded as Foreign Secretary following Crosland's death and the assertion that Crosland allowed himself to be dictated to by Henry Kissinger.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Callaghan's official biographer stated that the real axis was between

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<sup>63</sup> *Guardian*, 11 October 1976, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Callaghan's biographer, credits Owen's energetic pursuit of an Anglo-American strategy as instrumental in the emergence of an independent Zimbabwe under black African rule in 1979. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan. A Life* (London, OUP, 1997), p. 599. Cyrus Vance also paid tribute to the work of the Labour government in helping

Callaghan and Kissinger because Callaghan believed that ‘Tony Crosland, in Rhodesian affairs, was felt to be rather more frail’.<sup>65</sup> In this section which reviews Crosland diplomatic efforts for a solution to the Rhodesian issue, I shall examine the relations between Crosland and Kissinger and in particular the contribution that he made to the diplomacy which they both conducted and how effectively he maintained the integrity of the British policy against the determination of the American Secretary of State to pursue his own initiative and thus achieve a rapid resolution of this issue.

Although the American Secretary of State was surprised and annoyed to be invited to their first meeting at RAF Waddington near Grimsby rather than Heathrow, they developed a working relationship which on one level was sustained even after Kissinger left office in January 1977; but, on another level, it became strained over the pace demanded by the American state department. Crosland welcomed Kissinger’s support for majority rule but he was less enthusiastic about Kissinger’s determination to pressurise Ian Smith into making an early deal. Crosland was convinced that the British had a better grasp on the dynamics of geopolitics in Southern Africa and that any lasting settlement could only work if the ‘front line states’ were brought on board first.<sup>66</sup> Kissinger’s priority was to stem the growth of communism in Southern Africa in particular for as his biographer states Kissinger saw most national liberation movements as acting on behalf of the Soviet state.<sup>67</sup> Kissinger immediately

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to find a final solution of the Rhodesian impasse. ‘For this credit must go to David Owen and Jim Callaghan’.. See David Owen, *Time to Declare* (London, Penguin, 1991) p. 381.

<sup>65</sup> Morgan, *Callaghan*, 1997, p. 496.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffreys, *Crosland*, 1999, p. 201.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger A Biography* (New York. Simon & Shuster, 1992) pp. 685-686.

attempted to hasten progress by utilising a discussion paper produced by the Foreign Office officials as a basis for a meeting with Smith.<sup>68</sup>

Crosland asserted himself over three issues that became areas of dispute with the American Secretary of State: relations with the black front-line leaders; compensation to white farmers; and, above all, the strategy of the Kissinger plan for resolution of the future of Rhodesia. At a formal meeting between Crosland and Kissinger and their respective teams before Kissinger departed for Africa, the question of the diplomatic approach to Kaunda of Zambia, Nyerere of Tanzania and Machel of Mozambique was discussed. Differences arose over the involvement of Machel. Kissinger obviously distrusted him and feared that he would extend the influence of his Marxist movement into a Rhodesia ruled by a black majority. However, Crosland and his officials had become convinced that Machel was amenable to a diplomatic approach and that he was 'anxious to avoid an internationalisation of the war'.<sup>69</sup>

The issue of financial compensation to the white farmers who had decided to emigrate was contentious. Kissinger supported the international fund unreservedly; but Crosland and his advisers considered that time was required for expert study of the practical and financial implications.<sup>70</sup> Two days later, Crosland was more emphatic that Kissinger should acknowledge the British position on the terms of the settlement which was for the British non-negotiable.

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<sup>68</sup> See Jeffreys, *Crosland*, 1999, p.202. See below for this discussion paper termed 'Annex C' by the FCO.

<sup>69</sup> Meeting of Crosland and Kissinger in London, 4 September 1976. TNA, FCO/ 73/209.

<sup>70</sup> Crosland to Kissinger, 'Rhodesia Joint Planning', 14 September, 1976. ACP, 5/14.

If you do let me reassure you that we remain most anxious not to cramp your style or restrict your room for manoeuvre, except on the major points of concern to us – no departure from the principles laid down by Jim Callaghan on 22 March [1976]<sup>71</sup>

Crosland again stressed that when financial arrangements were included ‘we must get this part of the plan strongly refined before any package as a whole is launched’.<sup>72</sup>

In spite of Crosland’s concerns, Kissinger indicated that after his meeting with Smith in Salisbury he expected an announcement within five days from the Rhodesian leader. Crosland’s reply illustrates the divergence between the two diplomats on policy and his determination to impress on Kissinger the obstacles that the British Government faced in supporting the Kissinger plan. Having complimented the American Secretary of State on his ‘courageous and audacious initiative’, Crosland reminded Kissinger that he, Crosland, did not have the same authority for unilateral decisions as Kissinger possessed.

For better or worse we have Cabinet Government and Cabinet has not endorsed any detailed proposals. The Prime Minister said in his talk with you on 6 September that consideration was still being given to certain joint proposals. That remains his position ... We support them strongly but have no powers to enforce them on either side, only to endorse them as constructive proposals.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Crosland to Kissinger, ‘Rhodesia Joint Planning’, 16 September 1976. ACP, 5/14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Crosland to Kissinger, 21 September 1976, ACP, 5/14.

It was at this point that Crosland had to remind Kissinger that the ‘plan’ which he was using as a basis for negotiation with Smith and the frontline Presidents was ‘always put forward as a discussion paper [annex C]...[which] we have felt necessary from time to time to modify’.<sup>74</sup>

Crosland’s authority was severely limited by several factors: having to respond to events 5000 miles away without Kissinger’s ‘on the spot feel’; obligations to the Cabinet; and the triangulation of Crosland-Kissinger-Callaghan. Kissinger ignored all of these constraints and the response that followed Crosland’s communication of 21 September, revealed his wider agenda. In referring to Crosland’s caution, Kissinger laid bare what was at stake to American involvement:

Your attitude could encourage the radical Africans to put forward more and more demands, and the Russians to meddle. Instead of stability, we invite chaos at the critical moment. And this whole enterprise after all only makes sense as a firebreak to African radicalism and Soviet intervention.<sup>75</sup>

Kissinger stated that Crosland’s approach ‘to negotiate an interim government of indeterminate design would have failed at the outset’ and that if Crosland could not give support ‘then frankly it would be best to say nothing publicly’.<sup>76</sup>

By September 1976, Kissinger’s initiative was disintegrating. As Smith prevaricated upon the potential deal, the African leaders in the frontline states and the Rhodesian oppositional party the Patriotic Front publicly dissociated themselves from it and demanded a

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Henry [Kissinger] to Tony [Crosland], undated but presumably sent between 21 and 23 September 1976, ACP, 5/14.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

conference.<sup>77</sup> They were unwilling to submit to an interim government for two years and demanded majority rule immediately. Crosland was left with no other option but to call a Conference on the Rhodesian issue. Crosland was torn between the pressure for Britain to assume some moral responsibility for political future of Rhodesia and the feeling in the Cabinet that they were exhausted with the ‘Rhodesian Morass’.<sup>78</sup> The Labour Party Conference in 1976 also called for a Constitutional Conference stressing that ‘the people of Zimbabwe had on all occasions rejected any attempts by outside powers to determine their future’ and regarded all Smith’s proposals as seriously flawed and therefore unacceptable.<sup>79</sup> Crosland felt justified in preparing for such a conference and returning to Callaghan’s original principles. He concluded a memorandum to Cabinet:

In addition, we must not allow ourselves to be caught in any lengthy negotiation. For this reason among others, while we must not be wholly negative, we should be cautious of calling a constitutional conference. Above all we must refuse to accept any direct involvement, whether administrative or militarily, in the government of Rhodesia during the run up to independence.<sup>80</sup>

It was now Crosland’s task to formulate the details of this meeting especially its composition and venue. Crosland resisted the attempts of Smith to dictate to the Secretary of

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<sup>77</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 369. ‘While Ian Smith haggled over the ‘package deal’, the front-line Presidents publicly dissociated themselves from it ... they wanted a conference’.

<sup>78</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.365.

<sup>79</sup> Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, ‘Rhodesia’, 21 September 1976, CAB/129/192/5.

<sup>80</sup> FWS Craig(ed.), *Conservative and Labour Party Conference Decisions* (Surrey, Unwin Bros., 1982), 1976, p. 444.

State on various issues. Smith objected a European venue for the Smith considered it illogical for Rhodesians to have to go to Geneva to discuss their own future. He further expected the British government to bear the full costs of transport and accommodation of the delegation of thirty six. Crosland refused to increase the amount already considered appropriate. By these tactics, Smith hoped to gain leverage over the conference by engineering a Salisbury location. If that failed, then he would try to ensure that the Rhodesian delegation outnumbered the other African groups the composition of which he would attempt to determine. Smith rejected the idea that the Rhodesian Government's delegation was to be treated on the same basis as any one of the three African Nationalist Delegations.<sup>81</sup> In order to neutralise the Patriotic Front delegations of Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, he suggested that Crosland should invite a delegation from the 'Council of Chiefs' whom Smith claimed represented the views of and had considerable responsibility for 'millions of Africans of moderate views'.<sup>82</sup> Smith warned Crosland that if this request as rejected it would prove that the British Government was not prepared 'to consider the views of any Africans other than the Nationalists politicians and the terrorists ... [and] I am confident that a delegation of Chiefs would exert a moderating influence'.<sup>83</sup>

Crosland's response was unequivocal. He rejected the suggestion that the Rhodesian delegation should be treated in the same way as the total African representation and he also dismissed the notion that the tribal Chiefs should be invited:

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<sup>81</sup> Smith to Crosland, 16 October 1976, TNA, FCO 73/226.

<sup>82</sup> Smith to Crosland, 18 October 1976, TNA, FCO 73/226.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*



Since the Chiefs are appointed by your Government and are not elected representatives, I do not believe they merit a separate invitation. If we invited them, we would have to invite representatives of the European Community other than the Rhodesian Front.<sup>84</sup>

Callaghan had already warned Crosland in Cabinet that Kissinger should not be impressed by Smith's appointment of African Chiefs to ministerial office for they were 'merely paid officials'.<sup>85</sup> His only concession to Smith was to increase the number of seats at the conference by two and two more in the conference room, more than any of the African delegations.<sup>86</sup>

The Conference in Geneva opened on 28 October but was finally adjourned by Crosland on 14 December having achieved nothing substantial. Crosland was criticised by the *Guardian* for offering little towards the settlement 'beyond offering to chair the opening conference' and for lacking a 'coherent policy' throughout.<sup>87</sup> Crosland refused to accept the chair appointed for he felt that he would be a more valuable influence at a latter, decisive stage if he had not personally committed himself to an operation he thought would be a 'fair shambles'.<sup>88</sup> Instead, he appointed Ivor Richard Britain's UN ambassador and former Labour minister. Richard faced great difficulties in conducting a successful dialogue between the various delegates. Smith's party wanted to use the Kissinger plan as a basis for a settlement; the black nationalists wanted

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<sup>84</sup> Crosland to Smith, 18 October 1976, TNA, FCO 73/226. Callaghan had already warned Crosland in Cabinet that Kissinger should not be impressed by Smith's appointment of African Chiefs to ministerial office for they were 'merely paid officials'. Callaghan, 29 April 1976, CAB 128/59/2.

<sup>85</sup> Callaghan, 29 April 1976, CAB 128/59/2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Guardian*, 11 October 1976, p. 10.

<sup>88</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p. 375.

to move to majority rule immediately and they utilised any tactic to obstruct discussions initiated by the Rhodesian Front.

Crosland's attempt to find a successful resolution to this problem was also dependent on the potential involvement of the Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary Jim Callaghan. Callaghan continued to communicate with Kissinger during the year and seems to have overseen the direction of policy in August and September. Callaghan's biographer Kenneth Morgan comments on the working relationship between Callaghan and Kissinger especially in regard to Rhodesia. Callaghan had his own background of expertise going back twenty years and his own personal perspectives and that the Kissinger phase of the manoeuvres in Rhodesia reflected the close personal ties of Callaghan and the American Secretary of State.<sup>89</sup>

Two meetings were arranged with Kissinger while the American Secretary of State was in London. Callaghan laid down 'operational requirements' for Kissinger's mission although he did insert a proviso 'subject to Mr. Crosland's views' for the Foreign Secretary was on holiday.<sup>90</sup> Callaghan continued to play a significant role in the weeks leading up and during the conference. Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, commented: 'How much I appreciate the speed which you and Mr Crosland have responded to my various messages on Rhodesia... glad it was possible for the Foreign Secretary to leave an opening for additional members [Sithole]'.<sup>91</sup> Callaghan seems to have initiated this development for he sent a note to Nyerere

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<sup>89</sup> Morgan, *Callaghan*, 1997, p.595.

<sup>90</sup> Meeting between Callaghan and Kissinger, 4/5 August 1976, JCP, Box 148.

<sup>91</sup> Nyerere to Callaghan, 14 October 1976. JCP Box 197. Ndabaningi Sithole was the founder of the militant organisation the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZAPU) Robert Mugabe was his deputy. In 1964 Sithole was imprisoned for ten years by the Smith government. In 1975, a split in the ZANU ranks led to a new oppositional group ZAPU-PF led by Mugabe who continued the guerrilla war.

saying ‘I have spoken to Tony Crosland to see what can be done [for Sithole] and he is considering the matter’.<sup>92</sup> However, when Nyerere showed a preference for Crosland as Chairman in place of Richard, Callaghan replied that ‘we think his appearance would confirm the entirely unwarranted criticism of Mr. Richard’s appointment’.<sup>93</sup> When Nyerere pressed for immediate majority rule citing Britain’s ‘colonial responsibility, it was Callaghan who stressed that he favoured ‘early’ majority rule as a vital part of his formula as laid before the Commons.<sup>94</sup>

Crosland had achieved a solution to the Cod War although one that was not generally popular. He met with no such success in dealing with the intractable problem of Rhodesia. He was accused by the *Guardian* of lacking a ‘coherent’ policy and of ‘diffidence’ in application to the required diplomacy. He certainly allowed Kissinger to dictate the pace of negotiations with the instrument of a Foreign Office discussion paper as a basis for a settlement. Crosland seems to have deferred to Callaghan for policy details. There were major differences between British and American perspectives on Rhodesia – the British saw no role for Smith and wanted him out. Kissinger saw him as integral to the diplomatic dialogue and settlement and Crosland had accepted this position in the initial stages of his ‘shuttle’ diplomacy. Both Kissinger and Callaghan, who had already formed a close association while Jim Callaghan was Foreign Secretary, figured prominently in the attempt to find a workable settlement.<sup>95</sup> Crosland’s role

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* Callaghan to Nyerere 23 October 1976.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Susan Crosland offered her perspective on the relationship between Callaghan and Kissinger. Callaghan ‘loved’ Kissinger and this respect was reciprocated: ‘He [Callaghan] was glad to accept Kissinger’s analysis of global dynamics. In turn, when Kissinger felt besieged in domestic politics, Callaghan calmed him down. They complimented each other. Now Anthony Crosland appeared on the scene and complicated matters’. Crosland. *Crosland*, pp. 336-337.

appeared to be largely supportive. His decision to appoint Ivor Richard to chair the Geneva Conference and not even attend the sessions may have resulted in a lost opportunity to control events.

Crosland as in so many departments demanded time to master the necessary background; unfortunately, this time was denied to him at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. He had built up *rapport* with some of the front-line Presidents for Nyerere did address his concerns to Crosland as well as Callaghan. The Geneva Conference has come to be compared unfavourably with that of Lancaster House in 1979; but the intransigence of both the Rhodesian Front delegates and those of the Patriotic Front severely impaired any progress in 1976.<sup>96</sup> Crosland was faced by a cabinet which was increasingly unwilling to involve itself in the Rhodesian issue; but he did receive support from the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool in 1976 when he announced that the Government were determined to ‘play our part in bringing to Zimbabwe a peace which is firmly rooted at long last in black majority rule and so in justice and equality’..<sup>97</sup> Palliser stressed that Crosland was given very limited time to solve the Rhodesia problem and, even though little headway was made, he had nevertheless devoted great effort and attention.<sup>98</sup> Palliser was also convinced that Crosland would have welcomed the Lancaster House Agreement, which was certainly in tune with his own approach.<sup>99</sup>

Crosland’s comments to Jim Callaghan concerning the intractability of the Cod War and Rhodesia and their possible fatal impact on his health proved prophetic.<sup>100</sup> He was working

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<sup>96</sup> An all-party constitutional conference meet in The Lancaster House in 1979 in London. It agreed a new constitution and fresh elections under a temporary British Governor and then formally brought UDI to an end.

<sup>97</sup> Anthony Crosland, *Annual Report 1976*, 30 September, p. 327.

<sup>98</sup> Palliser, Leonard, *Crosland*, p. 101.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>100</sup> See quote above.

on his Rhodesian papers minutes before a serious stroke that killed him. His wife stated that he was determined to achieve a solution ‘before I go to the Treasury’. and that a new initiative for Rhodesia was in preparation this time without the intervention of Kissinger or perhaps Callaghan.<sup>101</sup>

### Evaluation

Sir Michael Butler, a senior Foreign Office official, commented that had Crosland lived ‘.he would have been one of Britain’s great foreign secretaries’..<sup>102</sup> John Weston commented that initially Crosland considered that the intellectual ‘grist’ of the Foreign Office would be less demanding than that it had been at environment but that he began to see the complexities of the subjects. In fact, Weston considered Crosland a very good minister who red papers given to him and provided clear indications of the policy decisions which he required.<sup>103</sup> However Sir Ewan Fergusson, who was Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary (1975-78), considered that he had limited objectives in term of Britain’s contribution to international relations.

[Crosland was] a very good chairman but he was not at his most active and energetic and that his instinctive reaction was not to change things around, not to seek to change things too much and so his method as chairman was essentially to see how to get through the meeting effectively not to create a new world.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Crosland, *Crosland*, p.386.

<sup>102</sup> D Leonard, ‘What would Tony Crosland make of New Labour’, *Guardian* 17 February, 2002. Michael Butler was Assistant Under Secretary with responsibilities for the European Community (1974-76) and Deputy Under Secretary (1976-79)

<sup>103</sup> John Weston, *British Diplomatic Oral History Project.1998-2001*.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, Sir Ewan Fergusson interviewed by John Hudson, 2 December 1998.

To a certain extent Marcia Falkender recognised that Crosland was not comfortable in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and unable to ‘show his true worth’ for

The Foreign Office is a considerable strain with its enormous workload, the wide spectrum of issues involved, the number of people to be seen, visits to be made, the continuous moving around and the cruel demands it makes on personal lives <sup>105</sup>

Falkender considered that Crosland was ‘emotionally and temperamentally’ more suited to the Treasury and that his failure to achieve promotion to this office hampered his potential candidature as a future leader of the Labour Party.<sup>106</sup>

In terms of conducting a foreign policy on ethical grounds, there were elements in the two major issues Crosland managed. In his attempt to resolve the crisis over the Cod War, Crosland accepted the basis to the claim of the Icelandic government even though this would restrict the activities of British trawlers and drew criticism from the press. However, this policy was a pragmatic solution as well for Britain was no longer in a position both financially and militarily to enforce her traditional rights and interests. Crosland took the broader view that the security of the area was a factor which should take precedent and that the interests of the wider community were also at stake.

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<sup>105</sup> Marcia Falkender, *Downing Street in Perspective* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983), p. 244. Marcia Falkender was private secretary and then Head of Political Office to Harold Wilson as Prime Minister between 1964 and 1976.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Crosland's approach to Rhodesia reflected more a concern that Britain should avoid expensive involvement than a passionate commitment to the achievement of 'justice and equality' for the black population. Callaghan had laid down the details of a settlement and Crosland's policy was to ensure that any attempt by Kissinger to come to an agreement with Smith was still grounded on these. In this he had prevailed. The failure of the Geneva Conference was more a product of the intransigence of both sides rather than his management. Crosland was to take responsibility for this although he was preparing to reopen the conference in 1977. Owen's attempt met with success for he benefited from Smith's deteriorating position.

Just as Crosland's revisionism reflected the changes in society and the necessary response by the Labour Party to these, so he seems to have accepted that Britain's role in international relations could no longer be based on a unilateral approach to further her interests. He promoted a more collaborative approach to problems confronted by the international community and this may have become his signature policy if he had lived to continue his work at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

## Chapter Six – Conclusion

At the 1997 Crosland memorial meeting in London several of his erstwhile colleagues gave an assessment of his record as a minister. It was the first significant appraisal of his performance in office. The discussion of his contribution to the evolution of socialist thought had become the main focus of studies on Crosland. This thesis has attempted to rebalance this consideration of his ministerial career in the light of substantial archival material and recent research. The criteria for assessment provided by Marsh, Richards and Smith offers an appropriate model for considering the ministerial record of Crosland.<sup>1</sup>

As with most newly appointed ministers, much of on-going policy presented to a new minister by officials is accepted and sustained and momentum maintained. Crosland was no exception in this regard; but he did attempt policy initiation and when he became convinced of a change of direction for the department's agenda following his own study of issues and his passionate commitment to an objective, he would not be open to persuasion and would confront perceived hostility from his civil servants. Very rarely could he be described as a 'mandarin minister' - his premature announcement of a programme of polytechnics in April 1965 under pressure from his senior civil servant was an example of a minister led by departmental *dictat*; but he ensured that this would never happen again. When he was presented with the plan for the expansion of Stansted, he resolutely rejected this to the consternation of his civil servants. He provided executive leadership for the departments to which he was appointed but this leadership was less energetic and forceful towards the end of his career and his management of the Rhodesian crisis was less decisive than required. Failing health may have been a factor here.

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<sup>1</sup> See introduction.



In terms of policy setting and initiation, a distinction can be drawn between his first two appointments 1964-1967 and those which followed. Both at the DEA and the DES Crosland had both the technical expertise and moral and philosophical commitment and this was reflected in his record. His appointment to the departments that followed was accompanied by an initial lack enthusiasm and admission of a lack of confidence in his knowledge. Ministers rarely have the luxury of selecting the departments they relish and to which they feel committed. Crosland often expressed his unsuitability for appointments after 1967; but managed to impress especially at the Board of Trade and the Department of the Environment.

At the DEA although he was not the Cabinet lead, his economic knowledge enabled him to suggest a variety of economic tools and instruments to improve productivity and enhance exports. However, he failed to convince his department on the issue of a 'freeze' on earnings and wages and the cabinet hierarchy consistently rejected his advocacy of 'devaluation'. This, for Crosland, was the solution to the poor performance of the national economy.

In terms of policy setting at the Department of Education and Science, Crosland found that the agenda had been laid by the previous ministerial incumbent and his function was to maintain the impetus already established. The drive to the comprehensive model was a cause close to his heart. Crosland believed that selection in education whether in the state or private sectors was a major factor in the denial of equality of opportunity in society in general. Appointment to the department of education in 1965 gave him the power to advance the cause of equality a fundamental principle in his philosophy of socialism. The abolition of selection at eleven and the promotion of comprehensive education in place of grammar schools had begun under the previous minister Michael Stewart and a formula providing LEAs with instructions for reorganization. Crosland accelerated this process and dealt vigorously with any authorities, Labour as well as Conservative that attempted to dilute the process with

reorganization plans that did not accord with the aims of the department's objectives. Crosland had hoped to 'destroy every fucking grammar school' under the jurisdiction of the DES. This was not achieved during his tenure of office (and many authorities have continued to retain grammar schools) but he had provided the 'impetus' to reform that he considered a feasible target for any minister of state. Crosland had provided the essential leadership in this process. However, he was served by very experienced and committed departmental civil servants who ensured the successful progress of reorganization between 1965 and 1967.

Crosland's determination to confront elitism in the education system which he argued prevented the establishment of a society based on the principle of equality, led him to reform the delivery of higher education. He was not originally an advocate of a dual system of higher education and allowed senior civil servants to steer him in a direction for which he was not adequately prepared. This was a rare occasion when he had failed to undertake a thorough scrutiny of the factual background to such a reform. Crosland became convinced of the necessity of such institutions which provided a broader, innovative and vocational education and one which was removed from the essentially elitist academic world of the universities. Crosland was charged by contemporaries of inconsistency in the creation of segregation in the sector of higher education while destroying it in secondary education.

This charge also extended to his failure to deal with the existence of private education. This would prove to be a more difficult area to reform. There was a reluctance in Cabinet to tackle this institution even though some in the Labour party saw this sector as representing the essence of privilege and elitism. Crosland was aware of the financial implications of thorough reform and his only action was to meet the basic obligation of the manifesto of 1964 and establish a commission to examine these schools and the various options for their reform. Crosland had in the opinion of some of the left of the party avoided tackling this issue for practical reasons

At the Board of Trade Crosland was able to have some impact on the economic development of key areas of the economy by policy selection - namely a restructured textile industry in the North West - and an innovative policy of establishing an aluminium industry in areas of industrial decline. The ethos was one of a business-driven agenda. And this was recognised by the business community. He may have won over the industrialists but his relationship with his European counterparts was not harmonious. British interests appeared to be prioritised over those of Norway. A protectionist tone was identified in British policy. Crosland favoured free trade in international commerce but as President of the Board of Trade he resorted to a more pragmatic approach affording a measure of protection to the British textile industry even though this involved an increased tariff on goods from the Commonwealth countries. Again, he was determined to provide preferential financial treatment to the embryonic aluminum industry a project he had personally encouraged and thereby facing criticism from Norway an EFTA member and a major aluminum producer. At the DEA he had announced to the European Council of EFTA a surcharge on imported goods, a measure considered essential if Britain's deficit was to be addressed but predictably unpopular with Britain's trading partners.

The Department of the Environment provided Crosland with opportunities for implementing policies based upon a socialist agenda. This department was an amalgam of two key areas - housing and transport political issues upon which Crosland had written passionately. Crosland displayed considerable leadership in his involvement in the committees that were concerned with the housing review. Socialist measures were at the heart of the programme of reforms which he favoured: bringing development land under council control; instituting a scheme of fair rents and preventing the destruction of traditional communities. These would ensure improved living standards for the working classes in particular. Attempts at the nationalization of development land have been revisited by several Labour governments;

but the obstacles have proved to be formidable and Crosland's plans were as unrealistic as all previous schemes.

A weakness of Crosland was his simplistic interpretation of issues such as transport and often his judgement was impaired by his insistence that socialist principles should dictate the basis of any findings. Crosland was determined to place the interests of working people as the foundation to the DOE's Transport Review. He argued for subsidies to be directed towards public transport at the expense of the car owner and considered that motorway construction would benefit predominately car users and that such funding should be channelled to transport for the working-classes. He considered that rail usage enabled the affluent commuter to live outside metropolitan areas and therefore should be denied extra assistance in the form of a government subsidy.

A criticism of Crosland was that he was unable to carry through decisions and failed to complete measures which he had initiated. Barbara Castle, not an admirer, was particular critical of his performance as a Minister and his inability to bring matters to a conclusion often citing his 'procrastination' in Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> Denis Healey, a friend since Oxford days, stated that Crosland had a habit of 'evading responsibility' when confronted in Cabinet.<sup>3</sup> If some of his Cabinet colleagues considered that he displayed a failure to hold his position on issues under discussion, such fragility was not evident in departmental terms. Although he would only

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<sup>2</sup> 'Tony the indecisive once again', Barbara Castle,' *The Castle Diaries. 1974-76* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1980), 4April 1974, p.68. And again, 'I bet Tony C has shot his usual temporising bolt and will climb down next time;' Castle diaries, 15 October 1975, p.522.

<sup>3</sup> Denis Healey, '*The Time of My Life*', (London, Penguin, 1990), p.457. Comparing Crosland to Roy Jenkins Healey also wrote that Crosland 'lacked Roy's determination ...and sometimes used an offhand flippancy as a means of disguising his views'. *Ibid.*

commit to a decision after intense examination of the necessary background to an issue, his civil servants acknowledged and came to admire the intellectual depth which underpinned his chosen course of action. He could not be accused of manipulation by his departmental officials although his premature speech at Woolwich was an error which he rarely committed again. His decision to reopen the Stansted case illustrated his determination to act independently even when confronted with a united front from his civil servants in the Board of Trade.

In terms of international politics he appears to have placed British interests subordinate to those of the cause of international peace when required. He brought the escalating dispute with Iceland over cod fishing to an equitable conclusion although this was not in the interests of the British fishing industry. He was unable to bring the same decisiveness to the more intractable matter of Rhodesia a successful solution to which had evaded most of those detailed to take responsibility since the 1960s. Crosland was restricted in his actions by the intervention of Callaghan and Kissinger although he did show a lack of firmness when confronting African political tactics in the discussions in Geneva.

Marsh, Richards and Smith have commented that since the 1960s ministers have acquired another role – overseeing the department's relations with interests groups, the public and the media. This was not as significant during Crosland's career as for subsequent governments; but it was an additional feature of a cabinet minister responsibilities. It has been noted that Crosland was not at his best when dealing with professional bodies. Although teachers unions were in favour of the abolition of selection at eleven years, he displayed an antagonism to those who supported the grammar schools. Educationalists considered that he should have been more proscriptive and uncompromising when issuing circular 10/65. He rarely came into contact with LEAs during the process of the submission of plans for comprehensive reorganization for this was left to his department officials; but he was willing to confront those who appeared recalcitrant to the departments aims. He was viewed by

committed environmentalists as unsympathetic to their cause. Crosland was not a high profile politician in the public's mind as were some of his colleagues and he was often portrayed in graphic representation in the press as a marginal figure alongside other cabinet ministers. Tony Benn was far more adept at capturing the support of the public – Crosland was a more abrasive character in public and this did not endear him to various interest groups. However, he was prepared to provide lengthy interviews with the press and both broadsheet and tabloid recognized the intellectual strength of his arguments and the underlying rationality behind his decisions.

In terms of his ministerial legacy, above all, he is still perceived amongst the popular press as the destroyer of the grammar school and educational selection although, as discussed earlier, the advocates of comprehensives both in the 1970s and more recently, regard his contribution as of less significance than ministers and educationalists before him. His dual system of higher education was overturned in the 1990s with the expansion of universities; but his espousal of broader based and vocational courses has become integral to education in all higher institutions. Crosland considered the issue of the status of the independent sector in education as 'insoluble' and attempts at major reform have never progressed beyond the report of his royal commission established in 1966. His attempt to penalise car owners and support public transport has gained some traction in London. Stansted remains in a supporting role to Heathrow and Gatwick as Crosland envisaged. The textile industry did not recover in Lancashire to the extent that it had existed before the war in spite of his measures; but Britain did acquire a growing aluminum industry much to his credit. Crosland was prescient in his opposition to the sale of council houses although he was not able to prevent the rapid erosion of the stock of public property but successive governments.

Crosland had limited time to establish his own signature in the conduct of foreign policy and his reputation in attempting to resolve the crisis in Rhodesia has suffered compared to the

success enjoyed by those who followed him in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. To some extent the reverse was true in the rapid resolution of the dispute with Iceland although subsequent generations of fishermen would have a different view and the demise of this industry would be a factor in the vote in June 2016 supporting Britain's exit from the European Community. The desire to regain control over fishing grounds surrendered in 1976 by Crosland and the Labour government was undoubtedly a powerful motive for many in the Referendum.

‘All political lives, unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure because that is the nature of politics and human affairs’.. Enoch Powel's summative statement on political careers offers a useful means of viewing the course and achievements of Crosland's ministerial career. Crosland committed himself to the efficient discharge of all of the roles assigned to him and his contribution to departmental work often went beyond providing ‘impetus’ to the reforms or departmental business he inherited. There seems to be general agreement amongst his civil servants that he ‘added value’ to the business of the departments to which he was appointed. Crosland considered that his time at the DOE did not allow him the opportunity of fulfilling the tasks which this expanded department required.

In terms of his ambition for cabinet advancement he had hoped to become chancellor – but this role was denied him on several occasions and was a constant disappointment especially as his colleagues and contemporaries - Callaghan, Jenkins and Healey - were promoted above him. Crosland was the foremost economist of his generation as recognized by his contemporaries and yet he was unable to steer the nation's economy on the lines which he considered necessary. His potential for even greater advancement to the leadership of the party was limited by a failure to engage and lobby supporters and an inability to transmit his desire for this goal. He may have been another ‘lost leader’ of the Labour movement as seen by some; but that opportunity, if it existed at all, had probably passed by the time he became Foreign Secretary. Jim Callaghan considered it a possibility even in 1976 for strong leadership of the

centre right of the party was needed. Crosland's sudden death has led to speculation of future achievements; but, at the age of fifty-eight, this could not be regarded as 'midstream'. He had begun to enjoy the new challenges he faced at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office although Crosland himself admitted that he was weary of office. Crosland had contemplated a career outside politics and was uniquely equipped to continue a writer or university academic. His contribution to the debate on the direction of the Labour party was relevant and his ideas have influenced much of the thinking behind New Labour and the development of the party today.



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