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McLeod, James Robert

POWER AND GOVERNMENT IN EAST LONDON

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1983

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POWER AND GOVERNMENT IN EAST LONDON

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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The Ohio State University
1983

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This work is dedicated to the memories of ROLAND FREDERICK OTT, PATRICK LOUIS OTT, and JAMES RANDOLPH REYNOLDS, whose examples taught me courage, and to the PEOPLE OF THE EAST END OF LONDON, whose lives taught me fortitude. It is also dedicated to MILDRED MARIE MCLEOD, whose life has taught me to understand and appreciate both courage and fortitude.
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INTRODUCTION

The origin of political anthropology as a separate discipline can be traced to the publication of *African Political Systems* in 1940. In the preface to that volume, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown put forward the first attempt at a cross-cultural definition of politics. He defined politics as "...that aspect of the total organization (of society) which is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of physical force" (Radcliffe-Brown 1940: xxiii). This definition has been justly criticized by many authors for depending altogether too completely on the presence of coercive force as the sole aspect of "the political." As John Middleton showed in his study of the Lugbara (1965), a dependence on force requires one to conclude that segmentary lineage systems have "no politics," when in fact lineage politics are a very real force within that system. The sanctions for political action are mystical rather than physical, but real nonetheless.

Two alternative views of the political have been offered as cross-culturally applicable. One view, following M.G. Smith and Marc Swartz, holds that politics is that aspect of society concerned with the implementation of public goals. Smith (1956) stated that government action deals with the ways in which public affairs are directed and managed, and following his lead, Swartz advanced the view that:

Wherever there are activities relating to the formulation and implementation of public goals and/or events having to do with the distribution and/or use
of public power, these activities and events will be considered political whether or not they occur within or have relevance to any sort of governmental structure (1969: 2).

Swartz goes on to point out that the notion of public goals should replace the idea of "structures" in political research with the idea of allowing a processual analysis of political systems rather than static descriptions, which he equates with the structural-functional approach. He notes:

The structuralist view...does direct investigation away from the activity centered around public goals outside (and sometimes public goals are not only outside of but also violently opposed to) the ongoing structure and its distribution of authority. Thus, it seems to me that a goal centered view of politics comprehends what is worthwhile in a structure-centered view and at the same time draws attention to crucial sorts of activity not included in that view (1969: 4).

The second alternative to Radcliffe-Brown and the structuralists was outlined by David Easton in the article "Political Anthropology." In this article, he provides a definition of the political which relies on the notion of decision making. He writes:

I shall confine the ideal of political system to those activities more or less directly related to the making of binding decisions for a society and its major subdivisions (1959: 227).

Both views, that of public goals and of binding decisions, share in the realization that many sorts of institutions in society are able to make decisions and have public goals. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts,
church groups, and even departments of anthropology, have public goals and make binding decisions. The key in my view, however, of the governmental aspect of politics is the ability to enforce these decisions legitimately. This is both the structure and the process of governing. What differentiates a Mafia wiretap from a government wiretap is the notion that the former is illegitimate while the latter is legitimate. By enforcement in this sense, I do not mean the simple use of physical force, nor am I endorsing Radcliffe-Brown's definition. Coercive force is the final means available to many governmental systems for the enforcement of decisions, but it is not the only such means of enforcement. In complex societies, there are many avenues of enforcement open to the government before physical force is invoked. Specifically, the ability to control public funds and their disposition is a critical key to political power in these systems, and the key to government.

Nor is this ability to enforce decisions without recourse to the actual use of physical force limited to complex societies. The debate between Frederick Barth (1959) and T. Asad (1972) over the interpretation of Barth's data on the Pathans is essentially a debate over the nature of enforcement and legitimacy. While Barth argues for his game theory, Asad notes:

...his analysis is permeated with notions of consent in at least three different senses: 1) in the sense of individual decisions (by each would-be follower or ally or chief) concerning transactions with political implications—where there is an awareness of alternatives, the ability to choose and to make a good choice; 2) in the sense of the peasants recognition that the activity of a sovereign authority (the landowners) is necessary for the maintenance of life and security—and the acceptance of the political obligation that
this recognition implies; 3) in the sense of all agreeing to the rules of the game—Pakhtuns in their conduct of political struggle, and everyone in his attempt to maximise his individual position (1972: 84).

But what are the rules of the game in this situation? Barth argues that all Pathans, whether landowners or peasants, are competitive players in the game, and this is precisely the sense in which he argues the peasants have power within the system. The peasants have power because they can withhold their allegiances from the Pakhtuns, the landowners, and in this sense can be seen to be bargaining throughout the political process. Barth says:

Each separate villager clearly sees himself as exercising a choice. Either he may make every possible contract with one leader and so to speak "join his island." Or he may establish no contract with any leader, and thus remain entirely outside the different fields of authority. Both alternatives have readily apparent disadvantages and advantages. In the former, the villager makes himself subject to the whims of the leader but profits materially and gains protection. In the latter he remains free of external control at the price of considerable material discomfort, and must also manage without any protection against aggression (1959: 69).

The notion is that the peasants consent and make choices about their participation in the political process. However, as Asad points out "Most of the land in Swat valley (and the best land too) is owned by the Yusufzai minority. Landlords collect from three quarters to four fifths of the gross crop in rent from their tenants" (1972: 84). Can the notion of consent be applied to a system in which rent constitutes
the lion's share of the peasants' production? The system is enforced, in my terms, by this extraction of this fund of rent. It is seen as legitimate because it is paid, rather than being paid because it is legitimate. Landlords demand this fund of rent, they do not ask for it. The phenomenon of political control is enforced ultimately by the realization among the peasants that if the rent is not paid, they face real physical threats from the other retainers working for the landlord. In this sense, the whole notion that there is a parity between the landlords and the peasants in terms of bargaining is a misinterpretation of the systematics of the economy. The only alternative that the peasant has in this context is to seek another patron, but this alternative hardly represents a choice. Barth, however, contends:

The striking feature of the political organization of Swat is the emphasis of free choice and contract which is fundamental to the organization on lower levels, and also characterized the wider political alignments. Thus the political organization does not derive directly from any one of the frameworks previously described; it is a distinctive framework of its own, based on a series of explicitly political contracts and alliances (1959: 104).

It seems clear to me that these relationships represent a choice only in the sense that peasants can make them or starve. Since feasting and the flow of gifts from the landlords to the peasants are major means by which Pakhtuns derive authority, Barth argues that the peasants manipulate the Pakhtuns by their manipulation of alliances. However, I fully agree with Asad when he observes:

...in a society where a small group of landowners owns most of the land, where all subsistence is ultimately based on agriculture,
where there is high population density, where most non-landowners are barely above subsistence level, the landlord's dominant position is not problematic. The Pakhtun maintains his position by virtue of his control of scarce land, not by cajoling the landless into accepting his authority.

...he (the Pakhtun) acquires his political authority by virtue of his membership in a politically dominant class not by persuading freely consenting individuals to become his political followers. The fact that the landless greatly outnumber the landowners is not a source of weakness but of strength in the latter's position. The landlords do not need to worry about how to make themselves indispensable to the landless: it is the latter who must worry about making themselves acceptable to the landlords (1972: 85).

It should be pointed out that this analysis of the Pathan material also raises serious questions about the "public goals" approach. Who is setting public goals in the Pathan case, and who is following them? What is "public" about the goals of the Pakhtun? Is the fact that more than one person is involved in clientage between the Pakhtun and the peasant the criterion that determines its "publicity?" In my view, the aspect of these behaviors among the Pathans which make them "political" is the fact that they are enforceable through the control of the fund of rent by the Pakhtuns, not the fact that there are public goals. What goals do the peasants and the Pakhtuns share? The peasants want food and protection, while the landlords want control of land and power. To my mind, these are far too different to be called "public goals." The only level at which these are merged is the level of political control, and this is something quite different from Swartz' notion.
Nor is the debate between Barth and Asad the only place in the literature of political anthropology where enforcement of decisions is the real issue. Meyer Fortes (1940) study of the Tallensi was later critiqued in an article by Peter Worsley (1956). In Fortes' study, he noted that the political processes of the Tallensi were as much symbolic and ideational as they were anything else. In fact, in his study of both the chiefs and the tendaans, force was only used as a last resort in the enforcement of binding decisions. Specifically, he contended that it was the belief system of the Tallensi which underpinned the political process, a belief system predicated on the influence of the ancestors in the daily affairs of the people. Kinship, custodianship of the lineage shrine, sacrifices to the earth at the tendaan's shrine, and a general belief about the principles of political action mirroring kinship principles are all other types of political support active in the Tallensi case.

Fortes analysis of the Tallensi was a structural-functional attempt to describe a system of power in action where there was no formalized state. The myths and beliefs of the Tallensi form a structural charter, in Fortes' view, which act as a template for both ideas and action. The "structure," if you will, are the beliefs he calls "axiomatic" norms for the culture as a whole, while the "function" is the means by which these norms are made palpable and tangible to those within the system. For example, there is no more terrible offense in this culture than the "spilling of blood in strife"—it is an offense both against the ancestors, who have forbidden it in the mythical charter, and an equally great offense against the spirits of the earth, over whom the tendaans have
stewardship. If the social balance is to be restored, the proper sacrifices must be made in both quarters and social restitution paid to the lineage of the injured party. What Fortes attempted to do was to demonstrate where such behavior came from and how it was justified.

I agree with Swartz here that one of the major problems of this type of functionalism is that it brings a "recipe" approach to the study of political action. All one needs to do is to determine the charter underlying the social structure, then to outline the structure in terms of clans, lineages, shrines, and so on, and the cycle is complete. In that case, we come to an analysis of political action. What we really come to, however, is something quite different, i.e., a description of what political action should be if all things remain equal within the political and social system. Of course, things do not remain equal, and this process of change is precisely the dimension which structural-functionalists cannot analyze. The best they can do is to describe the social system as it should operate and then to note changes as "variations from the norm." This is precisely what happened to Fortes in terms of the power of the lineage in Tale society.

In the traditional system, the lineage kpeem is the senior male of the agnatic lineage group. His authority to enforce proper political behavior was based primarily on his ability to curse younger members of his lineage and to prevent them from visiting the ancestral shrine and making sacrifices. This ability to sacrifice was critical within the Tale system, as proper sacrifices insured fertility, successful crops, and health. The kpeem also controlled the distribution of land and labour within the lineage as well as harvest distribution. But Worsley
(1956) in his reevaluation of the kinship system of the Tallensi contended that this control of the economic means of production, not the belief system, which maintains the "integration" of Tallensi society as a whole. Worsley went on to discount the importance of kinship beliefs, ancestor cults, or earth cults in Tale life. He proved this by examining the effects which wage labour have had on this system, using Fortes' own data to illustrate the point. Once young people had a separate source of income independent of the power of the kpeem, the other associated belief system turns out not to be axiomatic at all, and Fortes' "moral imperative" disappears for a few shillings a week. This points up my contention that the political must be concerned with those decisions and goals which are enforceable in society, for without that aspect of enforcement, there is no power aspect to the political in society. To put it another way, an unenforceable decision or goal is neither a real decision or a real goal, but simply a desire or wish.

An attempt to get around all of these problems has been the "game theory" already mentioned for Barth. Another "game theorist" is F.G. Bailey, who tells us, "...think of politics as a competitive game" (1969). The idea is that this analogy gives us a processual model in and of itself and thus gets around the problem of dividing up structures and functions. But even here, the rules for determining what to analyze seem very similar to the structural method. For example, his use of the terms political field, political arena, and political team, are attempts to give us a cross-cultural means of comparative political analysis. He goes even further by telling us to look for the following kinds of processes: 1) eligibility, 2) prizes, 3) umpiring and refereeing, and
fair vs. unfair rules. The idea is that this game analogy allows comparison without prejudice. But even Bailey has raised a question which he cannot answer. He contends that values create and regulate political competition, and that when we differentiate political competition from a free for all, we are discussing the impact of shared values. However, this is precisely the same problem we faced with Fortes, for if values create and regulate politics, they are the axiomatic beliefs which Fortes specified.

I could not find these values in my research, at least not in the sense that they linked the political elite with the members of the political community. I also could not find the supposed bargaining which characterizes Barth's work. The rules of the political game in the East End of London are purely and simply the rules of the Labour Party, and if one is to participate in that process, one must join the Labour Party. The idea that some kind of a balance exists between the mass of people of East London and the Party is a complete fiction, as is the notion that the Party and the people are linked at some level of consistent political values. In Asad's terms, people make few choices about whether or not they participate in the political system; when they pay their rent and rates, they provide the "fund of rent" for those who control the political process. It is true that unlike the Pathan case, one can choose to join the Labour Party if one is so inclined, while one cannot simply decide to become a Pakhtun overnight.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that, in my view, people live in spite of political processes, and not because of them. This, I think, is the basic problem with many of the anthropological studies of power
because these studies assume that if people do not like a regime, they can simply refuse to participate. This is simply not the case. No one in East London has a choice about whether or not they pay rent and rates, nor do they have any choice about which Party is going to be in power to administer the taxes which they pay. "People know it's a Labour borough," but they know that because the Labour Party has the power to enforce decisions on the people who live there, whether that decision is to build high rise tower blocks, construct a tourist hotel, travel to Europe on public funds, or provide vital social services for the elderly. But the people of the area do not pay for these services voluntarily, they are mandated by the Council and the law of the land. Of course, one can argue that revolution is always a possibility, but how probable is it? This again brings up my contention that people live in spite of politics and politicians, not because of them. Values, to the extent that they are shared at all in cultural systems, are only shared among the elite, and the majority are simply living their lives, trying to get by as best they can. It is the mandated power of enforcement of legitimate public decisions that determines government in any society, but it is the aspect of enforcement which is most critical in my view. In East London, this enforcement takes many forms, from withholding funds from groups which are against the Council, to actions against Labour Party members who violate Party rules. Again, it is my view that people only pay taxes in East London (or anywhere else for that matter) because they realize that enforcement is both possible and likely if they refuse. The idea that they do so out of some knowledge of systems of shared values is living in what the British call "cloud cuckoo land."
It is also clear to me that the idea of political values acting as axioms which integrate most political systems needs serious revision. Force is only one kind of social support in a political system, but so are values. Other important factors in the East End are common housing, common poverty, common types of employment, and common speech. If you abstract these facts into a kind of value system, it would seem to me necessary to differentiate those values from the value of socialism in Great Britain. Certainly, the borough I studied was considered a socialist borough. But is it really? Even the members of the political elite, the Labour Party, could not agree on what socialism was or how it related to the ideology of the Labour Party.

In the East End, the idea that an integrated value system orders the real polity constitutes what Jacques Ellul has termed "the political illusion." The attitudes and beliefs of people in the East End are the result of their economic conditions, not some abstract conception of how society should be organized. They know that the Labour Party is the party for them because it is the only party that will build housing they can afford to live in. I will not argue with the idea that building public housing is a different "value" from that of building privately owned homes, but the value is the result of the fact that people are too poor to afford their own homes, not the result of their belief in public housing. Labour political power is the result of their control of basic human services, such as housing, not their commitment to some abstract system of political values. That is not to say that the Labour Party is not committed at some level to an abstract system of values, but rather to emphasize that that these abstractions are not the primary source of
political support in the East End of London. The primary source of these values is the subordinate status that people in the East End of London recognize as their position within the class structure of their culture. The "common values" which give the Labour Party its overwhelming majorities at election time have their genesis in the fact that, by any measure, Thameside is one of the poorest areas in the United Kingdom. This poverty is made even more apparent and desperate by the fact that the other end of London, the West End and the City, are known for their wealth and opulence. This "relative deprivation" is a key source of their enmity for the other classes. But in this case, it is their economic position rather than any system of values or beliefs, that is the causative agent in their political behavior.

Of course, there are Conservatives in Thameside, there are Liberals (some of whom even sit on the present council), there are Communists, and there are members of the National Front. Even so, they represent such a tiny minority of the electorate that the dynamics of control in the East End are totally the dynamics of decision making within the Labour Party.

I am not here arguing that values and beliefs do not exist, but only that there is no consistent system of values in the East End which empowers the Labour Party with its political mandate. The closest thing to a consistent value for the Labour Party elite and the mass of people in East London is the perception that the Labour Party is "the party of the working man," or that the Labour Party "will do what is best for the working person in Britain." The fact that this conception of what the Labour Party represents is not part of a consistent system of values
is revealed by the chaos now confronting the Labour Party every time it meets in Blackpool, as well as the kinds of support that has arisen for the new Social Democratic Party. The presumed value basis, which was assumed to be consistent, is breaking apart at the seams.

In this sense, I faced a problem similar to that of Edmund Leach (1968) in his study of the Kachin, and that faced by Raymond Firth (1968) in his study of the Tikopia. In both cases, they found that the idea of the "consistent mythical charter" posited by Bronislaw Malinowski (1948) that underlies and guides social behavior was an idea inconsistent with their fieldwork data. In order for myths or tales in traditional society to guide social action, Leach argued, they must be consistent at the level of information and action. I would argue the same thing for the notion of a "value system" in that if these values act as either public goals or as guides to correct political behavior, they should be consistent throughout the system. The difficulty Leach encountered in his fieldwork was that the mythological system of the Kachin was not internally consistent, but varied widely according to who happened to be telling the tale. He was also reacting to those ethnographers who had disposed of contrasting modes of the same tale by choosing one mode as the "correct" tale and relegating all other versions to the status of incorrect translations and the like (Leach 1968: 265). Leach makes the point that all versions are correct insofar as they each justify a particular claim to status or authority. He points out:

A good example of this kind of adaptation is to be seen in the two published versions of the story of the origin of the Nsu nat—the spirit of jealousy—The Kachin stereotype
of a jealousy situation is the relation between elder and younger brother. Two Kachin ethnographers, Hanson and Gilhodes, recount very nearly the same myth, but one is the reverse of the other. In Gilhodes' story the eldest brother is jealous of the younger brother, who is favoured by the nats. In the end the elder brother is drowned in a coffin he has prepared for the younger brother and the younger brother lives on to become a rich chief. In Hanson's story the roles are reversed and the younger brother, having long defrauded the elder, is finally drowned in the coffin he has prepared for his elder brother.

Neither of these versions can be said to be more correct than the other. It is simply that where bad blood exists between an elder and a younger brother either party may suspect the other of bringing on misfortune by jealous thought; either party may then make an offering to the Nsun nat. If the younger brother makes the offering, Gilhodes version will figure as the mythical sanction; if the elder brother makes the offering Hanson's version will serve the same purpose. The bard-priest (dumsa) will adapt his stories to suit the audience which hires him (Leach 1968: 266).

Firth notes a similar phenomenon among the Tikopia; the traditional tales ascribe one set of statuses to the lineages which compose the Tikopian culture, while the contemporary positions of the lineages differs significantly from the traditional basis. He states:

It will be seen at once that there is no close coincidence between the status ratings of the lineages—or their elders—in modern socio-ritual terms, and the status rating of the origins with which they are credited. In Tikopia theory, priority of origins gives status and power, but the existing social structure
is not closely reflected in those terms (1968: 178).

Firth goes on to show that traditional tales of the Tikopia are as often used to support factions within that society as they are to integrate the society into a singular functional whole. Malinowski's mythical charter becomes the basis for conflict and division rather than the basis for integration and solidarity. Firth observes:

...with more cogency I think it can be argued indeed that very often traditional tales are divisive and not unitive for the society at large, and that social integration is accomplished by the practical requirements of economic and social cooperation, such as are involved in marriage, or by the political requirements of obedience to authority (1968: 175).

The primary source of "...the political requirements of obedience to authority" in Thameside is the low economic status imposed upon the people of the East End by the wider society of Great Britain. The political "myth" in this case is the appeal to be the party which best represents that group of people best identified as the "working class." But the relationship between working class values and the values of the ideologies of the various parties is not one of consistency but rather one of inconsistency. In fact, many people within the Labour Party see their political role as that of the vanguard of the working classes, as the elite who represent the values which the working class should have, rather than the values they do have. This inconsistency is pronounced by the fact that the Labour Party sees itself as the Party which has a mandate to create socialism in Great Britain, when the people of the East End do not necessarily see socialism as a worthwhile
public goal. For that matter, the rise of the Social Democrats and Roy Jenkins, considered by many in the Labour Party to be a "closet capitalist," demonstrates that the idea that the values of the working classes in Britain and the values of the Labour Party are not part of a consistent system of political values. What I am interested in is not so much the ways in which these political values manipulate people, but rather in the ways in which people manipulate these political values. This is, perhaps, a subtle difference, but an important one. I am not arguing that the study of political culture is unimportant or even less, unnecessary. What I am arguing is that a study of political culture which is more directed to the investigation of how values are used by the members of any political community is a more important focus than the study of how they "support" that political system. Force and belief form the poles for the dimension of political obedience in any society, but to argue that political legitimacy is the direct result of beliefs in abstractions called values is to ignore the dimension of enforcement.

In Thameside, the enforcers of political values and the implementers of public goals are the members of the Labour Party. These party members compose the political elite in this community. By elite in this sense, I am thinking specifically of S.P. Nadel's formulation:

...elites, as here understood, must have some degree of corporateness, group character, and exclusiveness. There must be barriers to admission. The people said to form an elite must be aware of their preeminent position and all that it entails as something which they enjoy jointly and which sets them off from other people; which means, they must form a more or less
self conscious unit within the society, with its particular entitlements, duties, and rules of conduct in general. Above all, the preeminent position must be regarded by the members of the elite, as well as the rest of the society as belonging to the former not fortuitously, because of some possession, experience, or interest they happen to share, but by right, a corporate right which is not within the reach of everyone (1956: 415).

It is possible to argue that membership of the Labour Party is ideally open to everyone in the London Borough of Thameside, and thus the Labour Party does not constitute an elite group. However, when the actual organization of the Thameside Labour Party is analyzed, the nature and reality of its status as an elite can be clearly shown. The lower levels of Party membership by no means confer the kinds of power and authority which the higher levels of Party confer, and these higher levels are occupied by interlocking elite groups which control the Council, the Party, and the borough itself, as well as recruitment to those higher levels. They possess these authorities because they are perceived as the holders of the working class mandate in the East End, both by the wider society and the people who decide to vote in local elections. The "political illusion" in Thameside is the notion that the values of the working class and the values of power distribution within the Labour Party form a consistent system of belief.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN LONDON

One of the most surprising facts about London is just how old it is as a permanent settlement. Neolithic handaxes and kill sites have been found in Piccadilly Circus, with the disarticulated skeletons of Pleistocene fauna. The latest of these finds occurred during the sixties while the Underground was being repaired and caused great pleasure among the British public. The continuous occupation of the London area may be conveniently dated to 43 A.D. when the Romans conquered Britain under the reign of Claudius. The name London itself is the object of some controversy as to its origins, but most scholars now accept that it is derived from an old Saxon name, Londinos, which the Romans Latinized to Londinium, or the place of Londinos. Permanent urban occupation of the area dates to this era, and many survivals of the Roman occupation survive today. One of the best known of these is Roman Road in Bow, a road still in use.

In contrast to the age of the settlement itself, the history of local government in London is a relatively recent phenomenon. In fact, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in their classic work on English local government state:

During the eighteenth century, the anarchy of local autonomy was heightened by the fact that there was nothing that could be regarded, in theory or practice, as a system of local government (1963: 5).

The term local government did not even come into common use according to Julius Caesar did not conquer Britain, but only certain southern areas including London. To illustrate this and show his delight, Claudius named his son "Britannicus" in celebration of his victory.
to the Webbs, until the end of the eighteenth century, a fact which is even more startling when the range of English Imperial power is considered. In essence, Britain was governing India and the American colonies before she learned how to govern London.

The oldest system of local government of any sort in London is the ancient City of London, one square mile on the banks of the Thames directly in the heart of the present urban conurbation. While the population of the City is just over 4,000, it is the business and trade center for all of Great Britain, as well as containing the major banks (including the Bank of England, the Temple, the Law Courts, the major national newspapers) and numerous national and international corporate headquarters.

The history of London is unique in the history of English local government. It possesses the oldest royal charter, one dating back to 1068, guaranteeing the people of London special privileges within the Norman system of manorial government. By 1192, the office of the Lord Mayor of the City of London had been created and recognized by the Crown, and this office still survives today. Because of this ancient heritage, this system of local government in this square mile is separate from all other local authorities in Britain, and is subject only to the laws of Parliament. It has its own police force, separate from the Metropolitan Police who patrol the rest of London, its own tax status, and its own representative body for local affairs. As Gerald Rhodes and S.K. Ruck (1970: 12) comments:

"...by the middle of the fourteenth century a corporate body of Mayor,"
Alderman, and councilmen had been established as the forerunner of the modern Corporation of London. A striking fact about the area of the City is that it has remained almost unchanged since the time of the Norman Conquest.

It is important to note this special status for the City, because a frequent cause of confusion is the distinction between the City of London and London as an area by Americans. The student of British local government hoping to learn a great deal from the City itself about how local government processes work will be quite disappointed. The City is unique and will probably always remain so.

The rest of London, on the other hand is our main concern. The present governing body, subject to Parliamentary statutes, is the Greater London Council. There is presently an area of 622 square miles under its control and this is the home for some 6.8 million people according to the 1978 United Nations Estimates. The area is divided into some 32 boroughs, twelve of which are part of the Inner London Education authority, while the outer boroughs have authority over their own educational systems. This present governmental system was formed by the London Government Act of 1963, and became effective on April 1, 1965, when it took power from the old authority, the London County Council.

The complex political structure of London today is a recent phenomenon. While a common council can be dated to as early as 1273 for the City, outside of the City there was little organization and even less government until relatively recently. This fact has been pointed
by Rhodes and Ruck:

By the time of the first Census in 1801 the population of the City was nearly 130,000, but Westminster had over 150,000, Southwark nearly 70,000, and the remaining parts of the continuously built area over 500,000. Moreover, only the City at that date had anything which could be regarded as an effective organ of local government (1970: 12).

Twelve years earlier, in 1789, there were 152 parishes in London and the Corporation of the City. There were also more than 300 hanging offenses against the Crown, from stealing bread to cursing the King. This is even more remarkable when one considers that the London of the 1780s had a population of more than 600,000 people, all operating within a governmental system which was an extension of the manorial plan introduced by the Normans.

While a Court of Burgesses had been created by Elizabeth I to deal with certain offenses in Westminster (1585) this was the exception and not the rule. According to the Webbs, at the start of the 18th century, the parish and the manor, rather than any specialized bodies, were the local government system in London. By the time of the second census of Britain, 1811, London had more than one million people living essentially without any system of local government whatsoever, as we think of it today. However, the need for services to clean filth in the streets,* provide for public order, and punish civil offenders was as critical as it would be in any city of that size. Open sewers, robbery, and murder were the order of the day throughout the city.

*The present day colloquial term for the bathroom in Britain is 'loo.' This term originated from the French phrase "Gardez-l'eau," or "watch out for the water," which came from full chamber pots into the street.
The first real attempt at any kind of overall system of government for the metropolis was finally passed while Peel was Prime Minister in 1829. Parliament passed the Metropolitan Police Act, which called for the establishment of a local police force to handle crimes within seven miles of the City. This police force was (and still is) under the direct control of the Home Secretary, and responsible to Parliament — it had to be, as there was no other overall governmental body in London at the time. In 1835, the Municipal Corporations Act was passed, but this dealt only very indirectly with the problems of London, and it was not until 1855 that an act dealing directly with the problems of governing Greater London was finally passed. By this time (1851 census) the population was more than 2.5 million, all living without local government authority. Even the Act of 1855 did not deal directly with the problem, but provided rather with hygienic and health services which were sorely needed. Specifically, it covered sewerage, paving, drainage, cleansing, and lighting the streets for 99 of London's 152 parishes which was a major step forward. However, there was no move to introduce local democracy or local government, as the Boards of Guardians and parish members were still indirectly elected and property qualifications were required of all office holders.

Unfortunately, the Acts of 1835 and 1855 set the standard for the remainder of the century. The local government of London was dealt with piecemeal as problems got so bad that they had somehow to be resolved. The 1855 Act established the Metropolitan Board of Works, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was formed in 1866, the London School Board
in 1870, and finally, with the Local Government Act of 1888, the London County Council was created with direct elections for office. However, the London County Council's powers were very limited and it often conflicted with the Board of Works, as it was neither a county authority nor a local authority, and the range of its obligations and duties was a source of constant debate.

Modern local government did not really begin in London until 1899 with the London Government Act of 1899, which produced the "two-tier" system known today. Twenty-eight metropolitan boroughs were created, and the City of London was again acknowledged to be in its own realm. The London County Council was formalized, with the strategic planning authority powers, responsibility for baths, public amenities, and powers of rating and taxation. The piecemeal approach to London government, however continued right into the 20th century* with the passage of the Metropolitan Water Board in 1902 and the Port of London Authority in 1908. The fact is that the concept of local government in London has evolved over the past two hundred years to its present form. The notion of a single authority with powers over the whole range of government activities on the local level has never really taken hold in London. England may be the "mother of Parliaments" but London is certainly not the mother of modern local governments.

This fact can easily be demonstrated by examining colonial and early post-colonial cities such as New York in terms of local level

*Frank Smallwood's analysis made this point abundantly clear: "The changes that took place in Greater London's government after 1900 continued to follow the earlier special authority and special functional precedents" (1965: 65).
administration. In 1789, even though New York was a city of only 29,000, it was divided into seven wards, with freemen electing aldermen who sat on a Common Council. The city government consisted of a Mayor, Recorder, seven Aldermen and seven Assistant Aldermen. This government had wide powers, including providing for fire brigades, a City Watch with forty-five regular members, a militia and artillery regiment, and wide powers of taxation to support these services. In addition, by an Act of 1787, all Aldermen, the Mayor, and the Recorder were given powers as Justices of the Peace.

When these facts are compared with London, the differences are clear. The London Fire Brigade was not formed until 1866, the Metropolitan Police Act was not passed until 1829, and city wide government did not come to London until 1855. The reasons for these differences are beyond the scope of the present study, but certainly deserve further research.

Since the modern system of London local government was introduced in 1899, one of the most critical areas of investigation has been the distinction between administration and politics. While this debate in the United States dates from Woodrow Wilson's classic discussions, it is of less public concern and under less public scrutiny than it is in Great Britain. This is because the system of local government within Britain is divided into elected members and the hierarchy of bureaucrats known as local government officers. Just as Parliament has its Civil Service, the Greater London Council and each borough has an

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*For a further discussion of early New York City government, see The City of New York in 1789, by Thomas E.V. Smith (1972)
official bureaucracy created by Parliament and protected by both tradition and statute. There is a great debate in Britain about the nature of delegation of both power and authority to these officials, and the amount and kind of delegation varies enormously from borough to borough. The objective record shows that these officials have a power and superiority in local government far beyond any limitations imposed by their lack of elected status. As Michael Hill points out:

Administrators in British local government are professionals with a strong sense of their right to expect a measure of professional autonomy. Their positions are further recognized by Acts of Parliament and the Courts so that some of their duties are prescribed by law...

In other words, their positions are something more than just 'servants' of the council... local government officials are significantly more threatened by ideological politics than are civil servants (1975:215).

The results of the impact of ideology on the position of officers will be examined in later chapters. However, it is important to note here that the ways in which advice from officers is offered, and the degree to which it is followed by councillors, is in large part determined by the ideological commitment of the council whether it is Conservative, Liberal, Labour, or Communist. While this seems self-evident, it has serious consequences for the kinds of decision making which transpire at the local level. Officers are ostensibly objective in the kinds of advice they give, and their personal relations with councillors. The reality on the ground is quite another matter.

English local government takes place in an atmosphere where interest is lacking or non-existent. The simplest way to illustrate
this point is to examine voting behavior. For 1974, the Greater London
Council turnout overall was just over 30% of the electorate, while in
the borough I studied, less than one fifth (18.3%) of voters turned out
on election day for the local council elections. Nor is this year an
exception: 25.9% voted in 1971, with 5 uncontested wards, while in
1968 14.3% voted with 8 uncontested wards. The public is largely ex-
cluded from the real decision making processes, which may account for
the low voter participation. In any case, because of this exclusion,
decision making is the result of a dynamic exchange between officers
and councillors. Decisions are made by a complex system of feedback be-
tween administrators and councillors while the public is a bystander in
the process. The negotiation and jockeying of groups and lobbies char-
acteristic of American politics in big cities simply does not exist.

Meetings in local governments in Britain are divided in such a
way as to underscore this concentration of power in the hands of the
councillors and the administrators. The meetings have both public and
private parts, Parts I and II, in which the former are exercises in
public relations while the real decision making takes place during Part
II. In almost two years of research, I never saw the council vote to
allow the public (including myself) access to any of these second clos-
ed meetings, although the pretense of voting on the closure was made
at each meeting I attended* and we were then asked politely to leave.

It should be noted here that local councillors are not actually

*This made useful research extremely difficult. I was often offered
confidential information, took it, and was then blackmailed at a later
date in public for "stealing council secrets."
well disposed to the idea of public participation in real decision making. Paul Kantor summarized the findings of the Maud Commission superbly on this issue:

According to the Kaud Commission surveys, the vast majority of councillors regarded the local "public" as generally uninformed, uninterested, and irrelevant. Local councillors were asked by the Commission "How would you describe the attitude of the general public to the work of the council in this area?" In London, 65% replied that the public attitude was simply "not interested," while only thirty-three percent said it was "favorable." Nearly forty-five percent of respondents of all councils felt the opinion of the general public was either unfavorable or uninterested. Seventy-six percent of the London councillors responded that the public in their area simply does not "know enough to vote in an informed way in local elections (1974: 27).

The result of all these factors is that the issue of delegation of authority from councillors to officers is the critical feature of decision making processes in local government. While the amount of delegation may vary from borough to borough, the issue is always a paramount concern of both officers and councillors. Officers are full-time professionals while councillors are part time amateurs. Problems arise from the legitimizing mandate which the councillors achieve by the elective process, while the officers have no such elective base. In a political regime where election confers legitimacy while appointment to office simply confers power and responsibility, there is built in conflict over the simple issue of who is in charge, who should make specific decisions, and how those decisions should be made.
The key to the British system of decision making is the committee. Committees form the backbone of the decision making process at both the Greater London Council and the borough levels, with the officers from specific departments meeting with members within the committee hearing. According to Dillys Hill:

The outstanding feature of local administration in this country (U.K.) is the committee system. The full council is ultimately responsible for action taken in the authorities name, but actual administration of the separate services is done through a series of committees. In the majority of local authorities, the council meets monthly... considers the reports from various committees and directs what action is to be taken (1970: 31).

As will be explained later, even this model system is too cumbersome for the daily administration of a borough such as Thameside. Committees have been subdivided into "policy subcommittees" which are the actual locus of decision making in the authority, with a corresponding increase in the power of the members of the council leadership.

The council leadership in Thameside is unique, because of the complete nature of Labour Party control. Within the Labour Party system, tight discipline over public decision making is the rule, with discussions allowed within the Labour Party, but not in public. All members of the Labour Party form the Labour Party Group in Thameside, and at the time of my study, this was all seventy members of the council. As Kantor points out:

The structure of local English parties is modeled after their national counterparts. Party programs, formulated in the 'group' caucus, become binding on individual candidates and tight discipline is demanded on council votes; because rejecting the party whip is usually a rare event and not to be taken
lightly by Conservative or Laborite, party leaders can expect council back-benchers to follow their lead (1974: 10).

This closed nature of both the committee structures and the Party structures makes it difficult for public groups, what I have termed "intermediate groups" between the council and the electorate to participate in the decision making processes. In Columbus, Ohio, recently, groups from an area called Italian Village fought through the Council to prevent certain changes in their area. To do this, they made public presentations to the Council as a whole, and brought political pressure upon individual councillors through the indirect threat of changing or withholding their votes. These kinds of direct presentations within the English system of local government are highly exceptional, even rare, and in no sense represent bargaining with the council in the same way. In Thameside, these bargaining groups possessed little power, simply because the electoral mandate of the Labour Party was so large that the possibilities of obtaining a majority on the council which was non-Labour were extremely remote.

To sum up, the American system of local government differs in two key respects: 1) in many cities we elect key executive officials and provide them with salaries, and this is never the case in London, and 2) the public is more often involved in input to the system itself when a critical issue comes to a decision or a vote. For both these reasons, the study of the British and especially London local decision making processes involves a different focus than that used in American studies. The question Dahl investigated (1961) of pluralism vs. elite rule is
not applicable to the Thameside context. In Thameside, the answer to such a question would have to be that Labour rules; the kinds of islands of divergent political power which Dahl found in New Haven, the various "notables" simply do not exist outside of the Labour Party. This was one of the questions I wished to investigate in my original proposal for fieldwork, i.e., the extent of elite influence and pluralistic political power on the local level in London. The answer to the question became apparent in the first few months of fieldwork, and I was forced to adopt some different research questions. First, since the Labour Party rules, how does it rule? How is it structured? What is the nature of leadership in the party and who makes the majority of decisions, the rank and file or the party leadership? Secondly, I had to investigate the relationships of the elected member to the appointed official within the British system of local government. How much power can or should the elected member delegate to the administrator? What kinds of decisions should each make and how? What is the relationship between councillors and administrators in terms of their relative power and ability to influence and make decisions? These are very different questions from the pluralist-elitist debate in the United States and they demand a different kind of research. For example, I found that one of the questions administrators often asked was how much power should the elected member have when he was obviously an amateur at best and an incompetent at worst in the field of his committee? Works such as the construction of apartments, water pressures in heating systems, even the building of toilets, take the expertise of an engineer, and
no amateur, however sincere, could use political sagacity to know hydraulics. Even so, in many cases it was political acumen which had given that councillor the position of authority in the first place. Problems such as these form the backbone of the political dimension in London government and are not easily resolved, but they must be if the processes of local government in London are to be understood and not simply the formal structures created by Parliament.

Why Study Thameside? Background

My initial research problem was twofold: first, to investigate the relationship between political legitimacy and values in complex society and secondly, to test the nature and influence of elites in the processes of political decision making. The area was chosen because of its previous appearance in the literature on kinship and social organization (see Michael Young and Peter Willmott, 1964) and because the phenomenon of local government in urban Western settings is not well understood in the anthropological literature. As Anthony Leeds (1973) describes the problem:

Localities and supralocal structures enter into a variety of oppositional, cooperative, complimentary, and other types of relationship which constitute some of the most important structures of the total society, though they have been largely ignored in the literature. They require a great deal of fundamental research... (1973: 36)

In Thameside, one of the major ways in which the locality articulates with the outside world is through the functions of the Labour Party. Ronald Frankenberg in his study Communities in Britain, states:
"...it is possible without distortion for Young and Willmott to study one aspect of social life and to say nothing, for example, about politics," (1966: 194). However valid such studies might be, studies of political life in Britain from the participant-observation perspective are extremely rare. There are many excellent studies of British community and town life, including W. Williams' (1956) study of Gosforth, Frankenberg (1957) and his study of village life, Raymond Firth (1956) and his studies of kinship in East London, B.J. Jackson (1968) and the study of a working class community, and J.H. Goldthorpe, D. Lockwood, F. Bechofer, and J. Platt (1968) and their studies on the new affluence of the working class in Britain.

Beyond these studies, and problem oriented studies such as Elizabeth Bott's (1957) study of kinship and network relationships, little exists informing students of political anthropology about the nature of power and authority on the local level in urban Britain. This study of the London borough of Thameside was an attempt to provide such a study of political processes on the local level from an anthropological perspective.

In order to achieve this end, I attempted to utilize Bailey's procedure as outlined in Strategies and Spoils (1969). This includes the determination of the nature and extent of the political community and the political elite, as well. As Bailey points out, the following questions are critical to his method:

a) What political roles constitute membership of that community?
b) What other roles (political or not) qualify a man to play membership roles?
c) What are the symbols of the political community? Are they accepted by the whole population within the community?
d) Are the boundaries closed or open? If open, how is this achieved? What features in the cultural and natural environment make for an open or a closed political boundary?

(1969: 24)

Although I have since developed some reservations about the applicability of Bailey's method to my research in urban politics, his approach guided the kinds of investigations I undertook during the period from 1974-76 in Thameside. Bailey goes on to point out that "Exactly the same questions as those listed above may be asked, substituting 'elite' for 'community'" (1969: 24). I attempted to do this, and the results follow. I also tried to follow the research outlined by Robert Dahl (1961) but found that the time and labour involved in the type of survey research he conducted were completely beyond the scope of one man working on his own. I did, however, find his research a great comfort while in the field in terms of his theory of "Notables" within any community. In a real sense, my "Notables" were the leaders within the Labour Party in Thameside.

I had also initially hoped to model my interviewing technique on that of Daniel Hughes (1969: 39), and code scheduled interviews after an initial period of open-ended interviewing. For a host of reasons, including the necessity of informal interviewing to obtain valuable information, I abandoned this notion after the first five months of fieldwork. This is not to say that scheduled interviews and survey research are not valuable, but simply that they did not work very well
for me in the East End. I found that if I asked "stock questions," I received "stock answers," and this was not the kind of information which I wanted to discover. People in the East End like to talk, but they have a dread of survey research which is, I believe, the result of being researched to death in the last one hundred years. I had to dissociate myself from that style of research as much as possible and therefore found that open ended interviews were my best friend. I might also point out that I still have a dozen notebooks filled with information which I received in pubs in informal conversations. These conversations often turned out to be more valuable than the interviews, if only because they gave me basic solid questions which I could use in the interviews that followed.

Essentially I tried to look at six processes of local governmental action: 1) the nature and legitimacy of values among the elite of local government; 2) Leadership within the Thameside Labour Party, 3) Who governs, i.e. administration vs. politics in terms of decision-making, 4) Popular democracy and the Labour Party as a machine for political influence, 5) Labour Party internal discipline and organization; and 6) decision making and the ideological basis for government action in a single party borough.

The methods I used for this investigation included the following: 1) interviews with 35 of the 70 council members on the Thameside Borough Council, averaging one and one half hours each; these were formal interviews which I taped and later transcribed; 2) interviews with the Greater London Council members from the borough; 3) more than 50
sessions with the Party Secretary and Agent of the Thameside Labour
Party; 3) interviews with more than 20 party members who were not sit-
ting members of the council from 11 of 20 wards; 4) interviews avera-
ging two hours each with the heads of all eight organizational heads
of Thameside Borough administration, the chief officers; 5) a formal
interview with the Chief Executive Officer of the Borough; 6) more
than a score of formal and informal interviews with council workers
"on the street" in the borough; 7) interviews averaging two hours
each with the heads of influential members of nine major intermediate
groups within the borough, 8) interviews with the four staff members
and the editor of the Thameside News, the local paper; 9) interviews
with the leading Communists, Liberals, and Conservatives of Thameside
(there are not many: the last Conservative sat on any council in the
area in 1928!); 10) archival research totalling more than 100 hours
in the Labour Museum, the Local History Library, the London School of
Economics, the Greater London Council, and various borough departments;
11) formal interviews, scheduled and coded with more than 100 residents
of Thameside chosen at random; and interviews with more than 500 local
residents on an informal basis.

I also wish to point out that I applied for and was given permis-
sion to do the study by a majority vote of the Thameside Borough Labour
Party Group, which allowed the members to speak to me within the limits
of Party discipline. This also allowed members of the administration,
the council officers, to discuss their views on local government.
Cultural Setting

The area which I studied was by any measure one of the poorest in London and in Great Britain as a whole. In 1971, the median household income was only 1497 pounds sterling, or about $2500 per year at the then prevailing sterling exchange rate. Only two boroughs in London had lower figures, and these were fractionally lower. It is a working class area, and had the highest number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers per population of any borough in London, some 42% of the working population. When combined with the percentage of skilled manual workers, 33%, the total working-class population of the borough constituted exactly three quarters of the economically active population. This fact of working class predominance is the major cause of the overwhelmingly Labour vote during local elections. Only 1.2% of the active population were classed as "professionals" compared with 12.9% in the Conservative borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Employers and managers composed only 5.3% of the population of Thameside, as compared with more than 23% in the middle class borough of Barnet. Intermediate and junior non-manual trades made up the remainder, some 12.7%, as compared with 28.5% in the outer borough of Bromley.

Unemployment is an epidemic in Thameside. According to the 1971 Census, Thameside had about 2% of the total London population, but 5% of the unemployment for the same area. The borough ranks in the bottom five of London boroughs in total numbers of employed, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the population. As of 1971, only 52% of the total population was economically active, 86,500 out of
out of 165,800. Only three other boroughs have lower percentages.

Another indication of the poverty of the borough can be demonstrated by the fact that Thameside has the lowest number of car owners in all of London, only about one-third (33.7%) as of the 1981 estimate. The average for the Greater London Council area is almost double that, some 64.6%. The Department of Employment determined in 1974 that more than one third (34%) of incomes for people over 21 were less than forty pounds per week (about $68). Unemployment was estimated overall to be at least 12% in 1975 and in some parts of the area, as much as 15% of the working population. This fact, combined with the approximately 16% of the borough comprised by old age pensioners, means that upwards of one fifth of the borough population is unemployed or on old age pensions. As can be imagined, the social services requirements of such an area are overwhelming. Another startling fact of life in Thameside is that as of 1974, only 16.5% of the working males over 21 earn more than 60 pounds per week (about $115). By any standard of comparison, Thameside is troubled economically, and is not getting much better: a study done during part of my research period, from November 1974 to May of 1975 showed that unemployment in Thameside increased by 24.4% during that period, while Liverpool and Newcastle, both considered extremely depressed areas, increased their unemployment 8.8% and 13.5% respectively.

At one time, docks within the borough employed upwards of 4.0% of the borough population. These docks are now completely abandoned as a result of the containerization of cargo ships and the building of new
docks at Tilbury, down the Thames estuary, to accommodate the new, larger, container ships. Beyond that, when cargo was unloaded piece-meal, the number of jobs was extremely high, as the unloading and loading process was extremely labour intensive. Because of the presence of the docks, Thameside was a primary target of the Blitz and large areas of the docks and of the borough were destroyed outright by the bombing. Even today, large open spaces "cleared by the Jerries" can still be seen. During this period as well, many of the children of the area and considerable industry was moved to the country to prevent wholesale destruction.

As a result of the bombing, housing in that area was in critically short supply after the war. Today, municipal housing is the rule in Thameside, and owner occupation is the exception. The political consequences of this can be demonstrated by the fact that three Liberals now sit on the council, and all are from an area which has become "gentrified" by middleclass owner occupiers moving in from outside.

Both the Thameside Council and the Greater London Council are the major landlords in the area. The Thameside Council owned 16,487 dwellings, some 29.3% of all housing in the borough. The Greater London Council has its largest housing holdings in Thameside, owning 27,394 (48.8%) of all housing in the borough. Only 17.9% of all housing is privately rented and owner occupied as opposed to almost half of all housing throughout Britain. Housing tenure, which gives a different statistical picture from ownership, still shows this trend. In Thameside, Council rented housing (both local and GLC) account for 67.6% of
all tenures, while owner occupiers represent only 2.4% of the population.

These cultural and economic facts have definite political consequences, as mentioned earlier. One of the most important sources for political authority is the function of both the Greater London Council and the Thameside Council to provide inexpensive housing for people who desperately need it. Clearly, the Conservatives and the Liberals are not seen as viable alternatives to the Labour Party which has as one of its most important planks a home for everyone in Britain. In essence, housing is seen by the Labour Party as a right rather than a privilege, and owner occupation is often regarded with distaste by Party members. The contortions which some party members go through to explain why they own their own home is an indication of this feeling. On the other hand, the Leader of the Thameside Council owns his own home and has been in power since 1974. Regardless, unlike the situation in the United States, it is not stigmatized or considered "bad" in London to live in municipal housing owned by the council, at least not in working class urban areas. In fact, this would be surprising if it were the case, as the GLC and the boroughs combined own fully one quarter of all housing in London (24.9%). In Thameside, two-thirds of all housing is municipally owned.

The distinction between areas in London which possess council housing in large proportions and those areas which have many privately owned homes or private rentals is a critical one in political terms. Owner occupation is associated with the outer boroughs, and Liberals
and Conservatives, while council renting is located around the City of London and in boroughs such as Southwark and Newham. These boroughs are clearly Labour and have been so for more than half a century. The last Conservative to represent the borough in Thameside was elected in 1928, while in the outer boroughs Labour stands little chance of success. Of course, unemployment and manual occupations heighten these lines of political demarcation, but the general rule is that high council housing rates mean high Labour votes, while high rates of owner occupiers and renters mean high Conservative votes. The correlation between these factors of council housing and Labour success and owner occupiers and Conservative success is too startling to miss. Beyond this reality, these residential patterns mean that certain Parliamentary and GLC areas sit in what are known as "safe seats" for either the Conservative or the Labour Party. One of the Members of Parliament for my area has been a spokesman and member of Labour cabinets and shadow cabinets since the Wilson governments, and is even now a shadow spokesman for the Labour Party. The other M.P. was a member of the Tribune Group and also a member of the National Executive of the Labour Party. His residence was in St. John's Wood, an extremely upper class area in West London, while he represented Thameside. There was considerable rumour and gossip, and even some fairly good indirect evidence, that both these individuals had been "visited" on the local Labour Party by Transport House, the National Headquarters of the Labour Party. Certainly, nomination by the General Management Committee in Riverside meant certain election for the
candidate nominated. Also, no local Thameside native has sat in Parliament for over a decade, and the fact that both M.P.s for my area are very influential in national Labour politics cannot be accidental. This process is also true for the Conservatives, and I am not saying that it is unique to any party. My point is that when safe seats are needed for national party leaders, safe seats are found. One other indirect proof of this point is that when local party lights are moving up and looking for a Parliamentary constituency, they never look in Thameside. As one of them put it, "You could run a baboon for Parliament on the Labour ticket in this borough, and he would be elected, but don't try to get nominated in Thameside if you are from here."

Another important feature which should be mentioned is the distinction between the East End and the West End in terms of London geography. Chelsea, Westminster, St. John's Wood all sit west of the City while Newham, Thameside, and so on, sit on the City's east. There is even a song which says: "From West End to East End, from Best End to Worst End." Part of the phenomenon is the result of the prevailing winds which blow from west to east, and the distinction between rich and poor initially occurred because of the noxious fumes of the Industrial Revolution. This was not so true before the Great Fire of 1666, but when London was rebuilt it became a reality.

Londoners are very conscious of accents, and accents underline the
east-west divisions of class and status. People where I lived spoke a wonderful tongue called "Cockney," which is spoken throughout East London, while in Kensington and Chelsea you are much more likely to find the "Queen's English". As a result, even language works to split London in half. Occupations too have the same split; the East Enders are working class and proud of it, while West Enders tend to be middle class and working in non-manual occupations. It is worth an aside here to mention that one of my best friends from fieldwork, a former reporter on the local paper, refused to go to university because he was afraid of losing his class status. Although he passed three "A" level examinations with flying colors, he refused to go to university, though he was offered several places. When I asked him about his refusal, he told me at first that he simply wanted to be a journalist which did not require university. However, one night he said, "Jim, even if I had wanted to go, I wouldn't. By the time I got back to the East End, my friends wouldn't have anything to do with me; they would think of me as a traitor to my class." This incident illustrates just how deep these divisions in London and throughout Britain are.
THE THAMESIDE LABOUR PARTY

The organization of the Thameside Labour Party is a series of tiers of authority. These tiers comprise a pyramid of political power, with the individual members at the bottom and the Executive Committee of the Party and the Thameside Labour Party Group at the top. In order to understand how power is distributed within this system, a formal understanding of the schematic organization is required (see p. 46).

The lowest level of organization is composed of five groups, three of which are functional and two of which are 'shell organizations,' i.e. they are required by Labour Party rules but were inactive in the period 1974-76. The active units were: 1) the 20 wards themselves, the electoral divisions upon which council membership and party membership are based; 2) the Cooperative Labour Party, a holdover from the days when that Party was an unique political unit, now affiliated with the Labour Party; and 3) the 52 trades union branches, which are also affiliated with the Labour Party through sponsorship of candidates and political contributions. By far the most important of these are the ward organizations, which constitute the "...backbone of the Party" according to the Party Chairman. The two other groups were the YS or Young Socialists and the Women's Federation, which were functionally inactive from 1974-76, thus termed "shell organizations" by the Party Secretary and Agent.

The total Party membership in 1974 was 4100 out of a total electorate of 110,000. Party membership thus represents just under three
percent of the total electorate, with 2,500 Party members coming from the eastern Parliamentary constituency and 1,600 coming from the western Parliamentary constituency. Qualifications for membership in the Labour Party in Thameside are simple; one must be a subject of the Crown, reside or work in the area, and pay a fee of one pound twenty pence (about $2.00) each year. Old age pensioners are required to pay only 12 pence in Thameside per year, and pay reduced rates everywhere in England.

The fundamental fact of party organization is the extreme concentration of power in the hands of the party elites. Even though the system is ostensibly democratic, the kinds of decisions made at the lower levels and the types of authority they are given within the system determine that their ultimate importance in the decision making process is extremely limited. Ward meetings, held once a month throughout the borough, are the grass roots of the system. The quality and attendance at these meetings varies enormously throughout the borough; some wards were very well attended, while others were in a very difficult state. In general, a cry for the "good old days" before television and the affluent nature of the working class in England was often sounded by both ward Chairmen and Secretaries. In fact, the low attendance at ward meetings was most often accounted for by the impact of television in the lives of the East Enders.

Several common features hold for each ward. An excellent example of these common features can be seen in St. David's ward. St. David has approximately 350 members on the books, of which about forty are
active enough to attend at least six meetings per year. The major offices in the ward are Chairman and Ward Secretary. Although the Chairman presides at all meetings at the local ward level, it is the Ward Secretary who holds the greater power and status within the Party organization. This is so because in Thameside the Ward Secretary automatically holds the position of General Management Committee member, which places them in the next tier of party authority. In addition, each ward is allowed two members on the General Management Committee for the first fifty Labour Party members in the ward, and one for each one hundred after that. Ward meetings in St. David's provide a means by which the policy of the Party can be disseminated to rank and file members, as well as providing a forum for the members to announce their concerns to the higher levels of the Party. The ward also acts to nominate individuals for General Management Committee offices and for council memberships, as well as passing on resolutions to the General Management Committee officers for consideration at the borough wide level. These resolutions in St. David's range from denouncing apartheid in South Africa to denouncing squatting in Thameside.

St. David's in unique in Thameside, in that it is the only ward which does not allow ward officeholders to be members of the Council. In virtually all other wards, the ward officers are also members of the council, so that the power in the Party is reflected in the control of the local ward organizations by councillors or aldermen.

This formal distinction between the Council and the Party was one of great importance during my study, or at least it was emphasized by
my informants. A closer look, however, shows that the Party and the Council are linked by the series of Chairmanships and Secretaryships held by the councillors within the areas that they represent. The following list of Council members and their ward positions demonstrates the interlocks between the wards and the Council.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WARD</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS &amp; WARD POSITIONS</th>
<th>COUNCIL OFFICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglia</td>
<td>Joe Flaherty, Chairman</td>
<td>Representative to Metro. Water Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ned Rogers, Secretary</td>
<td>Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Lee</td>
<td>Ron Buckley, Chairman</td>
<td>Chair, Finance Comm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Kelly, Secretary</td>
<td>Deputy Leader, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southall</td>
<td>Don Waddell, Chairman</td>
<td>Chair, Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leslie Taylor, Secretary</td>
<td>Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastcote</td>
<td>Gus Williams, Chairman</td>
<td>Chairman of Thameside Labour Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chair, Exec. Comm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchfield</td>
<td>William York, Chairman</td>
<td>Chair of Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chair of Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick's</td>
<td>Harrison Taylor, Chairman</td>
<td>Chair of Works, 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Leader, 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive Comm. 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick's</td>
<td>Ward Taylor, Secretary</td>
<td>Council Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Mary Jones, Chairman</td>
<td>Vice-Chair, Old People's Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The same pattern of consolidation holds when the members of the General Management Committee are examined. The members of the General Management Committee are elected from the wards once each year, with the exception of the ward secretaries, who are automatically members ex officio, but voting members nonetheless. The total number of people on the General Management Committee is 142, about 60 of whom are Trades Union delegates. Many of these are also Council members; in fact, in 1974, of the 63 council members for whom I could obtain information, 26 were members from various unions affiliated with the Party, while 37 were on the General Management Committee from the wards. As each ward averages about three General Management Committee delegates, this means that over half of the ward General Management Committee delegates were council members. In addition, the trades unions supply about sixty of the delegates so just under half of those were council members placed on the GMC from the affiliated unions. In essence, a position on the Council means an assured position on the General Management Committee.

The General Management Committee is regarded as the organ of the rank and file members of the Party who have risen above the ward level of organization. Membership on the GMC is a distinctive and valued
status in itself and in many wards is a sought after position. In most wards there were more candidates for positions on the GMC than there were positions, a factor which did not obtain in other areas of London which were Labour controlled. In this sense, the Thameside Party must be regarded as a healthy Labour party, one which is active in both recruitment and elections. One other measure of the Party's relative health is that the membership was one of the highest in London at the time. However, the Party and the Council are not coequal in strength or power in political terms. The Chairman of the Party, Gus Williams, was the power in the General Management Committee, while Phil Garner was the power within the Borough Council Labour Party Group as Leader of that body. However, by far the most powerful organ was the Council Labour Party Group, or all the members of the Council who were members of the Labour Party. This was all the council members from 1974-76, so that the Thameside Labour Party Group was the Thameside Borough Council, even though the two bodies went by different names.

As the Chairman of the Party stated:

Well, there are certain important matters which in turn we pass over in the proper manner to the Council, but the real guts of the decision making still remains with the council. What we try to do is to impart to them what Party policy is saying that most members of the Council are delegates to the General Management Committee anyway, either through their wards or Trades Union branches; they know full well what the policy of the Party is so far as the important matters are concerned.

The Party and the Council are further linked by the membership of the Executive Committee of the Party, the most powerful organ of Party decision making. The Executive Committee of the Party has many of the
of the most important party responsibilities, including the shortlisting of candidates for council office and determining party policy. I was unable to gather any information on the Trades Union delegates to this Committee. However, the examination of the Council members of the Executive Committee demonstrates that the Party is very well represented from the Council. Fifteen of twenty members of the Executive Committee from the wards are council members; of the officers of the Executive Committee, all are very important party members. Gus Williams, Chairman of the Executive Committee has served on the council in many capacities (including the old Dockside Council) since 1934, and is also Chairman of the Party and Chairman of the Eastcote ward. Harry Taylor, Chairman of St. Patrick's ward, was also Deputy Leader for 1975-76, and is Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee. The other Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee is Phil Garner, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Policy Committee, the most powerful committee on the Council. Pat Callaghan, Assistant Secretary of the Executive Committee, is Secretary of Watford East ward, and Chief Whip of the Council, the powerful position of disciplinarian for the Group. The Treasurer was Willy Black, who was also assistant Whip. The two auditors were Ron Buckley, Chairman of the Finance Committee, and Secretary of the North Lee ward. Thus, no member of the Party rank and file occupied any position on the Executive Committee as an officer.

Control of the Party is not necessarily considered a positive virtue, especially if it is handled without significant discretion. This is because of the experience of the Party under the leadership of James
Dewey. Dewey was both Party Chairman and Leader of the Council simultaneously, and this was one of the factors in his overturn in 1974. People within the Group and the Party felt that he had "overreached himself" and become dictatorial through his control of both offices, and it is now thought that incumbentship in both positions is inappropriate. This brings up an important point about the Thameside Labour Party. It is not a static or monolithic entity: change can and does occur within the limits of Party discipline and behavior. (A demonstration of this process and how change occurs appears in the chapter "A Godfather Deposed.") The fact is, however, that the Party organization is so structured that elites are generated within the democratic system which have a definite tendency to maintain their integrity over time. Proof of this fact can be seen in the realization that since Thameside came into existence in 1966, only two men have held the leadership position of the Group, James Dewey from 1966 to 1974 and Phil Garner from 1974 to 1983. This consistency and perpetuity of elites is due to the interlocks which are maintained between the important decisive bodies of the Labour Party and the Council Labour Group. As one councillor stated about the General Management Committee:

Well, the people who run the General Management Committee usually run the Group, that's what I think. And the people who run the GMC run the Executive Committee. The council and those other two, they're not two separate bodies, they are as members, you see, all the councillors are on the General Management Committee, and the Officers of the General Management Committee are officers of the Group so there's really all the same people.
In point of fact, when the General Management Committee elects its officers, Chair, two Vice Chairs, Treasurer, and Auditors, they automatically become the officers of the Executive Committee and therefore hold both offices at once because of a single election. In the confusing world of Labour Politics in Thameside, often what seem to be many formal structures turn out to be aspects of the same political role. Control of the Party and control of the Council turn out to be aspects of the interlocking nature of the elites who run Thameside.

**THE ROLE OF PARTY SECRETARY AND THE PARTY EXECUTIVE**

Unlike many other parties in London, the Thameside Labour Party possessed a full-time party agent who acted as the paid party secretary. In this sense, the party agent and the party secretary were the same person, but with differing titles. His role in the system was that of facilitator and "middle-man," a Thameside equivalent to cultural brokers described elsewhere in the anthropological literature. In this case, it was not his knowledge of language or trade goods which placed him in this role, but rather his broking of information about the members of the Thameside Party. Personalities were often in conflict in Thameside, and the maintenance of a smoothly running party machine was no easy task. Factions, to the extent they existed in Thameside, were based more on personalities and personal style than they were on actual policy issues. This was particularly true of the two Leaders, Dewey and Garner, who had much in common in terms of their socialist commitment, but little in common in terms of personal style. The Secretary's job was to see that those who were
followers of each man, who had no love for each other, worked together for the good of the Party regardless of their animosity. In this process, he often worked very closely with the Chief Whip, whose primary responsibility was for party discipline. In essence, the Whip controlled discipline, while the Secretary attempted to maintain Party solidarity.

This role evolved because his original duty was to see that the parties which had to amalgamate in 1966 did so smoothly. By my study period, his role had become one of extreme importance.* He sat ex officio and without voting privileges on all the major meetings of the Party during this period. He was the primary organizer of all Party activities at the borough level, as well as the supervisory overseer of party discipline. As Secretary, he attended all General Management Committee meetings, all Executive Committee meetings, and any and all ward meetings he chose, depending on the importance of the issues involved. His correspondence was the main information source for the party rank and file, and he supervised the shortlisting of candidates for political office within the borough, as well as conducting the elections.

The shortlisting of candidates for council was one of the major duties of the Executive Committee of the Party, but a real power within that committee in terms of candidate choice was Sam Roberts, the Party Secretary. Although technically a non-voting member of the Executive, his political knowledge and native intelligence made him a primary

*There was a good deal of jealousy generated by the Secretary's role. When I returned in 1980, I was told that he and the Party Chairman had argued bitterly in the GMC and the Secretary resigned over the event.
force in the choices of candidates within the borough. Another advantage of his position was his status as an outsider, as he resided and was a Labour Party member in another borough in the north of London, which gave him considerable objectivity in the appointment of candidates as well as his supervisory work.

Nominations for candidates for Council come from the wards, the unions, and the Cooperative Party. The fact is, however, that the real decisions about who was going to run, in what ward they would run, and when they would run, were all made by the Executive Committee with considerable input from Sam Roberts, the Party Secretary. Sam had this to say:

The Executive Committee: 1) shortlists candidates for this Council, 2) shortlists candidates for the Greater London Council, and 3) consults the ward committees in relation to selection for a borough council bye election candidate. That's the situation; I run all the elections.*

The Executive Committee has the final responsibility for the selection of candidates, regardless of the nominations coming to them from the lower levels of the party hierarchy. In fact, in 1974, Sam took the lists from the General Management committee where the grass roots nominations are first announced and "shortlisted" them; that is, he placed them in ward groups to stand against each other and stated which groups had placed them in nomination.

While the public face of this process is that the democratic process from the ward through the General Management Committee is the sole

*Note to the reader: By the statement "I run all the elections," Sam meant 'conduct' I am sure. However, his influence in this 'conducting' is not to be underestimated, and was not by politicians in Thameside.
and final arbiter of nomination, this is not the case. In 1974, fifteen of the twenty wards accepted the shortlists which came down from the Executive Committee without any comment or demand for revision. This was true even though many candidates did not stand in the wards of their residence, and as the Secretary stated, "...we try to keep a good mix within the borough." The nomination process is clearly democratic, in that any number of names may be submitted by the wards, the unions, or the Cooperative; but the choices of where the candidates may stand against each other and who the candidates will be are clearly the options of the Executive Committee of the Party. As in many democratic organizations, the public did not realize the extent of Executive power in terms of its control of the recruitment process.

The Secretary put it this way:

> Of course, the Executive Committee only overrides the General Management Committee, in certain cases of election procedure. When you're talking about shortlisting candidates, from wards and when you're talking about Parliamentary shortlisting of candidates, its only the Executive that can do any shortlisting. Nobody else can, and the General Management Committee cannot take that right away from them. The GMC can't say, for instance, that in a bye election the GMC will consult with the ward because its laid down in the constitution that the Executive Committee will consult with the ward. It is in those particular instances that if you like it can override. But on general matters it isn't so. For instance, the Executive Committee can make a recommendation to the GMC and the GMC can turn it down. They often do, not on electoral matters, but on general matters...when you say it overrides the General Management Committee, it doesn't. (Question: only on electoral matters?) Yes.
There is thus a tremendous concentration of power in the hands of the members of the Executive Committee through their ability to control recruitment and access to the most powerful political offices in the borough. In theory, the wards and the General Management Committee act as a check and balance on the power of the Executive Committee, but in reality their decisions made about candidates are virtually final. Even in the five wards where the names as shortlisted were not acceptable to the wards involved, there was negotiation between the ward and the Executive Committee in which the issue was resolved to the satisfaction of both. As the Secretary commented:

If the ward adds a name, or decides it doesn't like the list, I call a public meeting of the candidates, act as an intermediate undercover and try to iron out the differences between the Executive committee and the wards, and I usually succeed.

In one sense, the success of having 75% of the shortlists accepted as-is by the wards is an indication of the Executive's ability to choose candidates acceptable to the wards involved. This is a tribute to the intelligence of the members of the Executive but it must be remembered that in a borough where Labour nomination means sure election, the power of the Executive Committee to control this shortlisting process must certainly be regarded with deference and respect by wards. Alienating the Executive Committee on an issue such as this could result in retribution in the future, a prospect to be feared and avoided at all costs.

The Executive Committee of the Party was also responsible for discipline of all Party members, especially in cases where publicity
might be involved. The Party Chairman possessed nominal control in these matters, but the determination of violations fell elsewhere. In actuality, the Secretary and the Chief Whip in Thameside shared the responsibility of party discipline and supervision. On any problems of party of personal misconduct, the Executive Committee of the Party had the obligation to see that the Party Constitution and the rules of the Labour Party are not violated. Usually these violations would first come to the attention of the Secretary, who would then meet with the Chief Whip to determine if any action was necessary on the part of the Executive Committee. Often a simple "talking to" was enough to bring the member back into conformance with Party discipline, but there were occasions where sanctions could be imposed and were. The atmosphere during my study within the Party was more relaxed because of the perceived misuse of Party authority by the previous Chief Whip and Leader, (See "A Godfather Deposed" for details) but it is important to note that the rules of discipline were not absolutely enforced in each case. In most cases, the amount of public knowledge of the events involved determined the enforcement of discipline, rather than the strict legalistic interpretation of Labour Party rules. As the Secretary made clear:

> With any matters that are personal and particular, in other words, if something was said about a member and there was a risk of publicity that might involve us in a legal action, it would be dealt with by the Executive, because that's a much smaller body and therefore you could keep the matter under control.

An excellent example of this selective enforcement of discipline can be seen in the following examples. During the 1974 borough council

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*The Chief Whip also held the post of Assistant Secretary of the Party, thus having the mandate to enforce both Party and Group discipline.*
election campaign, party members had been assigned various duties to aid in the cause, including pasting of Labour posters throughout the borough. Much of this was done at night because of the illegality of posting signs in many of the very public areas of the borough, but because of their public value, these were precisely the areas where posters were most likely to be read. One of the new candidates became a bit overzealous, and after running out of water for his paste bucket, he urinated into the bucket to make more paste, and then continued putting up his posters. Even though it was late at night, he was seen by another party member who lived nearby. About five o'clock the next morning, the Secretary received a call from the member who had seen the incident informing him of the "bucket incident." There was never any formal discipline taken over this issue, but had the local press been informed instead of the Secretary, an article of embarrassing proportions for both the Party and the member would surely have followed. As it was, the member was called in by the Chief Whip and the Secretary, dressed down, and then the entire office had a good laugh over the incident.

Another example, in a more serious vein, was the statement made by a former mayor of the borough and Labour Party member to a local group on the racial prejudice of the Council. During his term as mayor (almost exclusively a symbolic post within the English system) he was reported to have told a gathering of social workers that "Seventy-five percent of the Thameside Council are racialists," a significant condemnation of the Council in what was fast becoming the
multi-racial society of contemporary Britain. In Thameside, especially this was not a discrete thing to say, as one area in the eastern part of the borough was populated almost exclusively by Indians and Pakistanis; there was even an "Indo-Pakistani Social Club" on one of the main trunk roads in the borough. This incident was first reported to the Party Secretary and thence to the Chief Whip of the Group. The Executive met and the discipline was swift and sure: he was stripped of his council offices, including the mayorship. There was even a movement from within the rest of the Party to have him removed from the Thameside Party altogether, but the Secretary intervened on his behalf and a measure of mercy won the day. As the Secretary pointed out, "I don't like witch hunts." Discussions of matters of policy and matters of Labour doctrine are matters which are the direct concern of the Chief Whip, for members of the Council, and in this case, even for rank and file members. This case crossed all lines and an example was made.

An important point should be made here. The violation of the rules was in the previous case extremely public, and this was the key to the rigid discipline imposed. In many cases, in pubs and in homes, I had heard Council members bemoan the fate of a Britain which was "...going to the Wogs," to paraphrase their sentiments.* The fact is that rules within the Thameside Party were selectively enforced, mostly depending on the damage they did to the public or normative face of

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*This, if anything, is an understatement of the true feelings of some, a few councillors. Wog: acronym for Westernized Oriental Gentleman. It is not a term of endearment.
the Party. Two examples will be cited here, one briefly and one at length.

The first deals with statements made to the press. I will simply mention it here, as it is dealt with at length in "Thameside Labour Group: Organization and Power." After James Dewey was defeated in 1974 he granted an interview to the Thameside News without Party or Group permission and criticized both the new leader and the process which brought about his downfall. Permission to speak to the local press is required on any matters concerning Party procedure, whether that member is a former leader or not. Discipline could easily have been taken by the new leadership, but they chose not to as a show of the differences between the old elite and the new. However, a severe violation of Party rules had taken place, of that there was no question.

The second violation was of a more critical nature, both to the Party and to the London Borough of Thameside. One of the rising young members of the Council, Ted Hagovsky, was invited to the Harvard Business School. Ted was known as an ambitious politician and had more than once tried to become empaneled for a Parliamentary seat in other boroughs in London. He was one of the few college educated and professional members of the Council and a favorite of Transport House, the national Labour Headquarters. He was also known as a maverick within the borough, for he violated Party discipline by standing up in the full Council public meeting and criticizing a speech by the new leader, Phil Garner. Criticism of that kind is virtually unknown in public in Thameside, and is supposed to take place either in the Group meeting
behind closed doors, or at the General Management Committee Meeting, again behind closed doors. However, it is never supposed to happen in the public Council meeting with reporters and outsiders present. No action was taken against Ted for this affrontery, for it was thought that enough damage had been done, and discipline would simply aggravate the problem. Another factor entered into the decision not to take action, however. Mr. Hagovsky was invited to attend the Harvard Business School from 1975-1976. He had been elected to Council in 1974*, and thus had the remainder of a three year term to serve. In fact, he left the borough early in 1975 and did not serve on the Council for nearly a year of his term while he attended Harvard. (It is my understanding that he has since emigrated to America, where he presently resides.) This surely was a point which should have been a concern to the local Party and was a continuing concern of the Party Secretary. However, because of the possibility of scandal and adverse publicity, no mention was ever made of his absence, nor was any disciplinary action initiated by the Executive Committee, the Chief Whip, or anyone else. Neither was any bye-election called to fill his seat during his absence. He could not, therefore, serve on any committees or participate during this time, even though he was a member of the Development Committee and of the prestigious Special Dockland Development Study Committee. In any case, he was never called to court for his absence nor was the Party inclined to do so.

The supervision of Party meetings and affairs per se was also the obligation of the Party Secretary and the Executive Committee. An
excellent example of this kind of supervision can be seen in the participation of Labour Party members from Newham North East in the politics of Thameside.

Briefly stated, the nearby borough had experienced a drastic and militant takeover from 1974-76 in the personnel of its General Management Committee and the Party generally. This ultimately had the effect of deposing Reg Prentice from his Parliamentary seat, a turnover which is even more startling when it is remembered that he was a member of Harold Wilson's cabinet at that time. This was the test case that proved that what would come to be called the "Militant Tendency" within the Labour Party was a powerful new force. There was considerable fear within the Thameside Labour Party about such a revolution, and this fear came to a head when one of the leaders of the coup within the Newham Party started showing up at various meetings of the Oakland East ward. The rumour was out that Mr. Casey, the political firebrand from across the borough line, was showing up at these meetings with the purpose of trying the same kind of coup d'etat which had been successful in Newham North East. The Party Secretary heard about this almost immediately and determined to put a stop to it. I asked him about what he actually did. He replied:

Right, Mr. Casey was flashing around. And so I went to the following meeting and took the chair, just in case. And before the meeting started, I made an announcement that if anyone disrupted it, they would be out on their necks. That's it. You see, I'm not going to have someone coming into this Party for the purpose of disrupting it. I told my chairman, right, before we start, if there are any members from outside the ward, the members of Oakland East are going to run this ward, and anyone who disagrees with that can get out.
While the examples I have cited were common knowledge within the Party, the Chairman denied any knowledge of them. His denial is quoted here because it is revealing in terms of what it does not say, rather than what it says.

(Question: Would you give me any examples, without any names, of a councillor or party member who stepped out of line and was remanded by the party?)

Now, the Council have their own action with regard to members who have stepped out of line with their own decisions. So far as the Party's concerned, anybody who doesn't accept the decisions of the Party, especially if they were public representatives and that goes for M.P.'s and Greater London Council representatives as well, then they would be taken to task by the General Management Committee.

(But you don't have any examples?)
Well, I don't recollect. If there has been anything just out of line and then the people concerned have been quietly told about it, even if the matter hasn't been raised at the Executive or the General Management Committee. They have been told about it either by myself or in company with the Party Official Secretary. They have not been matters of great importance.

It is difficult to believe that the absence of a councillor and leading member of the Party from his elected post for a year could be considered less than "a matter of great importance." Similarly, violation of the ban on talking to the press without permission from the Leadership is nothing less than a cardinal sin. Simply put, there is a public and a private face to the Labour Party in Thameside. The distinction between appropriate instances for public disciplinary action lies not so much in any absolute code of Party behavior, but rather in the amount of knowledge of that behavior possessed by the public at large.
Ideology and Action: Socialism and the Party of the Working Man

Political parties in contemporary industrial societies are major means by which ideas about society are translated into social action. Nowhere is there a clearer statement about the purposes and goals of the Labour Party of Great Britain than in the famous "Clause Four," which appears on each membership card and is the guiding principle behind Labour solidarity. Clause Four states:

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service.

While the above statement is clearly socialist, in that it demonstrates the advocacy for the common ownership of basic social industries and services, the nature of socialism on the local level is often considerably less militant. The Labour Party of Thameside, for example, possesses many shades of political philosophy, but it is fair to say that the primary conception of the Party is as "the Party of the working man" rather than as the party of the socialist. This distinction, while difficult to describe, is critical to an understanding of the ideology of the Thameside Labour Party. The Party faithful all consider themselves as "socialists in a capitalistic society," but upon closer examination the nature of this borough socialism is more pragmatic than radical. In a real sense, the new Labour Party members who come from the ranks of the more radical leftist parties in Great Britain, such as
the Worker's Revolutionary Party, were regarded with a good deal of suspicion and often with outright hostility. As one senior Party member and committee chairman on the Council pointed out:

Whenever I talk of Socialism, I don't talk about the so-called International Socialism of today. I don't talk to the extreme left-wings. Socialism means to me the ultimate goal to which I aim. The manner in which I achieve it is for me personally to work out and my approach is that it has to be done through democratic ways. Communism, Marxism, is not for me. I believe everybody has a right to express their opinion and my job in life is to convince as many people as I can—hoping the ones I convince can convince someone else.

This democratic approach to socialism came up again and again in my research in Thameside. People simply rejected the notion of the Labour Party as primarily a socialist party. It was identified by twenty-eight of the thirty-five councillors I interviewed as the party of the working man rather than as the party of the socialists. Beyond that, those same Party members had a great deal of difficulty defining a basic notion of socialism which is generally accepted and indeed, affirmed by Clause Four. That is, the concept that socialism means ownership and control of the basic industries in public hands. Clearly, however, they perceived themselves as different from Americans, who were capitalists and in that sense did identify themselves as socialists. The Party Secretary often remarked to me: "Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford: they are all representative of a society I don't want to have anything to do with."

A song which the Party members often ended up singing after a night of drinking demonstrates one aspect of this Labour ideology of the
working man. The first line demonstrates the resentment toward the Royal Family and their apparent avoidance of manual labour; the other lines speak for themselves. The reference to Transport House, by the way, is to the national headquarters of the Labour Party.

(To the tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic")

We will make Princess Margaret
Sweep the steps of Transport House

We will make Princess Margaret
Sweep the steps of Transport House

We will make Princess Margaret
Sweep the steps of Transport House

When the Red Revolution comes.

Free beer to all the Workers
Free beer to all the Workers
Free beer to all the Workers
When the Red Revolution comes.

The two appeals of the song, to the workers and to the "Red Revolution," represent the two poles of opinion within the Labour Party in Thameside. One councillor who held that social revolution was the way to create socialism in Britain, easily the minority opinion, told me that "Democracy isn't all that important because it is really a question of false consciousness. What political democracy really is, it is a bourgeois instrument of control which leads the masses to feel that they have some say over the means of production when they really don't." In fact, this member had come from the Worker's Revolutionary Party to the Labour Party, and represented the only opinion of this kind I discovered within the Council membership. At the other end of the pole were some councillors who were outright racialists, and were from an area thought to support the National Front; they were named
by the Party Secretary "closet Fascists." During a bye-election this contention may have received some support, as the Labour Party was very surprised to find that the National Front outpolled the Communist Party in the area 161 to 140. (Labour polled a majority 766 in that bye-election for purposes of comparison. Still, the National Front polling over 100 in Thameside anywhere was a cause for real concern.)

Much more representative of Party opinion generally were those of the Chairman of the Cooperative Party, Aaron Steiner. Active in the Labour Movement and the Trades Union movement for many years and on the London Trades Board, Aaron was an individualist who could quote Marx or Ramsey MacDonald with equal ease. In fact, his lecture he gave me on Marxist theory one night at his home is still the best I have ever heard. Aaron refused to line up with any of the factions within the Council or the Labour Party. I asked him about the people of the militant 'left' who called the Labour Party "the new Establishment."

Of course, it's true that the Labour Party isn't all I want it to be. In my theory of politics, as I've argued with communists, whom I consider to be right-wing militarists, the only way is to find a cause or a movement which is going the same general direction in which you want to move, and then join that organisation. I've always thought that as a trades unionist, it's very nice to have people standing with their posters on strike outside, but the strike isn't settled on the pavement, it's settled in the office. If you want change, you change from the inside and you negotiate from the inside.

I really accept a lot of these arguments; all I say to these people is this: to stand outside a station in the East End and shout General Strike Now will never solve the industrial problems of this country. If someone is so moved about society, then join the bloody organizations that matter and change them.
The organization which matters, in Councillor Steiner's terms, is the Labour Party. However, the relationship between socialism and the Labour Party is not one which is clear either to the party rank and file nor to the leaders. The present disarray at Blackpool every October is proof positive of this fact. In fact, during my research many of the important informants I interviewed took umbrage at the suggestion that socialism and the Labour Party were connected in any sort of intimate way. This point is very important in the consideration of the relationships between values and political legitimacy. While there has been a consensus about that relationship among many political anthropologists, not much has been written concerning the range of legitimation procedures which might exist within a single presumed political system. Cohen's work is extremely valuable in this context (1976) as is the work of Aranoff (1980). Indeed, the divergence between socialism and the working class on the local level and the national break-up of the Labour Party in Britain are evidences that the presumed value bases for the Labour Party did not really exist at all.

The notion that there is a direct link between national ideology and the ideology of the Labour Party on the local level is one which simply does not stand up to empirical examination. This assumption is both dangerous for political anthropology and presumptive in the extreme. This divergence between the local or "folk" level of Labour Party belief and the national "urban" level of ideology forthcoming from Transport House is a central feature of the solidarity of the
Labour Party in Great Britain. In this sense, Thameside is an excellent laboratory in which to determine some of the local politics and attitudes which differ significantly from the national image.

The individual council member or rank and file party member often does not possess a clear cut idea of what socialism is, how it relates to the Labour Party, or how it related to other ideologies of the Left, such as Communism. This is true even when the individual possesses great power within the local organization. Patrick Callaghan, the Chief Whip of the Labour Party Group is also Secretary of the Watford East ward, Assistant Secretary of the Thameside Labour Party, Officer of the Executive Committee of the Party, and General Management Committee member, with twelve years of Council experience and more than twenty years as a Labour Party member. When asked about the relationship between socialism and the Labour Party, he replied:

Socialism? I don't know. I've never been a deep thinker on the socialist part of the Labour Party—the Labour Party means something different from any deep socialist thought—I really thought of it as the working class party. Nothing to do with Russia or China—no, I never seriously thought of it as a politician—I thought it was the best party to do the best job for the ordinary people, the ordinary working person.

Nor does this concern for the working person in Great Britain converge with political ideology at another level. While the national party in Great Britain is highly concerned with international events, the local concerns of the Labour Party are much more mundane, dealing with the exigencies of daily existence rather than the myriad factional debates which plague each conference at Blackpool. Mr. Callaghan put it
I always thought that their (Labour's) main priority was homes, schools, and roads. They'd even give decent schools and employment: socialism? I don't know. It seems to have become a dirty word on the television and the media. They're linking it with all sorts of Vietnamese, Vietcong, Portugal, everywhere there's an uprising--I think that it would be a wrong thing for it ever to lose its name, the Labour Party. They vote for the Labour Party. That's who the people vote for. Not the socialists. They vote for the Labour Party. I don't know how many people on the Council or how many people in Thameside are socialists. If you asked them if they were voting for a socialist party, they wouldn't know what you were talking about.

One of the Ward Secretaries I interviewed was even more direct in describing the relationship between the ideology of the Labour Party and the true feelings of the people in the borough who voted for the Labour Party. The Secretary noted:

Many people in our Party romanticize the working class, and that is because they don't live here. It's damn easy to sit in St. John's Wood or Chelsea and wax eloquent about the qualities of the working classes. The truth is that people here are still in favour of public flogging, public hangings, capital punishment, and stocks in the street. That is the real working class. Our job, as I see it, is to represent the interests that the working classes in Britain should have, not necessarily the interests they do have. We have to be the vanguard of working class interests in this society, and that is the role of the Labour Party.
THAMESIDE LABOUR PARTY GROUP: ORGANIZATION AND POWER

Throughout Britain, the partisanship of local politics is reflected in the composition of the party groups which comprise the local council. Unlike many American cities, in which the local council is non-partisan, local politics in England is completely politicized. Kantos points out, "As American local politics became increasingly non-partisan in the twentieth century, British local politics underwent an opposite development" (1974: 10). Each party represented on any council has a specific body called the party group which is composed of all the members of that party who have won election to the council.

Once in power, the members of the different parties will be identifiable as distinct groups with leaders, whips, and other officials. They will meet as 'groups' to discuss policies and strategies from time to time and the conduct of individual members will be regulated by rules. In particular, rules will define the duties of members, and individuals who deviate by speaking publicly or voting against the group to any marked degree, or any major issue, may be expelled.

Such a party group, once in power, may be expected to distribute patronage on party lines and will present to the administrators certain general objectives or policies with which they expect specific measures to be compatible (Hill 1975: 211).

The major duty of the group is to create and expedite policy, the political program of the party in power. The Party Secretary put the position of the group in Thameside this way:

In many ways, it's like the Parliamentary Labour Party. Members of the Thameside Council who belong to the Labour Group are all Thameside Labour
Party members, and to determine policy, they will adopt they meet in private. I'm afraid you'll never get into one of those meetings, mate. They are closed and private, and the only people who can go outside of Labour council members are the two liason delegates from the General Management Committee. Not even any other GMC members can go along.

As the expediters of party policy on the local level, the policies of Conservative and Labour groups vary considerably in many fields of social action, just as they do at the national level. Some of these dimensions include: housing policy, policy toward old people's welfare, the distribution of social services, provisions for the homeless, rating and valuation, hiring and salary policy for the professional administrators, as well as policies on delegated authority. Moreover, policies on such volatile issues as squatters in municipal housing and the purposes of municipal development are matters for group consideration. All of these policies, whatever party determines them, are grounded in and bounded by the law of the land which emanates from Parliament. As such, the kinds of policies which can be implemented on the local level are limited in scope and dimension, but are still significant in that provision of these services is mostly a matter of local concern within the British system of government.

Politically, the Labour Party Group is the most powerful organ of decision making in the London Borough of Thameside. This is so because from 1974-76 the Council members were unanimously Labour.

*A perjorative comment on the difference in homeless policies was: "The homeless policy in Kensington is "Send them to Thameside."
Party members. This situation had somewhat altered when I returned in 1980, as three members of the council had been elected from the Liberal Party. For purposes of illustration, these three formed the "Liberal Party Group" of the Council, with all the rights and responsibilities previously mentioned. However, the nature of their power in council was severely limited by the fact that were still a tiny minority. If the phenomenon of cross-voting or coalition building were true of local government in Thameside, they might have had an influence beyond their numbers. In fact, the Labour Group votes as a bloc on all public issues and this effectively cuts off any such power brokerage from the start. The point is that there are now two "Party Groups" on the Council; at the time of my research, only one held sway. It is my opinion that the presence of a tiny number of opposition members has not changed the political situation in Thameside in any significant way. The dynamics of power and decision making in the borough are still the dynamics of internal Labour Party discussion and debate.

This simple fact has many remarkable results. First, it means that all public statements from the Thameside Labour Party Group are strictly controlled as to form and content. This is the direct result of the exceptionally strict discipline under which members of the Group are placed as a result of their election. All Labour Party members are under discipline, but the importance of the discipline and its strict enforcement increases monumentally with election to the Thameside Council. A comparison here might help to illustrate the point. In the
United States, the Republican Party has often invoked the "Eleventh Commandment," i.e. that no Republican Party member should make statements to the press condemning other Republicans during tough election campaigns. It is not too much to say that this is the very first commandment of the Labour Party in Thameside. Private arguments and discussions are allowed within the Group, but woe betide the member who breaks with that discipline and makes unauthorized statements to the press, anthropologists, or anyone else who does not have the correct authorization. An excellent example of this kind of violation stems from the public statements of James Dewey, Leader of the Council for ten years, subsequent to his defeat by the present Leader, Phil Garner. After that election, Dewey was interviewed by the Thameside News and spoke frankly without the permission of the new Leadership or the Group. If anyone should have known the rules, it should have been Dewey. In part, Mr. Dewey said:

(Title) "Vendetta Alleged by Toppled Leader"

After ten years as Leader of the Thameside Council, Alderman James Dewey was toppled from power this week. And his demise, he says, was "...a vendetta among certain councillors."

"Certain members were disappointed that they did not get a chairmanship or vice chairmanship," he said.

He added that an 'anti-Dewey' faction started up and they gained the support of many of the 15 councillors elected at last Thursday's local election.

Commenting on the new leadership of the Group, Alderman Dewey said he felt there was a lack of political experience....

"I would have been only too pleased to have handed over the helm to someone with more experience," he said.
While the previous statements may seem merely "sour grapes," they were in fact considerable violations of the discipline of the Labour Party Group. The main purpose of the Chief Whip of the Group is to maintain that strict discipline and see that such statements are not made. The Whip put it this way:

It's (the Chief Whip of the Group) mainly a political job, although of course it's recognized by the Council, ex officio member of every committee of the Council. You are responsible for the convening of the Group and I suppose that you are responsible for the conduct of every member of the Council.

And then there is the Standing Orders of the Party laid down, the members know certain things councillors should do and others they shouldn't do. One of them is to be very careful with their dealings with members of the press, you know, on matters of council policy. They're not allowed to speak without permission...they should be careful when they're speaking to members of the press.

A measure of mercy is also the prerogative of the Whip in cases where the member has been a violator of Group discipline. In the Dewey case just cited, no action was taken; in fact, the Leader of the Council placed Mr. Dewey in a chairmanship after his defeat. His reasoning was, he said, "...to hoist Mr. Dewey onto his own petard—if he's busy enough with committee work, he won't have time to plot for the next election." The general feeling within the Group, however, and certainly among the officers, was that Mr. Dewey had flagrantly overstepped himself in that short interview. The Whip said:

Yes, he (Dewey) overstepped himself. Yes. Absolutely no question about it. He had no right to go to the press at all. It was a stupid statement. He had no right to go to
the press, him more than anyone; but of course it was a bitter blow.

Dewey, he didn't suffer any discipline—we ignored it. One young fellow got up there and said 'You told the local paper you were going to take it easy. What did you want a chairmanship for?' This was the only comment that was made. We ignored it.

Two important points should be made here. First, this kind of deferment of discipline is the exception, not the rule. Clearly, Dewey did violate Group discipline and could have been severely disciplined had the Whip and the Leader wished to do so. Second, the reasons for not disciplining Dewey had their basis in the abuse of Whip discipline which had cost Dewey his position as Leader. The faction which Garner led had based their campaign to dislodge Dewey on this sticky issue, and was therefore in no position to identify itself with the mistakes of the past. Quite the contrary, this measure of mercy toward Dewey toward was the first step in the consolidation of the new leadership in their position of Group control. As Dewey had not even been able to achieve election to the Executive Committee of the Party in 1974, this gesture of magnanimity was really more of a symbolic demonstration of the new leadership's power than a show of merciful restraint. By ignoring Dewey's violation of discipline, the new leadership had made his error even more apparent than it would have been otherwise, and also cast itself in the role of the appropriate elite for the new era in Thameside politics.
A Godfather Deposed: The Use and Abuse of Whip Power

How was "Big James Dewey" deposed after some ten years of Party and Group power? The central issue which led to his downfall was the abuse of his power as Leader of the Council and as controller of the Council and Group Whip in terms of discipline. There has never been much question within Thameside as to which party will be the party of power and of control.

The primary responsibility of the Chief Whip of the Thameside Labour Party Group is to see that Party and Group discipline are maintained. In coordination with the Leader of the Council, he has at his disposal powerful coercive sanctions to insure that the rules are obeyed. However, the discipline cannot be administered in a way that is perceived by the other members as unfair or purely spiteful. The random application of these powerful disciplinary sanctions is what led to the downfall of Dewey and his followers from the Leadership.

In 1971, during the Conservative reign of Mr. Edward Heath, the Conservative Housing Finance Act was passed. This act was intended to raise rents to what the Conservative Party thought was a "fair" level, that is to raise them to parity with costs. Since previous Labour governments had subsidized rents throughout the country, this meant a considerable increase in the weekly rent paid by the average household in the East End. Two out of every three renters in the East End lived in government owned housing, which is either owned by the Greater London Council or the Thameside Borough Council, so it is clear why the mandated rent raise was an important political event for the
politicians of the borough. The Housing Minister of the Greater London Council estimated that the actual increased cost on their housing would be one pound per week in 1971, ten shillings per week in 1972 (fifty pence) and another ten shillings in 1973, so that by the start of 1974 the estimated cost of a weekly rent in a Greater London Council flat would rise to something between eleven and fourteen pounds. Rises in local borough housing would vary, but increase generally along the same lines.

Since at the time of my study, all members of the Council in Thameside were members of the Labour Party, the Labour Party Group was the Thameside Council. The rules of the game in Thameside, the Standing Orders of the Labour Party, allow factions and arguments within the Group but do not allow them in open council. This means that within the meetings of the Thameside Labour Party Group, no holds are barred. People can and do take sides with considerable vehemence. However, when a majority decision is reached within the privacy of the Group, it is expected that only a voice vote will confirm the decision at Council. No record of who voted for or against is kept, and it is publicly shown simply as "agreed" thus implying unity. There is a front and a back region in Goffman's terms (1961), Group meetings are in the back and Council meetings are out in front. It was over this public and private distinction that the legitimacy of James Dewey's leadership first came into question. As Bailey observes:

In this way, politics has its public face (normative rules) and its private wisdom (pragmatic rules). My interest is largely in the latter kind of rule, that is, not so
much in the ideals and ends and 
standards which people set them-
selves in public affairs, but how 
they set about winning (1969: 5).

On the Monday night before the formal Council meeting, the Group 
met in closed session as it always does. No officers of the Thames-
side Borough are allowed, nor are non ranking members of the Party and 
certainly not the general public. It is exclusively a meeting of the 
Labour Party Group, save the two delegates from the General Manage-
ment Committee. The Group could have voted to oppose the implementa-
tion of the Housing Finance Act, through a majority voting against 
it. This would have been mostly symbolic in any case, since the laws 
of Parliament are the laws of the land and must be ultimately enforced 
regardless. But it would have shown the commitment of the East End to 
subsidized rents. The Labour controlled county council at Clay Cross 
refused entirely to implement the act, with the result that the council-
lors themselves were forced to pay the difference by the Tory central 
government. This was part of the Act itself, intended to prevent such 
symbolic shows by Labour Councils. No local authority, borough or 
county council has the real power to ignore central government for 
political reasons, however serious. This did not happen, and the Group 
voted by about 35 to 20 to implement the Act. Not only did this hap-
pen, but James Dewey and his Chief Whip, decided to "put the whip on."
This meant that when the formal Council met on that Wednesday, demand-
ing a division of the Council was also voting against party discipline 
and party orders. Demanding a division meant that at least 14 members
of the Council had to stand up in open Council and demand a division, which would have resulted in a recorded vote, instead of the usual "Agreed." Such a breach of party discipline is punishable by removal from chairmanships within the Council and other less serious sanctions. It is not often done, although there was another case of party disobedience in 1968, and the following was the punishment for the offenders:

17 October 1968

Thameside Borough of London
Labour Group

After full consideration of all the circumstances surrounding your participation in events at the September meeting of the Thameside Council, which in the opinion of the Group amounted to a violation of the undertaking given by you to adhere to Group Standing Orders and majority decisions of the Group, a meeting of the Group held on Wednesday 16th October decided that you not be allowed to hold Council Office or represent the Council at outside bodies or at conferences from the date of the Annual Meeting 1970.

I am required to inform you, however, that should you so desire, you have the right of appeal against this decision to the National Executive Committee, such an appeal to be made within 14 days.

The Chief Whip

Clearly, some very harsh penalties can be involved. It is important to note here that this action also contributed to the sympathy that the later rebels possessed in 1971. Six council members were predisposed to support some future action against James Dewey. As will be seen later, the votes of the people punished in 1969 become crucial to Dewey's loss of the leadership. The fact that a very small margin of victory was involved for the new leadership becomes a very large fact in the political processes of the East End.

On that Wednesday, the meeting came as it was scheduled. One of the rebels recounted the events as follows:
We were still not happy with it (the vote on the Housing Finance Act) so on the night of the Council on the Wednesday, when it was put up to a vote, of course it was carried by the thirty, but Phil (Phil Garner, who was to become the new leader) demanded a division, and to demand a division, fourteen members must stand up in his place and the doors are locked and the Town Clerk goes right through every member of the Council in alphabetical order and they have to say yes or no to the vote; its recorded, it's about the only vote that takes recording, so James and his colleagues didn't like this much, so they all stood up for the implementation. They called us up from the floor, in front of the officers, and said you've been naughty boys and you shouldn't do it again. Then we said, we don't think it will arise again. This only happens once very seldom. James said, well, that's alright, and we thought the matter was finished with. It wasn't very bad, a little talking, a little joke, and every one of us went in individually (this event actually occurred at another meeting of rebels and the leadership: JRM) and then we came out. They laughed and they joked with us as we were in front of them, and we thought it was alright.

But it was far from alright. After meeting individually with the rebels on this second occasion where everyone was laughing and joking, the Leadership of the Group announced that everyone who had stood up against the Act who was a chairman would have to give up Chair positions. They were also to be prevented for two years from holding office on the Council as well. This was a cruel blow to the rebels, as one of them was the Chairman of the Metropolitan Water Board over the whole of London, one was vice-chairman of the Finance Committee of the Council, and all of them had considerable political ambition.

They therefore had only one option open to them; the pursuit of an appeal to the National Executive Committee to overturn the local
decision against them. This was a very serious move, as "voting to go over the Leader" meant that they were breaking away from the control and central authority he held. There was no turning back once this was done, but going to the National Executive was their only alternative were they not to be forced to suffer the punishment of the ruling clique under Dewey. They appealed within the necessary count of days with Mike Flaherty, the eldest serving member, leading the drive (he was the Chair of the Metropolitan Water Board). Several things were in their favor. First, three other boroughs in London with Labour majorities nearly as great as that in Thameside had not invoked the whip in open council and allowed the members with sincere feelings to vote openly in Council. This was made even more crucial since two of these boroughs stood geographically on either side of Thameside. Secondly, the vote in Parliament had been very close, and feeling was divided throughout all of Britain. These and other factors, such as the publicity accorded to the East End by the national press made the problems on the local level significant for the National Executive Committee. Two weeks later, a prominent Labour leader came down from Transport House and met both with the Group leadership and the rebels for almost five hours, from seven to midnight. This was an "informal review," not a formal hearing. Frank Diets, the representative from Transport House was reported to have told James Dewey, "James, look, this is not an organized group. We've had enough of this. It's split the party from top to bottom and its simply a spontaneous thing that these people have done. In my opinion
these people have given an undertaking, a new agreement, and I think we should pass it over. If you force me to, I'll take it back to the Executive, but it will be a bad thing for you, bad for Thameside, and bad for the Party" (These remarks were reported to me by Dewey's Chief Whip). In fact, the disciplinary process had not been adhered to correctly by the Group leadership, because they had not allowed the rebels to speak to the Group at the proper time. All of these factors resulted in a letter from the National Executive stating that the appeal had been upheld. Mike Flaherty and the others had refused to resign all along, and they retained their posts.

This entire process was the beginning of the end for Dewey and his followers in the Leadership. As Mr. Flaherty reported to me later:

Actually, I think this was the first thing that changed his rule. Now we didn't ask much of James; James was a friend of mine until then, and we were both from the same part of the borough. All we wanted from him was a free right of voting like the other boroughs had. They had a free vote in Council Chamber.

The attempt at a power play over this issue ultimately cost Mr. Dewey dearly. It drove the individuals who spontaneously opposed the Act into each other's arms, and they finally became known as the "Artichoke" faction because of the pub where they met to discuss political strategy. As the man who later became Chief Whip stated:

The vote over the Housing Finance Act certainly cost them, it really cost them politically, it cost them practically their political careers. Because I never cared much for Phil and Phil never cared much for Mike, and all of a sudden there's a tremendous body, of young people within the Council, a solid block within, and the next year we took over the Party.
Phil became vice-chairman, Tom Jones (another Artichoke member, later Deputy Whip under Phil) became the other vice-chairman, we got Gus Williams in as Party Chairman, and got Dewey out of the Chair. I became Assistant Secretary of the Party and Tony Williams became Treasurer of the Party. We took over the Party and then we took over the Council.

James Dewey told me in later interviews that he was convinced that the move was Mike Flaherty's idea from the outset. My information does not support that view, as the move to the National Executive Committee was only undertaken after the whip had been violated on the Housing Finance Act. Dewey's ultimate mistake was in perceiving a movement that had not been there in reality. He forced previously atomized individuals into a consolidated unit with one goal in mind: dump James Dewey and his friends. Interestingly enough, when the next Housing Finance Act increase was mandated the following year, it passed through without a murmur, even though the control of the Party so crucial to the control of the Council had passed into other hands. By May of 1974 the rebellion was complete, and the Leadership has been in Phil Garner's hands ever since.
Leadership of the Group and Political Control

Principal officers of the Group are the Chairman, the Leader, the Deputy Leader, the Chief Whip, and the Deputy or Junior Whip. Of these offices, the least powerful is the Chairman of the Group, as his sole purpose is to conduct the annual general meeting of the Group and the Group meetings which are held every six weeks prior to the public meeting of the Council. The Group officers are elected at the annual general meeting, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are also appointed by the new Leadership on that night. Unlike their American counterparts, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor have virtually no political power. These offices are simply political plums, handed out to the members of the faction loyal to the leadership in power in the Group at the time. In return, the occupants of these offices guarantee their votes for the leadership. The mayoralty is also often a reward for long service to the borough, as there are many perquisites which attach to this office and few real political responsibilities. Mayors and Deputy Mayors are famous in Thameside for opening new laundries, libraries, conducting housing ballots, and the like, and wear the symbolic insignia of office during the public council meetings. Their political importance, on the other hand, is negligible. The Chief Whip made this clear:

Mayor and Deputy Mayor: they are non-political and they cause enough trouble all the rest of the year.

The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are not regarded as serious political animals by the Group leadership or by other Group members. Their ab-
ility to influence policy is so limited that any political maneuvering on their part would be met with ridicule at best and outright antipathy at worst.

Many deals are concluded before the annual general meeting of the Group. This is so because the Leader has the power of appointment, not only of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, but also of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Council. In essence, the stability of Leaders in power is guaranteed by this power of appointment. To the extent that the Leader can assure individuals of Chairmanships and Vice-Chairs on the committees of their choice, he can influence their voting behavior in the Leadership election. Although some appointments must be made purely on the basis of ability (The Finance Committee was an excellent example of this during my study; Rod Buckley was loyal to no faction, but his knowledge of local government finance was without peer) many are made with the understanding that appointment meant a vote at the annual general meeting of the group. This form of political patronage means that any Leader, in combination with the small loyal clique who move around him, can control enough votes to stay in the Leadership virtually indefinitely. Although I have pointed it out elsewhere, it is worth noting again that in the seventeen year history of Thameside, there have been only two leaders, even though seventeen annual general meetings have taken place. The annual general meeting is essentially a ritual event which legalizes the deals and counterdeals which have been made throughout the year in the struggle for chairs and vice-chairs within the Council.
In addition to the Leader, the real power in the Group is held by three other officers: the Deputy Leader, the Chief Whip, and the Deputy Whip. While the Chairman of the Group is an impressive title, he is regarded in much the same manner as the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. His influence is strictly limited to the procedural matters of running the Group meetings in a parliamentary sense. The power he possesses starts and ends there; he is essentially an agenda administrator and little more. However, the Leader and Deputy and the Chief Whip and Deputy are by far the most important men on the Council, and as they are in direct control of the Council's decision making ability, they also become the most important members of the Labour Party. Their power stems from several facets of the offices that they hold. The Leader controls appointments and policy direction, with the Deputy Leader as his aide; the Chief Whip controls discipline and Group supervision, with the Deputy Whip as his aide. In addition, with the exception of the Chairman of the Group, they are the only Council members who may sit in on any meeting of any of the committees of the Council, and who have access to all agendas from all other committees. Control of this information is critical to the control of committee activities and committee members. The Leadership also sits on the most powerful committee of the Council, the Policy Committee, with the Leader as Chairman and the Deputy Leader as Vice-Chair. As Dillys Hill points out:

..... committees remain the real center of power in the community. The key to this power is the role of the committee chairman and his relationship with the chief officers. The
Chairman will be an influential figure; and where the council is run on strong party political lines he is likely to be a leader of the party group and a member of that small inner body of influential leaders who form, in many councils, a kind of 'cabinet' (1970:34).

This "cabinet" in Thameside is the Policy Committee. The chairman of the major committees of the Council, together with the four major Group Officers, constitute the most important committee within the authority, the Policy Committee. By their power of appointment, the Leadership and especially the Leader himself, controls the constitution of that committee; by this appointment the cabinet level Policy Committee is subordinate to the Leadership. The authority to appoint chairmen can be used to eliminate opposition or discord by simply removing the offenders from their chairs and thus from the Policy Committee of the Council. Of course, this power must be tempered with discretion, for not all serving councillors have the ability or the desire to take on the responsibility of Chairmen. Clearly, however, the power of the Group officers not only extends to the Group itself in a partisan party sense, but is also a direct means of control over the most important decision making committee of the Council.

As has been pointed out, the appointment of Chairs by the Leader is one of the major ways in which political patronage and gifts are extended throughout the Council. Support in the yearly leadership fight can and does result in certain appointments for individual members. This is true of any Leader and was well known to be Dewey's technique
for maintaining the Leadership through ten years of control. In fact, his control was so strong that it earned him the nickname of "Big James Dewey," or more often, "The Godfather." One of the Group officers said it this way:

It goes back over the years—but James Dewey thought he was the Godfather sort of thing. He thought he was the number one man, that everyone flourished around James, because if he was elected each year, each May, then James could hand out 20 chairmanships, and thus secure 40\* of the 70 votes on the Council night.

The process of determining chairmanships by the Leader has always been a major source of power for the Leadership, but it has undergone considerable alteration since the borough came into existence in 1966. The power of appointment has always been there, but in the initial three years of the authority, the chairs and vice chairs were nominated and then taken to the Group as a whole for consideration and approval. Initially, the nominations were taken to Group and then a majority of Group members had to approve them for the appointments to be official. As Dewey originally controlled a majority in Thameside, the appointments were approved in those years, but with considerable debate and argument. As one councillor saw it:

For a few times, in the early years of Thameside, it was all done by vote. And it was chaos. There was arguing and fighting and in the end we were up all night and we wasn't getting anywhere. But the point was that he could still offer it, the chairmanships and the vice-chairmanships and because of the majority he could say who would be chairman and who wouldn't be.

\*20 Chairs and 20 Vice-Chairs: 40 total
Nor does the present leader have any sympathy for the democratic election of Chairmen to the committees of the council. Even though he was elected to his post because the rank and file of the council felt that there was too little democracy under Dewey's leadership, one of the new Leader's first actions was to strengthen the role of the Group leadership in the appointment of Chairs. Mr. Garner told me:

It used to be that officers would first draw up a list for the approval of the Group; in fact, the Group never changed them. But the situation has altered now. The officers draw up a list and report. The Group are informed by report, but the Group do not decide.

Within the leadership of the Group, by far the most influential individual is the Leader himself. As Leader, he is automatically the Chairman of the Policy committee of the Council, and sits ex officio on every committee of the council, as do other members of the leadership. While it was often argued that the other members of the leadership constitute a check on this appointment power, the reality is that the Leader makes the crucial decisions in this matter. As Mr. Garner commented:

Well I think that it is right that whoever happens to be the leader, whether it is James Dewey or me, or whomever, I think that they ought to be able to see that the people around them are the people best suited to the job, as they see it. I know that in Europe, they have a completely different system. And to me it is completely crazy. They divide the council up into its committees and at its first meeting they elect the chairman. I think this is a nonsense. Because its your chairmen who sit on your policy committee, which is to my mind the most important committee we have, the people who shape the future plans of this borough.
Considerations other than patronage must be taken into account in some appointments. Rob Buckley, the Chair of the Finance Committee, was widely recognized as an expert in this field and the best and most capable man on the Council to run this committee. His job experience as a financial officer in a neighboring borough and his demeanor on the Council made him a perfect choice whomever the Leader might have been. His was the best run of all the Committees of the Council and his appointment to that powerful office was assured in spite of the fact that he had a reputation as a maverick, loyal to no faction or ideology, save efficiency and the good of Thameside. Such considerations always conditioned the decisions taken by the leadership, for a bad chairman of a powerful committee is found out in the course of a year's business on the Council. Such an appointment reflects not only on the Chairman himself, but also on the Leader who appoints him.

Other appointments were clearly political plums. One of the most sought after was appointment to the Chair of the International Links Subcommittee of the Amenities Committee. This sub-committee was known as the "twinning" committee because the major purpose was to maintain contact with various "twin-towns" on the Continent. This contact included sending the Chair and Vice-Chair and spouses to the twin-town on the Continent, all expenses paid by the Council and therefore the ratepayers of the borough. The woman who was appointed Chair 1974-5 was rumoured to be receiving payment for her and her husband's support in the Leadership fight of that year. Their support was critical not only for their votes, but also for their considerable influence on new Council members, for which they became known as "Kingmakers".
The role of the Leader in this process is a difficult one politically. Although he may want to appoint those who are loyal to him within the Group, often these members may not be competent enough to run a major committee; and he also runs the risk of alienating completely the other factions of the Council. He had also to create the impression that he was not dictating the appointments to the leadership, although my discussions with the other members of the Group leadership indicated that his choices were very little changed from his original ideas.

Mr. Garner described this delicate process this way:

Yes, I think you've got to work together. If you look at our present chairmen, you find a mixture and I think that healthy. I think it is right that he (the leader) has a major influence within the group of officers, but the officers can act as a check, and they do. I drew up a provisional list as I saw it. And then the officers got together and chewed it over, and I think in fact, we had a second meeting and only then did we have a finalized list. I started contacting everybody and of course there were one or two who felt they couldn't serve for different reasons, so there was a final list at the end of the day.

The question remains, however, about the degree of influence of the other members within the leadership on this kind of decision. While the decision is made by all four major officers in one sense, it is my opinion that the major source of determination comes from the Leader himself. While the other officers act in an advisory capacity, the final decision comes from the Leader himself. Mr. Garner stated:

This is the exercise of power we are talking about here, and even at the end of the day,
people will say he's the man who makes the decision, we don't entirely agree with it, but we'll go along. People have nevertheless got to feel involved in the decision and certainly I've tried to do that.

The enormous power of the Leader is not only recognized within the Group but also within the Labour Party itself. While Gus Williams was considered to be the most powerful man within the Labour Party of Thameside for purely Party purposes (i.e. within the General Management Committee of the Party) there was no question in his mind about the role of the Leader in the process of decision making within the borough. When questioned about the power of the Leader of the Group, his opinion was definitive:

In my opinion, the Leader has to carry out all his duties as a leader and should be the most powerful as far as the Council is concerned. No question about that. If the members wish to dispute any rulings made by the Leader, then they have the full opportunity to do so at the private meetings of the Group. I think the Leader should be allowed to lead. That's the whole point of leadership.

The power of the Leader within the English local government system has often been compared to the model "American Boss" of big cities such as Chicago. In reality the model of the American Boss does not represent the role of the Leader within the Thameside Borough Council, for American bosses are primarily power brokers over a system of decentralized political influence. As such, bosses such as the late Richard J. Daley balanced opposing fragments of political influence from a central fulcrum through the use of patronage, guile, and outright
graft. These bosses represent a central hub around which the divergent political interests of a multicultural urban complex circulate and jockey for time, attention, and money. As Banfield and Wilson observe:

Chicago is a city in which the extreme decentralization of authority has been overcome by an extreme centralization of power, the power being based mainly on specific inducements. That is to say, he is a broker in the business (so to speak) of buying and selling political power. He performs an entrepreneurial function by overcoming the decentralization of authority that prevents anything from being done... (1963: 104)

Although the manipulation of committee chairmanships already described may seem on the surface to the casual observer to be "the buying and selling of political power," the real difference lies in the fact that the London case is already completely centralized from the outset. Unlike the American city, there are few islands of political influence outside of the Council, and the role of the political leader correspondingly much more secure. He may participate in intermediate groups, but their political importance is negligible within the Labour Party apparatus. As the Chief Whip pointed out:

Phil Garner, he is mixing with all the fringe groups in the borough, and it's a wonderful thing. Dewey wouldn't have tolerated them. He wouldn't have given them the time of day. But Phil is mixing with the arts, and the law centers, and the legal advice, you name it, and the festivals... he's actually contacting these people. They appreciate it. The Council don't. I don't because all those people don't give me one extra vote on April the 21st to make Phil Garner Leader. It's my job to sway the thing and to make sure that Garner is returned.
Now, in fact, all the people he mixes with, all the artists, and the legal groups, and the social workers—not one of them ever vote on that night.

The direct control of the Council's many concerns lies in the hands of the Group leadership and thus with the Leader. The feeling in the Group and the Labour Party is that once elected they possess the mandate of the people of Thameside and they are the sole representatives of the borough in a political sense. Meddling in the Council's business is not appreciated, nor is there any need in a political sense, to negotiate with these groups. This is so because they have no legitimate base for their power within the Standing Orders of the London Borough of Thameside. In a sense, George Foster's image of limited good prevails in the political atmosphere of Thameside. The more power is decentralized, the less power that exists for the Council and thus the Leader himself. Intermediate groups are mistrusted and disliked by council members as they represent a potential for the diminution of the political control of the Labour Party Group.

As a prominent Thameside councillor pointed out:

Actually Phil's (the Leader's) policies are tending toward a tangent toward all sorts of wierd organizations, that you must admit you know of, and I don't think really get the sympathy of the public and certainly don't get the sympathy of the Council, at all, and lots of things are done and conniving is done, that most councillors don't notice but some do...

What is considered "conniving" by the councillor quoted above is the essential process of bargaining which characterizes American politics in large urban areas. While "horse-trading" is appropriate in
the Thameside Labour Party Group, it is considered inappropriate and even politically dangerous with other groups in the borough. Banfield and Wilson point out that Chicago represents the greatest degree of centralization in the American city, while Los Angeles represents the highest degree of decentralization, having a completely non-partisan council. As they observe (1963: 110): "The fifteen councilmen owe nothing to the mayor or to each other, and are therefore under no discipline." In general, however, it is fair to say that bargaining with groups outside of the council, the intermediates between the electorate and the elected, characterizes American urban political processes much more than it does urban politics in Britain. Michael Hill makes this point clearly:

"... whereas in Britain, it is highly probable that power will be in the hands of the formally designated powerholders, in the United States power has to be sought by informal means. The fragmentation of formal power in American towns means that effective government depends on the skillful creation of informal coalitions (Hill 1975: 210).

This centralization of both formal decision making and party politics can be further demonstrated by the fact that in England and Wales there are about 1400 separate local authorities, while New York City alone is carved up into 1400 separate authoritative bodies*. In essence, the creation of coalitions in the English case is made unnecessary by the formal concentration of power written into English law. In Thameside, this concentration of power is made even more formidable.

by the fact that only one party possesses any claim on the political mandate.

Hill distinguishes three styles of political action which allow for real comparisons between the English and American cases.

In this chapter three...styles of local government will be distinguished: these will be called 'ideological politics,' 'bargaining politics,' and 'administrative politics.' In general terms, 'bargaining politics' can be seen as the characteristic system in American local government because of the dispersion of power, while the other two styles are most commonly found in England (1975: 210).

Hill reserves the "ideological politics" for local systems in which there are real ideological clashes within the Council, wherein competing Party Groups slug it out over issues. "Administrative politics" characterize party systems in which one party has complete control of the Council's decision making apparatus. While I feel that Thameside represents a combination of both ideological and administrative politics because of personal factionalism within the Labour Party Group, the major point is that the bargaining power of groups outside of the Thameside Labour Party is extremely limited. Bargaining with intermediate or "pressure" groups, is not an aspect of the maintenance of political authority; in fact, such bargaining can be dangerous to the Party Leadership. What follows is an example of this danger.

One of the most influential groups outside of the Council from 1974-76 was the squatter's cooperative known as Williams House. This
group of people had taken over a block of flats known by that name which was scheduled for modernization by the Council and had enlisted the aid of the Thameside News in its campaign. There was a substantial amount of enmity between the members of Williams House and the Thameside Borough Council and Labour Party, so much so that Aldgate ward introduced a motion to the Annual General Meeting of the General Management Committee, 1975, which passed overwhelmingly. It read:

Resolved that this Ward views with concern the attitude of certain Thameside Social Workers in relation to squatters, in that they are condoning squatting and on occasions advising people to squat on Council property. This ward requests that the General Management Committee press the Council to make an enquiry into this matter and the payments made to squatters from public funds.

Although Williams House was not mentioned by name, social workers had informed me that they were indeed advising people to squat there to put pressure on the Council to change both its policy on homeless families and its policy on housing in general. Williams House was the main impetus behind this motion to the Party. Both the Council and the Party were very upset by the headlines given to this squatter's cooperative by the local and the regional press, as they saw these squatters as illegal occupiers of Council housing, which indeed they were. Worse than that, they were viewed throughout the borough as "queue jumpers," people who were not willing to wait their rightful turn to receive the benefits of public housing. Indeed, the Leader had taken a clear public stand in the issue of squatting. Garner
had stood up in open Council and said that the people of Thameside had taken enough of the squatters, that they were queue jumpers and that the people of the borough were not going to take any more. This was met with wild applause and was considered his definitive statement on the subject of Williams House.

The truth is a bit different. As part of Phil's new style of leadership, he was indeed meeting with groups in the community, and I knew from the leaders of the Williams House Cooperative that they were one of the groups with whom he was meeting, albeit in secret. In fact, these meetings were so secret that they were taking place in another borough across the Thames river in a pub unlikely to be frequented by anyone from Thameside. In these meetings, they were discussing ways that both parties, the Council and Williams House, could come to some agreeable means of resolving the problem. Phil consistently denied that these meetings were taking place, but I knew that they were because of my informants in the Coop itself. Finally, when he was told by members of the Coop that I knew, he admitted it to me, but asked me to keep it quiet.

Why did these meetings have to take place secretly? The obvious reason is that this aspect of bargaining with local groups could have cost Phil the Leadership of the Group. While it is true that Williams House represented the most sensitive of these intermediate groups during that period, this case is instructive, for it demonstrates the kind of balancing act a Leader had to perform in order to placate both the groups within the borough who were seeking influence and those
within the Council Group and Party who controlled access to the reins of power. Had they discovered this "conniving" on the part of the Leader, the political consequences could have been devastating. The Party and the Group were both in the public record as being absolutely against the Williams House Coop, and even in favor of instant eviction. Should they have learned that the Leader was negotiating with the Coop behind their backs, the consequences could have been disastrous for the new Leader. The fact is that pressure groups were seen as outside the formal corridors of power, and were actually bargained with only when they presented a threat.

This is not to say that the Council did not consult with such groups as the local Festivals, the law centers, Cambridge House, and so on. But it must be clearly pointed out that bargaining in the American sense implies some possession of power on both sides in the process. Intermediate groups in Thameside do not bargain with the Council because they possess no power base from which to bargain. They may ask and potentially receive, but they have little of political value with which to bargain.

In this sense, there was no need for the politicians to pay attention to these intermediate groups or include them in the process of political power broking simply because their electoral base was not affected by their actions. The number of votes they controlled simply could not offset the Labour turnout and they were thus politically impotent when compared to the Labour Party. Michael Hill makes this situation abundantly clear:
There is another sense in which many people in local government in Britain tend to exaggerate the extent to which there is a bargaining element in the political system; this is the attention which is paid to pressure groups. There is a tendency for the 'rule of anticipated reactions' to operate in which it is assumed that pressure groups will have electoral influence when in practice local elections are normally decided by the popularity of the parties at the national level, and local controversies rarely have much impact. (1975: 223)

In the Thameside situation, even the national voting patterns had no effect on the Labour composition of the Council. Party members had an accurate estimate of the electoral situation which went "We weigh our votes and count theirs." As a result, the degree of political power which diffused throughout the borough was strictly controlled and managed by the Thameside Labour Party Group. Without effective opposition, and with the strictest of internal discipline, the Group constituted the only real decision making body on the local level. This decision-making role was not extended to the community at large, as it is in a city like Los Angeles, through referenda; rather, it was consolidated through intraparty processes into a working political machine which has few, if any, counterparts in the United States. As Kantor comments:

English local politics provides a singular opportunity to examine the capacity of a well-organized party system to prevent power from becoming diffused into multi-centered islands of decision making (1974: 10).
THE THAMESIDE LABOUR PARTY GROUP AND INFORMATION CONTROL

One of the most outstanding features of the Labour Party Group in Thameside is the degree of control exerted on the flow of information throughout that organization. Possession of this information is one of the most vital political resources within the Group and the control of its flow is central to the operation of the Council itself.

The Labour Party Group can be compared to a secret service organization in which each item of information is passed along through the hierarchy on a specific "need to know only" basis.

In this scheme, those with the least need to know are outsiders, or the public, for whom it is felt that there is very little "need to know." The next level would be the Labour Party rank and file, ward members and the like, who have a general knowledge of the operation of their ward, and some knowledge of the General Management Committee. They have very little knowledge of the operations of the Executive Committee, and finally, have little or no knowledge of the operations of the Thameside Labour Party Group. Members of the General Management Committee have somewhat more information of Group operations, as they have direct contact with the Party elite and participate in discussions about Party policy and discipline, which in turn influences Group policy and discipline. Since the Officers of the Executive Committee are also influential and powerful members of the Labour Party Group, they constitute the level of the Party and Group hierarchy with the greatest demonstrated need to know, and therefore have the greatest access to valuable
information within the system. All others have varying levels of need, and varying levels of information, depending on their place within the Party and Group hierarchies.

Even the position of rank and file councillors was not ideal in terms of information flow. Although representing the higher levels of both the borough and Party organization, few councillors actually had access to all the agendas and minutes which were forthcoming from the meetings of the Council. In fact, the only council members with this ultimate information access to agendas and minutes were the Leader, the Chairman of the Group, the Chief and Deputy Whips. Even the Party Chairman and the Party Secretary, the most important people within the Labour Party organization, did not have this kind of access to the reins of information within the Council and the Group. Only with the approval of the Leader could other members of the Council be allowed access to the minutes and agendas of committees other than the ones of which they were members. This restriction not only endorsed the elite status of the Group leadership, but put them in a position to oversee the actions of other councillors through their access to these privileged documents and thereby judge their performance in political terms. This was a privilege not allowed any other lay members of the Council. In addition, this compartmentalization of council activities meant that communication between committees on overlapping issues was extremely difficult, and in some cases, downright humourous (See Chapter on "Flowers and Houses: Administrators and Politics"). This right of
access was jealously guarded and purposively used in political infighting, per the formula, "knowledge is power." Only the four leaders of the Group are allowed to attend any of the committees of the Council which they choose, further reinforcing the information network within the Leadership. As the Deputy Whip observed:

Since early 1974, with the agreement of the whole Labour Group, with no dissension, the Deputy Whip was given the power to attend any committee, and if the Chief Whip wasn't there, to then be able to take part in the committee and to have the full voting rights, which is something which doesn't fall to any more than four members of the Group. Now the powers of the Deputy Whip are that much increased. The other thing is, whereas subcommittees of the major committees were not open to lay members of the committee, or indeed lay members of the council....Again, lay members of the committees, unless they are members of the subcommittees are not entitled to these agendas and the Deputy Whip is.

The information flow within the Council was a principal means of brokering power within the system. The equation of power brokering went:

As a member of the leadership, of the Council elite, I possess information you desire. That information means that I am in a stronger bargaining position than you are, unless you have information which I desire. As a member of the leadership, I do not have that problem, since all activities of the Council are open to me on a continuing basis, and therefore you cannot have information which I do not possess. As a result, the leadership once democratically elected was in an extremely strong position in terms of information with the lay members of the Council.
This fact was reinforced by the existence of the policy subcommittees. "Policy subs" as they came to be called, were instituted to provide ostensible means of communication between the Council and Group leadership and the lay members of the Council on issues of strategic and policy importance. The policy subs served to link members of appropriate committees to the leadership and thereby assure a significant dialog on sensitive and important issues. Their existence muddled an already unclear picture of essential importance to my study: where were decisions being taken? And who was taking them? Beyond the difficulty of sorting out the administrators from the councillors in these terms, as my research progressed the policy subcommittees kept coming up. Their nominal purpose was advisory and communications only, but the more probing I did, the more their true purpose emerged: means of controlling the decision making within the Council without recourse to the Labour Party Group.

The ideal decision making apparatus within Thameside was the Labour Party Group. In fact, this "town meeting" of all the Council members was entirely too unwieldy to really provide decisions on a week to week basis. The interlocutor between the Group and the Council committees was also supposed to be the Policy committee per se, composed of all the Chairs of various committees and the Group leadership, but even this was often too large a forum for decisive action. As a result, the position of the policy subcommittees evolved as a means of referring actions to the Group for final approval. The essential problem that the sub-committees addressed was the lack of information possessed or seen
by the lay members of the Council. This was overcome by calling to-
gether the members of the Council who did possess the necessary inform-
ation and political acumen to come to a decision which was then approv-
ed, endorsed and legitimized by the whole Group at the next meeting.

The political and organization problems of this information sys-
tem were enormous. In the first place, the only legitimate decision
making body within the Council structure was perceived as the Thameside
Labour Party Group, with all seventy members as the final check and bal-
ance on decision making. On the other hand, the potential for actual
decision making by the Group was limited by both the number of times it
met in a year (every six weeks) and by the lack of information which
the lay members of the Council possessed when it did meet. Only those
councillors directly involved in particular issues within their formal
committees got direct information; any other information they possessed
came either from meetings such as policy subs, from officers when it was
authorized by the Leadership, and most often through rumour and gossip
from other councillors. As a result, a bifurcation of power came to ex-
ist between the Group and the policy subcommittees in terms of decision
making. Many of the members of the Council pointed out that the policy
subs were becoming a major factor in the decisions being taken, and that
this correspondingly decreased the power of the Group. The Leader of
the Council did not agree:

No, I simply don't accept it. I think that people's view of what the Group should and should not do
varies. Certainly the Group should be the ultimate decider of policy. No doubt about that. I think
that a lot of members of the authority think that they should be involved in the day to day running
of departments. And if you go along to our Group meetings, which obviously you can't, because you're not a member of the Group, even though I know that you'd dearly like to, a lot of the discussion at those Group meetings are not on the major policy issues. The point of the policy sub committee, the idea of those policy subs is that they can go into some detail with officer advice, backing, and research.

Our Labour Group meetings last too long. Bear in mind that we have one Group meeting two nights before the Council meeting. We try in that session to cover all the wister of policy changes.

The justification for the policy subs is therefore the enormous amount of information which must be sifted before decisions can be made. But the question of where these decisions are actually being taken and by whom still evades easy resolution. In a formal sense, of course, the decisions are being taken within individual committees and then by the whole Labour Party Group. The Deputy Leader espoused this view eloquently, but then went on to reveal the informal view of the decisive process. In essence, the position of the Leadership can be summarized by the following exchange. I asked the Deputy Leader "Which committee is most important in making binding decisions for Thameside?" He replied:

Well, I wouldn't name a Council committee. I would say the Labour Group. Because we all think we're democratic enough to come to a decision of all members of the Group to decide what policy will be. It's then left to the policy committee and sub-committees to instruct other committees to carry out the policy of the Labour Group. The Group can never be bypassed. Because the whole of the Council, if they vote with the majority of one against anything, whatever the policy committee decides to do, they can overturn it.
If the policy committee recommends something, it is purely a recommendation, it will then go to the Council. If the Council decides no, then it's no. If the Council decides yes, then it's yes.

This idealized view of the operations of Group democracy was much repeated during my research. If the whole Council, i.e. the whole Group says yes, then the matter is agreed. The reverse is also true; therefore the decision making process resides with the duly elected members of the Council meeting and deciding as the Group. The Group makes policy and then instructs the committees of the Council to carry it out. Lay members in this scheme have as much power as the leadership and act as a check on any arbitrary power which is achieved or planned by the leadership.

This model democratic system cannot and does not exist for several reasons. First and foremost is the information system which I have described, which restricts and controls the access to important factors basic to any decision. Second, the leadership itself perceives its role as a "semi-permeable membrane" determining what is and is not critical information for any decision taken by the Council by determining the kind and quality of information which the lay Council member possesses. Third, the quality of the councillors themselves means that many of the rank and file members were simply not qualified to speak to the issues at hand even when presented with the information. Fourth, as a result of the uneven quality of the Council members, the leadership perceived its role as a kind of machinery kept the Party functioning in spite of the uneven personalities who composed the Council.
The nature of this machine, or what many informants called "the Party insiders" was much more often denied than affirmed during my research. The essential question remained, however, did decision making within the borough go from the bottom up or the top down? It is clear to me that the second alternative more adequately describes the situation. One reason that it was so often denied is the perceived need of the Labour Party to represent itself as the most democratic party, and therefore the most representative. If democracy means that the leadership is elected by the members of the Labour Party Group and then decisions should be delegated to the elected leadership, then the Thameside Labour Party is definitely democratic. The notion, however, that the Party rank and file in the Council had direct control of the decisive processes cannot be validated. As the Deputy Whip stated:

I would say that about 97-98% of all of the policy committee recommendations are approved by the Group. Very few of them are turned down. The party machine was put together with a group of officers who were capable of beating other people. And that's why we were elected as officers, to oust a regime we didn't like. To determine and discuss policy and carry it out. With the authority of the Labour Group, because that's where the authority lies.

This authority is not the same as power to make decisions and this distinction must be made clearly. Although it is quite true that the Group possesses the ultimate legitimizing authority to determine both the leadership and major policy goals, the power to direct policy decisions rests squarely with the policy committee and sub committees. One might ask the question: Where do we draw the line between control
and democracy? At what point can we say that a small elite is controlling a democratic organization in its daily decision making when its ultimate right to rule comes from an elective process?

The Leader of the Council, while not answering the question, had a reply to the general notion:

That's only because people have found out that in order to do something, you've got to move it to a smaller and smaller group. The danger is that you'll move it to a small group and end up with one, which is a dictatorship. And it doesn't work that way here, fortunately. At most levels there is a check.

I think this is the difference of the various views of what the role of the member should be. I see the member's role in being given all the basic information he requires on major policy items, and it should be presented to all members and come through to all members, and then a decision can be made. This is how I see the member's role.

The distinction between power and authority in decision making is critical to an understanding of the Leader's perception of the role of the councillor. In his view, the councillor has delegated the power of decision making to the leadership of the Group through the elective process, and then has a proper role in acting as a watchdog over the power so delegated. It is not, in any sense, a matter of quid pro quo between the leadership and the lay members of the Council, but rather a question of a dynamic struggle for legitimacy. The fact that both parties are involved in this struggle does not mean that they possess parity in terms of decision making. The notion that they do, or that there is some sort of equality between the large numbers of lay members and the Council leadership is what might be called "the political illusion"
(with gratitude to Jacques Ellul). This illusion is both useful to the lay members of the Council and to the leadership, as it harks again to the source of their legitimacy, the fact of their elective status.

This illusion of democratic process is upheld both by the leadership and by the rank and file of the councillors because of their right to rule is based on this assumption. It is also the public face of political action which they wish to present to the electorate at large, while obfuscating the real machinations which underpin the processes of decision making within the Council. A former Chairman had some insightful comments about this illusion:

I look at the policy and most of policy I agree with. As long as I agree, whatever they decide is alright....It seems to be democratic. If people are not happy with the policy and they think the leadership is using this they should scream. Make it be known.

(Now is the Group as a whole being bypassed by the policy committee and subcommittees?) Yeah, but that's not a bad thing, is it? The policy committee is the most powerful group on here. Now if they're running the right policies the right way, I don't mind. The end justifies the means. Because it's very hard to give good ideas when you've got seventy people. Keep it away from the Group, better still.

There is, therefore, a tacit recognition by both the leadership and the lay members of the Group that decisive action cannot take place within the context of the whole Group, but must be achieved by smaller groups of councillors. Whether this was the expressed intent of the borough reorganization plans, the infamous "green books" is still open to question. The effect has been to take the power of the Group and to
delegate it to these policy subcommittees and thus to remove the rank
and file councillor even farther from the decision making process. The
Leader noted:

Remember who set it up? (The policy committee
and subcommittees) I mean, I was in favour
of it, the change in committee structure,
the change in the administrative set up,
the famous 'three green books,' I was dead
in favour of it all. James Dewey (former
Leader) must have known of the changes it
would bring. That there would be a central
policy making role within the Council itself.
We've never had it before and it in fact made
administration within the Council very diffi-
cult. People have got to try to involve them-
selves not only in the Group, every six weeks,
but in the day to day running of the Council
and see what that means.

Jacques Ellul summarizes the fact of the illusion of control by lay
councillors when he observes:

Ultimately, every decision becomes independent
of individuals. And just as every decision is
anonymous, the criteria of judgement, the pro-
cesses, the methods of action employed by each
service or each bureaucratic element are com-
pletely secret. Here one must distinguish be-
tween official public juridical forms and rules
known only to interested parties—which, even
if they were made public, would still be known
only to the interested parties as they are too
numerous and technical—and decisive customs
that remain absolutely secret (1972: 148).

Beyond the secrecy involved in decision making, the illusion of control
over that decision making process is what Ellul terms "the political
illusion." This illusion in Thameside is the notion that rank and file
party members or the electorate at large control decisive processes.
The Public and Information Control

The amount of public access to the Council machine is limited. Both the organization of the Thameside Labour Party and the statutes under which the Thameside Borough Council operate act to control and in some cases, exclude the public from observing decision-making processes on the local level. The operations of the Council, for example, take place almost exclusively behind closed doors when important issues are being considered. The processes of debate between members themselves and between officers and members can only be discovered indirectly, whether by the public or the professional investigator. Discovering what actually happens within a local council such as the Thameside Borough Council is a difficult process of acquiring hearsay, gossip, and personal interviews.

Even the individual who joins the Thameside Labour Party in hopes of learning these facts directly finds that the lower levels of the Labour Party hierarchy are not ideal in terms of information acquisition. Only those who possess access to the upper echelons of the Party, such as the General Management Committee, and more importantly, the Executive Committee have free access to the information upon which decisions are based. This information is a valuable political asset and traded within the Party and the Council much like a rare commodity. It is the coin of the realm of the Thameside Borough Council, and is seldom given freely. On more than one occasion, I was given "confidential" information by a council member to which the public had no access even though it clearly
affected their lives and the fate of the borough in which they lived.

The highly centralized system of Labour Party control in Thameside does not lend itself to public access or input. Meetings of the whole Council, while open to the public, are more ceremonial than substantive in nature. The real work of the Council is performed behind closed doors, both within the Party and within the Council apparatus itself. While all committee meetings of the Council are open to the public, this free access does not include the second part of these meetings, in which the real decision making takes place. This secrecy is reinforced by acts of Parliament, specifically Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act, 1960. This Section is voted upon as the first public act of each committee meeting, thus making the most important portions of all meetings entirely excluded from the public.

A sign is posted prior to each meeting which reads, in part:

Because of the confidential nature of the Council business to be transacted, and the need to receive advice from the appropriate officers of the Council, the Committee will be asked to consider passing a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies Act, 1960, to exclude the public during part II of this meeting.

In some cases, the public is excluded from the entire meeting, save the vote on the exclusion of the public, which is public. The official justification for this procedure which appears on all council agendas is as follows:

...that the public be excluded from this meeting during Section II of the agenda as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and because of the need to consider recommendations from the appropriate officers of the Council.

In virtually all cases, the public interest is served by voting for
exclusion if the record of the Labour Party of Thameside is any indication. The members of the public choosing to attend these meetings will hear very little more than the introduction of the motions and the voiced "agreed" on the issues. I attended more than one hundred of these meetings, and was excluded from each along with the local press. On less than ten occasions were there more than three members of the public in attendance; usually the appointed reporter and I were the only people in the gallery. There is no doubt, however, that important decision making activities were going on at these meetings; but the simple fact is that the public was purposively excluded from the debate which underpinned that decision making process. This feature of English local government is even more important when one considers Dillys Hill's statement as to the importance of the committees in the overall process of local government:

The outstanding feature of local administration in this country is the committee system. The full council is ultimately responsible for action taken in the authorities' name, but the actual administration of the separate services is done through a series of committees. In the majority of local authorities, the council meets monthly, considers the reports from the various committees and directs what action is to be taken (1970: 31).

The limitations of public access to the inner workings of these committees is justified on three basic grounds. First, the public at large elected the members of the committees and thereby gave them the political mandate to exercise the will of the people as they saw fit. This is by far the most often mentioned reason in Thameside, and one which has
real political overtones. Second, much of the debate is presumed to be "private" in nature because of the sensitive nature of the information to be discussed. Examples of such sensitive issues include land to be purchased by the council and the extension of compulsory purchase orders by the council. In these specific cases, the public would be excluded from the critical meetings of the Development and Finance committees at the very least. The public is excluded from these committees to prevent land speculation or adverse publicity which might affect the final outcome with buyers or sellers. In fact, when a large tourist hotel was built in the area, along with an extremely exclusive yacht harbor and club, there was a considerable amount of negative public reaction to both the sale and the way in which the deal was accomplished. This can be measured by the fact that once the sale was final, memberships in the yacht club were conferred on any future Thameside councillors while membership to the club for the public at large was very expensive. Councillors who went to the club did so quietly, even secretly, for fear of the public reaction which would accompany knowledge of such a perquisite of public office.* Another example often cited is the Social Services Committee, wherein the fate of unfortunate families and their needs are discussed. As real names are used in such cases, the exclusion of the public prevents unnecessary embarrassment to those in difficult circumstances. The third justification holds that discussions between officers and councillors must be frank and direct,

*I was taken there on two separate occasions, once by the Deputy Whip, and once by another councillor. I was warned by both not to mention to other councillors or the public that I had been there.
and as a result often takes the form of what we call "political hardball." In this case exclusion is justified as protecting the reputations and images of both officers and councillors in what are often heated discussions and disputations.

While there can be no doubt as to the validity of some of these propositions, the net effect is to exclude the public from the processes which control and govern their lives on the local level. Virtually all decisions of importance take place under a cloak of secrecy which is difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate. As Dillys Hill notes:

Councillors are connected with many... groups. But they form a charmed circle, closely in touch with each other but somewhat insulated from a probing public opinion by an air of secrecy.

...the safeguards also tend to silence legitimate discussion outside the existing council committees. It is hard for the individual to make his voice heard. Groups cannot take part in discussion before final decisions are made. Our democratic tradition encourages councillors to emphasize elected, responsible, government. The main stress is on a single, hierarchical system, where opinions and demands pass from elector through the parties and elections to the representatives...

The communications gap between governors and the governed is very real (1970: 108-9).

It was often argued in Thameside that this gap between the governors and the governed was bridged by such devices as the surgeries and civic meetings, open meetings where councillors could meet with members of the community. Each councillor was to hold a surgery for his constituents every other week; problems presented included housing, street and sewer care, bus stops, and in fact the entire range of problems which the
authority controls. The input of the public within this context is very real, and the surgeries are often an effective means of problem solving for individuals who attend.

This effectiveness does not, however, address the central problem of local government closure. The civic meetings and surgeries are attempts to overcome this closure, while still retaining the decision making authority within the system as it exists. While problems can be brought up to the elected representatives within these contexts, the actual resolution of the conflicts and the debates and decision making processes which resolve them still take place outside of public access. In a real sense, both civic meetings and surgeries are means whereby the notion of public access is managed by the council. This management, properly handled, results in the image of public control while maintaining the reality of private control within the Council context. As the Chief Executive pointed out:

"....there are many other ways of getting..... back into the system. We have a civic meeting, and also surgeries in this council, because we know that the formal mechanism doesn't work. Because we know that the formal mechanism doesn't work, we've set up something outside the system. You see, the theory upon which local government rests in Britain is the parliamentary representation. That is, the people get a chance at the ballot box, and by their votes they elect the representatives who make decisions.

In 1974, the borough elections resulted in an electoral turnout of 18.3%, with five of the twenty wards uncontested. The percentage turnout was the lowest in all of London (32 boroughs) and only one other
borough (Newham) had an equal number of uncontested wards. The theory of British local government which specifies that the people "get a chance at the ballot box" must certainly be tempered with the realization that 81.7% of the electorate refused to vote at all in the local Council elections.* It is interesting to note, however, that 85.8% of the votes were cast for Labour candidates, also the highest percentage in London.

This information can be interpreted in a number of ways. Most often it was interpreted by members of the Party and the Council as the justification for their perceived political mandate within the Borough. As one member from Dockside put it:

In reality, there's no anti vote. I look at it this way, if they don't want you, they'll vote against you. If they're happy or there's apathy there, they don't care who runs it, they don't care period, but they would vote for us if there was a fight.

I don't see how much democracy you can get. I think that the big party political machines have taken away the sort of democracy you've got in local elections, people try and may win an election on one specific thing, but after that they go back again and vote for the parties again. If you've got only 13% of the people voting, that means either one thing (sic) they're happy with what they've got, or apathetic and deserve what they get.

This apathy as revealed in the low voter turnout bears directly on the access to information and the control of information as determined by the Thameside Labour Party. Control of information in this sense is

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*In 1971, the vote was 25.9%: five uncontested wards
In 1968, the vote was 14.3%: eight uncontested wards
Average voter turnout 1968-1974: 19.5%
Average voter non turnout: 80.5%
that if one is to have access to the reins of power or information, one must join the Labour Party. Other groups within the borough lack legitimacy from the Party context precisely because they do not have information necessary to the process of intelligent decision making. The process is self-fulfilling because the Party prevents them from having this information or being a part of the decision making process because it restricts such knowledge to members of the Party faithful, subject to strict Party discipline. In this sense, political credibility and reliability guarantee Party continuity but prevent local democracy. The Leader of the Council had this to say:

The Labour Party as I see it is a machine, certainly. And what it is, it's the process, its the machine for channeling ideas. Whether a person is an ordinary member of the Party, or an officer of the ward, or on the Management Committee, or an elected member, the Party is basically there to discuss ideas. To see what is the most acceptable method of working between a group of people. You as an individual have got an idea, you've got to persuade somebody. You start persuading people who are like minded to you and you prove that by joining the Party.

A critical feature of this position is the assumption that all activities and problems within the borough are under the auspices of the Party. This assumption underlies the phenomenon of political control within the borough and is to some extent justified by the range of services controlled by the borough council, which are on a scale virtually unknown in the United States. The entire justification for the amount of Party control, predicated as it is on the electoral mandate, constitutes the following self fulfilling prophecy. The borough is democratic
because elections are held every three years; voters possess the right at that time to make decisions which control the borough. While this is true at the time of the election, during the remaining term of office the public is extremely distant from the decision making processes which control Council activities. The assumption that all borough activities are the province of the Party is therefore predicated on a factual political reality: the Party and only the Party has access or power in the decision making process. The public is purposively excluded from the corridors of power by both the formal and the informal political processes.

It must be pointed out here that public consultation is not the same as public access. While the borough does attempt to reach the public through several devices (such as the Department of Public Relations, Housing Ballots, etc.) the input of the public in decision making is limited to a purely advisory role. In no sense can the bulk of the public constitute a force in policy or material decisions of the Council machinery. As Michael Hill assessed the situation (1975: 229):

Representative democracy does not exist since councillors cannot cope with the critical policy issues because of a lack of time and technical expertise, and also because of the failure of the electoral process to act as a check upon policy making.

This is true because the only means open to the public to act as an influential force in decision making processes is at the ballot box. Since nomination by the Party means virtually certain election, the public is even further removed from these decisive processes. Consultation
by the Council during the interim periods between elections is per-
ceived as a necessary evil, a duty imposed by the necessity for image
manipulation on the part of the Council members. The decisions are
still taken behind closed doors by the holders of the parliamentary
mandate.

The question of citizen participation does not even constitute a
problem for the members of the Labour Party in Thameside. In their
view, the control of the Labour Party is the obvious political reality,
and the only proper means for criticism or revision would be through
the emergence of other parties with electoral mandates. As the Chair-
man of the Party stated:

»well, I can only speak for the Labour
Party. This is the fault of the other
parties, isn't it? If the other parties
whoever they may be, are not able to org-
anize and get people who they say are of their
their opinions, they can't get them together
and organize them in order to be of any op-
position of any sort, then that's their busi-
ness. We're not going to go out and rust up
for them as well. This is the lacking of the
opposition parties. There's no organization—
no support for them whatsoever.

The obvious question of the vast majority of people who do not vote for
the Labour Party at election time (80.5% 1968-74) is left unanswered by
this point of view. Democracy, to the extent that it exists, exists
within the Labour Party and not within the borough except at the point
of the elections. This is as it should be, and the question of citizen
involvement seems always to revolve around the willingness of the citizen
to involve themselves in party organizations. Since the only party in
Thameside with any political impact is the Labour Party, that means working within the Labour Party. As the Leader of the Council pointed out, "The machine is only there to be used by the people who operate it." In order to operate the machine, one should become involved within the Labour Party, and at that point, democracy can be seen to operate in Thameside. The Party Chairman was quite clear on this point:

Above all else, we're democratic. The Party itself is very democratic. They have resolutions, all wards meet monthly, except the month of August when it's holiday time, they have the full responsibility and opportunity to send resolutions on any matter to the Executive Committee of the General Management Committee. They've got full power to do all that sort of thing and as far as the wards are concerned, they are the basis of our organization, as I've said before, especially when there's elections to be run. Everybody has the full right to say what they like — to do what they like. It even goes to members of Parliament.

A common public sentiment which I encountered about the Party was that they were "...a load of wankers." Often people noted to me that they were interested in local affairs, or had participated in Party activities, and had quit because of the insulated nature of the Party machine and the way it ran. Politicians in Thameside are reluctant to admit that part of the problem of citizen participation may reside in the closed structure of the Party organization. The regime or rules of the game in Easton's terms, are the rules of the Labour Party. If you want to play politics in the East End, you had better be ready to play that game. All criticism is shrugged off as insincerity at best and

*Cockney for people who masturbate to pass the time.
and anti-socialist attitudes at worst. To the Chairman of the Party, this is quite clear:

Well, all of these kinds of people who say this, if they're prepared to stand on the side lines and say these sort of things instead of getting involved and coming into the Party and actively involving themselves, and put forward their points of view and tell people, as you say, that they're wankers—then they're the people who should come along and get involved and tell the people how they arrived at their decisions about this sort of thing. But I think the people only say this, they're not really interested to help the Party in any way here in East London, they're not prepared to come and give a bit of help, criticise and complain and take part, then as far as their criticism is concerned it just doesn't mean anything.

Criticism of local governmental processes has one proper place, the venue of the Labour Party. Even criticism within the surgeries or public meetings is not taken seriously if the individual involved is not a member of the party in power. This aspect of political culture in the area is critical to an understanding of the relationship between the Party and other groups within the area who desire to influence the decision making process. Legitimate criticism and participation can only take place within the context of party membership and discipline, while all others have no legitimate basis for political power or opinions. Many councillors remarked to me that the service agencies within the area were happy enough to take council money and then turn around and criticise Labour Party ineffectiveness, which they saw as "biting the hand that fed them."

The centralization of the Party for political power is a multi-
dimensional phenomenon, determining both the regime level of political action and the essential values upon which political action was based. Sayings such as "We weigh our votes and count theirs," are therefore much more than political homilies in Thameside. They are also statements on the basis of political legitimacy and participation. The citizen who is not politicized in Labour Party terms has no right or basis to participate, become informed, or alter the system of which they are a rate paying part. Beyond this fact, there is no formal forum for the expression of their views or the implementation of their political franchise. I queried the Member of Parliament for the northern half of the borough on this issue, and his response follows.

(Question: In many cases, people tell me that it's not worth it to get involved in politics in the East End because of the nature of the Labour Party; if you want to play the game in Thameside, you have to be involved in the Labour Party, and there's no room for outside input. Would you comment on that?)

(Member of Parliament) I don't know what that means. It's not worth getting involved because the Labour Party runs it all? That's what they say? Therefore if you're not a member of the Labour Party there's nothing you can do? I've lived in a borough which is Tory controlled for thirty years, and I am very active in my party. This is an excuse for the bugger who won't get off his arse for one evening a month and away from his television set. It's the excuse for apathy and indolence.

Let them get in, get stuck in and put it right. This is the same as the bloody complaints you get from chaps who have never gone to a bloody Trades Unions branch in his life about the way Trades Unions and democracy doesn't work. A few people are willing to work and the rest are willing to grumble about it. I've got no time

[Bugger: Someone who engages in anal homosexual relations.]
for the second lot. No time for them at all. What are they doing about it? Moaning to you, and I’m surprised that a researcher like you doesn’t go to the proper sources of information.

The proper sources of information are quite obviously the people of Thameside who operate within Labour Party discipline. The opinions of those outside of the 4100 Party members are clearly not worth the serious researcher’s time or trouble.
FLOWERS AND HOUSES: ADMINISTRATORS AND POLITICS

In contrast to the politician in English local government stands the "professional administrators". They are neither elected nor may they be party members of any party in the area they serve. They are salaried professionals whose job it is to keep the borough running, regardless of the party in power at the moment. In essence, they occupy the same structural roles that civil servants do at the Parliamentary level and most of these professionals consider themselves in precisely the same position relative to politicians. They like to consider themselves outside of the political storms which regularly come and go in the struggle for power, a sort of anchor of solidity and fortitude in the swirling currents of political factionalism and rhetoric. Professional administrators in Thameside control such important activities as housing, health and social services, technical services (including road repair, street lighting, borough cleanliness, building repair), amenities such as libraries and public baths, and even the disposition of homeless families.

The administration of such vital public services is ideally determined by a complex system of committees, each of which has a specific area of competence and control. In theory, at least, both the councillors and the administrators share in the former, with the latter under the exclusive auspices of the politicians elected by public mandate. There is ostensibly a clear-cut distinction between the politician and the administrator, which has often been described as the bifurcation of
authority known as policy vs. administration. Councillors make policy, whether it is Conservative, Liberal, Labour, or whatever, and the purpose and job of the administrators is to carry it out. In this conception, real decision making rests with the politicians while the administrators are the servants of the council. All of this rests on a predication which has best been summarized by Michael Hill:

This sort of plea for the removal of certain aspects of decision making from political control...involves the view that certain kinds...of decisions inherent in the implementation of policy are made much more efficiently out of sight of the politicians who set the broad lines of policy (1975: 197).

There is a fundamental problem of control here which not amount of operationalizing of terms will overcome. This problem is that to the extent that elected politicians delegate administrative authority to their officials, they are surrendering an element of their power. Many politicians in Thameside were unwilling to surrender their power in such a way, even if that meant a more smoothly running authority. One of the areas of control which the politicians were unwilling to surrender in Thameside was the power of appointment of officers. More will be said of this later, but it is important to point out that policy in Thameside meant that there was little delegation within the borough. Many of the chief officers were extremely bitter about this situation. As one pointed out about appointment:

We all agree (all of the chief officers) that this is the wrong level of appointment. Although we try to increase the level, the councillors won't do it. We should be able to appoint up to the principal officer level--no reason why we shouldn't. It happens in most other boroughs. We're the ones who
have to operate the system. In the current system the Council appoint very often people we don't like. You have no redress; none, none at all. The Council insist that it's their right to appoint, and all we have is passengers. That's what I said, they won't take our advice. Damn all we can do about it.

It is not enough to make simplistic distinctions based on political vs. administrative spheres of influence. In the Redcliffe-Maud Commission Report on Local Government in England an attempt was made to clarify the roles of both the amateur politician and the professional administrator in terms of their proper spheres of authority. This report later fell out of favour in local government circles, but still provided valuable insights into the structure of local government roles. While Maud was clearly aware of the problems of simplistic distinctions between these aspects of leadership, i.e. policy vs. administration, he still saw the "sickness" of local government in terms of a failure to clearly demarcate the roles of politician and administrator. As Rhodes points out:

Maud's diagnosis of the ills of local government was that there was no clarity in the definition of the respective responsibilities of the councillor and the official. The councillor had invaded the sphere of the official by involving himself in administration. He was pushed into the administrative process by the committee system where he took decisions of a detailed nature. The consequences were that the officials were demoralized since they were inhibited from deploying their professional expertise; the council was devalued, becoming a rubber stamp for the decisions made in committee... and the public, in no way informed by the local authorities about the main issues, arguments and decisions, became ignorant and apathetic (1973: 135-36).
In some cases, this lack of clearly defined lines between policy and administration led to the violation of council policy by the chief officers in Thameside. In the social services department, many boroughs had a limit of up to 200 pounds to prevent children in care of the borough from getting into trouble, whether this trouble was rent arrears with the Greater London Council, private landlords, the gas or electricity boards, or whatever. In Thameside, that limit was 25 pounds and anything over that had to be reported to the social services committee and chairman. This is a policy decision of the council, but was selectively enforced by the chief officer. As he pointed out:

Thus I've given, although the Council doesn't necessarily know it, I've delegated to the area officers the power of spending up to five pounds without notifying me; up to 25 pounds comes into the office here, and anything over 25 pounds goes to the chairman of the social services committee. And because of that we have to report back to the casework subcommittee on the action that the chairman has taken on each of the 25 pounds grants. And there are certain councillors in that group who wish to withdraw the full delegated power and let the councillors decide everything. Well, at the next meeting of the social services committee, we've got to do a full report on these grants. Well, that's very irksome, because it means that they are getting involved in petty detail, which isn't really the way to run a department our size. We have the largest social services burden in London for a borough our size.

The intent of the councillors was to maintain tight control on the department by controlling the degree and amount of delegation. This in turn led to an unclear demarcation of the roles of councillor and administrator in terms of the administrative details of running the social services department in Thameside. In my research, it ultimately became
apparent why this lack of clarity led to "conniving" on the part of some chief officers. The amateur politician had no certain knowledge of the technical aspects of governmental administration when he was first elected to Council through local party processes. This lack of technical expertise led to a gap between the elected members and the local officers which was only overcome by many years of experience on the Council. After all, the Maud Commission report was the result of a major review of governmental processes and yet it could reach no clear decisions to be enforced on the local level. It is not surprising that the complexities of this managerial enterprise controlling the lives of more than 150,000 people would be difficult to understand and even more difficult to operate and control.

This problem of a gap between members and officers in terms of their respective knowledge of the bureaucracy came up time and time again in my research. While members complained that it was impossible to get things done through the bureaucratic "red tape" of officialdom, the chief officers had a very different view of the situation. Their view of the problem was that there was simply not enough delegated authority for them to get on with their jobs. This delegation was necessary to the successful completion of their official duties as it allowed the officers the freedom within the system to see the problems through to resolution. In my interview with the chief officer of works and design he stated: 

I think that there has to be a lot more real delegation to allow people to do work...Local government is a massive enterprise now which you can't learn in a short period of time. The major problem is getting work done. Local
government as you're finding it now
is such a complicated service its
become very bureaucratic. There must
be consultations. You can't just give
someone instructions and know that they're
going to be carried out straight away.
Certainly with major problems because
they go through committees for authority.
You've got to go to Finance Committee to
get the money...All this takes time.
Meanwhile the problem is still there.

He also complained that members, no matter how experienced, had
a consistent tendency to complain directly to him on any matter of con-
cern, no matter how small, instead of the correct official in his dep-
artment who could deal with it directly. He was consistently getting
calls about holes in the road, for instance, when the actual ability
to do something about them rested with officers well below him in the
chain of command. In his view, if the members had understood the bur-
eaucracy better, they could resolve the problems in much less time by
going directly to the person or persons who could actually "wield the
spade." As it was, this seldom occurred, and the duplication of effort
was the principal feature of decision making. Mr. Johnson put it thus:

And, as far as I'm concerned, I'd rather the
members, the councillors talked directly to
the people that's going to do something. They
will tell me what's going on. Rather than a
member telling me what the complaint is and
I've got to instruct somebody that he already
ought to know how to deal with it. It's a mat-
ter of cutting the chain of instruction to a
minimum. You can't cut it out altogether, but
it can be short circuited by getting the comp-
plaint to the man who's going to put it right...

I then asked if that meant that the councillors were under a great
obligation to learn the organization of the borough and he pointed out
that such an understanding could come from as simple a process as learning the use of the abridged telephone directory to get to the heart of the matter. In his view, however, members preferred to refer the problem directly to him rather than find the appropriate individual to solve the problem and thus the profound duplication of effort which characterizes local government in Britain.

This duplication of effort is critical to the comprehension of the relative importance of policy vs. administration, and the overlap between the two. As a specific example, consider the provision of flowers at parks and greenhouses of the department of works and design.

The provision of flowers for community events is not in and of itself a political act but an aesthetic one, one which seemingly could be provided as a "policy" act by either a Conservative or a Labour Council. As a non-political act, the authority would simply delegate the decision on flowers to the chief officer concerned and have him report it to committee once it was accomplished. But it doesn't work that way in Thameside, as the members wish to be involved in the "flower-provision process" from start to finish. The amount of delegated authority is tightly controlled by the politicians at the expense of considerable time, energy, and paperwork. As Mr. Johnson described this process:

It is really a silly example if you like--in parks, and gardens we have greenhouses which produce flowers. Local associations have functions which they like to present in a pretty way. They ask us if we will produce floral decorations. I've got to ask committee for authority to do just that. What I would like committee to do is to say, well, give me some guidelines as to the type of organization which would
tell me the type of organization which should receive them free, the type of organization which would pay a fee, like a fixed sum. To me those guidelines could be laid down. Committee could make that policy decision.

(Question) And then you wouldn't have to go back to them?

Yes, it's a silly little example, but it creates paper. It's another item on the report when these reports are produced 120-150 times. An awful lot of paper. Someone's got to initiate the report whereas I would be happy in initiating the floral display. This is the delegation I'm talking about. They have got to trust us. We were told that we can't cope with that. If we haven't got the powers, then we cannot produce the flowers.

Where is the line between policy and administration in this case? Obviously, a clear need for flowers exists at public events, but at that point of agreement on purposes, authority and not flowers becomes the critical issue at hand. Virtually without exception in my research members felt that officers had too much power through delegation of authority, while officers believed the exact opposite. The structural weakness built into the system is not the result of personal animosity between members and officers (although there is a good deal of that too) or even a polemic debate about the political importance of flowers. The real causes of this dilemma lie elsewhere and are not easily remedied. They are built into the structure of local government power in Britain.

Michael Hill observes:

...the American system of electing key officials and providing them with
salaries means that they are put in
in a very much stronger position than
English councillors or aldermen to in­
fluence administrative behaviour. While
in England the development of ideological
politics is limited by the relative weak­
ness of the elected representative in
relation to the permanent administrator,
in the United States the limitation stems
from the power of other elected officials
rather than from the power of administrators

The counterpoint between councillors and administrators in England
stems from one central issue, the control of the authority necessary to
make and carry out decisions. While it is both useful and convenient
to agree with Easton (1959) that politics is that aspect of society
concerned with the making of binding decisions, this systems approach
does not help us to understand the internal dynamics of authority with­
in a decision making authority such as Thameside. In the United States
administrators are important, but they do not occupy the same structur­
al role of importance that officers do in the English situation. Ad­
ministration and authority must overlap in Thameside because the offi­
cers lack the political mandate to legitimize their decisions, while
councillors lack the technical and managerial expertise necessary to
the running of a complex bureaucratic machine. As we have seen, even
this distinction can be manipulated to the point that flowers become a
matter of policy decisions at the committee level. In a real sense, the
councillors are at a loss in terms of their relative power; part-time
amateurs confronting full-time professionals. Nor is the powerful pos­
iton of administrators simply the result of dynamics on the local level.
Administrators (in Britain) in local government are professionals with a strong sense of their right to expect a measure of professional autonomy. Their positions are further recognized by Acts of Parliament and the courts so that their duties are prescribed by law...In other words, their positions are something more than just 'servants' of the council. Accordingly, local government officials are more significantly threatened by ideological politics than are civil servants (Hill 1975: 215).

How does all this translate to the "person in the street?" In fact, local government in Britain is elitist to an extent which is unknown on this side of the Atlantic. The Labour Party in Thameside is an extremely tightly knit working political machine which has little time or patience with outsiders. People in the borough equate the Labour Party with the Council, so that the blame for any problems is laid at the door of the Party, not the administrators. This creates a real strain between administrators and Party members on committees, as the reality of decision making is much more complicated than the average person realizes.

Nowhere is this lack of political democracy and concentration of decision making power in the hands of administrators and councillors more critical than in the area of housing. Thameside is the largest renter in London outside of the Greater London Council, possessing more than 16,000 individual housing units, and fully two thirds of the total population of the borough lives in state owned housing belonging either to the Greater London Council or the London Borough of Thameside. There are also more than 7000 families on the housing waiting list awaiting new homes and more than 500 families homeless and in care.
in the borough (as of 1975). This makes housing the most volatile issue in East London.

Housing, however, did not possess very much administrative power, even though the socialist commitment to homes for everyone is a positive plank of the Labour program on both the local and the national level. The administration of housing was divided between several departments, including health and social services, works, and development just to name a few. The manager of housing during my study was Mr. Atchison, who did not have his own department, but functioned under the aegis of the health and housing committee which came under the director of borough services. While in most other boroughs in London, housing was a separate directorate with control of lettings, repairs, allocation, and building all under the housing chief officer, in Thameside control of housing was split into tiny fragmentary units all ostensibly under the policy control of the socialist Labour Council. The degree of control over housing by anyone, administrator or councillor, was a major mystery I tried to examine in my research, principally because the primary contact or impression people in the community had with the Council was over the issue of housing.

To best illustrate this "illusion of control" over housing, I asked Mr. Atchison to describe his position with respect to both housing and the Council, as well as to other administrators within the system. This was his reply:

Well, once again, it's a crazy situation. I'm not quite sure how I'm supposed to function in relationship to the chairman of health and housing management. The director did voice his misgivings about the relationship I had with the last
chairman, Alderman Adler, who he couldn't stand. There are the links with the two committees. There's health and housing management and the policy committee and you see to get caught up in a crazy circle. If I want to recommend changes, I implement them either by making a direct report to health and housing management committee or to the working party on housing study.

So if I get any ideas about changing housing policy or practice I can get them included on the agenda of the working party, or what I can do is to report to the health and housing management committee direct. In this borough we have a two year registration period of waiting list applicants. What I did was to recommend a reduction of two years to one year, but I have to do this in the director's name. I can't report to the health and housing management committee in my own name so the report has to go up to the director of community services. Well, this report went to health and housing management. Now, when we get to health and housing management committee, although everything's in the director's name, on any housing matters I have with them even though I'm sitting right at the other end, right? Now this item goes to health and housing management. Health and housing management decided to refer it to the policy committee. Now, at policy, even when housing matters are discussed, I do not attend so that if the members of the policy committee have a recommendation from the second tier committee on almost a technical matter like the reduction of two years to one I can't attend, so if there's any queries they have to go to the director of community services to explain what it means. I don't know what goes on at policy. Now on this recommendation, what happened was that the policy committee decided to refer it to the working party on housing study. So it comes back to the working party on housing study, of which I'm a part, I solemnly agree with what I've recommended to the health and housing management and of course we've got on this committee people from the surveyor's department, people from social services, people from director of development... So that this recommendation goes back to the management team and the director will call me up and ask me to explain. So it goes back through the management team again, no representative of housing, through the management to policy. From policy it came back yet again to the working party on Housing study and again, as none of us are on the policy committee none of us really know why its come back to us and what they want. And I had a go at the leader in the pub and said what the bloody hell's this coming back for, I really thought that you were all in agreement with it. He said yes, but do you have to stick to a year; why do we need a registration period. I told him for administrative purposes; he said, well I wish that someone had told us—and I said if you won't have me on the policy committee I can't. That was a year ago, and tonight it's gone to the policy committee from the management team... so with a bit of luck the policy committee might agree
this is a good thing and then it'll go back to the health and housing management committee. Then if that committee agrees this recommendation, then maybe towards the end of this year might cut it down from two years to one year after I made my initial recommendation in October of 1974... and this was something that had the support of all the councillors. That's the way the cookie crumbles, I guess, and all that took more than a year.

This lack of delegated authority to act within the bureaucracy was cited as a critical failure within the structure of the Council apparatus by each chief officer that I interviewed. There was a consensus of agreement among these administrators that the Council, acting through the Labour Party Group, held the reins of power too tightly to allow effective administration of their departments. The Council had adopted many of the recommendations of the Bains and Maud reports, but the recommendations of the reports had little effect on their actual perception of the proper roles of councillor and administrator. One chief officer observed:

Actually, there are several inhibitions in a place like Thameside that make the distinctions between policy and administration very unclear. The members want to be more involved with what is happening than they would in other boroughs. Most of the Bains report was concerned with delegated powers, and the councillors making policy decisions and then only holding a watching brief after that to see that things were running smoothly. But here they want to know what's going on, want to get involved in what's going on...It doesn't make Thameside work better at all. This is where one gets to the level of understanding councillors and how they see their role.

While it has been clearly understood in the British studies of local government that the distinction between policy and administration was an ideal type or construct, the difficulties of
sorting out those categories in the actual working of the Council apparatus was no fiction. A lack of clearly defined roles for both the councillor and administrator has resulted in Thameside in a situation often resembling outright hostility. The British expert, Gerald Rhodes, summarizes this situation exactly:

Its (the Bains report) recommendations follow from its acceptance of Maud's explicit assertion that policy and administration cannot be distinguished....Administrative detail shades imperceptibly into policy; what is one man's detail often involves another man's principle or policy; and policy itself frequently develops by the accumulation of detailed decisions (1973: 137).

The situation in Thameside reveals that the distinction between policy and administration, while it may be blurred, is the precise distinction motivating behavior between administrators and councillors.

In overview it is clear that policy and administration are parts of the same process of running the borough. However, when the perceptions of individual councillors and administrators are examined, this distinction between policy and administration becomes the motivating principle for institutional behavior. In the officer's view, the only policy decision which will let them get on with their work is to increase delegation. As the head of housing pointed out:

And one of the basic faults in Thameside is the lack of delegation. One of the problems is that if you do get more delegation there's not this degree of trust and understanding between the councillors and the officers. One of the points about delegation is that if you delegate then you've got to accept the decisions that are made by the people to whom you have delegated and you have to accept that they will not always be the same decisions as you, at least not exactly.
The divergence between the statuses of councillor and officer were real and keenly felt. A councillor from Thameside remarked to me one night in the pub, "Those damned officers! They just think of us as legal nuisances." I found that this was not an uncommon sentiment among the councillors, many of whom felt that the middle class officers could not understand or empathize with the problems and difficulties of an area such as the East End. On the other hand, many of the chief officers felt that the political and cultural backgrounds of the members kept them from preceiving the situation in the authority with the necessary objectivity. One chief officer put it this way:

You have a situation here in Thameside where chief officers are highly qualified people; the councillors are not. We've worked hard all our lives to get to where we are, mostly by our own efforts, and we think that we know what we are talking about. The councillors think they know what they're talking about, but there is a difference. We're operating under 27 Acts of Parliament; I've got to know what we're doing. And what the acts are, what the exceptions are; quoting that to the members. They come back to me thinking they know what the Acts are; I have to be tolerant. Not sort of patronizing but at least tolerant.

Secondly, some of the chief officers had direct disagreements with the stated policies of the Council. The Chief Executive assured me that if he knew of such a case, he would recommend that the individual resign their job, because the purpose of officers was to carry out the policy laid down by the council. In his view, someone who disagreed with it could not understand or perform their job correctly. It was not uncommon for such a difference of opinion to exist, however.
The issue of delegation turns on the issue of the distinction between policy and administration. In a real sense, the entire problem is one of roleship, in which neither the administrator nor the politician has a clear agreement as to the proper role of the other. Without this agreement, the proper running of a governmental machine employing more than 2000 persons such as in Thameside, can often become an extremely elusive prize. A fundamental aspect of achieving the proper role relationship was often pointed out as trust, simple belief in the other's motives and abilities. Although ignored in many of the reports, this trust with officers and their councillors constituted one of the most important parts of officer-councillor relationships which worked. The Chief Executive of the borough noted:

Delegation is just as much a matter of personality as it is a matter of principle.
Or policy. Even if the elected members are completely to a policy of delegation, you'll never get them to delegate without trust.
I was neither surprised nor displeased when in the early days of the authority, there was little or no delegation. I'm glad to say that is no longer the case.

The actuality of trust between individuals at the higher levels of the Council was difficult to achieve for several reasons. First, and perhaps most important, was the differential perception of the status of councillor and officer in the area. The councillors were predominantly working class while the officers were predominantly middle class. This factor often seems trivial to Americans, but is of critical importance in British society and especially in the East End of London. One officer noted: "...it stems from the old cloth cap image: they are manual workers and we do nothing but sit and talk to researchers."
To put it another way, the realization that the line between policy and administration is blurred does little to aid or change the behavior of councillors and administrators toward each other "on the ground." In essence, the councillors felt that the borough was "their government," while the administrators felt that the government was "their bureaucracy." An excellent example of the conflict that this possessiveness generated was the conflict over the appointment of candidates to administrative office in the authority. The councillors in Thameside oversaw the appointment of all officers in the borough above the level of AP 4, a relatively low appointment threshold. Above that level, subcommittees of the Council, composed of both officers and councillors, made the decision jointly. Councillors saw this situation as a means of "controlling the actions of the officers," while the officers saw the situation a bit differently. The chief officer, Mr. Winchester, stated this succinctly:

Of course, the Council is afraid of delegation. There is no shadow of doubt about that. But I've been a chief officer for many years, long before I came here, and always in the past I had the power of appointment. The only persons that the members appointed were the chief officers or his deputy. But here you go trailing over to the town hall at their convenience and the candidates have to wait as long as they wish to make them wait. This is one of the reasons why we have so much difficulty in getting staff. These are the sort of arguments which have really got to be thrashed out at high level, because after all, the directors are trying to provide a service and if they don't get the support of the administration, nothing happens at all.
The divergence of the policies of the Council and the perceptions of the officers as to the objective needs of the Borough was quite real, however. Not only was there a gulf between the officers and councillors based on the perceived differences of class and culture, but the needs of the borough and the resolution of those needs varied according to the position of administrator and councillor. Everyone was in agreement about the nature and severity of the problems of the borough, but the kind and purpose of the solutions proposed varied significantly between members and the officers.

These solutions to the problems further reveal the difficulty faced in creating an air-tight distinction between administration and policy. One chief officer was very clear in his view of the housing policy within the borough:

In our area, Thameside, the ratepayers of the authority subsidize the tenants of East London: to the tune of two and one half million pounds per year. That's an eight penny rate. That's a subsidy for the current Thameside tenants. And one way they can do that is to increase the rates, and release that 2 1/2 million for other purposes. But that's a political philosophy. They can, but because they're socialists, they won't. And this is where the tug comes. Because they're only providing that subsidy for a limited number of people. Many of them don't need it. Everybody who does need it can get it; they can get rent rebates. But if they charged an economic rent; they won't ever, charge an economic rent. There's two and a half million tied up, serving no useful purpose at all, except keeping rents down. It's a political decision. These are the sorts of areas where the council make political decisions.

Thus, in his view, the politicians in the borough had made a political decision to maintain their voting popularity with residents of Thameside housing by subsidizing their rents with rates from all
other renters in the borough. In his view, keeping the rents down in Thameside housing units had demonstrated the fact that policy, administration, and political power merged at the level of decision making. His perception was that the objective needs of the borough were being sold out to court the favour of voters living in Thameside borough housing.

This "socialist philosophy" of the council impinged on the decision making process of the borough in other ways. The socialist commitment to housing following World War II, the "homes for heroes" campaign which allowed Clement Atlee to overthrow Winston Churchill, had a profound effect on the structure of Thameside as an urban area. All of the previous metropolitan boroughs, as well as the new borough of Thameside, had emphasized housing over business construction. The net result of this emphasis was a lowering of the rateable value of the borough and a resultant loss of revenue to the succeeding socialist administrations. The policy of the borough was municipalization of the housing in the area, and control of the borough in a political sense. Officers had warned against this, but their advice was often ignored by the reigning administrations. As the director of planning commented:

The local Council, I think it would certainly not be untrue to say, have woken up to the effect of all their policies that some of them have had extremely unfortunate consequences.

Here we are talking about the future. After all, we must realize that most of the people who will be in Thameside at the end of the century are already here, most of the buildings
are already here, what I think is that we must try to do is to stop certain trends and then reverse them. And one of them is the rapid decline of population which isn't as worrying as the much more rapid decline in employment; because it's seen that if that carries on, unchecked, the whole structure of the population will change and the borough will be left with no financial resources to deal with it.

One of the impacts of the grand slam for housing, as it were, was, through compulsory purchase, to displace existing commercial operations or industrial operations and offices of their freehold. This is sort of the employment side of things, whose contribution to the rates is a positive factor. Housing is a loss to the rates, for obvious reasons. It was very necessary and it became in the minds of people so necessary that it blinded them to the effects of doing it in the way that they were doing.

He then cautioned me on his comments, saying that they were made "thoroughly with the insight of hindsight." Be that as it may, the flight of industry from the East End is a reality. Of course there are many causes, including the emphasis of succeeding national governments on moving employment to the South East and North. However, this seems a clear cut case in which local policy and advice were at odds with each other in terms of the solutions to the problems of the East End. The assistant director of works pointed out:

One should remember that whereas councils have considerable powers and resources for creating housing, they don't have corresponding powers for creating employment. The council may set aside land for an industrial estate, it may even go so far as to speculate and put up a shell for a factory;
there's no way of obliging people
to come and set up an enterprise
in that. So that means that the
council is in a very weak position;
but this must be seen against the
background of the government policy,
all governments since the war, to get
industry and employment out of London---
in many cases more expensive to them to
do so than inside of London. So even
if the council had adopted a policy more
favourable to creating employment, its
by no means certain that they would have
been successful.

While it is clear that the national policies concerning the place-
ment of industry did indeed determine much of the present fate of the
East End, the fact remains that the priority for municipal housing was
determined by policy decisions at the local level. However, the
question of the degree to which policy is determined by officer re-
commendations still remains a moot point at best. The "grand slam
for housing" included following advice from officers which recommended
building tower blocks instead of ground level homes, a bit of officer
advice which people in the East End live with to this day.

Obviously, the question of industrial and commercial development
was one in which officer advice was to some extent ignored. The prop-
er priorities for the development of the East End were differentially
perceived by the Council and its administrators. The influence of ad-
vice from officers within the British system is a critical feature of
decision making, and a considerable number of factors impinge on how
this advice is taken by the councillors. The Chief Executive put it
this way:
It isn't any good to say that we only advise—they take the decisions. It's putting your head in the sand, to ignore the influence of the advice, the way it's put over, and so on. These factors influence the decision in every possible way. The quality of the advice, the way it's given, have all the alternatives been put forward, and so on, the trust, the relationship between the officer and the councillor, all those have a bearing on the degree of influence that the advice has.

The way in which officers give advice and the manner in which it is taken by councillors is also critically affected by the quality of the councillors themselves. Councillors of quality have the ability to approach the problems of local government from a perspective which grants respect to others while maintaining respect for themselves.

Rob Buckley, the Chairman of the Finance Committee was often pointed out to me by both officers and councillors as someone who had achieved just such an ideal relationship in his work. In complete opposition to the antagnoism which I have described, Mr. Buckley ran a smoothly operating committee. In all likelihood, his experience as a finance officer in a neighboring borough contributed to this relationship and his sympathy for the difficulties facing officers in local government.

His views on delegation were clear:

In fact I've seen in the past too much time wasted by members trying to resolve individual small problems rather than getting down to the nitty gritty of the real problems of policy.
My job as a councillor is to make the policy.
My job, having made that policy, is to tell the officer through the committee, through the council, this is the policy we're making, you interpret it, and get on and introduce it.
When I pointed out to him that he possessed a different view of delegation from many of the other councillors that I had interviewed, he was not surprised at all. I pointed out that the other councillors felt that delegation meant a loss in their authority. His reply was crystal clear:

Now, can you tell me, I know that you are going back, and taking all these findings back to the States, why, especially when we look at the value of the pound today, but can you see why I as a member of the council should pay an officer, 6,7,8, 9,000 pound and then do his job for him? This is what you're asking me to do if I don't give him something to do. I say, there's no loss of responsibility, there's no loss of power if you delegate the responsibility of doing the jobs at the same time having at all times the right to change the manner, method and the way a job should be done because you control policy.

He was also not afraid of criticism from officers themselves:

Then, I accept it's the responsibility of the officer to tell me if he thinks I'm doing wrong. He has a responsibility to do that. That's one of his jobs—that's one of the things that he is paid for. After all, in spite of all my knowledge of finance, I'm still only a layman. I'm a politician--not an officer.

He did acknowledge that my perception was correct — that most councillors in the authority did not share his view. He was also very conscious of the say in which other committees of the council operated. His relationship with the director of finance was one of amity, almost friendship, and he had little sympathy for members who perceived their roles as competitors with the Council officers. In his view, some members feared the position of officers without understanding the power of their positions as councillors within the authority.
Mr. Buckley pointed out:

Well, I've got an extremely good relationship with the director of Finance and the last thing he would want to do would be encroach on my right to make a decision. I think it's something that they (members) fear.

Some people fear, but they only fear because they don't really appreciate the problem. As in all fields of education there are certain levels achieved by certain personnel. No matter what walk of life you go into and the same applies to political animals as it applied to the animals of the church or big business or whatever it is. Some achieve certain fields, others go on and on. And some with all the sincerity in the world can't think beyond a certain point. They're not to blame for it. They do their best but they do fear because they can't see the problem in front of them.

This inability to "think beyond a certain point" was also a concern for the officers of the Council. In fact, the competence of the councillors and their perceived competence by the administrators was a crucial feature of delegation in Thameside. One of the longest serving administrators commented:

If or when you get a bad lot of elected members who are prepared to let their rights slip away from them—if you get a poor lot of councillors with not a thought between them, of course it will be the officers making decisions. That's fairly obvious, isn't it?

I'm talking about it happening by accident, not a deliberate decision to usurp the position of elected members.
H.L. Mencken once said: "Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage." The situation in Thameside is a difficult one to analyze with respect to democratic foundations and principles. While it is apparent that the voting booth forms the background and ultimate legitimacy for the Labour Party's right to rule, the relationship between this right to rule and local democracy is difficult to establish. As one Thameside councillor remarked to me, "Democracy in Thameside is a myth: but the Labour Party is a working machine." Swartz (1968) pointed out that the public and those who wield power are never the same people. He states:

...there is only one characteristic that is always present in what is referred to as a 'public.' That is that the actual use of power is not in the hands of those in the group referred to as a 'public'. They may be the source of the power used as they ideally are—to take an obvious example—in a democracy, but they do not include those who actually wield the power (1968: 228).

Most political anthropologists have felt even outside of democracies, force forms only one of the supports within any political system, and one which cannot be relied on for a long period of time to maintain the integrity of the system. The system of Labour Party rule in Thameside is not maintained by force, nor has force been important in the maintenance of political control by the central government since the General Strike of 1926 in the East End. As a result, the power of the Labour Party to control political processes in the area is due
to other factors.

As we have seen, Bailey (1969) contends that systems of values create and regulate political competition. By this he means that in order for any system to endure over time, some form of political community must be created which is based on the basic beliefs of the people composing that political community. Swartz supports this view, determining that political action is the result of supporting and implementing public goals. As Swartz points out:

...the fact that neither competition for power nor use of power is possible without support from the public. That is, somehow or other people have got to come together behind an individual or groups of individuals or process for there to be struggles for power or effective use of power (1968: 227-228).

A strict interpretation of both Bailey and Swartz presupposes some form of communication of these goals from the public to the political elite and vice versa. This is very difficult to demonstrate in East London as the public is so far removed from the decisive processes of local powers that often such communication does not take place. In fact, the formation of English local government and the closed nature of the Labour Party determine that such communication is a very tenuous process.

Cohen (1976) pointed out that legitimacy in political elites is not so much a support for the system that can be taken as a given, but rather the result of a dynamic struggle for legitimacy within the elite itself. He also made clear the fact that when legitimacy is treated as a static entity, this struggle for legitimacy is often ignored.
What is political legitimacy in the Thameside case? It has at least three aspects: First, political legitimacy means that the right to rule of the Labour Party in all things political is predicated upon their overwhelming victories in local elections. This is based on their role as the Party of the working-man in Britain. The fact that three-fourths of the electorate chooses not to participate at all simply means that three-fourths of the public are not legitimate politically. Any criticism or suggestion must be treated as suspicious if it comes from this majority, for in not voting, they have suspended their rights of participation. Secondly, legitimacy in Thameside means that the vote gives the Labour Party the right to control public access to public information and the decisive processes of the of the Council itself. Access to these corridors of power is seen as the proper role of the Labour Party alone, and even within the Party and the Labour Council Group such access is jealously guarded and controlled. Third, political legitimacy means that the Labour Party has a monopoly on political power within the borough, one which it derives from the class status of the people of Thameside.

To explain the information from Thameside, one must consider the non-voter in the situation. What authority or power the Labour Party possesses surely comes in party from their reluctance to involve themselves at the ballot box. Of course, as council members point out, "People know it's a Labour Borough." However, their reluctance to involve themselves may also stem from the machine type politics which characterize the Party in the borough. What is apparent in Thameside
is that the notion that there is some consistent system of values which links both the Labour Party and the public at the local level is an anthropological fiction. People in Thameside live in spite of politics and politicians, not because of them. The extent to which values can be demonstrated to exist at the level we call "ideology" is extremely limited within Thameside, and confined to a very small elite. The size of this elite depends on what you define as the political community, but at its widest it is only the Labour Party voters at any local election who can be said to be actively involved in the political process. By active in this sense, I mean actively a part of the machinery which runs the borough in a decisive sense. Perhaps the 4,100 Labour Party members compose too small a group to be called the political community in Thameside, but they certainly do not compose the political elite in Bailey's sense. The political elite in Thameside is not much larger than the General Management Committee itself, and probably not much more than 200 people at its widest. Within that group, probably only about 80 people are actually involved in the critical decision making processes within the Labour Council and the Labour Party. In my view, it is these Party Insiders who compose the political elite in Thameside, and they are only 80 people in an electorate of over 110,000. Within that group of 80, there are less than 20 people who have the positions within the Party, the Group, and the Council to be really effective decision makers, a kind of Super-Elite group. Their relationship with the local public and with the national Labour Party is pragmatic, but I am not convinced that this relationship can be described in terms of an ideological system of consistent values.
By now, it is clear that I do not think much of the pluralist analysis of political systems, at least not for the Thameside material. Clearly the pluralist model simply will not work for the Thameside case, as my analysis of the Labour Party elite demonstrates. I went to the field hoping to find something like local democracy, and in a sense I did. But the importance of elites within that democratic structure overcomes any notion that the ballot box is an effective tool for achieving power in Thameside. Power is achieved, distributed, and determined by membership and participation in the Labour Party, not by participation in local elections. If this is democracy, then Thameside is very democratic. Perhaps this is the way local democracy works everywhere in the world, or perhaps the concept of local democracy has always been an ideality wherever the name has been applied.

It may well be that a concept like democracy is a model of political action which is simply a theoretical, empirical, and desirable ideal rather than something people do on the ground. An area the size of Thameside could hardly have a "New England Town Meeting" every time a decision had to be made. The fact is that most of the people that I met in the Labour Party were sincere individuals with real political goals. I have not meant to portray them insincere, but rather to point out the way in which their system of democracy works, and for that matter, does not work.

This brings us to the necessary realization that more work of this sort is demanded. This kind of description fills a valuable niche in the understanding of complex political processes, at least from the
anthropological perspective. Our understanding of political processes within complex urban environments has continued to rely on grand overviews and survey schemes which lacks the kind of residence in the area and participant observation necessary to give the work perspective and depth. While I was in London, a political scientist whom I met was studying the Labour Party in Southwark through survey research. While doing this research, he lived in Chelsea and commuted once a week to the area to conduct the surveys. When he found out that I was living in the East End to do my research, he was aghast. "How can you live down there?" he asked. I have learned a great deal from survey research, but I am not convinced that it is the ideal way to study an area like Thameside. If I may make an analogy, it's rather like someone trying to study the ward machines in central Chicago while living in Hyde Park, and showing up once a week with a survey, or someone trying to study Harlem while living on Long Island. This is not to say that I am against survey research, I am not. In fact, I only wish I could have had the time, money, or labour to do successful ones myself. I am only pointing out that people have a way of lying to strangers which they do not to people that they know, and I think that my research proves this. There is room for all of us in social science, quantifiers and humanists alike, but the idea that a sophisticated enough chi square regression or sophisticated survey questions are an excuse for participant observation and alot of walking the street is an idea I would like to see abandoned in anthropology. We need both kinds of research for different problems. You can learn things in
pubs you will never learn in offices, and that is simply a fact of
(dare I say it?) human nature and the potency of British bitter.
Beyond these considerations, often survey research gives one a feeling
of how orderly the system is, because your schedule is, when the sys-
tem is chaotic at best. Much of what I learned was "occulted" inform-
ation, confidences hidden in offices by administrators, and secrets
possessed by the Labour Party which were never meant for the outsider.
And these were exactly the things which I could not have learned at
the town hall through survey research.

In this essay, I attempted to show that many of the notions which
guide political anthropology are presumptions and not proven facts.
In this context, our subdiscipline suffers from the same kind of ethno-
centrism we often ascribe to political science, except in reverse. We
simply do not have enough anthropological studies of urban political
processes in Western societies to justify our claim to be a truly
comparative science of political action. We have left the study of
these kinds of political processes to the eminent domain of political
scientists and political sociologists while presuming that anthropol-
ogists cannot contribute to this field in an affirmative way. Our
methods may be different, but our general goals are the same, i.e. to
provide an explanation for political phenomena by describing how pol-
itical systems around the world operate. In essence, anthropologists
know more about decision making processes among the Bemba than they do
about those processes in New York City, and I sincerely hope that this
study will contribute to the understanding of urban political processes
in Western cultures, and perhaps, even act as a guide for future study.
Appendix: Prejudices and Preliminaries, or What I Took to the Field

It has been six years since I returned from sixteen months of fieldwork in London. When I consider what remains of my impressions of experience, I am deeply saddened and gladdened at the same time. Where is the young man who went to London? Who was he when he left and how has he changed?

I feel obligated to give the reader some insight into the tool used to accomplish the fieldwork contained within this report, i.e. the anthropologist. To that end I will describe my training and preparation for the field, although such considerations are not normally included in anthropological field reports.

My three years of graduate training at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, were challenging and provided an excellent intellectual background in anthropology. This later stood me in very good stead when I attended the London School of Economics and Political Science during my fieldwork. At the time I was at Ohio State, the first year in the degree program was both exhaustive and exhausting: to receive the master's degree and enter the doctoral program, students had to become conversant not only with cultural anthropology, but also with physical anthropology, archeology, and linguistics. Of our initial class of 12, at most 3 of us will finish our doctorates.

Although I was intellectually ready to undertake the work at the L.S.E., I was by no means emotionally prepared for fieldwork. After hearing anecdotes from people experienced in fieldwork, I got the
impression that fieldwork was fun, that people are always helpful and honest, and that they were impressed with your interest in them. In short I went to London with the notion that all the people I wanted to study would welcome being studied. In London, this was often not the case.

In my experience, urban fieldwork into politics is a combination of being a private detective, an ass, and a journalist in precisely that order. There is nothing grand or glorious about following people from place to place to determine whether they were lying to you during the interview. This did not happen often, but it did happen over important issues critical to my study. People involved in political processes in complex societies are often reluctant, sometimes even afraid, to discuss the inner workings of the political system of which they are a part. Some people won't talk to you at all. Some people will talk to you and then use what they have told you against you at a later date. Fortunately for me, most people in my study were fairly open and honest. But even realizing that, it is important to note that politicians especially, and people in general, have an image of themselves which they want projected to the world which is not necessarily the same as what is really going on.

Often, the giving of "real" information threatens their elite status. This information is reserved for the "chosen few" who have earned access to it. As such, gathering information is necessarily a clandestine business, more like the work of Raymond Chandler's hero Phillip Marlowe than it is like that of Malinowski or Lowie.
It is hard, even now, for me to put this idea across in terms which give people the emotional tone of how hard this kind of fieldwork is. Everyone wants to go to London, the "Mother of Parliaments," see Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London, and Hampton Court. I never went to any of these hallowed tourist markers simply because I was not a tourist. I was an anthropologist sent there to investigate local level political processes in a completely Labour controlled borough in the East End. Let me assure you that there is nothing more lonely than being alone in a city of eleven million people. When you multiply that by the anti-American sentiment then prevalent, you may get some idea of how rough fieldwork can become.

One afternoon, after a series of particularly tough interviews, I decided that it was time to finally "become a tourist" and go see the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London, which was very near my area. I took the bus down to the Tower and started to walk up to the ticket booths. As I approached, a large coach unloaded a group of passengers dressed in checked, striped, and generally loud polyester leisure suits. Tourists of all nations are notoriously obnoxious (the legacy which the British have left in Spain is proof of this, as is the fact that while I was in London, polls showed that the most disliked tourists were the Japanese, not the Americans) but I soon realized that I was experiencing total shock and horror—these people were Americans! Gross and utterly impolite, they spilled out of the coach like rice boiling over in a pot; one of the men spotted me, and thinking me English, asked me in a very drunken voice, "Where in the hell can we get something to drink?!" I tried in vain to ex-
plain that there simply wasn't anywhere that a drink could be bought, except in a private club. He wouldn't believe me, though, and said: "You goddamn limeys! No wonder you almost lost the war! Can't even get a damn drink when you want it." Well, that did two things. First, it explained why so many people in Thameside had a built-in resentment towards Americans, and second, it created a real resolve in my mind never to be caught dead in anything remotely resembling a place where American tourists would hang out. Oh, and there was a third thing; it made me a little ashamed of my fellow Americans. The experience was emotionally devastating for me, because it finally made me realize why I had experienced so much trouble in getting people to consider me as an individual in London, rather than as an "American" or more often, just a "Yank." I cannot count the number of times I heard, some in jest, but most with just a bit of an edge, "Well, Jimmie, you're just like the Yanks we had here during the last war; overpaid, oversexed, and over here."

There were other reasons for this particular perception of me. One factor was that I was working in a borough in which all the political movers and shakers were socialists, and the American involvement in Vietnam was anathema to them. Many of the younger people who took over the Council from James Dewey had a song they sang to me which expressed their sentiments. In part it went:

Yankee Doodle went to Mars
Arrived there on a Sunday
Found a form of life up there
And killed it on that Monday

The fact that I had marched in the demonstrations at Berkeley to stop the war (and San Francisco and Oakland), worked on the Student Strike Com-
mittee during the Cambodian Invasion of 1970, did help to some degree to assuage their resentment. But I found myself in a difficult situation, because I had lost my older brother and one of my best friends from college (to whom this dissertation is partially dedicated) in Viet Nam, and even now I find it hard to explain the ambivalence that I felt as they sang that song to me. I was feeling a little resentment toward them, but there was no room for the expression of that resentment if I was to get the fieldwork accomplished. When they read this dissertation, they will probably feel, "Well, we gave him permission to study us, and all he did was slag us. Who does that Yank think he is criticizing us?" In a way, that is what I felt about our involvement in Viet Nam. I knew that it was horribly wrong, and had fought it while in the States, but when they were doing the criticizing, all I could think was "They don't understand how it was. Who do they think they are?" I never voiced these feelings as they would have interfered with the fieldwork, and I still believe it was the wisest choice.

There were other reasons people distrusted me. An important factor was the CIA scandal which occurred just after I reached London in September of 1974. Although little or no mention was ever made of it here, the "Underground" magazine Time Out had just published the records of our embassy in the Court of St. James which revealed secret plans to disrupt the telephone communications system, the underground and overground rail systems, and just about everything else in case of a radical coup in England. You must remember that inflation that year was running at almost 24%, the Labour Party was claiming to the public to be "the Natural Party of Leadership" in Britain. To the CIA, I suppose, it looked
like a non-democratic brand of socialism was just around the corner. Be that as it may, several of the "cultural attaches" attached to our embassy were 'politely' asked to leave the country and left in quite a hurry. All this happened within three weeks of my arrival.

Naturally, when I began poking around East London, people were curious about what I was doing. Tourists seldom go there, and if they do, it's for a quick stop at one of the open markets and them out again. I was down there everyday, hanging out and asking "suspectious" questions.

One conversation I had with a member of the Leadership before I received permission from the Group to do the study went something like this:

East Ender: Where are you from?
McLeod: California, near San Francisco.
(pause)
East Ender: And what are you doing here?
McLeod: Well, I'm a cultural anthropologist.
East Ender: What the bloody hell is that?
McLeod: Well, it's kind of like sociology, only different.
(pause)
East Ender: Oh, and you're another goodie goodie sent down here to tell us what's wrong with us, and then bugger off back where you came from and leave us right here where you found us, right?
McLeod: Well, no, that is, yes, well, see what I want to do is to compare local government here with that in the States and to do that I have to do this work by living here.
(pause)
East Ender: Right you are, mate. Let's get this right. You are from California, right. Sunshine, John Wayne, Disneyland, right. Then you come to bloody East London, bronchitis, tuberculosis, meths drinkers, to study us while you could be in California? That's a load of old cobblers, and you know it. Sod off, matey. There's only one bloody reason that one of your kind would come here and that's if you're one of those sodding CIA blokes what's come here to destroy socialism. You must think that we live in fairyland round here. Why else would anyone give up California to come to the East End?!!
Another example of the difficulties I encountered was due to the fundamental distrust of intellectuals. Although proud to be the area of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the area studied by Marx and Engels, and many other intellectuals, "intellectual" is still a dirty word in East London. The area I studied is and has been inundated with researchers. The congressman who commented that "...if South Carolina gets one more military base, it will sink into the Atlantic" during the time that Mendel Rivers was head of the House Committee on Military Expenditure could easily be paraphrased about the number of intellectuals and do-gooders who have studied the East End, going right back to Charles Dickens. One could say "...if the East End gets one more intellectual with higher ends, it will sink into the Thames," and it would not be much of an exaggeration. An example of how these intellectuals have influenced the thinking of the working people on the Council follows.

During the sixties, when the need for "community based care" was being demonstrated for the mentally ill, a noted psychiatrist set up a halfway house on one of the main trunk roads in the borough. People with mental health problems from all over England came to this house for the latest in outpatient care in the community. After a few months, when the house was at its peak of two hundred and fifty patients, the psychiatrist was offered a lucrative job at the University of California at Los Angeles teaching his methods. So, in the words of the East Ender who told me this story, "...he buggered off," leaving the people of the area, especially the local Council, holding the proverbial bag. The private funding which had housed the people in the first place naturally dried up when the psychiatrist left, with the result that the already
overburdened social services of the borough had to provide for the patients left in the home. It is no wonder, then, that when I appeared on the scene saying that I wanted to study the Council, people were a bit suspicious.

However, my American citizenship and my accent made me a different kind of intellectual than they were accustomed to. I was not a "wet behind the ears" intellectual straight out of Oxford or Cambridge, nor was I a "trendy-lefty" from the University of London. I wasn't even a "Sunday socialist" from Hampstead or Chelsea coming to the East End to save them from themselves. I was difficult for them to place in such handy categories, and this ultimately became one of my greatest advantages in my work. Although it was very hard to convince people of this initially, both people within and outside of the Council, I had no particular axe to grind. I wasn't out to convert anybody to my doctrine as I had none. It was for these reasons that I was difficult, if not impossible, for anyone to pigeonhole. An Oxford or Cambridge graduate, for example, almost always has what is known as "the public school" accent and is categorized as "intellectual" immediately. Other intellectuals in the area were from the Worker's Revolutionary Party, or the radical wing of the Liberal Party (which is rather the same as talking about the socialist wing of the Republican Party, but never mind), Cambridge House, one of the law centers, or whatever. All had programs and policies which they wanted implemented, if possible, by yesterday. On the other hand, I only had four things: my briefcase, my tape recorder, my notebook, and my accent. Of course, no one believed me when I told them that I had no particular business there except "scientific
curiosity" but I stuck to my story, because it was true, and they learned to live with me.

I cannot overstate the importance in a research situation such as this of staying objective as much as possible. Anthropological research is necessarily subjective to some degree because people do it with other people. One of the largest problems I encountered in the field was the fact that so many of the meetings, discussions, and arguments which made politics work in Thameside were held absolutely in secret. To get around this, I debated joining the Labour Party in order to gain access to at least some of these meetings. I consulted both with my adviser at the LSE, Dr. Morris, and by correspondence with my adviser at Ohio State, Dr. Hughes. Both were firm in advising against it. While it might have gained me access to some of the meetings I so desperately wanted to attend, they warned me that it would also do at least two things which I didn't want: 1) it would place me under the Labour Party discipline which I have described, with all the repercussions in terms of confidentiality and ethics that involves, and 2) it would have alienated me from all the other parties, groups and individuals in the area I considered necessary for my study. Once they learned that I was a member of the Thameside Labour Party, an equation of "us vs. them" would have been operative, and I doubt very much that they would have talked to me as freely as they did. The only reason that I received this kind of open treatment is because the people involved knew that I was not working for or against anyone. It is my opinion that there is a lesson here for those people working in what has come to be known as "active anthropology." Certainly, your mere
presence in the field changes the situation you are studying, and there is no changing that. But if your simple presence changes the situation under study, imagine what working for one side or the other does to the problem being studied, and to the kinds of information to which you are privy. In the particular case of Thameside, it would have made the study absolutely impossible.
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