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Anthony Ridge-Newman

The Tories and Television, 1951–1964

Broadcasting an Elite

palgrave
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Anthony Ridge-Newman
University of Glasgow
Glasgow, United Kingdom

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*To my dearest grandparents Barry and Barbara Ridge
Your fond recollections of the 1950s and 1960s partly inspired this book.
In loving memory of Tracy, Dennis, Peter, Katie, Edward and Diana*

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Recently, someone said to me that the 1950s and 1960s could not be viewed as history, because it only feels like yesterday. This illustrated for me how, when human perception is involved, all things are relative. For many, we perceive the world, and our place in it, based on unique combinations of personalized variables. Temporal and geographical factors are two of the most significant. Being someone whose most formative years were the 1990s, I grew up in a world that seemed to be technologically mature and alive with vibrant technicolour. My early understandings of the 1950s were informed by black and white news snippets, films, documentaries, family stories and fading photographs. As a child, this seemingly distant world appeared dowdy, starched, formal and fuzzy. So much so that I found it hard to visualize the 1950s world as anything other than shades of grey. That said, through my rich conversations with my grandparents, I have it on good authority that, even while post-war Britain was rebuilding, the grass was green and the skies were blue (well, at least some of the time in the latter case).

The advent of television in Britain predates my birth by many decades. As a child, when I imagined a time before television, the world seemed almost prehistoric. I found it difficult to imagine life before the domesticity of ‘the small screen’. I can now liken this to my observations of my young nephew and niece, who think that the Internet has always existed. They are often at a loss without their iPad in hand. When I tell people I have written about new media and, then, elaborate that, in this case, it is about the role of television as a new medium in the Conservative Party, they often look at me in a bemused manner. There has been so much talk

about ‘new media’ in recent times that general perception has latched itself onto the term and it has become synonymous with technologies like Facebook and Twitter. But, as this book will hopefully illustrate to the reader, television was very much a new medium in the 1950s. Not only that, there were similar debates, discourses, suspicions and anxieties surrounding television’s infiltration into people’s daily lives as there are today about the Internet and smart phones. Moreover, in an age of smart TVs and *Netflix*, Internet and television have now converged to some extent. This is perhaps a technological legacy that few could have envisioned in the 1950s.

Interestingly, in conducting the research on which this book is based, I discovered that the 1950s period most notably came to life for me, in richer colours, when I engaged with materials from the Conservative Party Archive (CPA). It was a privilege to spend the large part of 2011 accessing the CPA. I was fortunate to enjoy many hours amid the historic grandeur of the Duke Humphrey Reading Room at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. I would like to thank both the Conservative Party and the CPA, particularly Jeremy McIlwaine, for assisting my extensive access to Conservative Party files that have given me a new found technicolour perspective of life inside the Conservative Party from Churchill to Douglas-Home. My thanks also go to my friend Matthew Powell, a fellow Worcestershire-man, whose company I enjoyed at lunches and debates, while in Oxford. I am grateful to him and his colleagues for my membership to the Middle Common Room at Hertford College, which greatly improved my research experience at Oxford University.

I am particularly grateful to Dr Alex Windscheffel, Royal Holloway, University of London. He helped inspire this work, and his support and guidance have continued to impact on this book and beyond. Similarly, Professor Tim Bale, Queen Mary, University of London, and Dr Alexander Smith, University of Warwick, have been inspirational academics whose input and mentoring have contributed significantly. I would also like to thank and acknowledge my friends and colleagues in Scotland for all their support, help and guidance. Special thanks go to my colleagues at Glasgow University, especially Professor Lauren McLaren, Professor Christopher Carman, Professor Sarah Birch, Dr Kelly Kollman, Dr Karen Wright, Dr Mo Hume, Dr Myrto Tsakatika and Dr Evgeny Postnikov. I thank Dr Alan Convery, Edinburgh University, and Professor David Hutchinson, Glasgow Caledonian University, for simulating debates in our shared interest areas.

Thanks also to my friends at Strathclyde University for keeping me intellectually stimulated and well fed on Tuesday evenings over on ‘The Southside’.

There are all those family and friends to whom I owe a hug and personal thanks for their ongoing and, in some cases, ceaseless support. These include my brother and family Ian, Pamela, Harvey and Darcey; grandparents Barry and Barbara; uncle Nigel and aunt Donna; cousins Rachel and Karl; cousins Thomas and Kirsty; cousins Christopher and Stephanie; aunt Maureen and family; cousins Emma and Richard; cousin Heather and uncle Lesley; and my dear friends Alex; Christopher and Victoria; David; Dawn; Kerry and Ryan; and Sandra, Simon and Christopher. Edward, the Third Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, 1926-2015, is himself a significant part of British history, especially in the 1950s. He is one of a number of close friends and family to whom I have said a final goodbye in recent years. That said, his legacy partly continues with this book, because, through him, from a young age, I gained privileged access to the life of a hereditary peer, which most certainly inspired my interest in Conservative politics and the 1950s period. My late mother Regina was born in 1957, the year Prime Minister Anthony Eden departed Number 10. As ever, my final thought turns to her. Mum, you are greatly loved and missed.

Bransford, Worcestershire, and the West End of Glasgow

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Company/Corporation
CCO	Conservative Central Office
CPA	Conservative Party Archive
CRD	Conservative Research Department
IPU(s)	Indoor Projector Units(s)
ITA	Independent Television Authority
ITV	Independent Television
MP(s)	Member(s) of Parliament
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
US(A)	United States (of America)
YC(s)	Young Conservative(s)

CONTRACTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Conservative Party	
Conservatives	
Tory Party	Conservative and Unionist Party (UK)
Tories	
The party	
National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations	Nation Union
Labour	Labour Party (UK)
Liberals	Liberal Party (UK)