

**DISSENSION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**1945–1974**

# DISSENSION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*Intra-Party Dissent in the House of  
Commons' Division Lobbies 1945–1974*

*Compiled and edited by*  
PHILIP NORTON

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*To my Parents*

# PREFACE

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and advice which I have received from Mr F. W. S. Craig, of Parliamentary Research Services in the compilation of this work, and also wish to place on record my debt of gratitude, in connection with my research, to Mr S. A. Walkland of the University of Sheffield.

PHILIP NORTON

March 1974

# INTRODUCTION

In terms of the expression of dissent within a Parliamentary party, voting against one's party in the division lobby represents only the tip of an iceberg; but, like the tip of an iceberg, it represents the part that is visible. It constitutes a public expression.

Yet, perhaps paradoxically because it is public, it has generally been neglected in the study of intra-party dissent in Parliament. Partly from a natural desire to avoid causing public embarrassment to their respective parties, and partly because dissent or dissatisfaction expressed privately and early may prove more effective than if expressed later, or solely, in the division lobby, Members of Parliament will initially express their dissent in private (through communication with a Minister, for example, or at a backbench party meeting), and this, coupled with the *assumption* that Members are normally unwilling to defy their party Whips, has led to the study of intra-party dissent within the division lobbies being neglected in favour of attempts to obtain an outline of the nature of dissent expressed behind closed doors. Despite a small number of articles and one published study<sup>1</sup> dealing with a number of specific (usually the more important and publicised) cross-votes for particular Parliaments and parties, there has been no comprehensive study of cross-votes or other occasions of intra-party dissent in the division lobbies in the post-war House of Commons. Yet without such a study it is impossible to assess the true importance of such dissension, and, indeed, the extent to which Members of Parliament are actually willing to resist pressure, and express their independence of their parties in the lobby.

This work attempts to fill this gap by recording all cross-votes and other occasions of intra-party dissent which have taken place in the House of Commons' division lobbies from 1945 to 1974. Each occasion in which Members of either the Conservative or Labour parties in Parliament entered a lobby against their party Whip,<sup>2</sup> or, in exceptional cases, against the clearly expressed wishes of their Front Benches,<sup>3</sup> is recorded. In each case, the names of those Members who voted against the Whip are listed, preceded by a short *précis* of the debate upon which the vote occurred, with particular emphasis upon the views (if any) by those who subsequently cast the dissenting votes.<sup>4</sup> In those cases where Members of a party entered both Lobbies in opposition to a Whip enjoining abstention—as happened in the Conservative party over the

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Jackson, *Rebels and Whips* (Macmillan, London, 1968). See Select Bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> In a small number of cases, where a party may have abstained from voting, the existence of a Whip, or the wishes of the whips, has had to be presumed.

<sup>3</sup> That is, cases in which the advice and wishes of a Front Bench are made explicit, but in which (usually for tactical purposes) the whips are not *officially* put on; for example, the decision of the Conservative Government not to put the whips on for the vote on the principle of entry into the European Economic Communities in October 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Or abstained from voting.

American Loan in 1945 and the Rhodesian oil embargo in 1965—then the names of those entering both lobbies are recorded.

The data contained in this book are based upon research into every division which has taken place in the House of Commons between, and including, the Parliamentary Sessions of 1945–6 and 1973–4. Every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy but the responsibility for any errors or omissions which may have occurred, rests with the compiler.

# INTRODUCTORY NOTES

## *Abstentions*

If, in addition to a number of Members casting dissenting votes, a number of others also abstain from voting, then this, where known, is indicated in the text.

Unlike votes cast in either lobby, however, abstentions cannot always be accurately estimated. Absence from a division does not, in itself, denote deliberate abstention—Members may be ‘paired’, ill or inadvertently delayed on the way to vote—and the only accurate and detailed information on abstentions, which is unfortunately not available to researchers or the public, is maintained by the party whips.

Some indication as to abstentions may be provided by Members declaring their intention to abstain during debate, by Members remaining in their places during a division (attracting publicity in so doing), and by unusually low Government majorities.<sup>1</sup>

## *Closure*

A Member wishing to bring a debate to a close and have a vote taken may move ‘That the Question be now put’. This motion for closure, if accepted by the Chair, is put forthwith without debate, and, if carried, the Question before the House is divided upon without further debate. For closure to be carried, it must be supported by at least 100 Members.

## *Corrections*

Errors occasionally occur in the division lists. Members’ names, for example, may be listed in error for other Members with similar names.

A number of such errors have been discovered in connection with this study, and, where appropriate, have been corrected or omitted from the text. The compiler expresses his gratitude to those Members and ex-Members of Parliament who have kindly assisted in confirming presumed errors.

## *Cross-votes*

The term ‘cross-votes’ refers to votes cast by Members in the lobby of their opponents in a division in which both main parties voted in opposing lobbies.

## *Prayers*

The term ‘Prayer’ is normally applied to a motion to approve or annul a Statutory Instrument promulgated by a Government Department or body, but

<sup>1</sup> Or unusually high Government majorities in the case of Opposition Abstentions.

is also commonly applied to any other motion to approve or annul a rule, order or regulation, and it is given this wider application in this work.

Where a Prayer is listed, details are also given as to whether it is tabled from the Government or Opposition side of the House, and as to whether it emanates from the Front or Back benches.

### *Private Bill legislation*

Private Bill legislation, which differs procedurally from Public legislation and on which the whips are not commonly applied, is excluded from this study.<sup>2</sup>

### *Private Members legislation*

Most Private Members' Bills and Motions are subject to free votes, and therefore not within the scope of this study.<sup>3</sup> On occasion, however, the whips have been applied (or explicit Front Bench advice offered),<sup>4</sup> and such occasions are listed.

### *Rejection*

On Second (or Third) Reading, a Member might move an amendment for the rejection of a Bill. This may take the form of a straightforward amendment for rejection (to read the Bill 'upon this day six (or three) months'), or one in which a reason for rejection is outlined, commonly referred to as a 'reasoned amendment'. If a straightforward amendment for rejection is negatived, a Bill is then deemed to have been read a Second (or Third) time.

### *Sources*

The primary source of information contained in this work is *Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons*, fifth series, otherwise known as *Hansard*. This is cited in the text as *HC Deb.*, followed by the Volume number and the column numbers of the division,<sup>5</sup> in addition to the Session and the division number.

Additional sources, such as *The Times*, various periodicals, reference works and Members and ex-Members of Parliament, are cited in footnotes to the text.

The compiler acknowledges, with thanks, the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office to use material from *Hansard*.

### *Tellers*

The names of dissenting Members who act as tellers are followed by an asterisk in the lists contained in the text.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> Records of all divisions, on Private Bills, Private Members' Legislation or Motions and other free votes, in which Members of either party divided to enter different lobbies, are maintained by the compiler, with whom interested researchers are invited to communicate.

<sup>4</sup> Primarily Labour Front Bench advice offered on backbench Labour Motions which expressed contrary views to official Labour party policy.

<sup>5</sup> Column numbers for divisions taking place in the calendar years 1973 and 1974 refer to Weekly *Hansards* and not the bound Volumes.

# Definitions and Abbreviations

'Committee' includes not only the Committee stage of a Bill but also re-committal.

'Conservative' includes Conservative Members of Parliament, Ulster Unionists, Liberal National (and subsequently National Liberal) Members in the 1945 Parliament, and Conservative Members and their allies in receipt of the Conservative whip in subsequent Parliaments.

'Labour' includes Labour Members and their allies in receipt of the Labour whip.

C.	Conservative
C.A.P.	Common Agricultural Policy
Cmnd.	Command Paper
Comm.	Communist
Dem. U.	Democratic Unionist
E.E.C.	European Economic Community
E.F.T.A.	European Free Trade Association
G.A.T.T.	General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
G.L.C.	Greater London Council
<i>HC Deb.</i>	<i>Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons/Hansard</i>
I.L.P.	Independent Labour Party
I.M.F.	International Monetary Fund
Ind.	Independent
Ind. C.	Independent Conservative
Ind. Lab.	Independent Labour
Ind. U.U.	Independent Ulster Unionist
I.R.A.	Irish Republican Army
Lab.	Labour
L.C.C.	London County Council
M.P.	Member of Parliament
Nat.	Nationalist
N.A.T.O.	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
N.E.D.C.	National Economic Development Council
P.L.P.	Parliamentary Labour Party
Prot. U.	Protestant Unionist
Rep. Lab.	Republican Labour
S.D.L.P.	Social Democratic and Labour Party
S.I.	Statutory Instrument
S.T.V.	Single Transferable Vote

*Definitions and Abbreviations*

<b>U.D.I.</b>	<b>Unilateral Declaration of Independence</b>
<b>U.D.R.</b>	<b>Ulster Defence Regiment</b>
<b>Unity</b>	<b>Irish Unity Party</b>
<b>U.U.</b>	<b>Ulster Unionist</b>