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## THE PARLIAMENT FOR WALES CAMPAIGN, 1950-1956

THE launching of the Parliament for Wales campaign in the summer of 1950 was not a sudden event. Between the wars, Wales had received but little recognition as a distinct political entity and had frequently been denied a measure of administrative autonomy. As early as 1925 it could justifiably be claimed that attempts to create national organs of government had resulted in a 'catalogue of failure',<sup>1</sup> and many of the administrative divisions between north and south had become more pronounced.<sup>2</sup> No Secretary of State for Wales, the consistent objective of Welsh devolutionists ever since 1890, had been appointed,<sup>3</sup> and many Labour activists in Wales in particular were diffident and over-cautious in their response to devolutionary proposals. Yet the experiences of slump and depression in the 'twenties and 'thirties did strengthen the economic arguments for devolution, as is reflected in the appointment of an increasing number of Welsh representatives to the government's advisory committee from March 1942, and in the setting up of a Welsh Reconstruction Advisory Committee in the following June. Demands re-appeared that a national Secretary of State be appointed,<sup>4</sup> and in the spring of 1944 the Coalition Cabinet grudgingly conceded that a Welsh Day should take place in the Commons when Welsh affairs alone might be debated.<sup>5</sup>

When the war came to an end, the tone of public debate was coloured more and more by devolutionary proposals which in turn influenced ideas on post-war planning and reconstruction. During the spring of 1945, the speeches of a number of Labour candidates in north Wales, especially Huw Morris-Jones (Merioneth), Eirene Jones (Flintshire) and Goronwy Roberts (Caernarvonshire), consistently advocated devolutionary solutions. Such candidates were responsible for the publication of a broadsheet, *Llais Llafur*, which promised not only a Secretary of State, but an economic planning authority for Wales, a radio corporation, an end to emigration and a north-south road

<sup>1</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 1 August 1925.

<sup>2</sup> See Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales, 1880-1980* (Oxford and Cardiff, 1981), p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> J. Graham Jones, 'Early campaigns to secure a Secretary of State for Wales, 1890-1939', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1988, pp. 153-75.

<sup>4</sup> I discuss this theme in 'Socialism, Devolution and a Secretary of State for Wales, 1940-64', *ibid.*, 1989, pp. 135-59.

<sup>5</sup> See the comments in Sir Reginald Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: a study* (London, 1954), pp. 368-70.

link.<sup>6</sup> Welsh issues received an attention unknown since the 1890s, an attention fuelled by seven *Plaid Cymru* candidates in the field: Gwynfor Evans (Merioneth), Ambrose Bebb (Caernarvonshire), J. E. Daniel (Caernarvon Boroughs), Wynne Samuel (Neath), Trefor Morgan (Ogmore), Kitchener Davies (Rhondda East) and Dr. Gwenan Jones (University of Wales). Yet it was apparent that a deep schism existed within the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party over its attitude towards Wales. When Cledwyn Hughes, the party's candidate for Anglesey, proposed to Aneurin Bevan (Ebbw Vale) that the party's manifesto might comprise a specific Welsh policy, he received short shrift, Bevan dismissing the suggestion as pure 'chauvinism'.<sup>7</sup> It was reputed that Ness Edwards (Caerphilly) displayed at his election meetings a Nazi lamp shade made of human skin, claiming that such atrocities would occur in Wales if the Welsh Nationalists gained power!<sup>8</sup>

Overall, it became increasingly apparent during the post-war Labour governments that demands from Wales for greater powers of self-government were increasing in momentum. Repeated appeals were made for the appointment of a minister to be in charge of Welsh affairs. Although Attlee's governments consistently rejected these appeals, a number of concessions to Welsh national sentiment were granted: the annual holding of the Welsh Day debates in the Commons; the annual publication of a White Paper summarising government activity in Wales; the 'retention and improvement' of the regional offices of government departments, and the regular convention of Quarterly Conferences of Heads of Government Offices in Wales.<sup>9</sup> February 1947 saw the establishment of a Welsh Regional Council of Labour, with Cliff Prothero as its first secretary, soon to merge with the South Wales Regional Council of Labour which had already survived ten years.<sup>10</sup> A distinct Home Rule wing had emerged within the Labour Party in Wales, comprising a number of M.P.s, prospective parliamentary candidates and constituency parties. The idea of a Parliament for Wales—approved by the Communist Party's 1944 congress<sup>11</sup>—began to win substantial support.

<sup>6</sup> See Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies—a Socialist faith* (Llandysul, 1983), p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> Lord Cledwyn, *The Referendum: the end of an-era* (Cardiff, 1981), p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Griffiths, *Turning to London: Labour's attitude to Wales, 1898-1956* (Pontypridd, 1983), p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> See 'Socialism, Devolution and a Secretary of State for Wales, 1940-64', loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> P.R.O., CAB 132/1: Minutes of the Lord President's Committee, 11 October 1946; Cliff Prothero, *Recount* (Ormskirk and Northridge, 1982), pp. 61-63.

<sup>11</sup> See Brian Davies, 'Heading for the rocks?', *Arcade*, no. 31, 5 February 1982.

These developments were paralleled by new policy initiatives from the Conservative camp. Early in 1948 R. A. Butler, although announcing his party's opposition to the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales, advocated a 'watchdog' or 'Ambassador for Wales' within the Cabinet whose brief would be to 'watch the priorities and see that Wales is getting its fair share',<sup>12</sup> a policy re-iterated in the *Conservative Charter for Wales* published in February,<sup>13</sup> and a startling departure from the traditional stand of many Conservative politicians. In October Churchill confirmed Butler's policy statement: 'Should we return to power we propose, among other steps, to make provision for a Cabinet Minister especially responsible for Wales'.<sup>14</sup> Alarm spread through Welsh Labour circles,<sup>15</sup> an unease reflected in part in the proposal that a Council for Wales be set up, an idea first mooted by the Welsh Regional Council of Labour in December 1947, and subsequently raised in the Commons by Goronwy Roberts, Labour M.P. for Caernarvonshire, in January.<sup>16</sup> The proposal was the subject of vigorous discussion in the Labour Party and the Cabinet during the spring and summer of 1948,<sup>17</sup> following which it was eventually decided to set up an Advisory Council for Wales and Monmouthshire whose members would be permitted to elect their own chairman as 'the least objectionable arrangement' available to a reluctant Labour Cabinet.<sup>18</sup>

Reactions to the proposal throughout Wales were at best luke-warm, at worst overtly hostile. Lady Megan Lloyd George, Liberal M.P. for Anglesey, was not alone in accusing Herbert Morrison, the Lord President of the Council, of fobbing off the Welsh people with a 'scraggy bone, without meat or marrow in it... a half-hearted concession to Welsh public opinion'.<sup>19</sup> She asserted that Wales required far more than even a Secretary of State and a Welsh Office, perhaps a Parliament on the model of Northern Ireland,<sup>20</sup> and thus in a sense 'fired the first shot' in what was to develop into the Parliament for Wales campaign. While there was majority approval

<sup>12</sup> *House of Commons Debates, 5th series*, Vol. 446 (26 January 1948), cols. 693-96.

<sup>13</sup> *Western Mail*, 3 February 1948.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 October 1948.

<sup>15</sup> See N.L.W., James Griffiths papers C2/8: Griffiths to Morrison, 11 October 1948 (copy); and *ibid.* C2/9: Morrison to Griffiths, 13 October 1948.

<sup>16</sup> *House of Commons Debates, 5th series*, Vol. 446 (26 January 1948), cols. 728-29 and 1468-69.

<sup>17</sup> There is a detailed account of the deliberations in J. G. Evans, 'British Governments and Devolution in Wales: attitudes and policies, 1944-1979' (unpublished University of Wales M.A. thesis, 1987), pp. 42-56, a most impressive thesis.

<sup>18</sup> P.R.O., CAB 129/29 CP(48) 228 (11 October 1948).

<sup>19</sup> *House of Commons Debates, 5th series*, Vol. 458 (24 November 1948), cols. 1262-77.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* See also Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.



for the proposal for a Council from trade union branches and divisional Labour parties in Wales,<sup>21</sup> many Welsh local authorities were unenthusiastic,<sup>22</sup> few considering the Council an acceptable alternative to a Welsh Secretary of State.<sup>23</sup> Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council and deputy party leader, having secured Attlee's agreement to address the Council's inaugural meeting on 20 May 1949,<sup>24</sup> defended the government's decision, asserting that the new Council, in regular and direct contact with government ministers, was far preferable to a 'buffer Minister' solely responsible for Wales. The Council, he claimed, would engage in 'an intimate co-operation with the government of the day'.<sup>25</sup> The creation of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire, which began life as 'a concession and a compromise',<sup>26</sup> had at least recognized Wales as a distinct administrative unit; its very existence served to stimulate interest in the devolution debate. Once it was established, as Ness Edwards—Labour M.P. for Caerphilly and no nationalist sympathiser—put it, 'Practically every place-seeker and wall-scribbler throughout the land started proposing a wild array of fantastic alternatives to it'.<sup>27</sup>

By 1950, with 'the Welsh question' firmly on the political agenda, it was apparent that the Labour Party was very much on the defensive, badly shaken by Conservative calls for a Minister for Wales, and very conscious of a growing Plaid Cymru challenge. Goronwy Roberts, fully sensitive to the course of events, wrote of 'a process of revolt against us. . . . Many of our own people are dispirited and frustrated. . . . This is the way for a party to die at the roots'.<sup>28</sup> The impression which emerges from the source materials is that of a Labour Party which had become 'decidedly defensive' in its attitude towards Wales.<sup>29</sup> To many Labour Party activists in Wales, 'Welshness' was indeed 'more of a social grace than a political imperative',<sup>30</sup> as is

<sup>21</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 6, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 17 January 1949.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. In response to a questionnaire circulated by the Association of Welsh Local Authorities concerning the proposed Council for Wales and Monmouthshire, 80 voted in favour, 64 against and 38 did not respond.

<sup>23</sup> *Western Mail*, 25 January 1949.

<sup>24</sup> P.R.O., PREM 8 1569, part 2: Morrison to Attlee, 18 October 1948.

<sup>25</sup> N.L.W., James Griffiths papers C2/31: draft speech by Morrison for the inaugural meeting of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire; Evans, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Stead, 'The Labour Party and the claims of Wales', in John Osmond (ed.), *The National Question again: Welsh political identity in the 1980s* (Llandysul, 1985), p. 105.

<sup>27</sup> Ness Edwards, *Is this the road?* (1955).

<sup>28</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, GS/WAL/47: Goronwy O. Roberts to Gwilym Williams. 8 August 1950.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. J. Beverley Smith, 'James Griffiths—an appreciation', in *James Griffiths and his Times* (Ferndale, 1978), p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> Stead, loc. cit., p. 100.

reflected in their regular complaints that the B.B.C. Welsh news abounded with 'far too many Welsh nationalist items'.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the Liberal Party, now at the nadir of its electoral fortunes in Wales as elsewhere, supported at its 1949 assembly at Hastings calls for separate parliaments for Wales and Scotland,<sup>32</sup> thus strikingly re-committing itself to a distinctive home rule platform. Clement Davies, Liberal M.P. for Montgomeryshire and, since 1945, party leader, had powerfully supported devolutionary measures throughout his political career.<sup>33</sup> The party manifestos in both the 1950 and 1951 general elections contained specific pledges to create Welsh and Scottish assemblies.<sup>34</sup>

Such was the general background to the launching of the Parliament for Wales campaign. During 1949 many Welsh Liberals had appealed for a covenant in Wales on the model of the Scottish Covenant for a Scottish Parliament which had won extensive support north of the border. In October Plaid Cymru called for a campaign for a Parliament for Wales,<sup>35</sup> powerfully led by Gwynfor Evans and J. E. Jones, the party's president and secretary.<sup>36</sup> But it was *Undeb Cymru Fydd*, a voluntary, non-political language pressure group, which acted as midwife in the birth of the Parliament for Wales campaign, to the general approval of both the Liberals and Plaid Cymru. The *Undeb* had been set up in 1941 and sought to safeguard the social, linguistic and educational interests of Wales. Always adopting constitutional methods, it attracted much support from the Welsh-speaking intelligentsia, many of them prominent Plaid Cymru members, but never became a grass roots or popular movement. When the *Undeb* organized a Welsh Covenant early in 1950, Emrys Roberts, Liberal M.P. for Merioneth, wrote, 'I think this would be excellent. I think we would gain the kudos of having launched the campaign but avoided a stunt or a flop.'<sup>37</sup> Dr. T. I. Ellis, secretary of *Undeb Cymru Fydd*, having noted on the last day of 1949 a 'desire in many circles' in Wales for the convention of a national conference

<sup>31</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 6, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 21 March 1949.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 26 March 1949.

<sup>33</sup> J. Graham Jones, 'Montgomeryshire Politics: Clement Davies and the National Government', *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 73 (1985), 96-115.

<sup>34</sup> *The Times*, 6 February 1950 and 4 October 1951.

<sup>35</sup> *Welsh Nation*, October 1949.

<sup>36</sup> Elwyn Roberts, 'Ymgyrch Senedd i Gymru', in John Davies (ed.), *Cymru'n Deffro: Hanes y Blaid Genedlaethol, 1925-75* (Talybont, 1981), p. 95.

<sup>37</sup> Gregynog Hall, Newtown, Liberal Party of Wales archives, Emrys Roberts to Hywel Rhys, secretary of the Liberal Party of Wales, 8 January 1950. Significantly, *Undeb Cymru Fydd* had been so named by Gwynfor Evans.

during 1950,<sup>38</sup> suggested to the movement's council on 13 January such a conference to consider promoting a petition in favour of parliamentary self-government for Wales.<sup>39</sup> These moves were much influenced by John McCormick's dynamic and broad-based Covenant movement in Scotland which displayed greater energy and tenacity than the contemporary Scottish Nationalist Party. Representatives from the *Undeb* attended a Scottish national conference held at Edinburgh on 22 April,<sup>40</sup> by which time the Scottish petition had already attracted a large number of signatures.<sup>41</sup>

On 1 March 1950 *Undeb Cymru Fydd* announced that an all-Wales conference would be held at Llandrindod Wells on 1 July whose objective would be to organize a national petition for domestic self-government. Immediately the Welsh Regional Council of Labour reacted scornfully, Cliff Prothero dismissing what he termed 'the frivolous demand for home rule' as emanating from a 'small number of people who represent no serious body of opinion in Wales'.<sup>42</sup> In May the Regional Council's annual conference, endorsing Prothero's rejection of the Llandrindod Wells convention, appealed to 'the whole of the Labour Movement to have nothing to do' with the event.<sup>43</sup> Prothero claimed that the broadsheet *Llais Llafur*, which had appeared in 1945, was the work of 'a few individuals for which the Labour Party could not accept responsibility'.<sup>44</sup>

The Llandrindod conference has justifiably been described as 'a triumph of organization and enthusiasm',<sup>45</sup> at which the speakers constituted an array of figures prominent in Welsh public life, among them S. O. Davies, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, Gwynfor Evans, Dr. T. I. Ellis, Lady Megan Lloyd George, J. R. Jones and Rev. G. O. Williams.<sup>46</sup> An executive committee to co-ordinate the national petition for a Welsh Parliament was nominated at Llandrindod. The presence of S. O. Davies, the highly individualistic Labour M.P. for Merthyr Tydfil, on the Llandrindod platform caused an outcry in Welsh Labour circles. 'We are ruled by the Civil Service', Davies told an enthusiastic audience, 'We shall have to ease the pressure at Westminster. . . . Control of their own affairs must be handed to

<sup>38</sup> N.L.W., *Undeb Cymru Fydd* records 268, secretary's report, September-December 1949.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, minutes of council meeting, 13 January 1950.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, secretary's report, January-March 1950.

<sup>41</sup> It was claimed that more than 500,000 had signed the Scottish petition by the end of 1949.

<sup>42</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 6, Welsh Regional Council of Labour papers, press statement, 29 March 1950.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, executive committee minutes, 26 June 1950.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* See n. 6 above.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 170.

<sup>46</sup> See *Welsh Nation*, September 1950, for a full account.

Wales and Scotland. We either do that, or we lose the measure of freedom that parliamentary democracy guarantees to us.'<sup>47</sup> His prominent part in the proceedings was soon reported to Morgan Phillips, himself a former Welsh miner, now the party's general secretary.<sup>48</sup> Predictably, the Welsh Regional Council of Labour was incensed by Davies's conduct, 'strongly condemning' the line he had taken and vehemently opposing 'anything which has emerged out of the Convention'.<sup>49</sup> In response to a communication from Cliff Prothero to the Merthyr Trades Council and Labour Party,<sup>50</sup> Davies defended himself vigorously: *Undeb Cymru Fydd* was a non-political body, while the Regional Council was a 'conglomeration of nonentities' who were 'not in line with the movement in Wales'. Prothero's attitude, he claimed, had cost Labour both the Anglesey and Carmarthen divisions in the 1950 general election.<sup>51</sup> The matter continued to occupy the attention of the Regional Council for several months.<sup>52</sup>

Interestingly, a writer in *The Economist* viewed the holding of the Llandrindod Conference as one indication of 'a protest against the power of any government in a planned economy', but asserted that the attitude of Whitehall was equally 'exasperating and callous' towards the regions of England as towards Wales and Scotland.<sup>53</sup> He lent support to the movement inaugurated at Llandrindod on the grounds that, if Scotland and Wales were to achieve a measure of self-government, the momentum thus created might encourage someone 'to demand a little freedom for the patient English'.<sup>54</sup> Inevitably, progress was slow and problems formidable during the first year of the campaign's existence.<sup>55</sup> The movement survived aggressive opposition from the Labour and Conservative parties and from much of the English-language press in Wales, while financial difficulties invariably dogged its progress throughout its existence. *Undeb Cymru Fydd* was forced to provide extensive financial and organizational support.<sup>56</sup> The *Undeb's* Aberystwyth office served as the headquarters of the new campaign and

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, Morgan Phillips papers, Gwilym Williams to Morgan Phillips, 4 July 1950.

<sup>49</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 6, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 25 September 1950.

<sup>50</sup> University College, Swansea, S. O. Davies papers 1/A/i.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 1/A/ii.

<sup>52</sup> See N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vols. 6 and 7, Welsh Regional Council of Labour papers, 6 November 1950-5 November 1951; Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, pp. 171-73.

<sup>53</sup> *The Economist*, 8 July 1950, p. 60, cited in Evans, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 99-100.

<sup>56</sup> N.L.W., *Undeb Cymru Fydd* records 268, secretary's report, September-December 1950.



initially bore all its costs.<sup>57</sup> In November 1950 Dafydd Jenkins became the campaign's secretary,<sup>58</sup> and in 1951 Dafydd Miles of Aberystwyth was appointed a full-time organizer,<sup>59</sup> soon embarking upon an extensive campaign of public meetings throughout mid- and north Wales.

A meeting was held at the Llanrwst National Eisteddfod in August 1951 to launch the campaign formally, and names began to be collected on a petition which was eventually to be presented to Parliament. A parliament with legislative and administrative powers on the Northern Ireland model was the campaign's formal aim. This parliament would be responsible for matters directly relevant to Wales, while the Westminster Parliament would remain in control of issues of 'wider concern'. There would be no reduction in the number of M.P.s representing Welsh constituencies at Westminster.<sup>60</sup> The Welsh Regional Council of Labour remained fiercely hostile to the movement,<sup>61</sup> though there was some support for the campaign in Welsh Labour circles. When the 1951 general election was imminent, Plaid Cymru announced that it would not contest Caernarvonshire and Merioneth on the grounds that Goronwy Roberts and Emrys Roberts had associated themselves with the Parliament for Wales campaign,<sup>62</sup> a decision no doubt facilitated by the party's dire financial straits. In this election Lady Megan Lloyd George, Liberal M.P. for Anglesey since 1929 and the president of the Parliament for Wales campaign, was defeated by Cledwyn Hughes for Labour, ironically a warm fellow-supporter of the movement. 'I am too left for the modern Liberal taste', she wrote bitterly to Lord Samuel after her defeat.<sup>63</sup> In other respects, the election results augured well for the movement's future; the election of Hughes in Anglesey and T. W. Jones in Merioneth provided the campaign with two stalwart supporters in the Commons. Most of their Labour colleagues were more cautious. George Thomas (Cardiff West) condemned even the more moderate proposal for a Secretary of State for Wales: '... I have studied carefully the way in which the Scottish Secretary of State acts, merely as a buffer between the M.P.s and Ministers with real

<sup>57</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, T. I. Ellis to Elwyn Roberts, 19 June 1956 (written when the campaign had come to an end).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 101-2.

<sup>60</sup> *Parliament for Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1953), p. 3, and Evans, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

<sup>61</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, GS/WAL/53: Cliff Prothero to Gwilym Williams, 10 September 1951.

<sup>62</sup> See the comments in Alan Butt Philip, *The Welsh question: Nationalism in Welsh politics, 1945-1970* (Cardiff, 1975), pp. 76-77.

<sup>63</sup> House of Lords Record Office, Samuel papers A/155 (xiii) 161: Megan Lloyd George to Samuel, 9 November 1951.

authority over departments'.<sup>64</sup> James Griffiths (Llanelli), traditionally a consistent advocate of devolution, now pursued a tentative *via media*: 'We have no right to ask our people in Wales to sign a blank cheque for a Welsh Parliament without the consequences being fully explained to them. . . . I want to see the largest amount of devolution in all essentially Welsh affairs within the framework of our British economy.'<sup>65</sup>

The October 1951 election also heralded the end of Labour's long post-war reign, a disappointingly barren period to advocates of institutional and constitutional innovation in Wales. Churchill's new Conservative administration, remaining true to its manifesto commitment,<sup>66</sup> made the Home Secretary, David Maxwell Fyfe, responsible for Welsh affairs,<sup>67</sup> although he was to enjoy no executive powers. The appointment would bring about 'a more intimate comprehension of the Welsh point of view', suggested the Prime Minister.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, David Llewellyn, M.P. for Cardiff North, became an additional Minister of State at the Home Office, charged to assist Maxwell-Fyfe in fulfilling his responsibility for Welsh affairs.<sup>69</sup> The officials of *Undeb Cymru Fydd*, having met the new ministers, sensed that 'Interest in Welsh affairs is on the increase' at Westminster.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, the Parliament for Wales campaign gained little in momentum. T. I. Ellis was very conscious of 'a gulf between the M.P.s who are Welsh in spirit and the rootless Members. . . a mirror of the condition of things in Wales itself'.<sup>71</sup> In January 1952 the Welsh Regional Council of Labour announced its own investigation into 'the needs of local government in Wales'.<sup>72</sup> Enthusiasm was waning and financial problems growing apace. In March Gwilym R. Jones wrote to T. I. Ellis: 'We believe the campaign will become a disastrous failure unless moves are made at once to raise a substantial fund'.<sup>73</sup> The year 1952 certainly represented the nadir of the campaign's fortunes.

In 1953, however, the movement was to discover a new vitality and sense of purpose. On 22 January S. O. Davies made an impassioned plea for Welsh self-government in the Commons: 'Wales cannot be ordered, governed and

<sup>64</sup> *South Wales Democrat*, December 1951.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, November 1951.

<sup>66</sup> D. E. Butler, *The British General Election of 1951* (London, 1952), p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> *House of Commons Debates*, 5th series, Vol. 493 (13 November 1951), col. 75.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 815-16.

<sup>69</sup> P.R.O., CAB 128/23, C C (51)3 (2 November 1951).

<sup>70</sup> N.L.W., Undeb Cymru Fydd records 268, secretary's report, September-December 1951 (transl.).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, secretary's report, January-March 1952 (transl.).

<sup>72</sup> *South Wales Democrat*, January 1952.

<sup>73</sup> N.L.W., Undeb Cymru Fydd records 203, Gwilym R. Jones to T. I. Ellis, 9 March 1952 (transl.).

managed successfully by an outside alien body of individuals'.<sup>74</sup> The campaign still languished. In February the movement's committee at Bangor expressed its disapproval of the apathy and inactivity which prevailed and appealed to the executive committee to give a lead.<sup>75</sup> Dafydd Miles was compelled to return to his post as a music master at Machynlleth, the campaign had no full-time organizer, and its debts amounted to £1,154.<sup>76</sup> In May the executive committee appealed to Plaid Cymru to allow Elwyn Roberts, then party organizer in Gwynedd, to rescue the campaign by becoming its national organizer. Agreement was reached that he should begin his duties in September,<sup>77</sup> and should take full advantage of the National Eisteddfod at Rhyl in the previous month to re-awaken public interest. Attention was focussed on a public meeting to be held at Rhyl on 7 August, when Lady Megan, Goronwy Roberts and Tudor Watkins were to speak.<sup>78</sup> In the event, the meeting became a major turning-point in the course of the campaign, for Alderman Huw T. Edwards, a leading figure in north Wales Labour circles and chairman of the Council for Wales, announced his conversion to the cause.<sup>79</sup> Previously one of the campaign's most virulent and consistent critics, who had penned the vitriolic pamphlet, *They went to Llandrindod*,<sup>80</sup> Edwards was immediately acclaimed a 'prize convert' to the cause.<sup>81</sup> The *Western Mail* could justifiably describe him as 'three men in one'—'a leading light of the trade union and Labour movements', which did not believe in the appointment of a Welsh Secretary of State; the chairman of the Council of Wales which envisaged a Welsh Secretary as a 'long-term objective'; and at the same time a fervent advocate of a Parliament for Wales.<sup>82</sup> Iorrie Thomas, Labour M.P. for Rhondda West and an arch-opponent of all nationalist movements, warned the campaign's supporters that Edwards would become 'a diminishing asset... He is walking backwards on his heels... Huw is marching around in a circle.'<sup>83</sup>

In the same month, a pamphlet entitled *Parliament for Wales* saw the light of day, outlining the campaign's aims and the functions and role sought for

<sup>74</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, pp. 174-76.

<sup>75</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 31, minute book of the Bangor committee of the Parliament for Wales campaign, entry for 11 February 1953.

<sup>76</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 102.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 30 July 1953.

<sup>79</sup> *Y Cymro*, 14 August 1953.

<sup>80</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 103-4.

<sup>81</sup> *Western Mail*, 22 February 1954.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 26 September 1953.

the parliament.<sup>84</sup> Elwyn Roberts took up his new position and an office was opened at Rhyl.<sup>85</sup> A determined effort was made to re-vitalise the campaign. At the end of September a 'Parliament for Wales' rally was held at Sophia Gardens, Cardiff, officially organized by Plaid Cymru; S. O. Davies joined the sponsors of the rally on the banner-decked platform and gleefully joined a huge procession through the streets of Cardiff to the proposed site of a Welsh parliament in Cathays Park.<sup>86</sup> The Welsh Regional Council of Labour was predictably incensed by Davies's behaviour.<sup>87</sup> In addition to the wayward M.P. for Merthyr, four other Welsh Labour Members were now actively involved in the Parliament for Wales campaign: Cledwyn Hughes (Anglesey), Goronwy Roberts (Caernarvon), T. W. Jones (Merioneth) and Tudor Watkins (Brecon and Radnor). Peter Freeman (Newport) had also expressed sympathy with the movement's objectives. 'The Labour Party is having the ground taken from underneath its feet because we do not make a declaration one way or the other', wrote Prothero to Morgan Phillips.<sup>88</sup> The campaign approached the South Wales Council of the National Union of Mineworkers for support and circulated its programme to every miners' lodge in the coalfield. The South Wales Council of the N.U.M. in turn appealed to the Regional Council for guidance, and the Regional Council resolved to prepare a declaration against a parliament for Wales and to circulate the statement to the south Wales lodges of the N.U.M.<sup>89</sup> 'It was agreed that it would be necessary for us to act quickly', wrote Prothero to Phillips, 'Or we may find the miners coming to a decision at a conference having heard only one side of the case'.<sup>90</sup> He was particularly alarmed that the Communist Party, already committed to supporting the campaign, might win over large numbers of miners.<sup>91</sup>

At the end of November, T. W. Jones and Tudor Watkins, sharing the platform with Lady Megan Lloyd George, addressed a campaign meeting at Tonypany in the very heartland of a Welsh Socialist bastion.<sup>92</sup> The

<sup>84</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 4 September 1953.

<sup>85</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 105.

<sup>86</sup> See Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 176.

<sup>87</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, Morgan Phillips papers, Cliff Prothero to Morgan Phillips, 6 October 1953 ('Confidential').

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 7, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 26 October 1953.

<sup>90</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, Morgan Phillips papers, Cliff Prothero to Morgan Phillips, 27 October 1953.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> *Western Mail*, 28 November 1953. On this episode, see also Evans, op. cit., pp. 79-80.



meeting had already caused a storm of protest in Welsh Labour circles, the Rhondda Borough and the Rhondda East local Labour parties protesting to the Regional Council that it was 'very bad form' for Jones and Watkins 'to associate themselves with this campaign which could only lead to embarrassment for the Labour Party in the valleys'.<sup>93</sup> Both M.P.s were advised of these objections by the party's assistant national agent,<sup>94</sup> but neither was prepared to back down, Watkins arguing that the meeting in question was a non-party gathering and that he had already consulted Bill Mainwaring, the local M.P., who had no objection. He further asserted that the Labour Party had not formally announced its opposition to the Parliament for Wales campaign.<sup>95</sup> The gist of Jones's reply was similar; he was determined to honour his commitment.<sup>96</sup> The intransigence of the two Members was striking, for, at a meeting of the Welsh Parliamentary Labour group two weeks earlier—with Herbert Morrison, Morgan Phillips and Cliff Prothero in attendance—the dissentients had been warned to toe the party line. The Labour Party would unveil its own plans for Wales within three months, they were told, and in the meantime they should withdraw their support from the Parliament for Wales campaign or else face disciplinary action from the Parliamentary Labour Party.<sup>97</sup> A 'Welsh Socialist dilemma' had indeed emerged.<sup>98</sup> Widespread criticism ensued that the Regional Council had been slow in formulating a Welsh policy, and it was feared that it might endorse 'the stomachs before souls theory' by stressing industrial and economic problems and 'dodge the constitutional issue entirely'.<sup>99</sup> Welsh Socialists, it was claimed, faced stark alternatives—'accepting the Party line or being disowned by headquarters'.<sup>100</sup> Morrison was accused of 'wielding his big stick above the heads of the Welsh Socialist Members'.<sup>101</sup>

While the Labour Party in Wales was thus plunged into internal turmoil because of its disparate attitude towards the Parliament for Wales campaign, Elwyn Roberts turned resolutely to the task of rescuing the movement from oblivion. His energy and determination were sorely needed. 'What is happening to the Parliament for Wales petition?', Gwilym Roberts had

<sup>93</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 7, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 23 November 1953.

<sup>94</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, Morgan Phillips papers, Sara E. Barker to Morgan Phillips, 24 November 1953.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, T. E. Watkins to Sara E. Barker, 25 November 1953.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, T. W. Jones to Sara E. Barker, 25 November 1953.

<sup>97</sup> *Welsh Nation*, December 1953.

<sup>98</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 November 1953.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 November 1953.

<sup>101</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 11 January 1954.

justifiably enquired in July; 'I have not heard of any activity on a national scale for months. . . . It would be a great pity if the movement were to collapse. . . . All this enthusiasm looks like evaporating.' The Welsh, he claimed, were in danger of being dubbed 'a nation of five-furlongers', unable to stay the course.<sup>102</sup> Roberts aimed to overturn the inactivity and apathy. In September he opened an office at Colwyn Bay, arranged a nation-wide programme of meetings, established a network of local committees prepared to collect signatures and to raise money in an attempt to clear the substantial debts which he had inherited. He felt himself to be inaugurating a new movement from scratch,<sup>103</sup> even lacking a list of names of local secretaries.<sup>104</sup> He made contacts in localities in the south previously untouched by the campaign.<sup>105</sup>

A concrete policy statement from the Labour Party was awaited impatiently on all sides. The Welsh Regional Council of Labour had appointed a sub-committee to examine Welsh affairs as early as May 1952.<sup>106</sup> An internal memorandum drawn up in September of the following year concluded: 'A Parliament for Wales does not deeply move the masses of the people. Not many are convinced it is the best way of getting "fair treatment" or "fair shares" for the people of Wales. It is hardly practical politics.'<sup>107</sup> Rejecting out-of-hand the setting up of a Welsh Office and a Secretary of State,<sup>108</sup> the document tended to favour the establishment of a Welsh Grand Committee at Westminster.<sup>109</sup> Many Labour politicians from Wales were deeply concerned about the problems of their native land. D. R. Grenfell (Gower) advocated the establishment of a Labour Party Council to co-ordinate the work of various government departments in Wales—'I am not in favour of political devolution. I am all for helping Wales to attain industrial prosperity.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 July 1953.

<sup>103</sup> Elwyn Roberts, *loc. cit.*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>104</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales Campaign executive committee minutes, 7 November 1953.

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

<sup>106</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, file 28, Cliff Prothero to Carol Johnson, 14 May 1952 (copy).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Confidential Memorandum, 'The Machinery of Government in relation to Welsh Affairs', 22 September 1953, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9: 'Would a Secretary of State and a Welsh Office be something worthwhile and satisfy? When such was pressed during the time of the Labour Government it was not conceded. We were told there were difficulties in the way of what powers to give a Secretary of State for Wales & Monmouthshire. The question of duplication of duties and the "cutting across" other Ministers' duties was uppermost. Our Scottish friends tell us that their Scottish Secretary is by no means all he seems to be at first sight. They add, "The Treasury is still in control."'

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The rest will follow.’<sup>110</sup> He later supported the proposal of the Council for Wales that a Welsh Development Board be set up ‘as an alternative to the subject of a Parliament for Wales or any merely constitutional controversy of its kind’.<sup>111</sup> ‘It is imperative that we should be more specific and not so vague’, James Griffiths impressed upon Prothero. ‘It’s the vagueness that has led us to the position in which we all go our way in Welsh Affairs—some for this and some for something else.’<sup>112</sup> Prothero agreed: ‘The time has arrived when we must be in a position to tell our people in Wales what we will do when returned to power. . . . We must declare exactly what we will do.’<sup>113</sup>

The task of preparing a distinctive Welsh policy proved protracted and fraught with disagreement and rancour. A long series of meetings was held during the winter of 1953-54 attended by the Labour M.P.s from Wales, Herbert Morrison, the party’s national executive, its national policy committee and the Welsh Regional Council of Labour,<sup>114</sup> meetings which, it was claimed, reflected the alarm of the party’s leaders at the ‘progress of the Welsh Nationalist movement and the effect upon Socialist policy and membership’.<sup>115</sup> In March there appeared the policy document, *Labour’s Policy for Wales*. Attacking at some length the proposal for a Parliament for Wales, and defending the record of the Labour governments of 1945-51 in relation to Wales, the document came down in favour of revising the constitution of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire (so as to make it ‘a more representative and more effective organ of Welsh opinion’<sup>116</sup>), and retaining the post of Minister for Welsh Affairs with a Cabinet seat and without departmental responsibilities.<sup>117</sup> Thus did the Labour Party return to a proposal which had been firmly rejected by Attlee and Cripps in 1946 and which a few years earlier had been condemned by the party as ‘a piece of lip-service to Welsh sentiment which ignores the realities of modern government’.<sup>118</sup> The 1954 policy statement could indeed be described as ‘a “play-safe” document. . . a ridiculous and embarrassing *volte-face*’.<sup>119</sup> The impression remained that the policy change had been made reluctantly, was motivated by expediency and self-interest and accepted half-heartedly as a

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., D. R. Grenfell to Cliff Prothero, 24 October 1953.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., D. R. Grenfell to Cliff Prothero, 6 November 1953.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., James Griffiths to Cliff Prothero, 24 January 1954.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Cliff Prothero to James Griffiths, 26 January 1954 (copy).

<sup>114</sup> See the *Western Mail*, 11 November and 17 December 1953, and 28 January and 4 February 1954.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 11 November 1953.

<sup>116</sup> *Labour’s Policy for Wales* (Cardiff, 1954), p. 12.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>118</sup> *Western Mail*, 30 January 1950.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 3 March 1954.

more acceptable alternative to the more radical proposals for a Parliament for Wales or self-government. It was widely felt that 'the Socialist hierarchy', fearing that a reduction in the number of Welsh M.P.s at Westminster would emerge as an inevitable concomitant of a Parliament for Wales, had backed the proposal for a Minister for Wales.<sup>120</sup> Supporters of the Parliament for Wales campaign were outraged by *Labour's Policy for Wales*.<sup>121</sup> Predictably, S. O. Davies was the most outspoken, consistently attacking the statement at party meetings, and angrily proclaiming the need for 'a Socialist government in a Socialist, self-governing Wales', which, he asserted, would have enabled Wales to escape the tragedy of the inter-war depression.<sup>122</sup>

It was announced that a motion in favour of the Parliament for Wales campaign would be discussed at the annual conference of the south Wales area of the N.U.M. at Porthcawl on 10 May 1954. Many Welsh M.P.s were determined to make a concerted attempt to crush the movement,<sup>123</sup> and successfully negotiated speaking rights for D. R. Grenfell, James Griffiths and D. J. Williams.<sup>124</sup> It was widely argued that a Parliament for Wales would lead to purely 'Welsh' trade unions, the break-up of the N.U.M. and a return to the loathed district pay agreements for Welsh miners.<sup>125</sup> In a long letter to the *Western Mail* published on the day of the conference,<sup>126</sup> S. O. Davies countered these rumours powerfully, but he was denied the opportunity to speak from the platform. In the event, 121 delegates opposed the home rule motion, thirty-four supported it, and there were forty-five abstentions. The outcome was indeed 'a psychological body-blow to the campaign',<sup>127</sup> which had placed great emphasis on securing and retaining the support of the miners.<sup>128</sup> A fortnight later, the Regional Council, again meeting at Porthcawl, inevitably endorsed *Labour's Policy for Wales* by 154 votes to one, and rejected a home rule amendment by 159 votes to eight.<sup>129</sup> 'What a highly disciplined army the Socialists possess', responded Gwilym

<sup>120</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 February 1954.

<sup>121</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 111-12.

<sup>122</sup> University College, Swansea, S. O. Davies papers 1E (speech notes).

<sup>123</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, file 29, I. R. Thomas to Cliff Prothero, 7 April 1954.

<sup>124</sup> *Western Mail*, 10 May 1954.

<sup>125</sup> *Daily Herald*, 30 April 1954; Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 112-13.

<sup>126</sup> *Western Mail*, 10 May 1954.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 181.

<sup>128</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 18 December 1954.

<sup>129</sup> *Western Mail*, 31 May 1954.



Roberts.<sup>130</sup> Labour had officially abandoned Welsh home rule—to the undisguised glee of Council secretary, Cliff Prothero.<sup>131</sup> In October Labour's annual conference meeting at Scarborough confirmed these decisions.<sup>132</sup> A sole dissentient delegate, a railway worker from Merioneth, swiftly defected to Plaid Cymru.

The Parliament for Wales campaign continued its meetings and propaganda. At Newtown in July, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, an interesting recruit, argued the case for an extensive measure of devolution on the grounds that the Westminster Parliament was 'choked, congested, overburdened and overdriven. There is a rush of blood to the head and anaemia at the extremities.... There is no nationalism gone mad. It is common sense.'<sup>133</sup> At the National Eisteddfod at Ystradgynlais in August, one of the largest rallies in the history of the campaign took place at the local miners' welfare hall where more than 800 assembled to hear rousing addresses from Lady Megan, S. O. Davies, T. W. Jones, Tudor Watkins, Dai Francis and the Scottish Nationalist leader, John MacCormick.<sup>134</sup> 'I am an uncompromising Socialist', proclaimed Davies, 'But that Socialism can never materialise in Wales unless we can be free to apply its principles to our own way of life.'<sup>135</sup> It was agreed that as many signatures as possible must be collected, and a target of 250,000 was adopted.<sup>136</sup> 'Like the rest of us, you must find it hard these days to get the work going', lamented Elwyn Roberts to the campaign's organizers in south Wales in September.<sup>137</sup> Yet there were some indications of success. It was reported by Dr. T. I. Ellis that 100 localities in Wales had completed the collection of signatures and that eighty-seven per cent of the population had agreed to sign in these areas.<sup>138</sup> These claims were not universally accepted. 'I am of the opinion that the Campaign is not as successful as members of the Committee expected it to be', wrote

<sup>130</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 31 May 1954.

<sup>131</sup> N.L.W. Labour Party (Wales) archives, file 28, Cliff Prothero to Morgan Phillips, 1 June 1954 (copy).

<sup>132</sup> *Report of the 53rd Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Scarborough, 1954* (London, 1954), pp. 167-68.

<sup>133</sup> *Western Mail*, 18 July 1954.

<sup>134</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 113-14.

<sup>135</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 181.

<sup>136</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 114.

<sup>137</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 32, Elwyn Roberts to Miss Eiryth Davies, 1 September 1954.

<sup>138</sup> T. I. Ellis, 'A Federal Parliament for Wales', *Yr Enfys*, October 1954, p. 14.

Cliff Prothero in November, 'And furthermore the organization is very weak, and I have reason to believe in financial difficulties.'<sup>139</sup>

The death of D. Emlyn Thomas, the Labour M.P. for the Aberdare division of Glamorgan, in June 1954 brought about a by-election in the following October. Plaid Cymru almost immediately decided to field a candidate<sup>140</sup>—the party's president Gwynfor Evans was subsequently adopted—and the contest was viewed with particular interest as a measure of 'the extent of support in South Wales for the Welsh Parliament movement'.<sup>141</sup> Arthur Probert, the Labour aspirant, was described as 'fiercely opposed to the idea of a Welsh Parliament',<sup>142</sup> and heartfelt resentment grew up in the Labour camp because, it was alleged, Plaid Cymru supporters were distributing the petition forms while canvassing, thus causing confusion among the local electorate.<sup>143</sup> In the event, Evans polled 5,671 votes, sixteen per cent of those cast, a highly creditable performance<sup>144</sup> and rightly viewed as 'a severe jolt to the Socialist Party's complacency about Welsh affairs. . . . Aberdare has shown that there are thinking people in Wales who are prepared to defy the Socialist steam roller by placing country before party. . . . The once-idealistic Socialist Party must realize that the crack is now clearly showing in the wall. And no amount of London cement will seal it!'<sup>145</sup> The result was widely interpreted as an encouraging omen for the future success of the Parliament for Wales campaign.<sup>146</sup>

On 15 December, S. O. Davies, predictably acting independently of the Welsh Parliament campaign, presented a private member's bill 'to provide for the better government of Wales'. He had failed to consult with any of the officials of the Parliament for Wales campaign who confessed to being dumbfounded by their colleague's action.<sup>147</sup> Elwyn Roberts was compelled to admit privately: 'There is no certainty as yet whether the Bill will ask for a Parliament on the lines of the Campaign's proposals or a Parliament with

<sup>139</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, file 29, Cliff Prothero to James Griffiths, 16 November 1954 (copy).

<sup>140</sup> *Western Mail*, 20 July 1954.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* In the general election of October 1951, D. E. Thomas (Labour) had polled 34,783 votes (78.5%) and Wynne Samuel (Plaid Cymru) 2,691 (6.1%).

<sup>143</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 8, Welsh Regional Council of Labour papers, press statement, 25 October 1954.

<sup>144</sup> See Butt Philip, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>145</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 2 November 1954.

<sup>146</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 32, Gwynfor Evans to Eiryth Davies, 2 November 1954; *ibid.*, Dafydd Orwig Jones to Eiryth Davies [November 1954].

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 18 December 1954.

much less powers'.<sup>148</sup> Publicly, in order to give an impression of unity, the campaign's organizers resolved to support Davies.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, Davies won the support of his fellow M.P.s within the campaign—Cledwyn Hughes, Goronwy Roberts, T. W. Jones, Tudor Watkins and Peter Freeman. These, together with Eryl Hall Williams, a lecturer in law at the London School of Economics, and D. Watkin Powell, a barrister and a member of Plaid Cymru's executive committee, met regularly at the Commons to draw up the bill.<sup>150</sup> After much dissension, it was agreed to prepare a simple scheme based on the Government of Ireland Act 1914. Both Hughes and Roberts urged Davies to frame a less ambitious measure. The former pleaded for a 'moderate and reasonable measure', arguing that a Secretary of State and a Welsh Office should be secured as an essential preliminary to a Welsh Parliament. 'Your and my instinct is to go for the larger scheme', wrote Goronwy Roberts, 'But it is essential that we should all as a team feel absolutely confident of being able to defend what we put forward.'<sup>151</sup> Both clearly felt that Davies's bill 'went much too far and was disastrously the wrong bill at the wrong time',<sup>152</sup> but the member for Merthyr refused to back down. A Secretary of State, he claimed, would be merely the 'creature of the British government', unacceptable to the supporters of the Parliament for Wales campaign.<sup>153</sup>

At the end of February the Bill was published. Its controversial centre-piece was a Welsh parliament at Cardiff composed of seventy-two elected senators responsible for the domestic affairs of the Welsh nation. Its powers would be based on those of the Northern Ireland Parliament, while defence, foreign policy and overseas trade would remain the preserve of the Westminster Parliament. A governor of Wales would be appointed by the queen, and a Joint Exchequer Board established to regulate the financial relationship between the United Kingdom government and the Welsh senate, which was to enjoy its own tax-raising powers.<sup>154</sup> The measure was

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., file 32, Elwyn Roberts to Eiryth Davies, 21 December 1954.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., Elwyn Roberts to Eiryth Davies, 11 January 1955.

<sup>150</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84, based on information derived from His Honour Judge Dewi Watkin Powell.

<sup>151</sup> University College, Swansea, S. O. Davies papers B3, Cledwyn Hughes to S. O. Davies, 14 January 1955, and *ibid.*, Goronwy Roberts to S. O. Davies, 9 January 1955.

<sup>152</sup> Stead, *loc. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>153</sup> University College, Swansea, S. O. Davies papers B3, S. O. Davies to Cledwyn Hughes and Goronwy Roberts, 19 January 1955 (copy); and Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-86.

<sup>154</sup> *Western Mail*, 17 February 1955.

justifiably portrayed as a worthy successor to E. T. John's Government of Wales Bill introduced in the Commons in March 1914.

In the debate on the second reading of the bill on 4 March 1955, Davies described the measure as 'a modest Bill . . . on which a considerable measure of self-government could be built in the future'. He was powerfully supported by Hughes<sup>155</sup> and Roberts,<sup>156</sup> while Labour's general opposition to the bill was led by James Griffiths, who argued that the creation of a Welsh senate would break up the economic unity of the United Kingdom and of the social services, and would remove Welsh M.P.s from the mainstream of British politics. He himself welcomed the decision to appoint a Minister for Welsh Affairs with a Cabinet seat.<sup>157</sup> Other Welsh Labour M.P.s to speak against the measure included W. H. Mainwaring, Ness Edwards and D. J. Williams. Eventually, and indeed inevitably, Davies's measure was defeated by forty-eight votes to fourteen. But the debate was of some significance. Major Gwilym Lloyd George, Minister for Welsh Affairs, promised that the government would 'consider' the establishment of a Royal Commission on Welsh administration. 'Secretary of State on the Way', proclaimed the *Western Mail* on the morrow of the debate.<sup>158</sup>

The fate of Davies's bill and the course of the debate in the Commons caused attitudes towards devolution to harden and the schism in the ranks of the Labour Party to become more apparent. On the eve of the debate, George Thomas had told the press in south Wales of his efforts to kill the measure: 'We are appealing to English Members, as I did in Yorkshire, to help us to save the Welsh people from themselves'.<sup>159</sup> Upon the morale of the Parliament for Wales campaigners the effect of the defeat of the bill was considerable. In his reminiscences, James Griffiths regarded the events of March 1955 as 'decisive in rejecting the Parliament for Wales'.<sup>160</sup> Cledwyn Hughes, however, portrays the defeat of Davies's over-ambitious measure as

<sup>155</sup> *House of Commons Debates, 5th series*, Vol. 537, cols. 2443, 2447-55.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 2519, 2521-24.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 2514-17. Griffiths had refused to meet supporters of the Parliament for Wales campaign who, after the presentation of Davies's bill, sought an interview to discuss the trade restriction between Ulster and the United Kingdom. See University College, Swansea, S. O. Davies papers B3, Cyril O. Jones to S. O. Davies, 4 January 1955. Elwyn Roberts, annoyed by Griffiths's attitude, urged Miss Eiryth Davies, the campaign's organizer in south Wales, to make a determined effort to collect signatures at Llanelli: 'We want you to try Llanelli first mostly because of Mr. James Griffiths' opposition. When Mr. S. O. Davies presents his Bill on March 4th he must have the Petition Forms from the Llanelli area so that he can announce in the House of Commons that so many per cent of the adult population in James Griffiths' constituency has signed the Petition.' N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 32, Elwyn Roberts to Eiryth Davies, 11 January 1955.

<sup>158</sup> *Western Mail*, 5 March 1955. Cf. Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-91, for a full account of the debate.

<sup>159</sup> *Western Mail*, 3 March 1955.

<sup>160</sup> James Griffiths, 'Welsh politics in my lifetime', in *James Griffiths and his times*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.



'a milestone . . . that led in due course to the inclusion of the policy of creating a Welsh Office in the Manifesto of the Labour Party in 1959, and again in 1964'.<sup>161</sup> The Labour Party was thereafter determined to strike upon 'a Policy for Wales outside of a Parliament for Wales'.<sup>162</sup>

When Churchill went to the polls in May, Elwyn Roberts became the Plaid Cymru agent at Conway, and the Welsh parliament campaign was temporarily deprived of its organizer.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, interest was increasingly focusing on the political future of Lady Megan Lloyd George. She had always stood firmly on the left of the Liberal Party and had warmly applauded the more radical enactments of Attlee's governments. As early as 1947 it was asserted that she was about to join Labour's ranks.<sup>164</sup> The rumour was denied, and she became the deputy leader of the tiny band of Liberal M.P.s in January 1949. Her defeat in Anglesey in 1951 inevitably increased the pressure on her to 'move left'. In November 1952 she declined an invitation to stand again in Anglesey as the Liberal candidate, asserting that she had 'latterly been disturbed by the pronounced tendency of the official Liberal Party to drift towards the Right'.<sup>165</sup> In the autumn of 1953 her name became associated with the Labour Party candidature in Conway.<sup>166</sup> When another candidate was adopted, the *Western Mail* prophesied, 'Her stay in the political limbo seems likely to be of indefinite duration'.<sup>167</sup> She remained the subject of intense political speculation throughout 1954, her political future causing a regular flurry of comments in the national and provincial press. It was rumoured that she planned to stand as an Independent Home Ruler at Llanelli against James Griffiths to produce 'the most scintillating contest of the century in Wales',<sup>168</sup> and that she sought the Labour candidature in an English constituency.<sup>169</sup> As she was still widely regarded as 'a singularly persuasive leader',<sup>170</sup> attempts were made to keep Lady Megan within the Liberal fold,<sup>171</sup> and persistent overtures came from the

<sup>161</sup> Lord Cledwyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>162</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 8, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 28 February 1955.

<sup>163</sup> Elwyn Roberts, *loc. cit.*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>164</sup> *Evening Standard*, 2 December 1947.

<sup>165</sup> Gregynog Hall, Newtown, Liberal Party of Wales archives, Lady Megan Lloyd George to W. Shubert Jones, 5 November 1952.

<sup>166</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 7, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 26 October 1953.

<sup>167</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 November 1953.

<sup>168</sup> *South Wales Echo*, 27 March 1954.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 March 1954.

<sup>170</sup> *The Times*, 31 May 1954.

<sup>171</sup> *Sunday Express*, 17 October 1954.

Plaid Cymru camp.<sup>172</sup> Finally, in April 1955, desperately anxious to return to the hub of political life, she joined Labour,<sup>173</sup> and was immediately offered a candidature by some twelve local Labour parties.<sup>174</sup> She was anxious not to become a candidate in the 1955 general election, but it was anticipated that the imminent offer of a peerage to the Labour veteran D. R. Grenfell would cause a by-election at Gower where she might well stand.<sup>175</sup> Although in some circles her 'conversion' was regarded as an asset to the Parliament for Wales campaign,<sup>176</sup> Elwyn Roberts considered it a nail in the campaign's coffin.<sup>177</sup>

Indeed, Lady Megan's drift to Labour coincided with the final phase of the Welsh parliament campaign. After the failure of S. O. Davies's bill, it was widely felt that the campaign had reached the end of the road,<sup>178</sup> and that a motion tabled in the Commons by twenty-three Welsh M.P.s seeking a Royal Commission on Wales and Monmouthshire was in reality the end-product of the agitation.<sup>179</sup> But the campaign's organizers resolved to press ahead with the objective of presenting a petition in March 1956, and to target specific areas for the receipt of petition forms.<sup>180</sup> Lady Megan urged the campaign's supporters to a final effort. The campaign, she asserted, had 'awakened the people. It has caused much uneasiness in London—and that is an encouraging omen.'<sup>181</sup> The completed petition, she assured them, would not be 'left in the bag behind the Speaker's chair'.<sup>182</sup> It was hoped to present a petition with 250,000 signatures;<sup>183</sup> a higher total, it was felt, would be unrealistic as the campaign was unable to organize effectively the collection of signatures in all parts of Wales.<sup>184</sup> Particular problems had been encountered in the southern seaboard towns and in some of the industrial valleys of Glamorgan and Monmouth. Eventually, in April 1956 a petition containing 240,652 names was presented to Parliament by Goronwy Roberts,

<sup>172</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 116.

<sup>173</sup> *News Chronicle*, 26 April 1955.

<sup>174</sup> *Western Mail*, 28 April 1955.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 28 April 1955.

<sup>177</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 116.

<sup>178</sup> *Daily Herald*, 24 March 1955.

<sup>179</sup> *Western Mail*, 1 April 1955.

<sup>180</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 16 July 1955.

<sup>181</sup> *Daily Herald*, 6 August 1955.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 10 December 1955; Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 117.

<sup>184</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 February 1956.

a stalwart supporter from the outset. This total represented about fourteen per cent of the Welsh electorate,<sup>185</sup> but the petition's organizers claimed that some seventy-five to eighty per cent of those approached had agreed to sign.<sup>186</sup> They experienced much satisfaction that a petition had indeed been presented, and that they had overcome 'innumerable difficulties' during 'five years of struggle' and what Lady Megan termed 'a deadly complacency'.<sup>187</sup>

The petition was presented to Gwilym Lloyd George in his capacity as Minister for Welsh Affairs. He promised to convey the petition to the Cabinet, but stated that he personally did not support either a Welsh parliament or a Secretary of State for Wales. Any action by the government would depend upon a report on devolution currently in preparation by the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire and expected before the end of 1956.<sup>188</sup> As a result, the campaign's executive committee resolved that the Council should be asked to receive a deputation consisting of Lady Megan Lloyd George and Dewi Watkin Powell, whose brief was to explain the campaign's objectives in the hope of influencing the recommendations in the Council's memorandum. Lady Megan should also discuss these moves with Alderman Huw T. Edwards and Sir William Jones.<sup>189</sup> At the end of May, the campaign's debts amounted to £1,569.<sup>190</sup> It was resolved to sell the campaign's car, and to close the office at Colwyn Bay on 9 June, but the executive committee was to remain in existence until all debts were cleared.<sup>191</sup> Generous donations from the campaign's supporters and the sale of the car reduced the debt to £600 by June.<sup>192</sup> 'It is sad to think that the movement is reaching its end under a cloud like this', wrote Alderman William George to Elwyn Roberts, 'But I am afraid a kinder fate could not be expected under the circumstances. You did your best.'<sup>193</sup>

The question of disciplinary action against the Labour M.P.s actively involved in the campaign remained a live issue. In February James Griffiths had, at the insistence of the Regional Council, interviewed at the Commons the small group in question,<sup>194</sup> each of which, it was claimed subsequently,

<sup>185</sup> *Western Mail*, 19 April 1956.

<sup>186</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 117.

<sup>187</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 April 1956.

<sup>188</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 12 May 1956.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., Dewi Watkin Powell to Elwyn Roberts, 5 June 1956.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., executive committee minutes, 7 April 1956.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 12 May 1956.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., circular letter from Lady Megan Lloyd George and Moses Griffith, June 1956.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., William George to Elwyn Roberts, 17 May 1956 (transl.).

<sup>194</sup> *Western Mail*, 22 February 1956.

undertook to end his activities once the petition was presented to Parliament.<sup>195</sup> More than twenty years later, Cliff Prothero wrote that the Labour Party in Wales had consistently displayed 'tolerance' towards this group of politicians,<sup>196</sup> a debatable claim. The Labour Party's National Executive Committee resolved to take no action against the rebel M.P.s, largely, it would seem, at the insistence of Aneurin Bevan who asserted, 'They may be wrongheaded, but they have a right to their opinions'.<sup>197</sup>

It is difficult not to view the relative failure of the Parliament for Wales campaign as inevitable and final. Many reasons explain its downfall. Apart from the group of committed Labour M.P.s who lent consistent support to the campaign throughout, Clement Davies, the Liberal leader, was the only other member from Wales to show enthusiasm. His Liberal colleagues, Roderic Bowen (Cardigan) and Rhys Hopkin Morris (Carmarthen), did not display the same interest.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, Elwyn Roberts was later to reflect that the Welsh M.P.s had constituted 'the biggest obstacles of all' to the success of the campaign.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, from the outset the campaign tended to be badly organized, and the essential task of collecting signatures protracted and unplanned. Many supporters displayed a curious reluctance to canvass and gather signatures.<sup>200</sup> Local committees complained of a lack of leadership from the campaign's executive committee.<sup>201</sup> Time and time again campaigns in specific areas brought considerable success; in Merthyr Tydfil, for example, of 1,092 voters approached, 1,074 agreed to sign the petition.<sup>202</sup> But the same kind of concerted effort simply could not be

<sup>195</sup> N.L.W., Labour Party (Wales) archives, Vol. 8, Welsh Regional Council of Labour executive committee minutes, 23 April 1956.

<sup>196</sup> *Western Mail*, 25 May 1978. Cf. Cliff Prothero, op. cit., p. 68, 'It was made clear to all concerned that members of the Labour Party were free at all times to express their personal views even when at variance with Party policy'.

<sup>197</sup> Lord Cledwyn, op. cit., p. 10. S. O. Davies, Cledwyn Hughes, Goronwy Roberts and Tudor Watkins were in turn among those who had supported Bevan when he defied the party line by voting against the statement on defence in 1952. See Evans, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

<sup>198</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 193, writes, 'Bowen indicated support for a Welsh Parliament, although he did not play an active part in the Home Rule campaign'. When interviewed in the late 'sixties, Bowen stated that he had failed to support the campaign 'because there were too many political viewpoints represented': Butt Philip, op. cit., p. 259. Even Clement Davies was reluctant to address public meetings. See N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 31, minute book of the Bangor committee of the Parliament for Wales campaign, entry for 18 February 1952.

<sup>199</sup> Quoted in Butt Philip, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>200</sup> Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., pp. 116-17.

<sup>201</sup> N.L.W., Minor Deposit 1460A, minute book of the Merionethshire committee of the Parliament for Wales campaign, entry for 25 May 1951.

<sup>202</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 19 March 1955.



repeated in all parts of Wales, which meant that some areas in south Wales were completely ignored by the campaign.

The movement inevitably faced severe financial problems from start to finish. By the summer of 1951 the campaign was already £500 in the red.<sup>203</sup> When the petition was re-launched with Elwyn Roberts at the helm in 1953, the new organizer inherited debts of some £1,000, which remained until 1956.<sup>204</sup> The payment of salaries, the purchase of a car, the organization of an array of public meetings and other administrative costs all proved formidable.<sup>205</sup> Many supporters were reluctant to provide financial assistance.<sup>206</sup> Intense efforts were made to clear the debts during the summer of 1956,<sup>207</sup> efforts which ultimately succeeded.

Nor was the petition a particularly effective political weapon; it could not *per se* transform the political system. Lady Megan Lloyd George, the movement's president, although an eloquent and persuasive public speaker, a popular, charismatic personality, and a formidable political antagonist, alternately displayed traits of indolence and rashness. As *The Times* put it in 1954, 'The keen edge seems to be wearing off'.<sup>208</sup> She certainly possessed few skills as an administrator or supervisor. Elwyn Roberts's account of the campaign is highly critical of Lady Megan's conduct. After her defeat in Anglesey in 1951, she immediately left for the U.S.A., seemingly abandoning the movement.<sup>209</sup> She tended to prepare statements at the last minute,<sup>210</sup> was reluctant to make firm promises concerning engagements,<sup>211</sup> and, alleged Roberts, placed the furtherance of her own political career before the good of the campaign.<sup>212</sup> These opinions, written more than twenty years after the event, are to some extent confirmed by contemporary sources. The campaign's local committee at Bangor in 1952 found Lady Megan reluctant to address public meetings and unwilling to reply to correspondence.<sup>213</sup> In the autumn of 1954, Elwyn Roberts complained that

<sup>203</sup> Butt Philip, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

<sup>204</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 16 January 1954.

<sup>205</sup> Elwyn Roberts, *loc. cit.*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>206</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, Parliament for Wales campaign executive committee minutes, 16 July 1955.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, Ifan ab Owen Edwards to Elwyn Roberts, 31 May 1956, and Dafydd Jenkins to Elwyn Roberts, 22 June 1956.

<sup>208</sup> *The Times*, 31 May 1954.

<sup>209</sup> Elwyn Roberts, *loc. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103 and 114.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>213</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 31, minute book of the Bangor committee of the Parliament for Wales campaign, entry for 17 September 1952.

he had received no more than three letters from her during the whole of the previous year, and that he found it impossible to ensure that she did not break speaking engagements.<sup>214</sup> She expected the campaign's organizers to arrange transport for her,<sup>215</sup> and angered many supporters. 'I suppose you are afraid to write her!!!!', sympathised Tudor Watkins, with Eiryth Davies early in 1955.<sup>216</sup> She often refused to travel south to attend meetings of the campaign's executive committee, insisting they should be held in Bangor,<sup>217</sup> and sometimes caused meetings to be cancelled at short notice. Postponing a meeting early in 1956, Elwyn Roberts commented, 'All this upset has been caused by Lady Megan'.<sup>218</sup>

The sheer breadth of support which the campaign attracted also posed problems when formulating policy and determining strategy. No clear definition of the functions and powers of the proposed Welsh parliament was possible in a movement in which Conservative and Communist attempted to co-operate. The campaign was indeed 'too shapeless, broad-based and ill-organized to make permanent headway',<sup>219</sup> providing further evidence of the fatal wide diffusion of nationalism in Welsh life. At Penrhyndeudraeth in February 1954, T. W. Jones appealed for 'patience and tolerance' in place of 'squabbling amongst ourselves over matters of secondary importance'.<sup>220</sup> Three months later, *The Times* expressed sympathy with the plight of the Labour Party, especially with the invidious position of the party's M.P.s and candidates in marginal constituencies who were 'left to struggle against the blandishments of the Liberal Home Rulers, the half-and-half Conservatives, and the fanatical nationalists', all of whom, it appeared, were attempting to join forces in the Parliament for Wales campaign.<sup>221</sup> Problems were compounded by a deeply entrenched suspicion in north and west Wales that any Welsh parliament would be dominated by representatives from the more populous counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth, a root cause of the failure of all nationalist movements from *Cymru Fydd* in 1896 to the referendum for a Welsh assembly in 1979. When the petition was presented in April 1956, one commentator argued that any Welsh parliament would inevitably 'be ruled permanently by a one-party Government of Socialists', and that 'No

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., file 32, Elwyn Roberts to Eiryth Davies, 6 October 1954.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., Elwyn Roberts to Eiryth Davies, 9 November 1954.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., Tudor Watkins to Eiryth Davies, 1 February 1955.

<sup>217</sup> N.L.W., Undeb Cymru Fydd records, file 203, Elwyn Roberts to T. I. Ellis, 14 October 1955.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., Elwyn Roberts to T. I. Ellis, 10 January 1956.

<sup>219</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, op. cit., p. 381.

<sup>220</sup> T. W. Jones, speech at Penrhyndeudraeth, 12 February 1954: *Liverpool Daily Post*, 13 February 1954.

<sup>221</sup> *The Times*, 31 May 1954.

device for a re-distribution of seats could alter that'.<sup>222</sup> At the same time, the Merioneth Conservative Association claimed that the 'ill-fated petition' sought a 'Socialist-controlled super county council detrimental to Welsh interests'.<sup>223</sup>

In south Wales, on the other hand, there was generally scant interest in the progress of the campaign, which had a distinct north Wales air about it. The most prominent politicians in the south—Aneurin Bevan, Gwilym Lloyd-George, Ness Edwards and James Griffiths—did not support the movement. David Llewelyn, Conservative M.P. for Cardiff North, dismissed the campaign's outline of the functions of a Welsh parliament as 'a scheme to swindle south Wales of its numerical superiority'.<sup>224</sup> At the executive level, the campaign's business was conducted entirely in Welsh. Although the movement asserted that it was 'entirely a non-party movement working outside party politics', its close association with Plaid Cymru further harmed its reputation in the south. When Elwyn Roberts took up his duties as the campaign's national organizer in September 1953, he was seconded from his post as a Plaid Cymru official. Much of the campaign's organization was undertaken by prominent Plaid Cymru activists, who all too often on public platforms throughout Wales insultingly denigrated prominent Labour politicians, revered in the south, who had failed to support the movement. Problems were compounded in south Wales by the deep cleavage within the ranks of the Labour Party. At Merthyr Tydfil, for example, S. O. Davies's burning zeal and unremitting efforts for the campaign were not matched by official declarations of support from the local Labour party.<sup>225</sup> The decision of the group of home rule Labour M.P.s to ignore the intransigent attitude of the Regional Council also alienated many party activists in the south. By 1954 the *Manchester Guardian* could justifiably refer to 'the tangle of loyalties in which good Welshmen who are also good Labour men find themselves enmeshed'.<sup>226</sup>

In south Wales, moreover, there was a genuine deep-rooted fear of the aims of the campaign, a fear which stemmed from a lack of genuine interest and understanding. It was widely felt that the movement sought a self-governing Wales, shorn of English influences and financial support, in which living standards would plummet and widespread poverty prevail. The Welsh

<sup>222</sup> *County Times*, 26 April 1956.

<sup>223</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 April 1956.

<sup>224</sup> Quoted in Elwyn Roberts, loc. cit., p. 111.

<sup>225</sup> Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies*, p. 178.

<sup>226</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 27 May 1954.

language, it was claimed, would become compulsory. The 'economic consequences' of a Welsh parliament weighed heavily on the minds of some Labour M.P.s from the south.<sup>227</sup> Opponents of the campaign engaged in widespread scaremongering—the Welsh Parliament, they claimed, would seize control of the coal industry in Wales, establish a Welsh coal board and a separate Welsh miners' union, forcing Welsh miners to desert their revered N.U.M., restoring to them the hated district wage agreements, and depriving them of the vital 'subsidies'.

Quite simply, there was no consensus among the Welsh of the need for a parliament for Wales. Speaking at Cardiff in March 1954, Lord Lloyd, the Under-Secretary of State for Welsh Affairs, commented, 'One sometimes gets the impression, on any particular issue, that the Welsh nation . . . is galloping off rapidly in all directions'.<sup>228</sup> 'It may be doubted', reflected the *Western Mail*, 'whether any other small nation is quite so embroiled in feuds, jealousies and local rivalries.'<sup>229</sup> This 'national disparity' among the Welsh nation was paralleled by what Lady Megan Lloyd George termed in April 1956 'a deadly complacency' against which the campaign had been forced to struggle.<sup>230</sup> 'Everyone is fairly satisfied with the world the way it is', lamented W. Shubert Jones to Elwyn Roberts in June, 'And it is difficult to make them realize things.'<sup>231</sup>

But the Parliament for Wales campaign was an important movement which undoubtedly created a sharp awareness of the needs of Wales as a nation and compelled the political parties to redefine their Welsh policies. The years of its existence, 1950-56, have rightly been described by Peter Stead as 'strange and angry years . . . a period with an anguish and a temper all of its own'.<sup>232</sup> The campaign, he argues, and S. O. Davies's bill in particular, 'brought considerable confusion, held up what would have been less controversial devolution, soured relationships and forced people artificially into extreme positions'.<sup>233</sup> There is some truth in these assertions, but it would seem that the campaign of 1950-56, far from delaying 'less controversial devolution', actually stimulated interest in, and underlined the need for, such devolution, eventually helping to pave the way for the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales in 1964. As Huw T. Edwards

<sup>227</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 February 1954.

<sup>228</sup> *Western Mail*, 30 March 1954.

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

<sup>230</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 9 April 1956.

<sup>231</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 30, W. Shubert Jones to Elwyn Roberts, 2 June 1956.

<sup>232</sup> Stead, *loc. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.



put it in his autobiography, 'Mighty oaks from little acorns grow'.<sup>234</sup> The Welsh parliament campaign may indeed have 'brought considerable confusion [and] soured relationships'; it also brought the self-government movement into prominence. A sensitive appraisal of the campaign published in the *Manchester Guardian* in May 1954 justifiably noted how this movement, primarily associated with 'the incendiary fringe of the Welsh Nationalists' a decade earlier, now attracted audiences of 'the solid citizens', 'half intelligentsia and half normal people like you and me', in the words of a Labour veteran.<sup>235</sup> This transformation the paper attributed to 'a growing conviction that the machinery of central government is so hopelessly overloaded that it can no longer even pretend to deal properly with the domestic problems of Wales', and to the 'attainable and practical' objective sought by the campaign committee.<sup>236</sup> Most Welsh newspapers and journals regularly published reports and editorial columns on the campaign's activities, thus ensuring its aspirations remained in the public eye.

Once the petition was presented, the Parliament for Wales campaign, its immediate objective realized, disappeared from public view almost without trace. Its Labour wing did attempt to continue the agitation; Goronwy Roberts sounded out support for a revived *Gwerin* movement and a 'Labour for Wales' conference and newspaper. Most of his colleagues, however, regarded as more important the creation of a bureaucratic base for devolution, comprising a Welsh Secretary of State, an expanded Welsh civil service or Welsh Office and eventually an elected Welsh assembly with modest powers. These elements, they hoped, would help to build 'a bridge to self-government'. In 1957 the Welsh Labour movement's newspaper, the *Cymric Democrat* (previously the *South Wales Democrat*), ceased publication, a symbolic event. Similarly, the machinery of the Parliament for Wales campaign committee ground to a halt. In December 1956 Elwyn Roberts wrote to T. I. Ellis: 'All the Petition's papers are now in cardboard boxes, one on top of the other, rotting through dampness'.<sup>237</sup> Attempts by Roberts to approach the government on the question of the petition in the autumn of 1957 met with short shrift.<sup>238</sup> Efforts to re-convene the campaign

<sup>234</sup> Huw T. Edwards, *Hewn from the Rock* (Cardiff, 1967), introduction.

<sup>235</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 27 May 1954.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> N.L.W., Undeb Cymru Fydd records, file 203, Elwyn Roberts to T. I. Ellis, 4 December 1956 (transl.).

<sup>238</sup> N.L.W., Elwyn Roberts papers, file 35, private secretary to Henry Brooke to Elwyn Roberts, 25 November 1957.

committee in 1958 proved equally fruitless.<sup>239</sup> 'We in Wales', lamented Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, 'have split ourselves up into movements and parties until we have become their prisoners and have sometimes lost sight of Wales itself.'<sup>240</sup>

Meanwhile, in a wider context there were grounds for greater optimism. In January 1957 there appeared the long-awaited *Third Memorandum* of the Council for Wales,<sup>241</sup> which came out strongly in favour of the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales. Harold Macmillan's Conservative government was slow to respond to the proposal, finally rejecting the suggestion outright in December and announcing only minor constitutional changes.<sup>242</sup> This friction between the government and the Council led to the dramatic resignation of Huw T. Edwards, the Council's chairman, in October 1958. 'Whitehallism', claimed Edwards, 'has not the slightest prospect of ever understanding Welsh aspirations. . . . Wales is not getting a fair and square deal.'<sup>243</sup> In 1959 he went even further, resigning his Labour party membership. The legacy of the Parliament for Wales campaign, the appearance of the *Third Memorandum*, the piecemeal concessions of Macmillan's government, and Edwards's embarrassing resignations all placed immense pressure on the Labour Party to re-consider its 'Policy for Wales'. The period from the spring of 1957 to the summer of 1959 was characterised by persistent and fruitless wranglings in the party's inner counsels, Aneurin Bevan and Ness Edwards in particular resisting any significant measure of devolution. Lady Megan Lloyd George re-surfaced as Labour member for Carmarthen in February 1957. Ultimately, James Griffiths's key position as deputy party leader, and his success in winning over Hugh Gaitskell, the leader, proved decisive. In July 1959 the party's National Executive Committee supported the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales with departmental responsibilities,<sup>244</sup> which was confirmed in the policy document *Forward with Labour: Labour's Plan for Wales*, in September, and in the party's 1959 general election manifesto.<sup>245</sup> The

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., Megan Lloyd George to Elwyn Roberts, 29 November 1958.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., Ifan ab Owen Edwards to Elwyn Roberts, 4 November 1958 (transl.).

<sup>241</sup> *Report of the Government Administration Panel. Third Memorandum. Council for Wales and Monmouthshire*. January 1957 (Cmnd. 53).

<sup>242</sup> *Western Mail*, 13 December 1957.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 25 October 1958.

<sup>244</sup> Labour Party archives, Walworth Road, N.E.C. minutes, 22 July 1959.

<sup>245</sup> *Britain Belongs to You* (London, 1959).

pledge was repeated in the party's manifesto five years later when, in fact, the Labour Party was returned to power with a small majority. Harold Wilson, the new Prime Minister, immediately honoured the manifesto commitment, appointing James Griffiths the 'Charter Secretary of State for Wales'. Although Griffiths had been a consistent opponent of the Parliament for Wales campaign throughout its existence, his appointment in 1964 was in a sense a legacy of that campaign's not insignificant success.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> I discuss these themes in greater detail in 'Socialism, Devolution and a Secretary of State for Wales. 1940-64', loc. cit.