

Going to the Dogs— Hostility to Greyhound Racing in Britain: Puritanism, Socialism and Pragmaticism

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In a variety of guises, dog racing in Britain has a lengthy history. During the 19th century the most organized form of such racing was coursing, essentially a match race between two greyhounds in pursuit of a temporarily live hare. The principal coursing competition, for the Waterloo Cup held on the outskirts of Liverpool, was established in 1836. Both urban and rural elites participated in the control of the sport, but there were a number of variations under more plebian control throughout the North of England. These appear to have been particularly popular in mining communities.¹ Many of these forms of dog racing have continued into the late 20th century, but they came to be dwarfed in terms of commercial development, spectator following and public attention by modern greyhound racing imported from the United States through the all-important technology of the electric hare in the mid-1920s. Despite forecasts that the new sport/business would not last more than 18 months, it in fact prospered.² Indeed, it boomed. Thus, although record attendances for the Waterloo Cup were set in 1945 and as many as two thirds of known tracks, particularly in the North, existed outside the authority of the National Greyhound Racing Society, by the time of the celebrations marking the twenty-first anniversary of the first running of the electric hare at Belle Vue Manchester, the youngest branch of dog racing had become dominant.³

Modern greyhound racing differed from its predecessors in much more than the mere technical constructs of competition. It developed predominantly in large urban centers, it involved the construction of large stadia and there was a conscious attempt to cultivate a large and regular following for the sport. Though its northern roots were never abandoned, there was a major concentration of new stadia/tracks in metropolitan London. The majority of tracks with average attendances in excess of 5,000 were in London. In the 1940s, there were 21 tracks within a 25-mile radius of Charing Cross. The 'dogs' required significant amounts of initial

1. I regret that John Dale, old friend and one-time owner of Aunt Daphne, is not able to read, and doubtless criticize, this article. For some understanding of the history of gambling sports in general, and dog racing in particular, I am heavily reliant on Mark Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society, c1823-1961*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992) and Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class, Social Relations in Britain, 18880-1950*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990). I would like to express my appreciation for the careful reading that my colleagues Susan Cahn and John Naylor gave this article in draft form.

2. *Daily Express*, June 11, 1947.

3. *Daily Express*, July 26 and November 25, 1947, *Daily Herald*, February 22, 1945.

capitalization and this necessitated an aggressively commercial promotion of the sport, the provision of facilities such as restaurants and bars, a strong preference for evening meetings and a determined effort to depict such meetings as an opportunity for 'family entertainment.'⁴

Patterns of ownership and administrative involvement in greyhound racing changed rapidly as its commercial aspects were more thoroughly pursued. While some aristocratic names continued to be associated with the sport as figureheads, the early leadership, drawing on respectable business and even military personnel, was quite quickly replaced by men who were distinctly entrepreneurs of entertainment and often large bookies and turf accountants.⁵ The dog racing proprietor stood apart from the majority of voluntary administrators running British sports in the 1920s '30s and '40s. Though some members of the two governing bodies, the National Greyhound Racing Society and the National Greyhound Racing Club, were drawn from the customary ranks of sports administrators, the majority of the promoters, like the sport itself, appear to have been more closely associated with the 'craze' for popular entertainment that was also accounting for the success of cinemas and dance halls.⁶ There existed for greyhound racing a degree of guilt by association with what was observed by some to be a trend toward physical softness, even moral decline, derived from passive leisure.⁷ Thus, even without the integral, indeed dominant, role of gambling within the sport, the dogs and those who ran them were encumbered with a less than positive public image.

In reality, the close association with gambling was there from the start of greyhound racing. Totalisator gambling on the dogs grew steadily during the 1930s and accelerated from the last year of the War.⁸ The annual turnover on the totalisators had reached £39m in 1938, and climbed to £75m in 1944, the last year impacted by wartime restrictions. Peacetime conditions brought about a marked climb, to £138m in 1945 and £200m in 1946, when profits were estimated at £14.75m. Turnover of business with the bookmakers was estimated to add 60-100% to those figures. Not surprisingly, the stocks of greyhound racing companies were soaring. Dog racing also boomed as a spectator sport; 60,000 attended the White City Derby in 1947, a figure comparable with major soccer matches. In 1945 and 1946, greyhound racing, its pariah-like status notwithstanding, benefitted along with other major British sports from a situation where increased disposable wealth pursued limited spending opportunities. As contemporaries observed, "with the shortage of consumer goods since the end of

4. *Report of the Royal Commission on Betting, Lotteries and Gaming, 1949-51* (His Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1951, Cmd 8190), pp. 24, 25 and 153. Hereafter referred to as the *Willinck Report*

5. Clapson, p. 144, *Daily Express*, May 16 and June 11, 1947.

6. The NGRS was "formed to represent the commercial interests of member tracks," while the NGRC governed the competitive aspect of the sport. The British Greyhound Tracks Control Society represented a number of smaller tracks and in 1947 joined a larger group of provincial tracks in the Provincial Greyhound Track Control Organization. Clapson, pp. 146-7. Ownership of greyhounds was a cheaper venture than with horses. As it was within the reach of a wide range of people it is not easy to characterize the 'typical' greyhound owner.

7. *Daily Herald*, April 19, 1947.

8. *Daily Herald*, January 6 and July 6, 1945.

the War the upward trend of gambling has been sharply accentuated.”⁹

In such circumstances, and with its widely acknowledged status as “the working-man’s turf,” or “poor-man’s racing”, one might have anticipated that in post-World War II Britain, greyhound racing would have been set on a further protracted period of growth, the more so because of the election of a Labour government presumed to be attuned to the interests of the working man.¹⁰ Such anticipations were not to be fulfilled. In formulating policies in response to fiscal needs and economic crises, the Government took positions which provoked charges that they discriminated against the working-class sport of greyhound racing.

This article seeks to look closely into the image of dog racing, its relationship to other sports and the views of the Labour Government toward ‘the dogs’ in particular and gambling in general. The story that emerges from these considerations is not a simple one, nor does it display that Government in a particularly favorable light. The interplay of interests and attitudes from which policy toward sport evolved was complex. The often hostile reaction to such policies as were pursued was stronger than the Government anticipated. In part, the problems experienced by the Labour leadership stemmed from adherence to elements of an older paternalism within which sympathy coalesced with a condescending disapproval of the ways of many of their electoral supporters. Many in the Labour Government did not always consider that which interested the working class to in fact be in the best interests of the working class. Clearly related to such sentiments was a tendency to cling to a well established view of sports involving degrees of moral approval or disapproval.

A Negative Image

Not everyone went as far as John Macadam, sports columnist with the *Daily Express*, who did not consider dog racing to be a sport at all.¹¹ However, there was a generalized social stigma attached to ‘the dogs,’ the intensity of which could be judged from the fact that even those who were prepared to defend it from alleged government discrimination would nevertheless insist that they were themselves uninterested, and uninvolved, in the sport.¹² There had long existed suspicions of regular fixing of races and specific scandals in London and the North in the immediate post-war period served to reinforce this belief.¹³ Crowd

9. Clapson, pp. 146 and 154. *London Times*, January 13, June 30, and July 10, 1947. August 19, 1948. *Daily Express*, January 9, 1947. Woodrow Wyatt, “The State and Gambling” I and II, *New Statesman*, vol. XXXIV. pp. 348-9 and 366-7, November 1 and 8, 1947.

10. Ferdynand Zweig, *The British working Man* (Penguin Books, London, 1952), p. 125. *Daily Express*, March 10, 1947.

11. *Daily Express*, July 21 and December 16, 1947 and May 4, 1948. Macadam was not alone in holding such opinions, Labour MP J. R. Leslie agreed, “the real attraction being betting.” *Daily Herald*, March 22, 1947. *Hansard*, Vol. 435, col. 790. March 21, 1947. On the other hand, very few supporters of dog racing were as outspoken as Lord Denham who referred to it in the House of Lords as “one of the great sports of the English people.” *Hansard*, House of Lords, Vol. 641, Col. 810. March 26, 1947.

12. *Daily Express*, January 29 and June 11, 1947. *Hansard*, Vol. 435, cols. 778, 787, 801, and 806. March 21, 1947.

13. Clapson, p. 157. *Daily Express*, February 8, 1947 and August 30, 1948. Doping and false registration, that is running a dog under another name, were the most common forms of fixing.

disorders, usually provoked by an unpopular judgement on the outcome of a race, did nothing to improve the image of the sport. At Harringay, in northeast London, in July 1946 a riot occurred after the disqualification of a well supported dog. The starting traps were burned, restaurants, the press box and track officials were attacked and, "when police re-inforcements were brought up the crowd attacked them." At the height of the disturbance, the totalisator was stormed and, "some money grabbed."¹⁴ A similar incident at Stamford Bridge provoked the police into fixing up water hoses in order to disperse the crowd.¹⁵ Officials at the Wimbledon track were criticized by the NGRC stewards when, "influenced to do so by an unruly demonstration by a section of the public," they changed the result of a race. Obviously, it was feared that such weakness would encourage further violent altercations.¹⁶ In the late summer of 1946. the Home Secretary was asked in the House of Commons. "if he is aware of the recent disorder at dog racing tracks in and around London." and, "whether he contemplated any action." James Chuter Ede, in keeping with the Government's preference for the avoidance of direct involvement in sports issues, pointed to the powers of local licensing authorities as the means by which to deal with such disorders. Even when disorders were not involved. press commentary depicted the atmosphere at dog tracks in far from attractive terms. A writer from the *New Statesman* remarked on the "intense gloom" prevailing at the track. only relieved briefly while racing was actually in progress. The crowd, wrapped in "glum meditation of the betting," placed their wagers in "a tomb-like vault under the stands" where they "queued morosely."¹⁷

Consolidation of ownership drew the attention of the press in Autumn 1946 when London Stadiums Ltd. was formed under a Mr. Sydney Parkes. This company would control four London tracks. at Wandsworth, Park Royal. Charlton and Mitcham. Presumably it would further enhance the wealth of Mr. Parkes who was reported to have enjoyed an income of £430,000 in 1945, anticipated to rise to £500,000 for 1946.¹⁸ In an era when easy money and 'spivery' were viewed, from differing political quarters, as socially undesirable, as signs of a profound malaise. the publication of such figures further dragged down the prestige of dog racing. Such judgements were expressed in an extreme form in Parliamentary debate by a Labour member who asserted that "most people concerned with greyhound racing are social parasites."¹⁹

Presumably aware of the mountain to be climbed, the NGRC and the NGRS made substantial efforts to improve the image of the sport. At the very time that Home Secretary Chuter Ede was declining to act on track disorders. Chief

14. *London Times*, July 23, 1946.

15. *Daily Herald*, September 28, 1945.

16. *Daily Herald*, August 31, 1946.

17. *Hansard*, Vol. 426, Col. 221, August, 1946. Charles Dimont, "Going to the Dogs," in *New Statesman*, vol. XXXII, p. 395, November 30, 1946.

18. *Daily Herald*, October 31, 1946. *London Times*, November 4, 1946.

19. *London Times*, February 28, 1947.

Constable Percy Worth resigned to head a newly formed Greyhound Race Tracks Security Police intended, "to chase dog-dopers, tote-ticket forgers, the 'beat-up' men and rowdies from the tracks."²⁰ One can reasonably surmise that similar motives lay behind the appointment, in the autumn of 1947, of U.A. Titley as a press officer for the NGRS. He moved very quickly to improve the image of dog racing. He pursued two main tactics to that end. One was the involvement of the NGRS in a number of well-publicized charitable projects. The establishment of a Veterinary Educational Trust and a donation of £10,000 to the Printer's Pension Corporation got such activities off to a fast start in late 1947.²¹ The 'second front' of Titley's campaign as press officer was to draft responses to hostile comment on dog racing that frequently appeared in newspapers such as the *Times*. In early December 1947, he responded to one such letter that had described dog racing as "an evil", which was "foisted on the community for purposes of greed and gain." Titley argued that, "the existence of betting facilities no more forces a person to bet than the sight of a church forces him to enter it." He generally defended dog racing on the grounds that it provided working men with a "brief, bright interlude in an otherwise drab life."²² Despite efforts to improve it, the image of the 'dogs' remained an adverse one throughout the immediate post-war period. The strong connection with gambling separated it in moral terms from the majority of sports while, lacking a traditional background, its lower-class urban associations distinguished it from horse-racing. Publicly expressed distinctions between the two gambling sports, such as those offered by Home Secretary James Chuter Ede, emphasized the export earnings of bloodstock as warranting horse-racing's preferred official treatment.²³ Indeed, respectable opinion tended to place dog racing in the same category as the football pools, an activity whose sole *raison d'être* was gambling.

Common Bonds

Greyhound racing's isolation on the end of a linear scale of disapproval contrasted sharply with the reality of the sport's close connection, by location or common controlling personnel, with sports that were generally much better thought of. Although considered by some to be vying with each other as "big money entertainment," greyhound and motor cycle speedway racing quite often

20. *Daily Herald*, July 31, 1946.

21. *London Times*, December 4, 1946, October 3 and December 19, 1947. *Daily Express*, October 2, 1947. *Daily Herald*, November 28, and December 18, 1947.

22. It was not unusual to express the benefits of dog racing in terms which threw a poor light on the lives of its followers. Thus a contributor to the *New Statesman* recognized racing as providing, "a real interest in many otherwise monotonous and empty lives." Norman McKenzie, "Mug's Games," *New Statesman*, Vol. XXXIII, February 1, 1947, p. 90.

23. *Manchester Guardian*, March 14, 1947. In the summer of 1948, the champion greyhound, Trev's Perfection, was sent to race in the United States, possibly to develop a market demand comparable to that for British throughbreds. That he failed to win in six races probably did not aid the cause. *Daily Express*, July 7, 1948. In fact, something of a 'counter-flow' prevailed; large numbers of dogs being imported into England from Ireland. "War-time restrictions forced many of our greyhound breeders out of the game." *Daily Express*, October 11, 1947, and April 13, 1948.

shared facilities.²⁴ This was particularly true in London, most prominently at Wembley Stadium.²⁵ There was some element of irony in that the Stadium, normally home to greyhound racing, was turned over briefly in the summer of 1948 to function as the principal site of the prestigious and amateur Olympic Games.²⁶ The irony was the more intense because Sir Arthur Elvin, as managing director of Wembley Stadium Ltd., played a critical role in providing financial guarantees without which the strictly amateur British Olympic Committee may not have been able to stage the Games. Elvin, knighted in 1946, was also a member of the council of the National Greyhound Racing Society.²⁷

Owned by the National Greyhound Racing Association, White City Stadium in west London regularly housed dog racing meetings and was also the primary British venue for major track and field meetings, including the Amateur Athletic Association Championships and the Varsity meet between Oxford and Cambridge.²⁸ The very first entirely new cinder running track laid in Britain after World War II was opened in August 1948 at the Hove Greyhound Stadium some fifty miles south of London. Financial arrangements for this project were credited to Charles Wakeling, chairman of the Stadium Company. At the formal opening, a local Conservative MP, William Teeling, praised this undertaking as, "an example of the part private enterprise still played in acting for the good of the community."²⁹

Similarly close, but ambivalent, relationships existed between dog racing and professional football. In the immediate post-war era, the Football Association was scrupulously disassociating itself from any form of gambling. Obviously, this worked itself out primarily in relation to the football pools, described by the venerable President of the FA, W.C. Cuff, as a "social evil."³⁰ Despite the understandable focus on the pools, such attempts to distinguish the 'clean' sport of soccer from gambling at times extended into concern over dog racing. At the annual general meeting of the Football League in June 1946, it was proposed that there should be no dog tracks on League grounds where such did not already exist, that any persons directly connected with gambling and lotteries should be forced out of involvement in League clubs and that League teams should not carry advertising for greyhound racing in their match programs. These proposals were accepted, though with a critical amendment which limited exclusion to

24. *Daily Herald*, October 12, 1947. Official records indicate a more positive view of speedway racing than of the dogs. The speedway control Board recognized that it had received relatively, "generous treatment" during the crisis of 1947-48. PRO HO 45/24289, Minute, November 24, 1948.

25. 'Big money' was certainly involved. Even in the last year of war, Wembley Stadium Ltd. made a gross profit of £386,913. *Daily Herald*, February 1, 1946.

26. Norman Baker, "The Games that might not have been; London, 1948," in *Proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Olympic Studies* (London, Ontario, 1994), pp. 107-116.

27. *Manchester Guardian*, March 12, 1947. The range of contrasting degrees of respectability is extended by Elvin's occasional activity as a promoter of professional boxing.

28. Jack Crump, *Running Round the World* (London, 1966), p.95.

29. *Brighton and Hove Gazette*, August 28, 1948.

30. *Daily Express*, February 20, 1947.

those directly connected to betting on football.³¹ Such modification of the original proposal was essentially necessary because, like it or not, both in terms of facilities and overlapping ownership, the Football League was ‘married’ to greyhound racing. The press pointed to the potential for mirth among football pool promoters who were themselves kept at arm’s length by the League but now saw the same organization, “bound irretrievably to the biggest betting sport of all.”³² A further touch of irony is provided by the fact that the showpiece event of the football season, the FA Cup Final, was regularly played on a pitch. at Wembley, surrounded by a dog track.

It is not possible to establish the full extent of the ‘linkage’ between the Football League and greyhound racing but it had probably reached a point where the 1946 proposal was only scratching at the margins. In London. Stamford Bridge, home of first division Chelsea, doubled as a dog track and the chairman of the directors of West Ham United, Will Cearns, was described as a “greyhound racing magnate.”³³ Even down in Wales, struggling second division Newport County experienced regular problems in scheduling training sessions because their home ground, Somerton Park, was not only used as a dog track but was actually owned by the greyhound racing company.³⁴

Discrimination?

Despite the efforts to improve security and the image of the sport and the reality of overlapping ownership and/or interest with other sports, greyhound racing retained its lowly status, at least in the eyes of many of the respectable and official classes. Even a Labour Government, which might have been expected to extend greater tolerance toward what was widely viewed as a working man’s sport, singled out dog racing for uniquely severe regulatory and fiscal treatment in the immediate post-war years. Charges of discrimination were common and stemmed from a number of official actions that need to be summarized here. In response to persistent requests from sporting interests that insisted on its relevance to their ability to achieve post-war recovery, the government reduced the rate of entertainment tax in its April 1946 budget. Neither horse-racing nor dog racing were beneficiaries of this consideration and for those sports taxes remained at the higher rate.³⁵

The very severe winter of 1946-47 created great difficulties in mining and moving coal and provoked an intense economic crisis. Dog racing was first to be impacted. On February 11, 1947, an absolute ban was imposed on the sport on the grounds that the power consumed could not be afforded in a time of crisis.

31. *Daily Herald*, May 28, 1946, and June 3 and 4, 1946.

32. *Daily Herald*, March 26, 1946. This assertion was not accurate. Dog racing was not, in terms of turnover, the biggest betting sport. It was, however, commonly viewed as the sport in which betting played the most dominant role; that it existed only as a vehicle for gambling.

33. *Daily Herald*, October 7, 1946.

34. *Daily Herald*, July 8, and October 8, 1946. It was allegedly feared that practising players would observe dog trials and pass on ‘tips’ to the public.

35. *Daily Herald*, April 10, 1946.

The ban applied even to tracks which operated their own generators and despite estimates that suggested very modest amounts of electricity were used. It was suggested in the press that the ban was not “a direct fuel-saving measure,” but was imposed for “psychological reasons.” It was “the undesirability during the acute electricity crisis of having such large-scale outdoor gatherings after dark with the brilliant lighting involved.” At this time, other major sports did not use floodlighting and other evening users of electricity, such as dance-halls and cinemas were indoors and less ‘public’ than dog racing. By the time this ban was lifted on March 15, 1947, 1,200 races had been postponed.³⁶

A few days before the ban was lifted, the Home Office had begun a series of negotiations with the governing bodies of various sports designed to generate voluntary cooperation in the avoidance of mid-week fixtures. It was believed this would reduce absenteeism and thus boost production. Some sports, such as soccer, rugby and greyhound racing were essentially confined to the weekends, while others, such as horse racing merely moved major events, such as the Derby, to Saturdays. Yet others, such as cricket, emerged largely unscathed. Although there was some publicly expressed equivocation, the sporting organizations all cooperated voluntarily. Only in the case of dog racing was Parliamentary legislation necessitated, albeit by legal technicalities.

The various negotiated limitations on mid-week sport were kept in place through 1947 and into 1948. By the end of that year most had been lifted. In the case of dog racing, a modified set of restrictions had applied from April 1948. This was only after a delegation of MPs had pleaded first with the Home Secretary and then with the Chancellor of the Exchequer for an easing of restrictions. Some such limitations remained in place on greyhound racing until well into 1949.

Calls for a tax on betting came from inside and outside Parliament in the immediate post-World War II period. For several reasons, Chancellor Hugh Dalton was slow to respond. Finally, in what was to be his last budget in November 1947, Dalton imposed a 10% tax on dog totalisators and the football pools, leaving bookmakers and horse racing unencumbered.³⁷ The economic crisis had intensified during the late summer of 1947. This justified the Chancellor’s claim that “the need to fortify the revenue and prevent misuse of our resources has become more urgent.”³⁸ Whatever the rationale, dog racing once again appeared to be a particular target for the government. When Dalton’s successor, Sir Stafford Cripps, chose to impose a licence fee on bookmakers operating at dog tracks, impressions of discrimination appeared to be confirmed.³⁹

36. *London Times*, February 11, 1947. *Daily Express*, February 11 and 12, and March 14 and 17, 1947. *Daily Herald*, March 12 and 14, 1947. *Star*, March 18, 1947. *Sporting Life*, March 1, 1947.

37. Hugh Dalton, *High Tide and After, Memoires 1945-1960* (Sough, 1962), p. 274. Disclosure of a budget leak obliged Dalton to resign.

38. *Hansard*, vol. 444, cols. 405-6, November 12, 1947.

39. *London Times*, April 7, 1948. *Daily Express*, April 7, 1948. *Daily Herald*, April 7, 1948. At the same time, Cripps doubled the tax on football pools to 20%.

Both the thinking that produced these regulatory and fiscal policies and the reactions that they provoked, reflect a complex of philosophies, experiences and understandings, within and outside government. They need to be studied in some detail if a reasoned judgement on the charges of discrimination is to be made. In undertaking a review of the debates involved, my attempt to maintain a focus on dog racing inevitably breaks down as that issue overlaps with those of gambling and, even more broadly, with leisure in general. Dog racing was both a part of, and apart from, the general realm of sport.

Historical Attitudes

The positions taken by the Labour leadership after 1945 cannot be understood without giving some attention to the party's historic position(s) on gambling and that in turn points consideration toward the broader history of attitudes on gambling. As has been clearly shown in Mark Clapson's *Bit of a Flutter*, the history of modern gambling has been paralleled, at least since the mid-nineteenth century, by the maintenance of anti-gambling pressures, within and outside Parliament. While the excesses of aristocratic elements might have provided the original adversarial focus for the movement, concerns had, by the mid-nineteenth century, shifted to the threat presumably posed to the working-class which, as in the case of drink, had to be protected in its own best interests against its own indulgences which it was too weak to control without help. From this perspective, not only did gambling lead directly to the ruin of the individual gambler and his or her family, but, even when conducted with some degree of success, it provided an inappropriate model, one which promised something for nothing and undermined qualities of thrift, perseverance, self-discipline and responsibility which were the foundations for individual or social improvement. Evidence that, in fact, most gambling was undertaken within a framework of deliberate, controlled moderation, that indeed it acted as an effective palliative to the tedium of modern labour, was generally not allowed to cloud the ardour of the anti-gambling constituency.⁴⁰ From the early stages of its parliamentary history, the Labour Party displayed signs of being influenced by the anti-gambling tradition. Consequently, its leadership was vulnerable to charges of discrimination against pleasures enjoyed by many members of the working class. In 1906, Labour MPs had supported the Street Betting Act described by opponents as a "monstrous sample of class legislation" establishing "one law for the rich and another for the poor."⁴¹

This anti-gambling tradition fed into the Labour Government and the Labour Party of 1945 through a number of channels. Gambling was a natural adversary for the respectable, often chapel-based, element of the party, bent on self and class improvement which provided so much of the authentically

40. Clapson, *op cit*. The details on the form of each dog contained in the program of a dog racing meet provides the basis for very deliberative consideration by the gambler. The intellectual challenge involved could be considered at least the equal of that demanded of a 'respectable' bridge player.

41. Clapson, pp. 30-31. This allegation was largely based on the distinction made between cash and credit betting.

working-class leadership within the Labour movement. These were the men and women who desire. "to secure the spiritual as well as the material ascendancy of the working-class." Though in the inter-war years the Labour leadership had developed some "tolerance for the cultural peculiarities of the English worker's distinctive way of life," they "remained very puritanical" and retained, in good part, their "Nonconformist Prejudices."⁴² Arthur Henderson was particularly representative of this important source of Labour leadership as was George Lansbury who, as editor of the *Daily Herald* in the 1920s, fought against the inclusion of racing 'tips' in his newspaper even though it was likely to harm circulation.⁴³ Though perhaps by 1945, not proportionately as significant as they might once have been. those who opposed gambling on basically moral grounds were still an important element within the Parliamentary Labour Party and they shared their convictions with members of the Opposition who supported the vocal and well organized Churches Committee on Gambling.

Though for different reasons, the left-wing of the Labour Party. those who regarded themselves as real socialists, were equally committed opponents of the contemporary practises of gambling. In their minds, preoccupation with gambling diverted working-class energies and aspirations from the pursuit of collective political solutions to their problems. Many agreed with Karl Kautsky's statement. dating from the 1890s, that, "the growth of football and gambling among the English poor was the main reason for the weakness of the labour and socialist movements." In part, this diversionary character of gambling had a pragmatic impact but further the linkage between gambling and attitudes of luck and superstition tied working people to a traditional outlook of fatalism and docility.⁴⁴ Gambling was viewed as essentially exploitative of the working-class, a capitalist-controlled practise which served to reinforce the individual worker's dependence on the capitalist system.⁴⁵ While for some on the left this exploitative element merely served to confirm their outright opposition to gambling, others focussed on this aspect in particular and saw the solution, not in condemnation but in control. The aim should be. if not nationalization, at least close regulation and a government share in profits.⁴⁶

Though not identifying completely with either the religious morality of the chapel constituency, or the radicalism of the left-wing, the, as of 1945, still powerful middle-class Fabian socialist tradition within the Labour Party incorporated selected elements of both positions. A long-standing rejection of gambling on ethical grounds. that it was escapism and was at odds with

42. Clapson, p. 30. Egon Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour A Party* (New York, 1929), pp. 94-5, cited in James Young, *Socialism and the English Working Class: A History of English Labour 1883-1939* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1989).

43. Raymond Postgate, *George Lansbury* (London Longmans, 1951), pp. 142-43.

44. Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (Chicago, 1892), cited in Young, *Socialism and the English Working Class*, P. 27.

45. *Daily Worker* would not carry runners or results of horse race meetings during the period, 1930-34. Clapson, p. 38.

46. *Daily Herald*, January 31, 1948.

approved values of serious-mindedness, was blended with a pragmatic need for commitment by everyone to tackle Britain's emerging economic problems. The assumed passion of the working man for gambling was now not only not sensible, it was dangerous and unpatriotic, threatening the fulfillment of the opportunities presented to Labour by its 1945 victory. Record turnovers at dog and horse totalisators and in investment in the football pools. revived some of the exasperation with the behavior of the working-class among those who claimed to protect their interests. Many of the leaders of the Labour party "saw significant aspects of working-class life through disapproving official eyes." Among other things, "they shared received views of working-class betting." On this and a number of other social issues, the post-War Labour Party retained at least part of a heritage descended from 19th-century Liberalism.⁴⁷

As Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede was the government minister most involved in policies relating to sport in general and dog racing in particular. From his social background and the early stages of his political career, Chuter Ede would seem to fit within the first of the groups discussed here. His lower middle-class family were staunch nonconformists and supporters of the Liberal party. While Chuter Ede began his career in the local politics of his native, Epsom, Surrey, as a Liberal, he switched his allegiance to Labour after World War I and later was to claim that this transition was underway in his mind even before 1914.⁴⁸ There is much in his political reputation, based on a long career on the Surrey County Council and later in Parliament and various government offices, that would put his name alongside Henderson and Lansbury in the above discussion. A centrist, highly regarded for his fair-mindedness. Chuter Ede developed a reputation in the Attlee Government for reconciling differences among his colleagues. Chuter Ede was more open-minded and liberal than his austere appearance would suggest. That this extended from the political into the social realm was evident in that "Horse racing was one of his passions." and he once acknowledged in the House of Commons the personal uplift he felt. "after attending racing on my native heath."⁴⁹ Though he believed gambling was "folly" he found no sin in it and, similarly, while himself a total abstainer. he saw no reason to deny others alcohol in moderation. There was, however, a limit to his social liberalism and, of particular relevance to this study, that limit was reached with dog racing. Chuter Ede, who had served as an official of the Surrey Amateur Athletic Association between the wars, expressed in the Commons his preference for people's participation in recreation, "rather than being merely spectators."⁵⁰ While commendable and widely held, it is hard to see how this preference could

47. Clapson, p. 30. MacKibbin, p. 297.

48. Much of the background information on Chuter Ede is drawn from Kevin Jeffreys, *Labour and the Wartrime Coalition: From the Diary of James Chuter Ede, 1941-45* (London, Historians Press, 1987), pp. 1-17. *Dictionary of national Biography, 1961-1970* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 216-17 and *London Times*, November 12, 1965, p. 14.

49. *Hansard*, vol. 434, col. 1499, March 13, 1947. *London Times*, November 12, 1965, p. 14.

50. *Hansard*, vol. 435, col. 799, March 21, 1947. Jack Crump, *Running Round the World*, (London, 1966), p. 65.

provide justification for the line between the approved and the unapproved in the moral hierarchy of sport to be drawn between horse racing and dog racing. For Chuter Ede that was precisely where such a line fell. On at least two occasions during Commons debates in March 1947, he went out of his way to avoid reference to dog racing as a sport even drawing attention to that as he used alternatives. "entertainment" and "pastime."⁵¹ Chuter Ede also expressed the view that, "actually seeing the race is no very great part of the enjoyment of attending dog-races." Furthermore, he took care to avoid any implication that he had attended a meet by crediting this observation to "advice which I have received."⁵² In the less public forum of ministerial debate, he committed himself to the desirability of controlling dog racing "on general grounds of public policy."⁵³ While he consistently denied discriminating against dog racing, and found in his official capacity objective reasons for his preference for the horses, there seems little doubt that he shared the poor view of the dogs held by many of his peers. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the Home Office records of any significant dissent from that opinion among his civil service staff.

More Recent Experiences and Perceptions

Long-term traditions that shaped attitudes towards gambling in general and dog racing in particular coalesced with more recent experiences in shaping post-World War II policies. Officials remembered that greyhound proprietors, particularly at small tracks, "were not always responsive" to government regulations "even during the war."⁵⁴ It was even feared that if some smaller tracks were closed or restricted, other tracks would be started up.⁵⁵ It was believed that, based on wartime experiences, "it may prove difficult to secure voluntary restrictions."⁵⁶ Such memories might indeed have nurtured a degree of reasoned discrimination.

Among the range of experiences and suppositions that shaped ministerial positions after 1945, some place should be found for a sense of opportunity not only to improve the material conditions but also the general quality of life experienced by the majority of the working-class. At its best, this ambition resulted in a somewhat earnest endeavor to offer working people a wider access to various cultural forms traditionally distanced from them. At its worst, it conveyed a sense of a civilizing mission to the unenlightened. Both forms, but particularly the latter, would identify dog racing as a barrier to the improvement of the working-class. However, in contrast to the energetic thrust toward the clear goals of its economic policies, the Labour Government's pursuit of this cultural mission was complicated, slowed and diverted by an oft-stated reluctance to intervene in people's leisure. In the case of sport, such reluctance was compounded by belief

51. *Hansard*, vol. 434, col. 1499, March 13, 1947, and vol. 435, col. 765, March 21, 1947.

52. *Hansard*, vol. 435, col. 769, March 21, 1947.

53. PRO CAB 71/19, October 26, 1945.

54. PRO HO 45/25176, Minute, May 1946.

55. PRO HO 45/25176, Memo, Home Office to Cabinet, May 1946.

56. PRO CAB 124/1060, March 3, 1946.

in the voluntarist tradition of governance. Though not always, indeed not often. the most representative speaker for the Labour Government, Manny Shinwell, in a June 1947 speech, reflected both the sense of opportunity to ‘improve’ and the reluctance to grasp it. Disturbed by the “way some people are content to live,” Shinwell stated the government’s intention to “promote a better way of life” and stressed the importance in this context of “the proper use of leisure.” “We may have no right to direct people how to live their lives outside their working hours. but we can at least afford facilities which would enable them ...to gain real benefits from changes in industrial organization.”⁵⁷ Ambition, ambivalence and awareness of opportunity are all reflected here. Nevertheless, those who possessed such hopes would be sensitive to opposition observations that ‘The great new world envisaged by the Government would not be built up on dog racing and the pools.’⁵⁸

It might be argued that this missionary zeal illustrates how out of touch leaders of the Labour Party were with the real circumstances and attitudes of those whose way of life they sought to improve; an accusation the opposition press were not slow to make and substantiate.⁵⁹ There is certainly some evidence that those, political leaders and civil servants, who developed policy were simply not familiar with various facets of working-class life; did not know much about that which they sought to influence or direct. Not only were individual ministers criticized for knowing, “nothing of the practical side of dog track betting,” but a lack of familiarity was conceded within government itself. In March 1946, the Board of Trade acknowledged to the office of the Lord President that “We seem to be lamentably ignorant about dog racing, although we are of the opinion that it was chiefly an evening amusement.”⁶⁰ In July 1947, in inter-departmental discussion on whether or not speedway racing should be regulated, it was asserted that most of its followers were adolescents or family groups. Home Secretary Chuter Ede thought “it desirable that a member of the Home Office staff should attend a speedway meeting to ascertain whether that was correct.”⁶¹ It is clear that in the mix of ‘formative influences,’ historical and current, one could find the foundations of a suspicion of, if not hostility toward, dog racing and these sentiments could lead to the appearance of discrimination, whether consciously formed or not. During the 18 months of Labour governance prior to the major fuel crisis of the winter of 1946-7 members of the government such as Shinwell, Chuter Ede and Lord President, Herbert Morrison made statements reflecting precisely the suspicion/hostility discussed here.⁶²

57. *London Times*, June 30, 1947. Given estimates by Mass observation that 60% of men over 40 claimed to go in for gambling, the task ahead of reformers was formidable. Woodrow Wyatt, *New Statesman*, November 1, 1947.

58. *Daily Herald*, February 13, 1947.

59. *Daily Express*, march 13, 1947.

60. PRO CAB 124/1060, Minute March 2, 1946. *Daily Express*, March 13, 1947. *Sussex Daily News*, June 2, 1948. Such lack of familiarity may well have accounted for the degree of government surprise at the severity of the reaction to the ban of 1947. *Sussex Daily News*, March 15, 1947.

61. PRO POW 20/132, note on meeting with the Home Office, July 1, 1947. This despite the fact that the sport drew very large crowds to a number of London stadiums and this was frequently reported in the newspapers.

62. PRO CAB 71/19, October 26, 1945, 128/9 and 1060, both March 13, 1947, and 132/1, April 12 and June 21, 1946. PRO POW 20/132, July 14, 1947.

Strong Opposition

Given their long-standing concerns, it is not surprising that the crisis of the winter of 1947 moved ministers to place a range of restrictions on sports in general and greyhound racing in particular. Yet the unexpectedly strong response to those same policies was so widespread and, in some ways, so fundamentally embarrassing, that Chuter Ede and his advisors at the Home Office came to moderate their positions and ended up urging abandonment of the severe restrictions on dog racing they had themselves suggested and indeed instituted.

The outcry against the government's policies, adopted in February and March 1947 and outlined above was certainly not confined to the supporters of greyhound-racing. The potential damage done to a number of sports was charged to the government and issues were raised that addressed the importance of leisure in general. However, because of the severity of those restrictions placed on dog racing they became a particular target of criticism. Supporters of greyhound racing cried discrimination long and loud, inside and outside Parliament.

While meetings with sports leaders were going on at the Home Office in March 1947, demonstrations were going on outside. The demonstrators were threatening one-day-a-week strikes and calling for the "restoration of democratic rights for greyhound racing supporters." An organization, the National Greyhound Patrons Association, was formed among the demonstrators and ultimately petitions were handed into the Home Secretary. A follow-up rally was organized in Hyde Park and was foreshortened by bad weather, but not before the strike threat was repeated with chants of. "No dogs. no Work."⁶³ The chairman of the Patrons Association described their cause as "a tight against dictatorship and fascism."⁶⁴ Charges of discrimination were maintained throughout 1947 and were repeated in March 1947 when both Chuter Ede and Sir Stafford Cripps were approached by an all-party, though Labour dominated, delegation of MPs which alleged there was an "appearance of discrimination against this form of sport."⁶⁵

The bipartisan nature of these delegations was matched by that of criticism in the House of Commons itself which came from both opposition and government supporters. E. Carson, Conservative MP for the Isle of Thanet, charged the government with the attempt to destroy dogracing while T. Braddock, Labour MP from Mitcham, was highly critical of the uneven treatment accorded horse and dog racing.⁶⁶ In the debate on the November 1947 budget, charges that the government were favoring horse over dog racing were made from the opposition benches by Anthony Eden and Oliver Stanley, and they found common cause with government supporters George Wigg and John R. Thomas. The only real distinction between the Labour and the Conservative critics was that the former

63. *Manchester Guardian*, March 12, 1947. *Daily Express*, March 12 and 17, 1947.

64. *Sussex Daily News*, March 17, 1947.

65. *London Times*, February 10 and March 18, 1948.

66. *Manchester Guardian*, March 22, 1947.

laid more emphasis on the fact that such discrimination was directed at a predominantly working-man's sport⁶⁷

Not surprisingly, the charge of discrimination was taken up in the press. The *Sporting Life* saw evidence of "unfair discrimination" against dog racing and believed it was "based on bias and prejudice."⁶⁸ While the weight of comment was critical, the government did have some sympathizers. Thus the *Manchester Guardian*, devout supporter of the Liberal Party, argued that restrictions were particularly justified in the case of football and dog racing. Its editorial column emphasized the "need to pay our way in the world" and complained that "sport has been allowed to invade so large a part of our lives that it becomes an addiction."⁶⁹ Essentially, the government was caught between a rock and a hard place. The sports that were believed to threaten production, among which dog racing was prominent, were *ipso facto* the sports popular among the very working men who had voted Labour into power. In this context, charges that linked discrimination with a bias against the working man were particularly damaging. They infringed on the assumed "class neutrality of the state," and they came from a wide range of sources. The formidable Bessie Braddock, Labour MP for Liverpool Exchange, observed of the regulation of leisure that "the peculiar thing it is always an attempt to get at something which the working man does." She believed that "the working man was entitled to use his spare cash as he wished." Equally bluntly, one of her colleagues reminded fellow Labour MPs that "we have to meet our constituents." Another Government supporter argued of dog tracks that "hundreds and thousands quite sincerely and genuinely go to these places as a form of entertainment."⁷⁰ MPs showed no reluctance to pass on to the Home Office critical letters from their constituents, complaining, for example, "that arrangements penalize the sport enjoyed by the workers."⁷¹ It was reported to ministers that, "there is widespread resentment among industrial workers all over the country at what appears to be discrimination against a particular form of entertainment which happens to be popular with a great many people."⁷² That restrictions also affected the livelihood of some 14,000 part-time and 4,000 full-time staff at NGRA tracks constituted further grounds for criticism of the government.

Allegations linking discrimination and class bias were sometimes given a specifically political edge, reflecting a sense that workers had been let down by 'their government.' One letter that found its way to the Home Office in early 1948 came from a trade unionist and Labour party member who also happened to

67. *Hansard*, vol. 444, col. 415-6, 446, 478, and 565.

68. *Sporting Life*, march 4, 6, and 8, 1947. Most of the accusations were taken verbatim from a statement of the NGRS, *Daily Herald*, march 6, 1947.

69. *Manchester Guardian*, March 12, 1947.

70. Her speech was representative of a number from government supporters during debates on the restrictions negotiated in the spring of 1947. *Daily Herald*, February 13 and March 22, 1947. *Hansard*, vol. 435, cols. 787 and 791, vol. 444, cols. 454 and 491. Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class*, pp. 28 and 51.

71. PRO HO 45/25176, letter July 23, 1947.

72. PRO HO 45/23517, Minute, March 1948.

be “an owner of racing greyhounds in a small way.” The writer complained of restrictions and asked rhetorically, “is this narrow mindedness of a small section of our party or what. and can we who have elected them in office hope to get a fair deal over any issue which effects the working-class?” The writer claimed to look to the Labour party for “equal fairness to all and a little more for the working classes. not against them ...”⁷³ The sense of having been let down was also stimulated by the belief that original understandings had been “that all would be treated alike,” a commitment that supporters of greyhound racing soon came to believe had been abandoned.⁷⁴

A lack of trust in the government also stemmed from the belief that the grounds for restrictive policies had been shifted. In a circular to all MPs in July 1947, the British Greyhound Breeders and Owners Association asserted that now. “the absenteeism idea has been proved to be definitely open to question. the ‘betting bogey’ has come to light.”⁷⁵ From the outset of restrictions, complaints on this score appeared in the press. Restrictive policies were blamed on the. “agitation of anti-gambling societies.” Despite government denials of any such influence. the suspicion remained that “there is a question of morals or ethics behind this latest move.”⁷⁶

In contradiction. Chuter Ede insisted in July 1947 that “no discrimination exists against sports enjoyed by any one class of the community.” In an earlier Commons debate, he had expressed anxiety “that it should not be thought that greyhound racing had been singled out.” Further, he emphasized that the impact on production was the sole consideration behind the restrictions.⁷⁷ While continuing to deny. in public. charges of discrimination against any sport. even dog racing, there is evidence that among government officials there developed a tendency to concede that. at the very least. an appearance of discrimination might inadvertently have been conveyed. The earliest, loudest and longest-lasting proponent of rigorous restrictions on sport was Sir Patrick Dollan, Chairman of the Scottish Fuel Economy Board. Even he conceded by March 1948 that existing policies were “unfair” to dog racing.⁷⁸ In late 1948, during discussions within the Home Office. it was argued that if current restrictions were continued. “the protectors of greyhound racing.” could complain “that they were singled out for exceptional treatment.”⁷⁹ Two months later. it was being conceded even more bluntly that greyhound interests “may well argue that their sport has been singled out by the Government for rough handling.”⁸⁰

73. PRO HO 45/21058, letter January 28, 1948.

74. PRO HO 45/21058, Home Office note, July 14, 1947.

75. PRO HO 45/21058, letter, July 30, 1947.

76. *Sporting Life*, March 11 and 14, 1947. *Hansard*, House of Lords, vol. 641, col. 815, March 26, 1947.

77. PRO HO 45/25176, Chuter Ede to Dr. L.H. Guest, July 23, 1947. *Hansard*, vol. 435, col. 810, March 21, 1947.

78. PRO HO 45/24289, Dollan to Hugh Gaitskill, March 11, 1948.

79. PRO HO 45/25225, Minute, November 1948.

80. PRO HO 45/23517, Memo, January 14, 1949.

Misguided and Untrusting?

Discrimination and unfairness were not the only criticisms levelled at the government over its restrictive policies on sport. Government actions were commonly depicted as the product of panic.⁸¹ In the sporting press it was questioned whether there was “any rhyme or reason” in government policy.⁸² Hostile comment in the press was also linked to a broader critique of the Government. The opposition *Daily Express* described restrictions as “austerity for the sake of it.”⁸³ The *Star*, normally supportive of the government, argued that it was displaying “a punitive Sabbatarianism that would make the workers miserable by Order.”⁸⁴ There was already sufficient austerity and thus no need to carry it into workers’ leisure.⁸⁵ Perhaps the most pointed of the common criticisms was based on the belief that restrictive measures were likely to be counter-productive. The *Star* argued that policing the people’s sport and recreation could have “no benefit whatever for production,” in fact banning sport “is bad for production.”⁸⁶ It was believed that morale would drop and production with it; “leisure emptied of ordinary pleasure is no way to full production.”⁸⁷ In fact, some would have it that sport, by giving the workers enjoyment, had “a tonic effect on production.”⁸⁸ It was also argued that the effects of limitations were reduced as credibility declined. Thus, “the essential will to work harder cannot be stimulated by a petty restriction that is already seen to be incapable of rigid enforcement.” Belief in what might be termed the counter-productivity theory also existed within government.⁸⁹

Criticism was even given a nationalistic tone by the *Sporting Life* in whose view, “You cannot force Englishmen to work but they will work hard enough so long as they are given the opportunity to play hard.” Such sentiments were carried somewhat further when the first meeting at the Hove track following the 1947 ban was preceded by the singing of ‘There will always be an England,’ a popular anthem of defiance during the War.⁹⁰ However, probably the most embarrassing charge laid against the government was that not only were they out of touch with but they did not even trust the workers. Wing-Commander Roland Robinson, Conservative MP for Blackpool South, accused the government of “treating the worker like a naughty child is treated.” Another Tory, Sir Cuthbert Headlam, pursued the same theme, urging ministers either to, “treat the people of this country like adults who can be relied upon to work or as little children.”⁹¹

81. *Daily Express*, March 12, 1947.

82. *Sporting Life*, March 11, 1947.

83. *Daily Express*, March 12, 1947.

84. *Star*, March 14, 1947.

85. *Sporting Life*, March 11, 1947.

86. *Star*, March 14 and 19, 1947.

87. *Daily Express*, March 8, 1947.

88. *Star*, March 17 and April 15, 1947.

89. PRO HO 45/25176, Ministry of Labour to the Home Office, July 23, 1946. *Star*, March 19, 1947. *Hansard*, vol. 435, col. 775.

90. *Sporting Life*, March 11, 1947. *Sussex Daily News*, March 17, 1947.

91. *Hansard*, vol. 435, cols. 783 and 806, March 21, 1947.

In a letter to Shinwell in July 1947, the British Greyhound Breeders and Owners Association drove home the issue of trust at some length:

We would point out that the Government appeals to the loyalty of the Industrial worker and his sense of responsibility in this time of national difficulty, but, on the other hand, the same government implies a considerable doubt as to the reality of that loyalty and responsibility by inferring, that those workers would be guilty of absenteeism if mid-week Greyhound Racing were permitted.⁹²

By early 1949, this view could be found within the Home Office:

Some time or other the people of this country have got to be trusted to decide for themselves when they take time off for their relaxation and in what fashion they take their relaxation, whether it be dogs, football or cinema.⁹³

There must have been a certain amount of glee at the opposition, *Daily Express*, when its editorial reprimanded the government on the grounds that "The good sense of the British working man is not being taken into account. The government lacks confidence in its own powers of persuasion."⁹⁴

Fair Play?

It is equally clear from the record that this was a government possessed of a strong sense of fairness and acutely sensitive over the appearance of fairness.⁹⁵ However, as was the case over dog racing, initial judgements of what constituted fairness could be deflected, if not warped, by presuppositions about peoples and places. Furthermore, there were times when fairness and reason could lead in opposite directions. For example, the Home Office had to overcome considerable resistance in insisting that the 1947 Oxford v. Cambridge Rugby match be switched from mid-week to a Saturday. This was done despite recognition that, even if it were played in mid-week, this event could present little or no threat to industrial production. Nevertheless, if left in mid-week it was feared that it "might very well raise awkward questions in relation to Association Football, Rugby League and the people interested in greyhound racing..."⁹⁶ Sensitivity over such issues intensified as the volume of criticism of restrictive policies increased in the spring and summer of 1947. This was particularly true at the Home Office, the department bearing the brunt of such reaction. The task of maintaining the reality and the appearance of fairness, never easy, was becoming very demanding. The Home Secretary, who was the target of much criticism in Parliament and in the press, was to display signs of a wearied despair in this

92. PRO POW 20/132, BGB&OA to Shinwell, July 22, 1947.

93. PRO HO 45/23517, Minute, January 4, 1949.

94. *Daily Express*, March 12, 1947.

95. Norman Baker, "The Labour Government and Sport, 1945-48." Unpublished paper presented at NASSH Conference, 1994, Saskatoon, Canada.

96. PRO HO 45/25176, Memo, October 14, 1947.

task.⁹⁷ Early in 1948, he reported to the Cabinet Production Committee that:

It seemed hard to justify the maintenance of a complete prohibition of mid-week greyhound racing at a time of the year when other mid-week sports such as football and speedway racing were permitted.⁹⁸

Where Are the Numbers?

Whatever may have been the original feelings of Chuter Ede and some of his colleagues regarding the social undesirability of dog racing, it had been government policy to rest the case for restriction of that and other sports exclusively on the issue of their impact on production. The labor of attempting to maintain fairness, to gain the voluntary cooperation of the various sports organizations and, at the same time, to face the public attacks on him and his policies, gradually eroded the Home Secretary's will to maintain those policies. Among the range of erosive pressures eating away at Chuter Ede's will to persist with restriction, one stood out. Even the most ardent advocates of restriction, such as Sir Patrick Dollan, were simply unable to come up with concrete evidence to support their central rationale, that there was a connection between mid-week sport, absenteeism and production, Lord Chancellor Jowett acknowledged this weakness in the government's position as early as the spring of 1947. He confessed that "I have no statistics to prove that greyhound racing does interfere with production." He fell back on the fact that government had received, "repeated representations" to that effect. The opposition quickly took up this issue in both Lords and Commons and Chuter Ede was a particular target of criticism, being accused of relying on "obviously hearsay evidence."⁹⁹ The absence of evidence was pointed to by critics in the press from the outset. Soon after restrictions were applied in March 1947, the *Star* was displaying optimism that "this ill-conceived and panicky gloom measure is being whittled away... it has never been proved that mid-week sport could inflict serious damage on industrial production."¹⁰⁰ However, once such policies were embarked upon, it became difficult to abandon them so the *Star's* hopes were not immediately to be fulfilled. In December 1947, Chuter Ede gave the Cabinet Production Committee his recommendations for 1948. He was obviously concerned at the prospects of a strong public reaction from "greyhound racing interests." but he was equally clear in identifying reasons why he was personally reluctant to maintain restrictions.

97. Throughout 1947 and 1948 Chuter Ede was under considerable stress. As Deputy Leader of the House responsibility for organizing legislative business fell on him during Herbert Morrison's illness. In 1948 he bore the brunt of complex debates over the death penalty and also lost his wife who had long been a cripple. Jeffreys, pp. 8 and 25.

98. PRO CAB 134/636. February 11, 1948.

99. *Hansard*, House of Lords, vol. 641, col. 808. Commons, vol. 435, cols. 769, 783 and 801.

100. *Star*, March 27, 1947.

When discussions took place in the House earlier this year. the Departments which had urged the Government to interfere with midweek sport failed to produce any evidence to support this action and if we seek to continue our policy I shall expect my colleagues directly concerned with production to furnish me beforehand with the material to justify our decision to the sporting interests and to the House.¹⁰¹

Subsequently, a Cabinet directive was issued to the Minister of Fuel and Power requiring that the Home Secretary be provided with "facts and figures."¹⁰² Nevertheless, a month later, Chuter Ede was recommending to the Production Committee a negotiated compromise with the NGRA and was clearly apprehensive about any approach to Parliament for renewal of the 'Dog-racing Bill.' He feared "considerable opposition in Parliament" on the grounds that the government was "imposing more severe restrictions on greyhound racing than any other form of sport." Once more, his unease was intensified by the fact that "the Production Departments had so far failed to furnish him with concrete evidence, to support continuing restrictions."¹⁰³ One can sense in Chuter Ede the tension between principle and pragmatism, between that which he believed was morally correct and what he recognized was politically astute. By the early months of 1949, the policy of restriction on mid-week sport was undergoing its last round of serious consideration within the government. 'Lack of evidence' became a decisive factor in such deliberations. At the Home Office, recognition of this situation was accompanied by some air of frustration that "No department has produced figures to show that it [restriction] has helped production and it must be pure guesswork to say whether or not removal of the ban would have any material effect on production."¹⁰⁴ At this point, it was the opinion of the Home Secretary that, as greyhound interests were not likely to maintain voluntary cooperation, a continuation of restrictions would have to involve legislation. Chuter Ede was not prepared to take responsibility for such legislation in the House given that supporters of restriction "can do nothing more than produce *opinion*." Opinion was even divided among the various regional Industrial Boards.¹⁰⁵ The essence of the problem and the difficulties, not to mention inconsistencies, into which it led the government is to be found in a decision of the Production Committee in February 1948.

101. PRO CAB 129/22/338, and 134/635, Memo, December 12, 1947. This body was described by one official as the place where "the main work is done." Kenneth Morgan, *Labour People* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 169.

102. PRO POW 20/133, January 9, 1948.

103. PRO CAB 134/636, February 11, 1948. Earlier, the opposition had made much of the absence of the Production Ministers from Commons' debate on restrictions. *Hansard*, vol. 435, cols. 791 and 795.

104. PRO HO 23517, Minute, January 4, 1949.

105. PRO HO 45/23517, Treasury to the Home Office, February 12, 1949, and Home Secretary to the Production Committee, February 24, 1949. PRO POW 20/133, March 17, 1948.

While it was admittedly difficult to provide concrete evidence of the adverse effects on production of a mid-week fixture held in the late evening, the *accepted fact* that mining would be prejudiced was in itself full justification....¹⁰⁶

From late 1947 onwards, the reasoning of those who wished to see restrictions maintained increasingly fell back on the belief that abandonment of such policies would send a dangerous message to the public. Continuation of restrictions came to rest on their symbolic rather than their practical impact. The Cabinet Production Committee decision of December 1947 that restrictions should be carried into 1948 was justified on the grounds that “it would be most undesirable to take any action at this stage which might be interpreted as an encouragement to the relaxation of effort.”¹⁰⁷

In February 1948, when the Committee confirmed its previous decision, it also repeated its view that:

it would be a psychological mistake, against the background of the present economic situation to take any decision which might encourage the impression that a relaxation of effort was permissible.¹⁰⁸

In January 1949, the Home Office was still recognizing that some people would raise this same objection to any relaxation. “but this argument is wearing a bit thin because the public is now much more fully alive to the need for increased production.”¹⁰⁹

Conversion

While those who were somewhat distanced from criticism persisted in support of restrictions, especially on dogs, those men who were most vulnerable because they had originally promoted such policies appear to have learned from their experiences of public buffeting in the spring and summer of 1947 and had moved to positions of moderation. In August 1947, Manny Shinwell was advising the ever-zealous Sir Patrick Dollan that restrictions by then in place were “as far as we should go and I do not feel able to endorse the views of your Committee.”¹¹⁰ By February 1948, Chuter Ede was recommending to Cabinet, initially without success, that they accept a compromise negotiated with the NGRA.¹¹¹

106. PRO CAB 134/636, February 11, 1948. The emphasis is mine. There is an interesting parallel here with traditional arguments on the effects of gambling in general. Consequence were assumed but only proven in individual cases. *Willinck Report*, pp. 45-47.

107. PRO CAB 134/635, December 6, 1947.

108. PRO CAB 134/636, February 11, 1948.

109. PRO HO 45/23517, Minute, January 4, 1949.

110. PRO HO 45/25225, Shinwell to Dollan, August 8, 1948. Dollan was calling for a total ban on all mid-week sporting activity.

111. PRO CAB 134/636, February 11, 1948.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that the Home Secretary and his staff had learned from their experiences came in the autumn of 1947 when they were consulted by the Treasury over the betting tax proposed for inclusion in Hugh Dalton's November Budget. The Home Office urged the Treasury that a tax on pools and dogs but not on horses "is open to such devastating criticism that we must be ready to meet demands for taxation of other forms of gambling."¹¹² The Treasury, it was argued, "would be wise to be prepared for the storm."¹¹³ The Home Office insisted that it "will be difficult to defend imposing a tax on the bets which are most prevalent among working people, while imposing no tax on the bets of wealthy people."¹¹⁴ The Home Office specifically linked caution over a tax to its own experience regarding restrictions on mid-week sport, recalling "the very large number of protests received from MPs and others."¹¹⁵

Chuter Ede appears to have been unwilling or unable to use the relative seniority of his office as Home Secretary to turn government policy around once it was committed to a particular course. Thus when he was approached in February 1948 by a delegation of MPs seeking a relaxation of restrictions on dog racing, he did not feel himself able to make any concession, even though he had argued for such a measure to the Cabinet Production Committee. It was only when the same, all-party but Labour dominated, delegation approached Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, a month later that a breakthrough occurred and some concessions were made to the NGRA. Cripps confessed to having "been impressed by the difficulty of making out a convincing case for the continuance of this ban in the absence of any concrete evidence to show that a slight relaxation would be likely to have adverse effects on production."¹¹⁶ There is a certain irony that Cripps, described by Kenneth Morgan as guided by "stem monk-like austerity" and possessed of "all the puritan virtues," should be the minister most immediately responsible for a significant concession to a sport one can reasonably assume was anathema to him.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

To study the workings of the post-war Labour Government, at least insofar as they bore on sport, is to invite schizophrenia. On the one hand, it was a group made up largely of fair-minded individuals who shared a genuine desire to effect improvement in the standard of living and the way of life of the majority of British people and believed that in 1945 political circumstances had presented them with a great opportunity to pursue those goals. However, post-war

112. PRO HO 45/25097, Memo, October 29, 1947.

113. PRO HO 45/25097, Minute, October 1947.

114. PRO HO 45/25097, Memo, October 29, 1947. The strength of feelings in the Home Office may be gauged by the fact that this warning appeared twice in almost identical forms in the same memo.

115. PRO HO 45/25097, Note, October 23, 1947.

116. PRO CAB 134/636, Minute, March 22, 1948. The concession was to permit one mid-week meet at each track providing they did not begin before 7:30 p.m. and that all tracks in any given area use the same night.

117. Kenneth Morgan, *Labour people* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 162 and 164.

conditions. some few of their own creation and others not, made the fulfillment of Labour's mandate more complex and more difficult than even the most cautious among government leaders might have anticipated.

Policy on sport reflects the way in which circumstances overtook good intentions. Furthermore, the development, application and maintenance of such policy evidenced a political leadership which may have been sympathetic toward its constituency but did not really comprehend and, at times, despaired of, some aspects of the way of life of those they 'represented'; politically but not socially. As was insisted by most members of the government, the control of sport, unlike many other social and economic activities, was not seen to be part of their mandate.¹¹⁸ However undesirable it may have been, some government action on sport came to be seen as necessary. Once reluctance over any intervention in sport had been broached by economic conditions, there is no doubt, and it should come as no surprise, that key government ministers did discriminate against dog racing. Their party's history and their own sensibilities led inexorably to that end. Whatever may have been their individual social backgrounds, Labour MPs were largely influenced, as were most of the opposition, by a philosophy of sport that had its origins in upper- and middle-class circles of the late 19th century.¹¹⁹ At best, dog racing existed on the very margins of such conceptions of sporting activities and, furthermore, carried the burden of an overwhelming association with gambling. Government was not on a mission to destroy the dogs. Rather, what were perceived as redeeming qualities that led ministers to moderate policies towards other sports did not exist in the case of dog racing. Had they been a little less certain that they knew what was best for the working-class, and had they been a little more familiar with the social ways and preferences of that class the ministers of the post-war government might have pursued different policies. Nevertheless, regardless of whether or not they could, or should, have anticipated the storm of criticism that engulfed them, men like James Chuter Ede did learn from their experience and, while not converted to a great appreciation of the dogs, they pragmatically reassessed their policies. While dog racing did indeed present a special case in terms of policy making, it could be claimed that the pattern described here, of transition from presumption to a resigned pragmatism, was no distortion of the general experiences of Labour in power in the 1940s.

118. Norman Baker. "The Labour Government and Sport, 1945-48." Unpublished paper presented at NASSH Conference., 1994.

119. Richard Holt, "Amateurism and its interpretation: The Social Origins of British Sport." *Innovation*, vol. 5, No. 4, 1992, pp. 19-31.