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The Rise of a Local Liberal:

An Examination of the Success of John Henry Whitley 1890-1906

Jonjo Ward

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Masters by Research in History.

University of Huddersfield

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Abstract

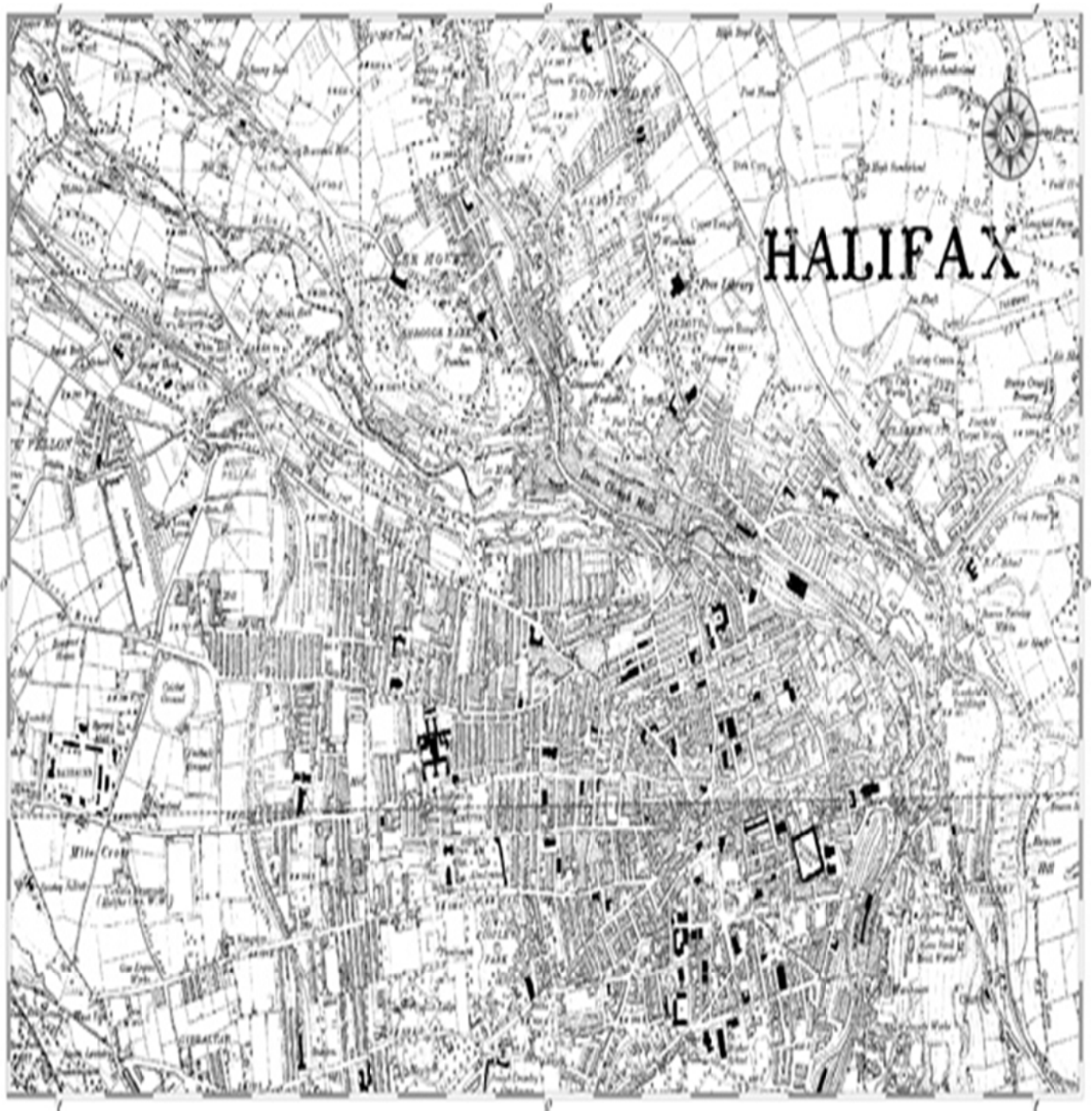
This thesis is an examination of the early political career of John Henry Whitley and the success he achieved at a local parliamentary level. It examines how a local Liberal candidate was able to succeed amidst the rise of Labour within the town of Halifax. My work examines the political context of Liberalism's battle with Labour and examines its impact on local politics within Halifax. Through combining these broader political aspects along with local factors specific to the town of Halifax, several questions arise with regard to Whitley's success in 1900 and 1906. How did Whitley make the transition from local figure to Liberal political candidate and why was he chosen? How Liberalism adapt to the rise of Labour? What did the Liberals do on a local level to challenge this threat? What did Whitley specifically promote and represent to ensure his success in 1900 and 1906? Ultimately, my thesis aims to answer the questions of how and why did Whitley succeed amidst a time of political uncertainty for the Liberal party?

Of the various aspects that culminated to Whitley's success, two factors proved crucial for John Henry Whitley to succeed in 1900 and 1906. His local roots and stature gave him a valuable connection of support to the community of Halifax that largely set him apart from rival political candidates within Halifax. Secondly, and most crucially, Whitley was able to unite old Liberal principles with a fresh emerging Liberal thought that promoted the social reforms the working class demanded. This was critical at a time when Liberal working class support was threatened by the emergence of a growing Labour movement, particularly within Halifax.

John Henry Whitley proved to be a Liberal who found the perfect balance between serving the Liberal creed he believed in and helping the community he represented.

Maps

Historic Ordnance Map of Halifax 1892-93, West Yorkshire (Map size- 2 miles by 1 mile)



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Many groups and individuals require thanks for helping me create this piece of work. Thanks has to go to the Whitley family for providing such an excellent base of sources to work from. Their incredible collection, the J.H. Whitley Archive, was invaluable in allowing me to truly understand John Henry Whitley and the impact he had on his local town of Halifax. I also thank the University of Huddersfield Archives, whose professionalism was outstanding throughout my research. The Archive team were a testament to the University of Huddersfield, the university that gave me the opportunity to research into the amazing life of John Henry Whitley. Personal thanks also goes to Professor Paul Ward who was always willing to support me. My highest praise is reserved for Professor Keith Laybourn. His support, patience and knowledge were all crucial in helping me produce this work and I cannot thank him enough.

Special thanks also goes to my mum and dad for supporting me throughout it all.

Chapter One:

Introduction

*'Everyone is proud to speak of him as a Halifax lad. Honour to him is honour to the town.'*¹

Halifax Courier, 20 June 1912

The transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century oversaw a period of substantial change in British politics. The Liberal star that had shone so brightly throughout the nineteenth century was beginning to wane, its political foundations uncomfortably repositioned by the rise of Labour. The progressive vote was not instantly seen as associated with Liberal values as it had been before; Labour began to emerge with claims of being the true voice of working class British society.² The rallying calls from newly-emerged socialist groups, such as the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893, reverberated around the nation to mixed effect.³ Some areas of Britain were completely deaf to the socialist cries whilst other areas such as the West Riding in the North of England, were captivated by it. A specific case of the new Labour movement challenging the existing political landscape can be found in the textile town of Halifax.⁴ Yet, amidst the political reflection and change in progressive politics that ushered in the dawn of the twentieth century, John Henry Whitley, a Liberal, carved out a political career within Halifax that would take him from being a local town councillor to national prominence as Speaker of the House of Commons.⁵

John Henry Whitley's rise from local mill owner to national political figure is one that can be deemed even more impressive due to the political conditions emerging in the Halifax constituency. Halifax

¹ *Halifax Courier*, 20 June 1912.

² Keith Laybourn, Jack Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour* (London, 1984) pp.1-15.

³ Barry Winter, *The ILP: Past and Present* (Leeds, 1996).

⁴ Patricia Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism 1890- 1914' in David James and Keith Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism* (Bradford, 1991).

⁵ H. J. Wilson, 'Whitley, John Henry (1866–1935)', rev. Mark Pottle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36875>, accessed 4 Jan 2014].

was one of the small number of dual-constituencies in the country, with two seats available for contention it was ripe for building political connections and alliances which were essential for local electoral success. Whitley was a Liberal who managed to navigate and adapt to the changing political conditions within Halifax to see himself succeed in the 1900 and 1906 local elections. How was Whitley able to rise from town councillor to succeed as local MP in 1900? What policies did he stand for, and implement, to see him successfully returned in 1906? How did he navigate and adapt to the emerging force of the Labour movement? And where did Whitley find the support upon which to build his political foundations? Answering these questions offers a clear picture of Whitley as not only an adept politician but a dedicated local MP who wanted to fully meet the needs of his constituency.

The working class community within Halifax craved an improvement in their standard of living, and in this pursuit many were willing to support new and more radical movements. There was the potential for Radical and new political creeds to find a support base willing to listen to ideas that strayed from the established Conservative-Liberal dominated political sphere. Through the 'complacency of the old leadership,' the emergence of the ILP in the 1890's was a 'manifestation of the new sense of independence and isolation the working class were beginning to experience.'⁶ Yet despite this disillusionment with the existing political powerhouses, the Conservative and Liberal parties, John Henry Whitley emerged as a local champion for the Liberal cause. The Liberal party had lost its Halifax seat prior to the 1900 election, and yet, amidst the rise of a new progressive threat from the ILP, Whitley fronted a Liberal resurgence and oversaw success within Halifax. How was he able to secure the support to elevate himself onto the local political landscape, fronting a party that Whitley himself stated was threatened to become 'fossilised or cramped in its ideas'?⁷ One of the

⁶ Matthew Davis, *Comrade or Brother?: The History of the British Labour Movement* (London, 2009) p. 110; Kenneth D. Brown, *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Response to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974) p. 4.

⁷ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

key aspects that Whitley had to implement for his eventual success was infusing 'new ideas and highest ideals into the purposes of the Liberal party.'⁸

To truly appreciate the context in which Whitley was able to negotiate his way into local and then national politics, an understanding of the state of the Liberal party at the turn of the century is vital. Liberalism faced a growing sense that it was increasingly stale and out of touch with working-class needs. The Liberal party was seen by many to represent a party run by old politicians who were simply not adapting to the changing times. 'The great Liberal party, whose principles were ever enabling' had remained mainly steadfast in its ideology of peace, retrenchment and free trade throughout the nineteenth century and this looked to continue into the twentieth.⁹ For all the great Liberal promises that the party had made that they had done 'more for the working man than any Tory Government that ever existed' the lives of many of working class within Britain had simply not improved.¹⁰ As substantial parts of working-class Britain grew further frustrated and exasperated at the conditions they faced, the emerging Labour movement and its Socialist groups were able to gather support. Political bodies, such as the ILP, presented themselves as the only true political outlet for the working class to improve their standards of living.¹¹ Liberalism had to adapt to remain the leading progressive party within British national politics and stave off any threat from the growing Labour movement. Individuals like Whitley were Liberalism's solution to this image of stagnation as he strove to reinvigorate the Liberal machine with the 'energy and enthusiasm of youth.'¹² Whitley understood that Liberalism could not simply represent the ideals it had stood for throughout the nineteenth century. He urged Liberalism to integrate policies that would have an immediate impact in helping British society, adhering himself even further within a town where 'no one was better known amongst Halifax people.'¹³ Indeed, Whitley can be seen as providing evidence

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Halifax Courier*, 24 September 1900.

¹⁰ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 September 1900; Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People* (London, 1889).

¹¹ David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1880-1906* (Manchester, 1983).

¹² *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

¹³ *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900.

for the ideas of historian P.F. Clarke who has argued that Liberalism was transforming from an 'old' to a 'new' state of Liberalism.¹⁴ Whitley strove to introduce further progressivism within the party and his belief that social reform had to be an essential part of Liberal policies allowed him to win the support of the Halifax working-class. Whitley did not abandon traditional Liberal policies but rather was able to bridge the gap between Liberalism of the nineteenth century and the 'new' Liberalism that was required in the twentieth. This combination allowed him to adhere to both the classic areas of Liberal support and more importantly halt the flow of working-class support towards the Labour movement.

For any individual to elevate himself into local politics, and then to succeed, connections have to be made and support earned. Whitley, critically, was able to achieve both, enabling him to be asked to represent the Liberal party and then to achieve success in the 1900 election. Before becoming a Liberal candidate, Whitley's stature within the town of Halifax was built upon years of displaying his 'own spirit of good service.'¹⁵ He was able to build a local infrastructure and network of support from several groups within the Halifax society that proved integral to his eventual success in the Halifax Parliamentary Elections of 1900 and 1906. He became well known within Halifax through his establishment of the gymnastic clubs and day trips for the 'deprived boys of the town.'¹⁶ Through his actions to offer more to the struggling youth within Halifax, Whitley eventually achieved position of town councillor and it was from this platform that he was eventually asked to rise into local politics as Liberal candidate. When analysing Whitley's career and taking note of his later roles as Speaker of the House of Commons and Chairman of the BBC, it is easy to suggest that his earlier roles as town councillor or his establishment of youth groups within Halifax are insignificant.¹⁷ However, on the contrary, it was these actions that were the initial stepping stones that would eventually lead him down the illustrious career path in which he would excel. Exploring Whitley's ability to earn a level of

¹⁴ P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (London, 1971), pp. 3-25.

¹⁵ W. A. Davies, *The Rt. Hon J. H. Whitley* (Halifax, 1953) p.6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁷ Wilson, 'Whitley, John Henry (1866–1935)', rev. Mark Pottle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36875>, accessed 4 Jan 2014].

respect within Halifax and then his ability to use his reputation to enhance his standing electorally offers a valuable insight into what qualities were needed to make the step into local politics in the early twentieth century. Whitley was not plucked from obscurity within Halifax to front the Liberal local campaign, his reputation preceded him and this played a decisive role in his eventual local political success.

There is a varied and wide historiography regarding Liberalism on a national scale but analysing Whitley's career successes in 1900 and 1906 reveals the impact Liberalism had on local level.¹⁸ During a time of political fluctuation with the emerging Labour movement challenging the established political landscape, Whitley's rise to prominence contradicts simplistic arguments that Liberalism was doomed as the Labour movement would succeed through class allegiance swaying to its social message. In both 1900 and 1906, Whitley garnered more votes than the ILP candidates and in 1906 he achieved more than any other candidate within Halifax. Patricia Dawson's work on Halifax and its emerging ILP movement stresses that the support of trade unions became the backbone of the Socialist group's eventual success.¹⁹ However, this poses the question that if the ILP had the trade union backing, where did Whitley gain his support to succeed against it? Though trade unions at the time only represented a minority of the working-class they would still prove decisive in elections within Halifax. What areas of support did Whitley attain to challenge the ILP threat? Bill Lancaster argues that Socialist groups only posed a true threat to the established political order in certain regions. Yet, there can be no doubt that Halifax and the West Riding were areas that ILP and socialism flourished.²⁰ How was Whitley able to maintain his success from 1900-1906 against the rising fortunes on the ILP?

What is clear is that Whitley's success cannot be put down to a single factor. During a time of Liberal instability, he proved a success and then would eventually become a political constant within Halifax

¹⁸ Roy Douglas, *Liberals: A History of the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties* (London, 2005).

¹⁹ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, pp. 48-52.

²⁰ Bill Lancaster, *Radicalism, Co-operation and Socialism: Leicester Working Class Politics 1860- 1906*(Leicester, 1987) pp. 1- 15.

for nearly thirty years. Whitley found initial success and earned a local reputation as an honest man wanting to do right by his home town. However this alone could not catapult him to the political triumphs he would eventually achieve. His local stature offered him the possibility to climb the political ladder but ultimately it would prove his adept handling of political affairs that would set him up for success. His initial triumph was dependent upon his local stature and hard work campaigning for a rejuvenated Liberal cause that heavily incorporated principles found in 'new' Liberalism. However to continue this success it required a combination of his adeptness in handling a growing ILP threat and his ability to present policies a working class majority within Halifax could identify as offering a chance of genuinely improving their everyday lives.

John Henry Whitley would eventually find himself in the political stratosphere by becoming Speaker of the House of Commons. However, for this eventual success to occur, local roots had to be planted and his foundations of support set. Analysing how he was able to secure local success in the political turbulence of Halifax will highlight how an individual was able to rise from the obscurity of a small textile town to become a national political figure in early twentieth century Britain.

Chapter Two:

The Changing Political Landscape

*'As the two-party political system began to crack, a third party with a distinctively socialist character emerged.'*²¹

Edward Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire'

John Henry Whitley's progression into local politics occurred amidst Socialism becoming a new force within British politics. Socialist groups started to gather traction in moving Labour's cause forward onto the national scene after building local political foundations. Yet, this Socialist ideology was not simply championed by all groups within society and swept to the forefront of British politics. Instead it took the emergence of groups such as the ILP to first find local electoral success before they could progress onto the national political stage. However, this emergence of Socialistic groups poses a significant question, for what reason did groups deem that the working class needed true political representation? Were the existing political parties not doing enough to alleviate the hardships the working class faced? An understanding of why the ILP emerged within Halifax and the effect this had on both the Conservative and Liberal parties offers a valuable insight into what Whitley and Liberalism had to deal with during his success in the 1900 and 1906 elections.

When analysing the rising tide of Socialism within British politics, which swept groups such as the ILP into the public limelight, it is important to account for the political context of the period in which the movement took shape. An essential question has to be asked when analysing the emergence of the

²¹ Edward Thompson, *Homage to Tom Maguire*, <http://www.independentlabour.org.uk/main/2011/11/03/ilp-history-beginnings-in-bradford/> (Accessed 21/04/2012).

ILP; would the movement have been necessary if the existing parties were appeasing the working class? If the Conservative and Liberal political parties had been answering the working-class calls for support and change, the radical socialist path the Labour movement took may never have been opened. Through the 'complacency of the old leadership,' the emergence of the ILP was 'the manifestation of the new sense of independence and isolation the working class were beginning to experience.'²² Neither the Conservative nor Liberal party's had recognised the potential political threat of a unified working-class movement or even made sufficient effort to placate the working class people. These failings can be seen in particular as being stirred within Halifax, with its working-class community earning a measly average of 8 shillings a week.²³ Conservatism and Liberalism both failed to raise their Halifax constituent's standards of living. The poor wages that existed in Halifax are extenuated further when contrasted to the 18 shillings a week earned by textile workers holding the same jobs just over the Pennines in Lancashire.²⁴

The ideological standpoint of the established Conservative party meant that many working-class communities felt they weren't making an effort to address the problems they faced. The working-class thoughts towards the Conservative party can be summed up by Benjamin Disraeli's criticism that Conservatism 'offers no redress for the present, and makes no preparation for the future.'²⁵ As Socialism spread, its message stressed that the Conservative's view on social relations had been 'so false that they believed the working-class dependent on them and not they on the working class.'²⁶ It became apparent that supporting Conservatism meant promoting a laissez-faire attitude to improving working-class standards of living. Socialism challenged these ideas, and groups such as ILP were able to promote themselves as being the true voice of working-class communities. Many workers found within Halifax gravitated towards the ILP through the idea that the group would fight

²² Matthew Davis, *Comrade or Brother?: The History of the British Labour Movement* (London, 2009) p. 110; Kenneth D. Brown, *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Response to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974) p. 4.

²³ Tom Mann, *An Appeal to the Yorkshire Textile Workers* (London, 1893) p. 210.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby* (London, 1844) p. 13.

²⁶ Fred Jowett, *What Made Me a Socialist* (Glasgow, 1941) p. 1.

for their interests and concerns. The Conservatives weren't the only major political party deemed to be failing the poorer citizens of British society. The apparent failings of the Conservative party were combined with 'the growing disillusionment of... the record of official Liberalism,' towards helping the working-class society.²⁷

Throughout the nineteenth century, Liberalism was the leading progressive party within British politics. As one of the two leading political powerhouses, Liberalism's foundations and consolidation of power seemed concrete throughout the nineteenth century. However, Liberalism critically made mistakes when addressing the rise of working-class political activity. A clear under-estimation of the potential strength of groups such as ILP can be seen as one of the key errors made by the Liberal party.

The emergence of the ILP within the West Riding meant there wasn't a Liberal constituency safe from the new Socialist challenge throughout the region.²⁸ However, the Liberal party's failure to recognise that Socialist groups such as the ILP had the potential to become a 'definite force in politics' critically underestimated the Socialist threat.²⁹ They believed that the working-class support would be retained despite the emergence of Socialism. Liberalism can be seen as not reacting to the emergence of a new political thought that appealed to the working class. At the close of the nineteenth century, many within working-class communities felt that there were 'many in the Liberal party whose opinions on Labour problems were behind the time.'³⁰ This opened up the opportunity for groups such as the ILP to proclaim that they represented the active political future of the working-class, an idea that many communities, such as Halifax, were drawn towards.

Liberalism initially failed to adapt to the new demands that originated from within working-class society. The Liberal party's reluctance to adopt parliamentary candidates from a working-class

²⁷ Paul Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party 1880-1945* (Essex, 1972).

²⁸ *Leeds and Yorkshire Mercury*, 9 July 1903.

²⁹ 'The Independent Labour Party: Annual Conference in Liverpool Labour as a Parliamentary Force', *The Guardian*, 2 April 1902.

³⁰ 'Independent Labour Party Founded', *The Guardian*, 14 January 1893.

background directly opposed what the ILP were hoping to achieve and undermined working-class confidence in the Liberal creed. The working-class strove for further political representation whilst the Liberal party was hesitant in pursuing such an idea. This led to working-class support filtering away from Liberalism, with the ILP more than willing to cater for the working-class needs. Keith Laybourn stresses this idea further by indicating that 'voters abandoned the Liberal Party in favour of Labour,' supporting the idea that the ILP was elevated to political prominence through the natural support and affiliation it had with the working-class.³¹ The Liberal party's resistance to true working-class representation also led to trade union support strengthening groups like the ILP, who realised 'that to advance the interests of the working class, indeed to make space for effective trade unionism, independent political activity' was a necessity.³² If Liberalism wasn't willing to actively pursue the want and needs of the trade unions, the ILP definitely was. Patricia Dawson advocates the idea that trade union support was essential in the development of an ILP movement. This is particularly highlighted by the electoral success the Halifax ILP branch was able to achieve in 1906 due to its affiliation with the trade unions within the town.³³ Liberalism's inability to handle and sway trade union support to the Liberal cause ultimately strengthened the ILP movement as a whole. The trade union support the ILP were able to achieve would become particular relevant to Whitley's Halifax Parliamentary campaign in 1906 due to the Liberal-Labour pact.

Through the failings of the existing parties, a speech by Ernest Jones, a Radical chartist who fought as a candidate in the Halifax local elections, holds credence and reflects the feeling that a new approach had to be adopted to help the people of Britain.³⁴ As he commented, 'you have tried all Governments but theirs; all factions have had their turn- Whig and Tory, Conservative and Radical... and all have failed. One party alone has remained untried- The People.'³⁵ Socialism claimed to be the

³¹ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 1.

³² Winter, *The ILP*, p. 5.

³³ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, pp. 48-52.

³⁴ John Saville, 'Jones, Ernest Charles (1819–1869)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15000>, accessed 6 March 2013].

³⁵ Ernest Jones, *Ernest Jones Speech*, (Halifax, 1856).

answer; the ILP being Socialism's outlet for working-class British society. The ILP empowered itself by urging working-class communities to let it be their political voice. The failings of Liberalism and Conservatism allowed Socialist groups to rise up from the cracks emerging in Britain's political foundations. However, though there was a platform created by the failings of the existing classes, this platform alone did not mean that a Socialist movement would arise. The Conservative and Liberal shortcomings opened up a political space that the working classes demanded be filled with their own voice and ideals. The ILP was born into this void within the political landscape; it did so because of various factors and influences which converged to see the movement come to fruition.³⁶ Evidently it is because of the prevailing aspects and dynamics found within the Yorkshire area, where there were 101 branches of the ILP with Halifax being one of the largest, which reveals how it was such a hotbed for socialist growth.³⁷

The faults of the existing parties can be seen as compounded when combined with the new 'substantial working class electorate,' that had emerged in the nineteenth century.³⁸ Gordon Phillips stresses that through the secondary parliament reform bill of 1868, and the widening of suffrage again in 1884, working-class people were finally getting a foothold in the political landscape of Britain.³⁹ It may not have been complete suffrage for all people but the working class were now being given a chance to voice their problems. Even if the new suffrage was limited to a few, the formation of groups like the National Reform Union continued to push for expansion of voting rights by giving houses or land to working-class people granting them the right to vote. This increased enfranchisement meant that it became even more pertinent for the Whitley and the Liberal to be able to retain working class support as it was an essential base of support in their quest overthrow the Conservative dominance the twentieth century began with.

³⁶ Francis Williams, *Fifty Years March: The Rise of the Labour Party* (London, 1955), pp. 34-35.

³⁷ Keir Hardie, 'The Independent Labour Party', *The Nineteenth Century*, No. CCXV (January, 1895), p. 2.

³⁸ Gordon Phillips, *The Rise of the Labour Party 1893-1931* (London, 1992), p. 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

Liberalism in Halifax threatened to open an 'ideological rift between the Liberal oligarchy and the working-class electorate' that would potentially allow the ILP to consolidate and strengthen its position.⁴⁰ Labour propaganda repeatedly pushed the idea 'there may have been a time when Liberalism meant something' that the working class could depend upon however they claimed that time had passed.⁴¹ Whitley entered the local Liberal politics at a time when Liberalism throughout the nation needed to reconnect with the working-class support it had depended on since the Second Reform Act of 1868. Previous Liberal, as well as Conservative, failings may have allowed Socialist groups, such as the ILP, to germinate and flourish within Halifax. However Whitley aimed to halt this progress through his promotion of 'New' Liberal ideals.⁴²

Amidst the surge of ILP growth during the twilight of the nineteenth century, Liberalism stood at a crossroads. Its policies and actions during the nineteenth century had ultimately failed in alleviating the hardships the working class not just within the Halifax community but throughout the entire nation. As the progressive powerhouse in British politics, it was now faced with the dilemma of finding a new relevance within the political landscape amidst an expanding and strengthening Labour movement. Liberalism found its answer through individuals such as Whitley who were 'practically oriented towards current social ills, to which they applied their mental energies and general principles.'⁴³ 'The failure of the Liberal party to accommodate working-class demands' was an issue Whitley's new Liberal philosophy could rectify.⁴⁴ He was firmly made from a 'new' Liberal mould that recognised the need for the Liberal party to promote and implement practical social reform that could appease the working class.

As the Labour movement emerged as a genuine progressive threat to Liberalism, Whitley and the Liberal Party had to combat this through finding fresh ways of making the Liberal ideology appeal to

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

⁴¹ *Labour Leader*, 23 June 1905.

⁴² Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 3.

⁴³ Michael Freedon, *The New Liberalism* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ Mary Hilson, *Political Change and the Rise of Labour in Comparative Perspective: Britain and Sweden 1890-1920* (Lund, 2006), p. 31.

the disgruntled working class within Halifax. The ILP may have promoted the notion that it was the true voice of working class political representation but Whitley was able to challenge this through a combination of factors. His local reputation within Halifax benefitted him greatly in showing he had genuine care and understanding for needs of the town he lived in. He combined this local standing with clear progressive traits and a more Radical philosophy that breathed fresh 'life into the Liberals of the town.'⁴⁵ Whitley did not simply abandon traditional Liberal principles, instead he incorporated them with a more Radical political attitude and a real desire for social reform. This combination was effectively able to challenge the progress the Labour movement had made and made Liberalism once again appeal to a working class that had grown disillusioned due to its previous failings.

⁴⁵ 'The Old and the New Liberalism', 11 February 1899, JHW/2/2/6, p. 8.

Chapter Three:

The Rise of a Local Figure

*'No one is better known to the Halifax people... than Councillor Henry Whitley.'*⁴⁶

Halifax Courier, 22 September 1900

John Henry Whitley's political career saw him repeatedly returned as a successful Liberal M.P. within the town of Halifax for an unprecedented thirty years. After initially being elected in 1900, Whitley embarked on a political journey that saw him progress from Halifax local politics and emerge into the national political picture. He reached the political pinnacle of his career when he became the Speaker of the House of Commons, where his tenure saw him earn plaudits such as 'if he will not rank with the greatest Speakers of the past, he has been well above average.'⁴⁷ Whitley's success in 1900 in the local Halifax elections was the beginning of a fruitful political career that would see him become a contemporary with political powerhouses and house-hold names of the era such as David Lloyd George, Herbert Asquith and Winston Churchill. However, Whitley's impressive thirty-year political career should not simply be analysed from his 1900 electoral success onwards. The success he achieved at the dawn of the twentieth century did not simply occur from nothing. Whitley managed to step onto the local political platform for the first time in 1900 and from this foundation built himself a towering political reputation. However, an examination of his career has to take into account the decade before his initial political election to highlight the background and local

⁴⁶ *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900.

⁴⁷ Sir Ellis Hume-Williams, HC Deb 08 January 1924 vol 169 cc1-16; *Yorkshire Post*, 11 March 1928.

groundwork he had performed in Halifax. Whitley's actions within Halifax from 1890 up to his decision to run as a Liberal Parliamentary candidate were critical in creating a positive reputation that would lift him towards political success within the town.

Through analysing Whitley's actions before the 1900 election, one can appreciate how he was such an appealing candidate to front the Liberal Party's election campaign within the town. Whitley did not simply emerge and captivate Halifax into supporting him in 1900, he had already built a reputation as a local man dedicated to helping his locality. It was this success in his local work that helped make him stand out as a potential Liberal candidate.

The idea that political reputation was essential for a candidate to succeed within Halifax is discredited through Whitley's electoral triumph. Whitley did not have any prior political experience nor did he have any sort of national reputation before the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Elections. However, these qualities were shown to not be a decisive factor in the town's voting, highlighted by the failure of the Socialist champion Tom Mann in the 1897 Halifax Parliamentary by-election.⁴⁸

(Table 1)

**Table 1: 1897 Halifax
Parliamentary By-Election**

Electoral Candidates	Votes Cast
Alfred Billson (Liberal)	5664
Sir Savile Crossley (Liberal Unionist)	5252
Tom Mann (ILP)	2000

⁴⁸ Chris Wrigley, 'Mann, Thomas (1856–1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34854>, accessed 19 May 2014]; Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 53.

Tom Mann had 'emerged from the London dock strike as one of the foremost figures in the British labour movement' in 1889 and was heralded by the emerging ILP party within Halifax as a man who could finally lead the Socialist movement to political electoral success.⁴⁹ Yet in the 1897 elections Mann lost to individuals much less lauded than him the elections and came a distinct third. So why did a nationally respected figure such as Tom Mann arrive in a town with a burgeoning Socialist movement fail? Indeed, in contrast, how could a political inexperienced Whitley succeed just three years later? The obvious answer is that Liberalism was much more established than the burgeoning Labour movement and it is possible to argue that Mann's attempt came too early in Labour's rise. However, this is too simplistic an idea to explain the gulf in electoral success. Was it purely down to the party that each man was associated with? The answer cannot ignore this difference. However, it has to also incorporate a large number of other factors as well, the most prominent being that Whitley was a Halifax local. He had already achieved a great deal within Halifax and for the community before becoming a Liberal candidate in 1900. Mann may have arrived with Socialist fanfare but he was a relative stranger to the people of Halifax, and he had no roots to Halifax. This is critically an area that Whitley could thrive upon and garner votes for the Liberal beliefs he would adopt in the 1900 elections.

Whitley's career would springboard from the local Halifax elections in 1900 and see him become a major political player. However, it is essential to grasp an understanding of how Whitley's time before accepting his Liberal candidacy helped shape and propel him towards electoral success. From simply being an educated local business owner, Whitley became a prominent figure the people of Halifax could rally around in faith he would improve their town.⁵⁰ What actions did he take before becoming a Liberal candidate? What did he believe and strive to achieve within Halifax before his political aspirations? And why were these acts able to not only gain the attention of the Liberal party

⁴⁹ Wrigley, 'Mann, Thomas (1856–1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34854>, accessed 19 May 2014].

⁵⁰ Wilson, H. J., 'Whitley, John Henry (1866–1935)', rev. Mark Pottle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36875>, accessed 4 Jan 2014].

but also gather the support and trust of the Halifax town? Whitley did not simply become an overnight Liberal success in the town of Halifax, instead it was local acts before his decision to take up the Liberal candidacy that would shape his political fortunes in the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Election.

Before the 1900 election, John Henry Whitley had already demonstrated to the people of Halifax that he was a respectable, caring local figure. His family cotton spinning trade, S. Whitley & Co., was a successful local business which employed many within the town and through association heightened Whitley's stature.⁵¹ Whitley was educated at Clifton College, Bristol and London University before returning to his hometown to help run his families locally established business.⁵² He 'proved himself a considerate, generous-hearted employer' and this helped further solidify his local reputation.⁵³ The success and wealth he attained through his families cotton-spinning business did not, however, see him become aloof from the working-class people of Halifax. Whitley set himself apart from other local Halifax business owners through his willingness to give back to the community that he had grown up in. Whitley had 'that civic spirit which prompts men to sacrifice leisure for the greater good' and it was this spirit that would see him rise to prominence as a local figure within the town. This idea of it being an individual's duty to help the people around him would be a quality he stood by throughout his political career. It can be best seen in how he helped his brother A. W. Whitley and the Halifax Citizens Guild of Help charity.⁵⁴ 'The Edwardian Guilds of Help promoted a vision of social betterment that drew on ideals of cross-class 'friendship' and civic participation' that Whitley promoted heavily throughout his political career.⁵⁵ Whitley sought a

⁵¹ Wilson, 'Whitley, John Henry (1866–1935)', rev. Mark Pottle, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36875>, accessed 19 May 2014].

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Halifax Courier*, 20 June 1912.

⁵⁴ Keith Laybourn, *The Guild of Help and the Changing Face of Edwardian Philanthropy* (Lewiston, 1994).

⁵⁵ Susan Pedersen, 'Keeling, Dorothy Clarissa (1881–1967)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/46438>, accessed 19 May 2014].

‘community based solution’ to help alleviate the poverty many of the working class in Halifax faced and he maintained this throughout his career.⁵⁶

Whitley’s most prominent social work within Halifax was his passion for furthering the opportunities for under-privileged teenagers. ‘Whitley felt that the fine education he had received laid him under obligation to share its benefits with others less fortunate’ and so he organised evening schools in a local gymnasium.⁵⁷ He was able to carve a positive reputation within Halifax through his persistent efforts to improve the opportunities for the town’s youth. Many children had to start work at a young age to help support their struggling working-class families, meaning that their childhood and education came second to the need to scrape a living. Whitley viewed the misspent youth of the children within Halifax as a direct ‘challenge to his conscience’ and he soon ‘found himself a new opportunity of service to the deprived boys of the town.’⁵⁸ He set up gymnastic classes for Halifax boys to compete against other Bradford evening schools. The Halifax boy’s camp also owed ‘its foundations to Mr Whitley’s initiative.’⁵⁹ Organised trips promoted by Whitley really rejuvenated the town’s educational opportunities for the Halifax youth. Indeed, Whitley built a solid local reputation as a successful educated individual who felt a civic duty to help the town that had raised him. He earned ‘the respect of his fellow town’s people’ and it was during Whitley’s impressive achievements with the Halifax youth that he also came to the notice of the Halifax Liberal party.⁶⁰ The first Liberal approach made towards Whitley came in ‘October 1893 when the ‘West Ward Liberals invited him to come forward as their candidate’ for the local council elections. Whitley accepted this invitation on the one condition that he was ‘not in any way bound to any particular course of action, but free to use (his) own judgement in all matters that come up for

⁵⁶ Laybourn, *The Guild of Help and the Changing Face of Edwardian Philanthropy*, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Davies, *The RT. Hon J. H. Whitley*, p.5.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ *Halifax Courier*, 20 June 1912; ‘Halifax Boys in Camp’, JHW 2/1/22, p. 11.

⁶⁰ *Halifax Courier*, 20 June 1912.

consideration.⁶¹ The 1893 council elections proved to be an overwhelming success for Whitley against the Labour candidate Henry Blackhouse, winning with a majority of 712 votes.⁶² (Table 2)

**Table 2: Halifax Local Council
Election Results 1893**

Candidates	Votes Cast
J. H. Whitley (Liberal)	991
H. Blackhouse (Labour)	279

Whitley remained on the council, winning a further two elections, until 1902 when he resigned to concentrate on his burgeoning Parliamentary prospects. However, during this time as local councillor he was able to consistently exhibit his sterling Liberal views and show he was a man of real social change within Halifax. Again his passion for education consistently shone, particularly when in 1888 he was able to convince the Halifax School Board to form a number of evening schools.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Whitley remained a hands on presence in these schools as well, becoming a teacher to help assist the children to the best of his ability.

It was not just education that Whitley exerted his efforts towards during his time as town councillor. Whitley also actively pursued incorporating a tram system into the town to improve access and transportation for its people. Whitley funded his own trips to America to obtain 'a knowledge of what was possible in the working of the tramways' and see if 'an American model' tram system could be effective within Halifax.⁶³ Through funding his own trips to America, Whitley demonstrated to the Halifax community he was truly dedicated to bringing change to Halifax that would truly benefit its people. Though a tram system never came to fruition as Halifax proved 'not an easy town in which to work tramways successfully,' Whitley's reputation as a local champion was strengthened greatly due to his committed endeavour.⁶⁴

The decade before 1900 was of critical importance to Whitley as it created a platform for. Whitley's time helping the youth of Halifax and serving as a member of the town council helped highlight how dedicated he truly was to improving not only the town but the fortunes of the people who lived within it as well. Whitley revealed during the ten years prior to his election that he had an 'an increased awareness of social issues' and more importantly, he showed he was willing to act on these issues.⁶⁵ This assisted in helping Whitley break the growing perception that Liberalism had become to withdrawn from the needs of the working class. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Liberal party was seen as alienating the working class, the class that it depended on the most for votes.⁶⁶ This changing attitude towards Liberalism was due to the perceived image that the Liberal class were full of wealthy old men who would rather discuss ideas rather than act upon them. Whitley could easily have been perceived as falling into this category through his education and wealth. However, his time as a local councillor highlighted his social creed of helping the less

⁶³ 'Halifax Municipal Elections', 21 October 1899, JHW/2/1/85, p.71; 'West Ward Contest', 1899, JHW/2/1/75, pp.70-71, p.70.

⁶⁴ 'Halifax Municipal Elections', 21 October 1899, JHW/2/1/85, p.71.

⁶⁵ Freedon, *The New Liberalism*, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p.4.

fortunate and improving the peoples living conditions. The Halifax community was able to see through his efforts to provide for Halifax youth and improve the standard of living within Halifax that Whitley not only stood by his Liberal principles but acted upon them.

Whitley proved to be a highly adept councillor who constantly sought to find ways to improve the town that he served. This did not go unnoticed by the Liberal party who had already asked him to represent them on the local Halifax town council. His success as councillor led to the Liberals asking for him to run as their candidate in the 1895 Halifax Parliamentary Elections. However, Whitley rejected the offer to run as a Liberal candidate as he felt they needed someone who had a 'more mature age and experience' to run for them.⁶⁷ This can be seen as a highly beneficial move for Whitley as the 1895 election proved to be disastrous for the Liberals on a national scale. Within Halifax, the Liberal party lost a seat to the victorious Conservatives.⁶⁸ Whitley's patience proved to be a blessing. The Liberal party was left reeling from the party's failure in the 1895 election due to the Conservatives being able to gather significant working class support. The Liberals fared little better in the 1897 elections, managing to only get the Liberal candidate, Alfred Billson, elected. However, Whitley emerged in the 1900 General Election as an established and prominent local figure through seven uninterrupted years as a Halifax town councillor. The people of Halifax knew that Whitley was an individual who didn't simply claim he would make a difference to Halifax, he had already done so through his time as town councillor. Whitley's decision to turn down the offer to run as Liberal candidate in the 1895 and 1897 elections assisted him in the long term. By the 1900 election, the Liberals were desperate to reassert their dominance within the constituency and gave him and his fellow Liberal candidate, Alfred Billson, full backing to achieve this aim.

Though Whitley rejected the Liberal party's initial offer to run as their parliamentary candidate in 1895, the fact the Liberal party approached him again in 1900 showed that he definitely had the full support of the Liberal Four Hundred. The Liberal Four Hundred were the 'policy making body within

⁶⁷ J. H. Whitley letter to Winterhall, April 1895.

⁶⁸ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 53.

Halifax Liberalism', and guided Liberalism's direction in Halifax.⁶⁹ The Liberal Four Hundred was made up of largely of local wealthy manufacturers who believed in the Liberal cause.⁷⁰ It was the Liberal Four Hundred that decided if an individual was suitable to run as a Liberal candidate and would consider internal members as well as figures outside the group. The Liberal Four Hundred's support was critical for any chance of a Liberal candidate succeeding within the town, the backing of the group opened funding and valuable connections with local middle-class businesses within the town. These connections be put down to the fact the Liberal Four Hundred was 'dominated by a middle-class oligarchy.'⁷¹ Patricia Dawson stresses that this middle-class dominance within the Liberal Four Hundred alienated the working-class support Liberalism had relied on throughout the nineteenth century, leading to working-class support turn towards the ILP to represent their needs.⁷² Dawson's view that the lack of working-class representation damaged the working-class communities' perception of Halifax Liberalism is supported by the fact that Liberalism lost a local seat in the 1895 elections. Yet, it should be noted that its damage was not enough to see Labour replace Liberalism within local politics. Though Liberalism lacked working-class representation within the Liberal Four Hundred, Halifax consistently had one of the two available constituencies filled by a Liberal M.P. throughout the 1890's. Dawson's viewpoint that Liberal support fell into Labour hands through the ignorance of Liberalism to find a working-class candidate is true to a degree, however the Liberal Four Hundred still retained enough base support for Whitley to rally in his 1900 campaign as Liberal candidate.

The importance of Whitley receiving the complete backing of the Liberal Four Hundred can be seen clearly when examining the fortunes of James Tattersall and James Beever in 1890.⁷³ Though both men had 'served their political apprenticeship in the Liberal Four Hundred', they both were

⁶⁹ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 52.

⁷⁰ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 47.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 213.

'victimised' by the Liberal Four Hundred and removed from the group for 'their prominence in Socialist circles.'⁷⁴ The Liberal Four Hundred had the ability to outcast individuals it felt did not fit into its overall Liberal plans within Halifax. However, for individuals such as Whitley who had displayed the Liberal qualities the group sought, it was able to elevate into the local political sphere. Whitley was an individual the Liberal Four Hundred believed could spearhead the Liberal candidacy and return the seat they had lost 1895. This highlights the faith they had in Whitley and reveals the unanimous support he received from his Liberal backers.

Building a local reputation in the years leading up to the 1900 election was a critical factor that allowed Whitley to triumph when he entered his first Parliamentary contest as a Liberal candidate. Other local figures, such as John Lister representing the ILP in 1893, had tried to use their name and reputation to further their political cause and failed.⁷⁵ Lister was an ILP champion who was a successful local business owner, much like Whitley. Lister's support for the ILP was vital in its growth, becoming its financial backbone and even going as far as acting as the 'guarantor for the Halifax Joint Stock Banking Company.'⁷⁶ Yet, his reputation as a successful local businessman proved to be insufficient in his bid for electoral success. Why did Lister, a Liberal who eventually became a Socialist, fail and Whitley succeed even though both had local connections?

The major difference was that Whitley was able to show that he was much more than just a local businessman and he was able to highlight the fact that he genuinely cared the town he wanted to represent in Parliament. There was a rising threat from Socialist groups such as the ILP and their ability to erode at the Liberal working-class support and it became apparent that the Halifax Liberal party had to adapt to the times or fall behind. Putting forward another Liberal who only represented the values and practises that had carried Liberalism during the nineteenth century would not attract the support it needed for success within Halifax. Whitley was able to transcend this through the

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 49., Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 52.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.53., John A. Hargreaves, 'Lister, John (1847–1933)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/45743>, accessed 20 May 2014].

⁷⁶ John Lister, Frank Brocklehurst, *Letter to the Halifax Joint Stock Banking Company Limited*, 4 July 1895.

sheer fact that he had already shown his willingness and ability to incorporate social action during his time as town councillor. The Halifax community were not simply shown a new face that spoke of what he wanted to achieve, Whitley represented a figure who could show what he already had accomplished. He was able to accompany this with the promise of achieving even more if the people would support him and the Liberal cause he believed in so fervently. Though the 1900 election campaign and success would springboard him into local and national politics, Whitley was only able to reach this platform through the foundations he established well before the candidacy was offered to him. Whitley proved he wanted and could make a difference for the people of Halifax. It was his actions in local politics prior to 1900 that allowed him to gain the support of his Liberal peers to mount a successful campaign as a Halifax Liberal candidate.

Chapter Four:

The First Success

*'The 1900 election will be one of the most exciting contests ever waged in Halifax'*⁷⁷

Halifax Courier, 22 September 1900

The twentieth century was heralded in with excitement and anticipation for one of the most hotly contested local elections Halifax had ever seen. The failure of the Conservative party to improve the lives of the working class left their position in power open to significant challenge. The nineteenth century had seen the repeated cycle of the British government simply changing from Conservative to Liberal and vice versa when the nation decided change was needed. The Conservatives and Liberals had always been perceived as the British political powerhouses and were seen as the only two viable options for power. However the national political landscape began to alter rapidly and irrevocably as a new political creed emerged to challenge the *status quo* of British national politics. Socialism began to find a foothold within society through appealing to the struggling working class, particularly finding support from semi-skilled workers throughout the nation. Socialist groups, such as the ILP, garnered support through its promises of alleviating the poverty and labour's the working class had

⁷⁷ *Halifax Courier, 22 September 1900.*

faced for so long.⁷⁸ The repeated failures of both Conservatism and Liberalism to answer the needs of the working class had allowed socialist groups such as the ILP to emerge to champion the rights and needs of the British working class. The dawn of the twentieth century saw the British political landscape alter massively as a new Socialist force attempted to thrust itself into the national political picture and challenge the established political set-up. However, for groups such as the ILP to develop into a national force, they first needed to create a local foundation of support to build upon. When John Henry Whitley accepted the Liberal candidacy in 1900, he was not simply facing a straight competition with Liberalism's old foe, the Conservatives, he had the dual challenge of facing a 'Labour candidate on one side and a Conservative on the other' in his first ever electoral contest.⁷⁹ The Liberal party faced a real challenge in the fiercely fought 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Elections. Yet, how were they able to succeed with a political novice such as Whitley being their triumphant candidate? What factors would allow Whitley to succeed? Was it simply down to his local roots and previous work within the town or was it specifically his campaign in 1900 that earned him enough support to become a Liberal M.P. for the first time? Ultimately how did Whitley succeed amidst fierce competition and political upheaval within Halifax politics to succeed in the 1900 election?

There is not one overriding factor that led to Whitley's success in 1900, instead it was a culmination of events that varied from immediate local importance to general national perspectives. Whitley's status as a prominent local figure, though beneficial to his campaign, could not alone elevate him to local political success. An examination of Whitley's success during the 1900 campaign has to take into account his consistent ability to stress the need for Liberal representation in Halifax. Whitley masterfully used the power of his oratory skills to not simply promote Liberalism. He was able to stress why the Liberal creed was the true and correct policy for the not only the people of Halifax but for the nation as a whole. This was best exemplified through his campaign speeches where he was able to articulate to Halifax the need for Liberalism. He also artfully highlighted the flaws and failings

⁷⁸ *Programme of the Independent Labour Party* (Bradford, 1893).

⁷⁹ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 September 1900.

of the Conservative government, with particular importance placed on the Conservatives inability to help the working-man. He emphasised how the Tory Government could in no way 'justify' dragging Britain into war with the Boer states.⁸⁰ Of equal importance, Whitley was also able to separate Liberalism from the emerging Labour movement and convince the Halifax community that it was Liberals that remained the best representative of working-class interests. Whitley was able to achieve this through a shift away from 'Old Liberalism' and becoming a self-described 'radical' Liberal.⁸¹ He valued social reform as a way to better the lives of the struggling working class. His proposals to actively improve the lives of the Halifax community assisted in enhancing his appeal to the Halifax electorate and dispel the idea Liberalism had become alienated from working-class needs. He was able to succeed in the 1900 Halifax election through his ability to highlight how he and Liberalism were still the true champions of the working-class cause, thus keeping the Labour threat to Liberal fortunes at bay. He balanced the neutering of the Socialist political threat with actively and effectively promoting the idea that the current Conservative government had only shown ineptitude and a desire for war-mongering during its time in charge. An examination of how Whitley was able to succeed in his first-ever election in one of the most hotly contested elections ever held in Halifax has to take into account three critical factors. Whitley succeeded in the 1900 Halifax parliamentary election due to the trifecta of his established local reputation, his oratory strength in expressing his Progressive Liberal views and his ability to highlight and successfully denounce the failings of the Conservative government.

In the Halifax Parliamentary by-elections, Whitley was faced with the challenge of competing as effectively one of a possible three candidates for the Progressive vote within Halifax. The fact that Halifax was a dual-constituency meant two seats were available and Whitley found himself competing with a fellow Liberal in Alfred Billson and in conflict with the ILP 'rising star' James

⁸⁰ *Councillor J.H. Whitley on Patriotism*, 7 March 1900, JHW/2/2/14, p.9; 'Representation of Halifax', JHW/2/2/18, p. 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, pp. 3-24.

Parker.⁸² All three candidates represented the party's claiming to be the Progressive force within British politics however only two could succeed in the Halifax elections. How did Whitley stand out from these two individuals and secure the Progressive vote required to succeed in his first ever election?

An initial examination of Alfred Billson's credentials highlights how he entered the 1900 election in a position of relative strength. After the humiliation of the Liberal party losing a Halifax seat in the 1895 election the Liberal Four Hundred turned to Billson to represent Liberal interests in the 1897 Halifax by-election. Billson's rivals in his first Halifax election were, Sir. Savile Crossley, who stood as a Liberal Unionist, and the nationally renowned Socialist Tom Mann, who represented the ILP.⁸³ In the 1897 by-elections, Tom Mann was widely heralded throughout the town and the West Riding by Socialist groups such as the ILP and the Social Democratic Federation (SDF).⁸⁴ Of the three debutants in the Halifax by-election, Mann was easily the most notable character on a national scale. A clear example of Mann's tactics can be seen in his appeal that 'West Riding men if you cannot save yourselves, at least you have ample proof your plutocrats cannot save you.'⁸⁵ Mann's fame combined with his specific research into the region made him appear as a real possibility to achieve the first election success for the ILP. The results however showed this was entirely not the case. The ILP confidence that Mann was the candidate they needed to see them to victory ultimately proved to be misplaced in what was a 'poor showing' for the ILP movement.⁸⁶ Mann's fame did not elevate him towards the success he and the Socialist ILP had hoped for and amidst the ruins and dejection of the Socialist campaign, Liberalism emerged prosperously with Billson

Table 3: 1897 Halifax Parliamentary By-Elections

⁸² Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, pp.189-191; Dawson, *The Halifax Independent Labour Movement* in Layborn, Reynolds, *Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 57.

⁸³ Chris Wrigley, 'Mann, Thomas (1856–1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34854>, accessed 16 June 2014].

⁸⁴ *Labour Leader*, 13 March 1897.

⁸⁵ Mann, *An Appeal to the Yorkshire Textile Workers*, p. 12.

⁸⁶ Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann 1856-1941* (Oxford, 1991) p. 100.

acquiring the most votes.⁸⁷ (Table 3)

Candidate Name	Votes
Alfred Billson (Liberal)	5664
Sir. S. Crossley (Liberal Unionist)	5252
T. Mann (ILP)	2000

With success in the 1897 Halifax By-election and heading towards the 1900 elections, Billson had proven he was bankable candidate by being victorious against formidable Labour opposition that sought to replace the Liberals as the progressive party. Of the Liberal candidates, Billson was the most likely to succeed in 1900 having gained experience as a candidate that had already tasted victory in a Halifax Parliamentary by-election. He had already adequately shown with him fronting a campaign, Liberalism could defeat an ILP movement that had desperately tried to morph itself into being 'a party of practical socialism.'⁸⁸ However, though the Liberal Four Hundred nominated two candidates to run in the 1900 election, only Whitley succeeded. How had he managed to replace the successful Billson in his first attempt? What set Whitley apart and allowed him to be the sole successful Liberal candidate in the 1900 Halifax parliamentary by-election?

The answer would appear to be that, unlike Whitley, Billson was not a local man. He was born in Leicester and became a lawyer in Merseyside before entering politics.⁸⁹ He did not have any local connections or history with the town he wished to represent prior to running as a Halifax candidate in 1897. He had previously and unsuccessful run for Liberal candidacy in Bradford, a fellow West Riding town, and failed whilst coming under intense scrutiny. The Bradford ILP branch, which Tom

⁸⁷ Dawson, *The Halifax Independent Labour Movement* in Laybourn, Reynolds, *Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 53.

⁸⁸ Tsuzuki, *Tom Mann 1856-1941*, p. 101.

⁸⁹ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 189.

Mann, was closely affiliated with, accused Billson of simply being a 'fat, plutocratic lawyer,' and this image would follow him to the 1897 Halifax election as well.⁹⁰ Billson was too reminiscent of the Liberalism Halifax had seen throughout the nineteenth century, a Liberal creed run by old educated men who knew little or nothing of the town they represented. Whitley on the other hand was quite the opposite. He had ties to the local Halifax community, he was a respected local businessman and most crucial of all, he had already 'busied himself in one way and another to render useful work to his native town.'⁹¹

Whitley's personal affiliation with Halifax offers a valuable insight into how he was able to defeat one of his Progressive rivals and fellow Liberal, Alfred Billson, in the 1900 Halifax election. However, the same reasoning cannot be used to explain how Whitley was able to triumph over the ILP candidate, James Parker. Parker was a similar local man wanting to represent the people and place he had grown up in. Parker rose to the challenge of the 1900 election with the full support of the ILP Halifax branch and posed a real threat in whittling away working-class and progressive support the Liberals had banked upon in previous elections. How was Whitley able to secure one of the two seats available whilst competing against a Socialist rival in James Parker? During a time where Liberalism had not been seen to have done enough to help the struggling working class, how was Whitley able to gather support to defeat an ILP champion claiming to represent working class interests?

The other Progressive candidate, Parker, was an 'engineering warehouseman, trade unionist and a leading figure in the Halifax ILP' who was given the task of reviving ILP fortunes within the town after Tom Mann disappointed in the 1897 parliamentary by-elections.⁹² Parker had become renowned for his 'contribution to working-class and industrial organisation'⁹³ and had begun to attract the support

⁹⁰ *BO*, 5 November 1896.

⁹¹ *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900.

⁹² Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 105.

⁹³ Dawson, *The Halifax Independent Labour Movement* in Laybourn, Reynolds, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 57.

of trade unions within Halifax seeking political representation. He represented one of the greatest threats to Liberal success as he was exactly what Liberalism had been accused of excluding. He was a working-class man wanting to offer working-class political representation. Dawson states that 'the working class were rarely allowed to take any leading part in Liberal affairs' and many of the working-class resented this fact. The working class within Halifax began to become disillusioned with Liberalism and started to look towards Labour groups, such as the ILP, to find the solutions to their struggles.⁹⁴ It was this disillusionment that had led to Liberalism losing the 1895 local Halifax elections. However, Whitley believed that the ILP's actions led to 'the return of many Conservatives' and ruined the Liberals campaign to get a Progressive party back in power.⁹⁵ So how did Whitley manage to combat the loss of working-class support to Parker and the ILP's Socialist message to succeed in the 1900 Halifax elections? An analysis of Whitley's success specifically against Parker and the ILP has to stress two key aspects. First, Whitley had the ability to repeatedly highlight and convince the working-class of Halifax of the credentials of the Liberal party when it comes to helping the poor and needy within society. Secondly, Whitley had progressive ideas and policies, which included social reform, which resonated with the voters throughout the town.

The ILP movement that emerged to challenge Whitley and the Liberal party gained support due to the willing audience their Socialist message found within Halifax. Socialist champions such as Ramsay MacDonald promoted the idea that where Conservatism and Liberalism had failed, Socialism had the answers to the issues the working-class faced.⁹⁶ MacDonald, an ILP leader and eventual British Prime Minister, believed that 'from the misery of the people the socialist future will arise.'⁹⁷ Socialist groups had emerged with promises that through them that the working class could alleviate the problems that they faced in British society. Slowly this support-base Liberalism had built itself upon

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 September 1900.

⁹⁶ David Marquand, 'MacDonald, (James) Ramsay (1866–1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34704>, accessed 7 Sept 2014].

⁹⁷ Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism Today* (London, 1909) p. 2.

began to erode. In the 1900 Halifax parliamentary election, Whitley challenged Parker and his Socialist message by highlighting how much Liberalism had already done for the British working-class and argued through voting for him, and not Parker, Liberalism would continue to deliver. During his campaign, Whitley consistently exclaimed to the Halifax community that ‘the Liberal party had given them practically all the benefits they enjoyed as working men.’⁹⁸ He repeatedly put across the idea that the ‘true friend of the... working man had been the Liberal party’ throughout the nineteenth century and it could continue to do so throughout the twentieth century as well.⁹⁹ All through his campaign, Whitley combined touching on classic perceptions of Liberalism, such as ‘the traditions of the great Liberal party, whose principals were ever ennobling,’ with highlighting how it was a Progressive force within British politics.¹⁰⁰ His speech on how he endeavoured to ‘show the continuity between Liberalism of the past and the Liberalism of the future’ is a clear example of how he aimed to combine the Liberal creed of the nineteenth century with a Progressive edge. This union would then be able to deliver the Social reforms the British working-class needed.¹⁰¹ He repeatedly displayed himself as a more Radical Liberal in the sense that he openly admitted he was closer to some of the programmes of the ILP than those of his fellow Liberal candidate.¹⁰² Early signs of his Progressive and Radical edge are best highlighted through his early want to see a Progressive union between Liberalism and Labour.¹⁰³ Ultimately, this worked in Whitley’s favour by simply highlighting how he was a candidate from a more established party who wanted similar reforms as some Socialist rivals. He appeared as the more attractive Progressive candidate simply through the fact he was more likely to succeed. The Liberals had been an ever-present in British politics whilst the ILP were still emerging. Through his effective campaign work in highlighting his united Progressive and Liberal message, Whitley was able to portray himself as an individual who stood by Liberal core beliefs whilst also recognising the need for change using social reform. Whitley was effectively able

⁹⁸ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 September 1900.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Halifax Courier*, 24 September 1900.

¹⁰¹ ‘The Old and the New Liberalism’, 11 February 1899.

¹⁰² ‘Trenchant Speech by Mr. Harry Whitley’, JHW/2/1/44, p.33.

¹⁰³ JHW/2/1/62, p. 61.

to take away Parker's main attraction of promising social reform through stating that Liberalism also stood for those qualities and more.

Even before examining the specific policies that helped Whitley ultimately win the support he needed to succeed, it is important to understand how effective his speeches were that put Liberalism in such a positive light. His compelling oratory skills allowed the working class of Halifax to forget the years of Liberal struggles before 1900 and remember the real Progressive work they had achieved in the past for the British people. Whitley managed to combine an acknowledgment of Liberalism's past with his promises of an even more Progressive future. He made the party an attractive option for voters who were seeking to finally receive the help they needed to alleviate their everyday struggles.

Whitley's success in 1900 can be seen as benefiting greatly from his positive local reputation as well as his ability to highlight the past progress Liberalism had managed in the aim of helping the working-class. These two factors gave him an edge in beating his two rivals for the Progressive vote. However, these factors alone could not grant Whitley success. As with any campaign, it was Whitley's specific policies that would prove the most decisive aspect in whether he would succeed or not. Whitley had to show what he stood for and more importantly what he wanted to implement to help the Halifax community. Analysing Whitley's policies reveals that though he stood by the principles that Liberalism had been built upon, he also revealed a more Radical streak in his pursuit for Social reform that would adhere himself to the Halifax people.¹⁰⁴ His policies also reveal how he was highly opposed to the Conservative government and many of the policies it had adopted. Whitley repeatedly reiterated during the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary election that Liberalism stood for 'peace, retrenchment and reform' and an examination of his policies reveals how he aimed to stand by these traditional Liberal ideals. He also denounced the actions of the Conservative government and pushed for active change to help the struggling working class. These policies and

¹⁰⁴ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 193.

aspects resonated strongly with the Halifax people and were the critical reason that saw him successfully elected.

Whitley's successful campaign in 1900 offers a valuable challenge to a theory put forward by Paul Adelman. He states that the working class did eventually align themselves with Socialistic groups such as the ILP because their views were 'fundamentally working-class in origins, aims and outlook', and he is correct to an extent. The unifying of the working-class needs with groups born from Socialism, seeking the primary goal of working-class political representation does seem inevitable.¹⁰⁵ However, Whitley's success highlights that at the turn of the twentieth century, fundamental Liberal beliefs and policies could still find an audience within the Halifax working-class community. Clear examples of the sort policies that typified previous Liberal campaigns and fundamentally represented 'old' Liberalism were temperance and Whitley's wish to instigate drink reform as well as his wish for Land Reform.¹⁰⁶ David Howell argues that these policies were a 'response was a traditional one' that typified Liberalism and it is true that these policies are perfect examples of the criticism many Liberal campaigns received in being out of touch with the average British citizen.¹⁰⁷ Specifically in the case of drink reform, Whitley was passionate about the problems that arose from it, claiming that '4 out of 5 public-houses in our great towns were superfluous.'¹⁰⁸ Throughout the 1900 campaign, Whitley repeatedly expressed his strong opinion that drink reform was 'an essential part of any real reformation of the life of our great towns' and on a national scale Whitley thoroughly believed that 'unless the state quickly makes up its mind to control it, it is going to control the state.'¹⁰⁹ From this perspective, it would be easy to adopt the notion that Whitley was simply falling into past Liberal habits that had seen it heavily criticised for being out of touch. Speaking simply about the evils of drink to the working-class man would not alleviate his hardship or

¹⁰⁵ Adelman P., *The Rise of the Labour Party*, p.19.

¹⁰⁶ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*; 'The Liberal Programme', JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

¹⁰⁷ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁸ 'The Liberal Programme', JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900.

help his everyday life so why try and drum support for the campaign through this means? What could Whitley hope to achieve through belittling and ridiculing the consumption of alcohol?

Whitley was able to adapt what was seen as a tried and tested Liberal policy and re-shape its relevancy for the Halifax working-class community. He did this through stressing the economics behind drink reform. Whitley did not simply take a moral standpoint towards temperance, he adapted his speeches to take into effect the economic ramifications and the possibility of it helping the majority class within the Halifax community, the working class. Whitley expressed how 'if the amount spent on excessive drinking were turned into proper channels it would bring higher wages to the workman,' immediately uniting Whitley's Liberal morals with an economic positive that could help the working-class.¹¹⁰ Whitley consistently aimed to highlight how Liberal ideology could help society through reform, highlighting the Progressive quality that set him apart from the previous 'old' style incarnations of Liberalism. Leading ILP members such as Ramsay Macdonald held similar beliefs on temperance and the necessity of drink reform, however, it was Whitley's ability to effectively make it relevant to the Halifax community that earned him votes in his 1900 campaign. Through Whitley consistently highlighting the necessity of drink reform, he was able to acquire a valuable group of support in the form of the Halifax Ladies Temperance Society. The Ladies Temperance Society 'decided to recommend the electors of Halifax to support the Liberal candidates, Alfred Billson and J.H. Whitley,' a significant coup in earning further local support for Whitley and the Liberal cause.¹¹¹

In Whitley's 1900 campaign he also spoke openly about his desire for Land Reform as to 'strike off the fetters of the present monopoly on land.'¹¹² Land Reform was again a traditional Liberal principle but he was able to make it as relevant as possible to the working-class audience he sought the support of. Whitley believed that 'land taxation should be based, like the income tax, on a man's

¹¹⁰ 'The Liberal Programme', JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

¹¹¹ Halifax Courier, 24 September 1900.

¹¹² 'The Liberal Programme', JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

own estimate' and through this action it would 'lighten the burdens of every one of the great municipalities.'¹¹³ This keeps in line with Whitley's belief 'that every elector in the borough must look rather to the issue in the country than to the particular issue in Halifax.' However, Whitley consistently highlighted how land reform would affect Halifax as a town, immediately making it more relevant to the local electorate.¹¹⁴ He could be accused of supporting dated Liberalist policies however he artfully was able to make them pertinent and relevant to the working-class majority within Halifax. This helped him garner further support that would eventually see him succeed as the sole Progressive candidate.

Whitley adopted another staunch Liberal policy that paid dividends for his campaign, this being his belief in Home Rule. During a turbulent time for the British Empire due to the Conservative led Boer War effort, the Empire became a hot topic of discussion throughout British politics. 'The adoption of Home Rule' by the Liberal party was not universally accepted by the British nation, not even completely within the Liberal party itself. However, Whitley was a Home Ruler.¹¹⁵ Whitley felt the success of the British Empire had to be based upon 'the freewill of loyal and self-governing communities' as 'the safety and security of their Empire depended on the maximum amount of self-government given to its component parts.'¹¹⁶ This policy did not specifically sway the majority of the Halifax community and for most it was a policy of little relevance or importance. However there was one group in particular that Whitley's Home Rule policy earned large praise and support from, this group being the United Irish League. The Halifax Branch of the United Irish League 'were glad and proud to have... such as staunch friend of Ireland as Mr. Whitley' and they claimed '93 per cent of the Nationalist electors had pulled for Mr. Billson and Mr. Whitley' after the 1900 election.¹¹⁷ Whitley had once again proven adept at earning local group support within Halifax, like he had with

¹¹³ *The Old and the New Liberalism*, 11 February 1899, JHW/2/2/6, p.8; *The Liberal Programme*, JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

¹¹⁴ 'Trenchant Speech by Mr. Harry Whitley', J/H/W 2/1/44, p.33.

¹¹⁵ Alan Sykes, *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism 1776-1988* (London, 1997) p. 128.

¹¹⁶ *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900; 'Representation of Halifax', JHW/2/2/18, p.10.

¹¹⁷ 'United Irish League; Halifax Branch', JHW/2/3/2, p.4.

the Ladies' Temperance League. Whitley was able to show that it was not simply social reform or scathing criticism of the Conservative government that would help his campaign, he demonstrated that at the turn of the twentieth century there was still an active audience willing to support classic Liberal values. Though Whitley was truly able to set himself apart through his Progressive and Radical streak as well as his ability to highlight Conservatism's failures, he did not abandon the principles that Liberalism had been built upon in doing so.

Though Whitley did not stray completely away from core Liberal beliefs, he was a self-pronounced 'Radical because he believed in dealing with the great social and economic questions facing the nation.'¹¹⁸ This more Radical and Progressive side to Whitley can be seen by two policies he advocated for in particular, the abolition of the House of Lords and his belief in Old Age Pensions for the entire nation.

Examining his disdain for the House of Lords first, Whitley was a firm believer that 'as a political institution they had had sufficient proof that it was absolutely useless.'¹¹⁹ Whitley jested that institutions such as the House of Lords made it as hard 'for a poor man to enter Parliament as it was for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'¹²⁰ He demonstrated through his firm view on the complete unnecessaryness of the House of Lords that he was willing to challenge the British political landscape to achieve what he felt the nation needed. Indeed, Whitley spoke throughout his campaign that the House of Lords were the greatest barrier 'obstructing a great and needed amount of reform.'¹²¹ This idea resonated strongly with the Halifax working class community. Whitley showed he was not as elite as the Tories were portrayed nor was he an old Liberal who was more talk than action. His plans and passionate criticisms of the House of Lords helped the average voter within Halifax relate to Whitley in unifying them against a common elitist problem.

¹¹⁸ 'Representation of Halifax', JHW/2/2/18, p.10.

¹¹⁹ *The Old and the New Liberalism*, 11 February 1899, JHW/2/2/6, p.8.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *The Liberal Programme*, JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

Whitley was able to adhere himself further to the Halifax working-class through his conviction that all workers within Britain ought to have a state-funded pension to see them through old age. 'Every worker in old age was entitled to support of his country' was one of the most Progressive social policies to be put forward at the dawn of the twentieth century.¹²² For working-class people to hear that they would be supported in avoiding the poverty so many elderly working class fell into through help from the state was a major draw to the Liberal, and specifically Whitley's, cause. Whitley championed old-age pensions throughout his campaign and it was one of his key social reforms. Whitley's drive to promote disdain for the House of Lords and the adoption of old-age pension policy went perfectly together with his brutal criticism of the Conservative government he perceived had let the nation down. Throughout the 1900 election campaign, Whitley balanced supporting his own policies with slashing away at the Conservative government's reputation. Analysing specific policies and actions that Whitley condemned is crucial in understanding how Whitley and Liberalism were able to compete so closely with a Conservative government hoping to ride a wave of patriotic support back into power due to the Boer War.

Throughout the 1900 campaign, Whitley consistently scorned the Conservative government by drawing focus on its failings to the people it was supposed to serve. Whitley consistently remarked that under that the Conservative government, none of its promises to alleviate the burdens that British society faced came to fruition. When the Conservative government came 'into power with a flourish of trumpets' it had claimed it would instigate widespread social reforms to help 'the down trodden, the distressed and the poor.'¹²³ He mocked how the government had actually only delivered 'blunder and bluster' amidst its time in charge.¹²⁴ The lack of social reform throughout the Conservative time in charge was an aspect Whitley would repeatedly pick upon in an attempt to sway the electorate of Halifax into voting for him, as he proclaimed Liberalism was the true friend of the working-class. Whitley remarked throughout his campaign that he found 'Toryism a good deal to

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ 'Liberal Gathering in the Drill Hall', JHW/2/2/24, pp.26-30.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

slow' in delivering the change Britain truly needed.¹²⁵ His campaign was based upon earning the votes of the Halifax electorate through revealing to them what Liberalism could achieve for the community if they returned both Billson and himself. The working class of Halifax, as well as the rest of the nation, sought an improved standard of living that Conservatism had failed to deliver by 1900. However, Whitley's campaign in the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary elections was not simply based on attacking and highlighting the Conservative party failings to achieve any serious social change. Whitley also pin pointed an area that was seen as the foundation for the Conservatives campaign during the 1900 election, this area being the Boer War and the patriotic support that had developed throughout Britain at the time.

The 1900 election was directly influenced by the Boer War, its impact highlighted clearly through the election being branded a 'khaki' election. A 'khaki' election is defined by Cynthia H. Enloe as favouring the 'party or candidate most enthusiastic about war waging or most intimately associated in voters' minds with the art of war,' and this idea is clearly a strategy the Conservative party hoped would see them successful in the 1900 general election.¹²⁶ The Conservatives had led Britain into the Boer War in 1899 and expected a quick and resounding victory against a population of roughly 200,000, the majority of the figure being made up of farmers.¹²⁷ Britain was at the height of its imperialistic powers, its Empire covering nearly a third of the world; the small Boer resistance was widely expected to be crushed swiftly.¹²⁸ The Conservative called for a General Election in 1900 in the hope of using the patriotism that had been built through the war effort to sweep themselves back into power. The 'party's vision of a Conservative-voting imperial metropolis,' however, backfired to a degree as Keith Laybourn argues the 'Boer War highlighted the problems at home.'¹²⁹ Though the Boer War may have stirred imperialistic pride within the British nation, the revelation

¹²⁵ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

¹²⁶ Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (California, 2000) p.6.

¹²⁷ Andrew Porter, 'The South African War and the Historians', *African Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 397, 2000, pp.633-648, p.635.

¹²⁸ 'The British Empire in 1901', <http://www.atlasofbriempire.com/uploads/1901.GIF> (Accessed 20/08/2014)

¹²⁹ Alex Windschaffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London 1868-1906* (London, 2007) p. 30; Keith Laybourn, *Social Conditions and Community 1860-1920* (Thrupp, 1997) p. 31.

that many potential recruits for the war effort were rejected due to poor health leads Laybourn to argue that attention became 'firmly focused on problems of poverty and deprivation in cities and towns.'¹³⁰ The war did not simply create patriotic pride for the Conservative party, it also shed light on many of its social failings for the British people.

The Liberal party's aim within Halifax was to undermine the Tories position through contrasting their pro-Boer War message with the breadth of social change that could be achieved if the Liberal party succeeded. To achieve this, Whitley emphasised how 'the Tories at their meetings have talked of war and nothing but the war' whilst also throwing 'a lurid light upon the defiance of the Tory Government in regard of social reform.'¹³¹ He aimed to offer to the people of Halifax a sharp contrast between what they were voting for. He aimed to portray a Tory vote as representing an empty vote in support for an unjust war whilst a Liberal vote represented a vote for social reform that could directly impact the lives of the struggling working class of Halifax. Whitley wished to paint a picture to the electorate of Halifax that Liberalism promised pensions, Home Rule, Land Reform and much more, ideas that would directly change Britain for the better. Conversely, he put forward the idea that the Conservative party were simply war-mongering. His scathing attack on the Conservative message throughout the 1900 campaign was an effective tactic in highlighting the distinction between the Conservative party and what he and the Liberal party promised to do for the people. Andrew Porter argues that 'many Liberals followed the example of their Conservative rivals in trying where possible to avoid the war issue. However Whitley would prove successful in his first ever Halifax Parliamentary contest because of his exact opposite approach.'¹³² The support Whitley received from the Halifax Branch of the United Irish League can be seen as solidified through a combination of his outspoken belief in Home Rule but also his pro-Boer stance. To many supporters of Irish Home Rule, they also saw in the 'Transvaal a fellow victim of British oppression' which only

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ *Halifax Courier*, 29 September 1900.

¹³² Andrew Porter, 'The South African War and Imperial Britain' in Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, Mary-Lynn Suttie, *Writing a Wider War Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War* (Chicago, 2002) p.292.

drew them closer to Whitley and his Liberal cause through his well-documented disdain for the Conservatives pro-war approach.¹³³ Whitley freely and consistently exclaimed his opposition to the war throughout his campaign to garner votes and directly oppose the Tory's priority, pro-war message for their campaign. The strength of Whitley's anti-Boer War stance as well as the effectiveness of his and Liberalism's overall offensive campaign against the Conservative party, can be seen when analysing the voting within Halifax in finer detail.

On the topic of the Boer War, Whitley held an entirely negative perspective and he repeatedly used the Boer War as an aspect to effectively criticise the Conservative party with throughout his 1900 campaign. In particular, he stated that in his eyes the Tories could not 'justify the war' as he firmly believed 'the empire should be an empire of free people.'¹³⁴ Whitley deployed a tactic throughout his campaign of lamenting the unjust and mishandled Boer War whilst also highlighting that the war effort was the Conservatives prime and only talking point throughout the election. The Conservative candidate in Halifax, Sir Savile Crossley, was not even present for the majority of the election as he was performing his military duty in Rhodesia.¹³⁵ The Conservatives main theme nationally, as well as locally within Halifax, was promoting the war effort and urging the nation to 'respond patriotically' to a war the Tories had ultimately led Britain into.¹³⁶ The Conservatives within Halifax even went as far to invite Frank Whiteley, an ex-mayor of Mafeking in South Africa, to Halifax to exclaim the sense of 'joy and jubilation and relief on the advent of a Conservative government' within South Africa. Whiteley was clearly invited to promote the Conservative government's policies regarding South Africa and Whitley commented on how 'it was sad thing to see Mr Whiteley... come out as a Tory hack.'¹³⁷ The prioritisation of advocating a pro-war and patriotic message by the Conservative party is clearly exemplified on the day of opening day of voting within Halifax. The Conservative banners within the town were emblazoned with slogans such as 'plump for Crossley, the patriot', 'Vote for

¹³³ Sykes, *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism*, p. 137.

¹³⁴ 'Representation of Halifax', JHW/2/2/18, p.10.

¹³⁵ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 18 September 1900.

¹³⁶ *Halifax Guardian*, 26 September 1900.

¹³⁷ *Halifax Guardian*, 29 September 1900.

Crossley, the soldier at the front' and 'Vote for Crossley and a firm and just settlement in South Africa.'¹³⁸ The primary message of the Tories during the campaign was essentially to convey the idea that it was the communities' patriotic duty to support the war effort. Conservatism aimed to create the comparison that belief in the glory of the British Empire equated to a vote for the Conservative party. What better way to show your support for the great British Empire than by voting for Crossley, a genuine officer placing his life on the line to fight for the Queen and country? The overall strength of Whitley's anti-Boer War stance as well as the effectiveness of his and Liberalism's campaign against the Conservative party, can be seen when analysing the voting within Halifax.

An examination of the voting patterns within elections offers a valuable insight into possible factors that swayed public opinion and can explain why certain individuals failed or succeeded. Examining the votes cast in the Halifax Parliamentary Election of 1900, it reveals a tight race run by four competitive candidates with Crossley being able to ride a patriotic wave of support for the Boer War to earn top place within Halifax and Whitley coming a close second.¹³⁹(Table 4)

Table 4: 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Election

Electoral Candidates	Votes Cast
Sir Savile Crossley (Conservative)	5931
John H. Whitley (Liberal)	5543
Andrew Billson (Liberal)	5325

¹³⁸ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

¹³⁹ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

James Parker (ILP)	3276
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These statistics show the levels of success each candidate achieved during the election with Crossley being returned as the overall winner. However these statistics alone do not reveal a detailed insight into the voting patterns that emerged within Halifax. As Halifax was a dual-constituency, every eligible voter within the community were able to plump for a single candidate or split their vote and support two candidates. Table 4 reveals the ultimate success for each candidate but it is necessary to examine which candidates received single votes or split support. Through an analysis of these votes, an insight can be made into reasons why the Halifax community voted for or against Whitley as well as why he was ultimately able to triumph in being elected in his first ever local election.¹⁴⁰

(Table 5)

Electoral Candidate	Plumper Votes Cast

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Sir Savile Crossley	4212
James Parker	1404
Andrew Billson	77
John H. Whitley	42

Table 5: Plumper votes for each candidate in the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Election

Examining the plumper votes from the 1900 election reveals that Whitley actually achieved the least number of votes of any of the four candidates that were solely for himself. The Conservative candidate Crossley earned an astounding hundred times more plumper votes than Whitley, the gulf being over four thousand more votes. This can be seen as a direct result of using the Boer War as a patriotic lightning rod to attract votes to the Conservative cause. Crossley and the Conservative party sought to establish themselves as the leading party within Halifax politics, actively pursuing a campaign of ‘plumping’ for Crossley. Slogans such as ‘Plump for Crossley, the Patriot’ and ‘Plump for Crossley and a United Empire’ are clear indications that the Conservative party did not want voters to support one of the Progressive parties contesting the Halifax election.¹⁴¹ The Liberal party were dependent on earning split votes from constituents within Halifax in the hope of returning two Liberal M.Ps., thus completely removing the Conservatives from local power. The Conservatives campaigned enthusiastically for voters to plump for Crossley as a split vote for Crossley and a Liberal candidate could ultimately see both Liberal candidates triumph in the Halifax local election, with the Conservatives losing out entirely. The drive from the Halifax Conservative branch to advocate a policy for voters to solely plump for Crossley and his pro-Boer War message can be seen as the main reason Whitley came up short, instead coming second in the election.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

James Parker was also able to attain a considerable number of plumper votes, highlighting the growing threat the ILP movement posed as a new Progressive movement that could eat away at the working-class Liberal support. It also drastically highlights that there were a growing number within the Halifax community that felt Liberalism simply did not have the answers to their problems and instead they sought true working-class political representation. The number of plumper votes for Parker was a clear indication that there was growing group within Halifax community that were disillusioned with Liberalism and its previous attempts to help the struggling working-class. The 'pressure for social and civil equality' that Liberalism had promised for so long yet had not achieved throughout the nineteenth century meant that many began to turn to new movements such as the ILP in the hope they could deliver answers instead.¹⁴² Parker's plumper success highlights the growing Liberal-Labour schism emerging in working-class ranks on who to vote for. The ILP's drive for its supporters to not split their votes with the Liberals was successful to a degree. Plumping for the ILP gave the party the best chance of success as it solely strengthened their position and did not strengthen both Progressive parties. Parker and the ILP emerged in 1900 as a real problem for the Halifax Liberal party as they began to clearly erode the working-class support the Liberal party had based itself upon.

The Conservative party and ILP both achieved far more plumper votes than the Liberal party in the 1900 Halifax election due to the fact that both parties only put forward one political candidate within Halifax. This was in heavy contrast to the Liberal party who instead relied upon split voting to see their two candidates to success.¹⁴³(Table 6)

Electoral Candidates	Split Votes Cast

¹⁴² Kenneth O. Morgan, 'New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour: The Welsh Experience 1885-1929' in Brown, *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, p. 159.

¹⁴³ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

Billson and Whitley	4869
Billson and Crossley	158
Billson and Parker	221
Crossley and Parker	1290
Crossley and Whitley	271
Whitley and Parker	361

**Table 6: Split Votes Cast in 1900
Halifax Parliamentary Election**

The Liberal party proved successful in campaigning for Progressives to use their split votes, earning close to five thousand votes for both Whitley and Billson. The lack of plumper votes for both Liberal candidates can be seen as more than made up for by the Liberals party's attempt to use the dual-constituency set-up of Halifax to its advantage. Whitley commented that the 'great danger lies in split voting' for Liberal fortunes, if its supporters shared their vote with the Conservatives or the ILP, the Liberal cause could fail within Halifax.¹⁴⁴ Conversely, if Halifax emerged in force with split voting in favour of the Liberal candidates, the party had the best chance to set a Liberal domination of local Halifax politics. The Liberals campaign to put forward 'two honest, genuine, good Liberals' as candidates within Halifax was completely based on using the split voting system to achieve unequivocal success in the election.¹⁴⁵ Liberalism was ultimately unable to achieve this success as they could not match the patriotic sweep the Conservatives and Crossley used from the Boer War to triumph within Halifax, as well as nationally. However, how was Whitley able to put up a strong contest and gain second place in his first ever contest?

¹⁴⁴ *Halifax Courier*, 29 September 1900.

¹⁴⁵ *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 September 1900.

Whitley and Billson both acquired roughly five thousand votes from the Liberal supporters within Halifax, a figure which put them in direct contention for success within the election. Though what factors led to Whitley earning more votes than Billson from other split voters and therefore earn election within Halifax? Various factors played a role in this outcome but the most prominent has to be Whitley's local connections throughout Halifax. David Howell has put forward the idea that 'the local record of the candidate' proved to play huge role in the outcome of the 1900 election and Whitley's success supports this notion.¹⁴⁶ Whitley earned more split votes from the a section of the electorate who had also voted for the Conservative or Labour party's than Billson and it was these votes that allowed Whitley to beat him to second place.¹⁴⁷ Howell's view is also supported through Parker's strong showing in the Halifax 1900 election, his local roots combined with the ILP's improved political position earned them more votes than the previous ILP candidate, the renowned Tom Mann.¹⁴⁸ Whitley's strong ties to the Halifax community and previous work as town councillor still remained prevalent to the people of Halifax, they knew he truly had their interests at heart. For split voters who also wished to vote for a Liberal, though Billson and Whitley promoted similar themes throughout their campaigns, Whitley's local prominence was highly beneficial in swaying split voters to vote for him instead of Billson. Local support would prove invaluable in allowing Whitley to succeed in the Halifax local elections however this was not the only factor that would allow him to succeed in 1900. Though the idea of 'local support for a local man' does hold credence and is well supported, it is not the only reason Whitley was successful in earning enough split votes to triumph within Halifax. Whitley's campaign also played a large part in his success, his policies and speeches endeared himself to the community as well as playing a decisive role in winning more Labour split votes than Billson.

¹⁴⁶ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 197; Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

¹⁴⁸ Chris Wrigley, 'Mann, Thomas (1856–1941)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34854>, accessed 26 Aug 2014].

Throughout his campaign Whitley had spoken of the vast social reform he wished to implement and he portrayed himself as more of a Radical than a contemporary Liberal.¹⁴⁹ Through Whitley's speeches, he was able to portray himself as representing and believing in a more active 'new' Liberalism, as defined by P. F. Clarke, which would pursue the social reform the working-class people demanded.¹⁵⁰ Whitley's claims that 'sometimes he thought the Liberal party was not quick enough for him' and similar messages opened up the idea to the community that if they truly sought social reform and swift change to the problems they faced, Whitley may be the best option rather than the ILP.¹⁵¹ Whitley had ably portrayed himself as the best option for Progressive reform. He had shown he was not in the traditional Liberal mould that had failed the working class throughout the nineteenth century. Instead he portrayed himself as a Liberal of action and nerve with a genuine interest in helping his fellow Halifax people improve their standards of living. Though he still stood by traditional Liberal principles, his ability to show he was 'immersed in the social issues of the day' earned Whitley valuable split votes that would lead to his success.¹⁵²

Another aspect that helped Whitley earn support from sections of the electorate willing to use their split vote for Liberalism and Labour was his message that the ILP did not have a realistic chance of attaining success in the 1900 Halifax elections. Whitley consistently commented that Halifax's choice within the election was clear, 'were they going to send to Westminster one Liberal and one Tory or two Liberals.'¹⁵³ ILP supporters had to consistently proclaim that electors 'had to get the nonsense out of their heads that Parker had no chance of gaining a seat,' thus vast majority of the ILP support plumped solely by their candidate.¹⁵⁴ This is best highlighted by the impressive amount of plumper votes for the ILP.¹⁵⁵ However, Whitley's words can be seen as having an impact, though not monumental, on the voting in the election. He effectively cast doubt into the minds of Progressive

¹⁴⁹ 'Trenchant Speech by Mr. Harry Whitley', JHW/2/1/44, p. 33.

¹⁵⁰ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, pp. 6-20.

¹⁵¹ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

¹⁵² Freedon, *The New Liberalism*, p. 1.

¹⁵³ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

voters as to how effective could a vote for the ILP truly be. His repeated claims that they stood no real chance attempted to convince voters that plumping for the ILP would eventually prove to be a wasted vote. The Halifax community, as well as the working-class throughout the nation, sought an alleviation of their problems as soon as possible. Could they really justify not exercising a split vote for both Progressive party's to help them in ease their struggle? Whitley's campaign effectively positioned himself in the eyes of the Halifax community as the next best option to genuine working-class representation. He portrayed himself as a Liberal dedicated to organising effective social change. Combining this image with his ability to cast doubt of over how realistic the idea of the ILP triumphing was, led to many voters exercising their right to a split vote and earned him the necessary support to elevate himself into second place.

It is interesting to note that the second highest split votes were shared between two highly unlikely partners, Crossley the Conservative candidate and Parker the candidate of the ILP. The ILP and Conservatives principles could not have been much further apart however they received over a thousand split votes within Halifax.¹⁵⁶ There are a various reasons for why this may have occurred however one of the most compelling is put forward by Richard Price.¹⁵⁷ Price argues that 'the war attracted significant support from the working-classes who were largely supportive of aggressive imperial policies' and an examination of the split votes supports this theory. Through splitting their vote, the working-class electorate would be able to support the social reforms demanded by the ILP as well as the Conservative's pro-Boer War message.¹⁵⁸ However, alternative political motives can also explain the large quantity of split votes between the unlikely partners. The split in votes is most likely due to a combination of working-class support for the war effort and political manoeuvrings from Conservatives and Labour supporters. Patricia Dawson supports the idea that the reason Crossley and Parker shared so many split votes was due to the fact many Labour supporters voted

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class* (London, 1972).

¹⁵⁸ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 110.

for 'passing Imperialism out of personal spite' against their Progressive rivals.¹⁵⁹ This theory does hold credence when one takes into account the severe friction caused between the Liberal and Labour movements as they contested for the working-class votes each needed for victory in the election.

The Conservatives could have also played a strong role in advocating for their supporters to not split their votes with either Liberal candidate. As previously mentioned, Whitley commented that split voting needed to be avoided 'like the plague' by the Liberals to ensure their candidates would receive enough votes to challenge for available seats.¹⁶⁰ Though Conservatives hoped most voters would plump for Crossley, urging those determined to split their vote to use it for Labour would prove highly detrimental to the Liberal cause. The further Labour was able to erode Liberal Progressive and working-class support, the weaker the overall Liberal challenge would be to the Conservative dominance. Liberalism and Labour were already challenging each other and urged their voters to not vote for their Progressive rivals. However, of the two parties, Liberalism were the established threat to the Tories whilst the ILP was still a developing force. It would make sense to support the smaller foe in Labour and therefore weaken the Liberal party for the overall benefit of Crossley and the Conservative party within Halifax.

There can be no doubt that Whitley's triumph in the 1900 Halifax election was a major success for him personally and as well as a moderate victory for the Liberal party. Against the growing tide of Conservative triumph in Britain, Whitley's first-time success in Halifax gave the Liberals a much needed boost.¹⁶¹ The Liberal party may have failed in its attempt to return two Liberal candidates, however it can be relieved that it had even managed to return one candidate amidst the impressive performance of Parker and the ILP. Whitley's first ever contest was much tighter than many had

¹⁵⁹ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁰ *Halifax Courier*, 29 September 1900.

¹⁶¹ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 56.

predicted; he offered a real challenge to a Conservative party attempting to ride a patriotic wave to success on local and national level. The Conservatives stood by one aspect throughout their entire campaign, this aspect being the adoption and proclamation of a pro-Boer War stance. Crossley was perfectly suited to represent the Conservatives pro-Boer War policy due to his role as an army officer and it proved effective in attaining the necessary support to see Crossley return as a Halifax M.P.

In contrast to Crossley, Whitley did not simply stand by one notion throughout his electoral campaign nor did he rely on his profession to see him succeed. He showed that though he stood as a Liberal candidate and maintained their core beliefs, he was not a puppet who followed party policies in all matters. He consistently exclaimed his desire for social reform and his willingness to see Liberalism adapt to meet the demands of a working class yearning for an improved way of life. Throughout his campaign, Whitley displayed the sort of attitude that fitted into the premonition that the 'future Liberal party will be Radical' rather than the traditional mind-set that had prevailed within Liberalism throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁶² Whitley was also crucially able to combine this refreshed and active Liberal ideology with his firm and established local roots within Halifax. The local electorate may have felt that a vote for Whitley was a vote for a better Halifax, not just a better Liberalism. Whitley was not a political mercenary who would simply go to Westminster after his success and forget about his constituents. He had a family, a business and more importantly a life that was tied with Halifax. Whitley's more Progressive and Radical Liberal principles spoke a message that many within the struggling working class of Halifax had hoped to hear. He combined this appealing message with the critical factor of himself being part of Halifax. Combining these two aspects led Whitley to triumph in his first electoral campaign.

The Halifax Parliamentary Election in 1900 re-established Liberalism within Halifax but it also equally revealed the growing strength of the ILP within Halifax. Though Parker came last, the ILP exceeded

¹⁶² Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 5.

local expectations after their previously dismal showing in the 1897 Parliamentary By-Elections. Parker was proud that the 'ILP had never fought a better fight and they had never fought against bigger odds' and it highlighted that working-class political representation was not simply a dream but it could one day be a reality.¹⁶³ The Conservative government remained yet it now had two movements in the Liberalism and Labour that sought to usurp the Tories in the name of Progressivism. The 1900 General Election set up a dilemma for Halifax Liberalism as it now had to devise a strategy that could combat a growing threat in the ILP whilst at simultaneously removing the Conservatives after a decade in power. However, in Whitley the Liberals now had a new champion to the face their next political challenge. The 1900 election elevated Whitley from a local figure into a career within national politics, a career that would eventually span nearly three decades. After Whitley's first success, there would be no looking back for the local M.P. who was held with 'the highest respect and esteem.'¹⁶⁴

Chapter Five:

The Pact

¹⁶³ 'Councillor Parker and the Poll', JHW/2/3/3, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Halifax Courier*, 22 September 1900.

*'All the forces in this country that were progressive must be united.'*¹⁶⁵

John Henry Whitley, 4 January 1906

The 1900 Halifax General Election did not go as planned for the Liberal Four Hundred. However it has to be viewed as an unequivocal success for Whitley. Whitley had fought off the challenge of the expanding and blooming ILP movement within the town, fronted by James Parker, as well as surpassing the previously elected Liberal candidate, Andrew Billson. From a personal perspective, Whitley had achieved all that could he could have hoped for in the 1900 election and took up his new position as a Halifax M.P. 'which he hoped he should be able to carry out with honour.'¹⁶⁶

Whitley had managed to elevate himself and the Halifax Liberalism into a position of power in 1900. However his new task was to ensure that they remained there amidst the ever growing challenge of the Labour movement within the town. Whitley's political position would next be under threat in the 1906 Halifax Parliamentary Election. He no longer had to campaign that he was a worthy candidate to enter local and national politics, he had already achieved that success in the 1900 Halifax election. Conversely, Whitley now had to prove that he and the Liberal party remained Halifax's best option as political representation and that Liberalism still held the answers to the problems of the Halifax community.

The national political landscape within Britain did not change dramatically between 1900 and 1906 in the sense that the challenge to Liberal success still came from the Conservative and Labour parties. The Tory success in the 'khaki' election of 1900 had seen the Conservatives maintain a ruling government for a decade before their political resignation in 1905.¹⁶⁷ However, this decade of Conservatism was ridiculed immensely by the Progressive parties, with the predominant question

¹⁶⁵ *John Henry Whitley, 4 January 1906, JHW/2/5/13, p.8.*

¹⁶⁶ *Halifax Courier, 6 October 1900.*

¹⁶⁷ *Windschaffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 30.*

being what had the Conservative Government truly achieved in this lengthy term in power? What had the Tory Government done to answer the problems the British working-class had toiled under?

The Liberal party followed the approach of highlighting the ineptitude of Conservatism in answering the problems of the people in the 1900 campaign yet it was to no avail. The 1900 campaign had also revealed that the emerging Labour movements were a genuine threat to Liberalism's established position as the leading Progressive party within national politics. Parker had performed far better than expected and had earned a significant number of working-class votes that were a critical base of Liberal support. No longer could the Liberal Party ignore the growing Labour movement within Britain, groups such as the ILP had stood as opposition to Liberalism in the battle for the Progressive vote long enough. Indeed, the Liberal party instead adopted a new approach in dealing with the Labour movement that sought to promote harmony and collaboration between Liberalism and Labour. The previous confrontation between Liberals and Labour within the political arena was replaced by a 'Liberal-Labour alliance at the election of 1906' forged by Ramsey Macdonald and Herbert Gladstone in 1903.¹⁶⁸ This shift in stance between the parties, that had begun to emerge as early as 1903, would prove to be a critical factor throughout Whitley's 1906 campaign. The Liberals evolved from their return 'two Liberals' campaign of 1900 into a joint endeavour with the ILP to see 'the forces of Progress' unite and succeed within Halifax.¹⁶⁹ However, though Labour and Liberalism were now aligned during 1906, both parties maintained their core opposing values so how did they make it work? Whitley had repeatedly acknowledged that he held views that were deemed more Radical within traditional Liberalism, particularly in the area of social reform. Yet was this idea enough to allow a partnership with the ILP candidate James Parker to flourish? Any examination of Whitley's campaign successful 1906 campaign that saw him re-elected as a M.P. within Halifax has to attempt to answer two questions. How much did the Liberal-Labour pact impact Whitley's campaign

¹⁶⁸ David Powell, 'The New Liberalism and the Rise of Labour, 1886-1906', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1986, pp. 369-393, p. 370; H. C. G. Matthew, 'Gladstone, Herbert John, Viscount Gladstone (1854-1930)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33417>, accessed 24 Sept 2014]

¹⁶⁹ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900; 'Liberals Rejoice', 15 Jan 1906, JHW/2/5/22, p. 19.

in 1906? Secondly, to what degree did this union help Whitley and the Liberal party succeed in maintaining his position as a Halifax M.P.?

Whitley was able to succeed in the 1906 Halifax Parliamentary Elections through a combination of factors, though two stand out. Whitley was able to profit 'from the rising local unpopularity of Tory domestic and foreign policies' such as the 1902 Education Bill, the concern over Chinese Labour and the issue most relevant to the 1906 election, the Tories backing for tariff reform.¹⁷⁰ This growing sense of resentment toward Conservative policies opened up the opportunity for Whitley to artfully promote his Liberal ideals as an alternative to the Tory failings. This is best exemplified through his claims that the Tories had 'wilfully betrayed the interests of the people in all their legislation.'¹⁷¹ Secondly, the Liberal-Labour alliance that emerged in 1903, and carried into 1906, was incredibly beneficial for Whitley and the Liberal party as it united the Progressive vote within Halifax. This Progressive unity allowed the Liberal party and ILP to effectively use split voting to power Whitley and Parker to success. The combination of Whitley's masterful ability to highlight and belittle the Tory's policies whilst promoting his Liberal ideology as well as the Progressive pact that emerged within Halifax were decisive factors that saw him successfully returned in the 1906 Halifax parliamentary elections.

The General Election of 1906 witnessed one of the greatest 'Conservative catastrophes' in the voting polls, losing to an overall Liberal landslide of support.¹⁷² Ian Packer argues that though the Conservative 'government's defeat in the next election was widely predicted,' the scale of the defeat was wildly unprecedented.¹⁷³ The Tories were 'reduced to a pitiful 157 MPs.'¹⁷⁴ Leading into the 1906 election, Halifax was represented by the Conservative candidate Sir. Savile Crossley, who polled

¹⁷⁰ Dawson, P., 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 61.

¹⁷¹ 'Halifax Contest Opens', 3 January 1906, JHW/2/5/12, p.7.

¹⁷² Ian Packer, 'The great Liberal landslide: the 1906 general election in perspective', *Historian*, No. 89, 2006, pp. 8-16, p. 9.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

the highest number of votes in the 1900 Halifax elections.¹⁷⁵ However, Crossley faced a mighty fall from grace within Halifax, which like many other constituencies throughout the nation, did not support Conservative candidates in the 1906 elections. What had led to this sharp drop in Conservative fortunes? How had a party that had been swept to a resounding majority in the 1900 elections been knocked to the floor so harshly six years later? And lastly how did these factors assist Whitley and the Liberal party in successfully being returned in the 1906 Halifax Parliamentary Election?

Examining the fall of Conservatism on a local and national scale, one has to look no further than the growing national resentment towards Tory policies. Instead of delivering the social reform so many of the working-class craved, Tories promoted unpopular policies that largely hurt the pocket of the tax-payer. A clear example of one of policies that undermined public confidence in the Tory government was the 'deeply reactionary piece of legislation' put forward in the 1902 Education Bill.¹⁷⁶

The 1902 Education Bill aimed to 'assert central control over elementary education' and by doing so, 'dismantle the popular schooling system developed by the school boards that had been created by the 1870 education act.'¹⁷⁷ The Education Bill removed the local school boards that had overseen 'several major improvements in the education offered to the urban population,' instead centralised, government-funded Local Education Authorities (LEA's) were established as replacements.¹⁷⁸ However the major short-term effects of the 1902 Education Bill lay in the promotion of church schools and grammar schools, whose maintenance would be at the tax-payers cost. No matter what religion a person believed in, each individual had to pay a further tax that was set by the LEA in the area to cover the cost of running Catholic schools. The Liberal party, as well as the ILP and the

¹⁷⁵ *Halifax Courier*, 6 October 1900.

¹⁷⁶ Kevin Manton, 'The 1902 Education Act', *History Today*, Vol. 52, No. 12, 2002, pp. 18-19, p. 18.

¹⁷⁷ Dawson, P., 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 61.; Manton, K., 'The 1902 Education Act', *History Today*, Vol. 52, No. 12, 2002, pp. 18-19, p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

majority of British of society, saw how grossly unfair it was for a 'citizen to pay for the teaching of religious doctrines with which he did not agree' for voluntary schools their children did not attend.¹⁷⁹

Through the 1902 Education Bill it brought about new rates to fund 'non-provided, denominational schools,' though control over these schools would still remain with the Catholic Church.¹⁸⁰ The added burden of a further tax to fund voluntary Catholic schools their own children did not attend infuriated many areas of British society. The working-class in particular were infuriated as they could not afford to send their own children to such schools yet still had to fund them. The Liberal party were staunch opposition to the Education Bill and Whitley was able to effectively portray himself as champion for the anti-Education Bill cause.

Whitley proclaimed to his constituents throughout 1902 that he 'had been doing all he had in his power... to defeat the Government's Education Bill.'¹⁸¹ For Whitley and the Liberal party as a whole, the idea that 'the Anglicans, who held the majority of voluntary schools, would be able to utilise public money to keep their doctrinaire-dominated institutions' was outrageous and wholly unacceptable.¹⁸² Whitley pointed out that 'the Bill was a final effort to place the whole cost of these church schools on the public funds whilst at the same time retaining the present management and the private appointment of teachers.'¹⁸³ It also brought secondary schools into LEA funding. Whitley consistently attacked the idea that these schools could be publically funded yet still remain their exclusivity. He saw it as being ludicrous and he promoted the idea that, unlike the Conservatives, the Liberal party sought 'a real national education system open and free to all.'¹⁸⁴ Whitley's fervent campaigning against the Education Bill led to him winning the support of disgruntled middle and working class Nonconformists who rejected the idea of paying a further rate. A clear example of the

¹⁷⁹ Frank Sellens, '1902 act sparked object lesson in passive dissent: Education bill regarded as unfair measure to finance clergy', *The Kent and Sussex Courier*, 24 January 2014.

¹⁸⁰ Wendy Robinson, 'Historiographical Reflections on the 1902 Education Act', *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 28, No.2, 2002, pp. 159-172, p. 163.

¹⁸¹ 'The Education Bill', 13 September 1902, JHW/2/4/24, p. 23.

¹⁸² Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 61.

¹⁸³ 'The Education Bill', 13 September 1902, JHW/2/4/24, p. 23.

¹⁸⁴ 'The Education Bill', 20 September 1902, JHW/2/4/26, pp. 24-25, p. 25.

Halifax community uniting to deplore the Education Bill was the strong attendance shown at a demonstration within the towns Victoria Hall, organised by the Liberal Association.¹⁸⁵ The Victoria Hall was 'crowded' with remonstrators from the Halifax community that aligned with the Liberal anti-Education Bill message, earning Whitley and the Liberals valuable support that they would then carry into the 1906 Halifax election.¹⁸⁶

It also won Whitley support from local groups such as the Halifax Free Church Council who resented the government getting involved with the schools run by the Church. Though the government may have helped these schools acquire public funding, 'as Free Churchmen they sought no recognition from the State' and believed religion was 'purest and best when it was freest.'¹⁸⁷ Whitley's indignation towards the Educational Bill and his belief that religious voluntary schools should not receive State help was exactly what the Halifax Free Church Council sought. This earned him and the Liberal party further votes in the 1906 Halifax election.

The Education Bill had a massively damaging effect on Conservative popularity in 1902 and it remained with them going into the 1906 election. However, particularly within Halifax, the ramifications of the Education Bill allowed Whitley to begin to lay foundations for the 1906 election to defeat Crossley. Whitley was able to openly draw support towards his and the Liberal cause through his open resentment and fight against the Education Bill. The Halifax community were already well aware of Whitley's devotion to youth, more specifically their education, through his earlier work as town councillor establishing evening classes.¹⁸⁸ Whitley was already a locally-established champion for education within Halifax, his past work lending credence to the idea that when Whitley fought against the Education Bill, he did not do so simply for votes but because he truly believed it was wrong. Conservative support filtered towards Whitley due to the communities shared resentment for the deplorable Education Bill. Patricia Dawson's acknowledgment that

¹⁸⁵ *Against the Bill*, 14 October 1902, JHW/2/4/35, pp. 30-31, p. 31.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ 'Free Churchmen Determined', JHW/2/5/19, p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ 'Clifton College Camp', JHW/2/1/25, p. 14.

'Liberals voted 'almost to a man' against the measures' is correct yet this alone did not mean that Liberal candidates would be able to win in their constituencies.¹⁸⁹ However, Whitley's crusade against the Education Bill was given added weight due to the successful educational work he had already instigated within Halifax. The community knew that they could trust such an influential local figure, Whitley's reputation and previous local work within Halifax greatly benefitted his ability to earn local support.

Whitley was able to highlight the traditional Liberal principles of a proper education for all, at a time when the Halifax community resented the Conservative alterations to the British educational system. The Conservatives lost significant working class support due to the educational measures and added tax burden they brought upon British society with the introduction of the Educational Bill. In contrast, Whitley was able to highlight how Liberalism could help a struggling working class whose Conservative government had put 'an intolerable strain on the British taxpayer.'¹⁹⁰

The implementation of the Educational Bill of 1902 had another major effect on the political landscape within Halifax, one that would prove critical in the defeat of the Conservatives in the 1906 Halifax election. The Liberal party were not the only political group that challenged the Educational Bill, the Labour movement were also scathing on their attack against the Bill. The School Boards that were being removed through the Conservative's Educational Bill 'provided an early source of working-class political representation,' that the Labour movement did not wish to lose. Working-class political representation was one of the 'the foundations upon which the Independent Labour Party builds itself' and therefore they could not support an Education Bill that effectively 'removed a whole layer of local democracy' from the British working-class.¹⁹¹ The Education Bill in 1902 created a unique situation as for the first time, Liberalism and Labour both found themselves actively

¹⁸⁹ Dawson, P., 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁰ *Annual Meeting Last Night*, 7 March 1903, JHW/2/4/54, p. 42.

¹⁹¹ Keir Hardie and James Ramsay MacDonald, 'The Liberal Collapse III: The Independent Labour Party's Programme', *The 19th Century*, No. CCXVI, 1900, pp. 20-38, p. 25; Manton, K., 'The 1902 Education Act', *History Today*, Vol. 52, No. 12, 2002, pp. 18-19, p. 18.

agreeing on an important national topic. Patricia Dawson has stated 'Liberal and Labour were alike in their opposition to the 1902 Education Bill' which is significant in revealing that the two movements could both possibly find a common ground.¹⁹² The 1900 Halifax elections had seen Labour and Liberalism pose as rivals for the Progressive and there was little they could agree upon. However, the Conservative's Education Bill inadvertently led to the two movements realising they could work together to in challenging the Conservative government.

The Education Bill of 1902 benefitted Whitley greatly in the 1906 General Election because of two key aspects. First, it severely harmed the popularity and support for the Conservative party. The British public had become further disillusioned with a government that spoke of helping the people yet instead had burdened them with a further tax to fund voluntary schools. The Conservatives folly would prove to be Whitley's gain as he was able to further enhance his credentials as a champion for education within Halifax. This culminated in Whitley earning valuable votes from people who had ceased to support the Conservative party. Secondly, the Education Bill led to the first united Progressive front between the Liberal party and the ILP. Suddenly it became clear that a 'Progressive alliance' could truly be achieved and could effectively challenge a struggling Conservative government.¹⁹³ Whitley and the Liberal party now found themselves with an ally in the ILP instead of a threat and ultimately the united Progressive front within Halifax would sweep both Whitley and Parker to electoral success.

Any analysis of the General Election of 1906 on both a local or national scale has also to examine the Conservative policy to adopt a 'Protectionist' economic policy. In 1903, the influential Conservative Joseph Chamberlain supported adopting an economic policy of using "preference and reciprocity' with the colonies and for retaliatory tariffs against countries that threatened British imperial

¹⁹² Dawson, P., 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 61.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 62.

interests.¹⁹⁴ Chamberlain argued that adopting tariffs would help the British economy recover from the 'immensely expensive Boer war in South Africa' as well as stave off challenges to Britain's global dominance from the emerging economic powers of Germany and the U.S.A.¹⁹⁵ 'Joseph Chamberlain's attempt to convert the country to tariff reform' was met with widespread contention from the Liberal party, as well as from Labour. Yet, its most striking effect was the massive divisions it created within the Conservative party.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Peter T. Marsh, 'Chamberlain, Joseph (1836–1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32350>, accessed 28 Aug 2014].

¹⁹⁵ Packer, I., 'The great Liberal landslide: the 1906 general election in perspective', *Historian*, No. 89, 2006, pp. 8-16, p. 10.

¹⁹⁶ A. W. Coats, 'Political Economy and the Tariff Reform Campaign of 1903', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1968, pp. 181-229, p. 181.

Chamberlain and Conservative 'tariff reformers engaged in a civil war' with fellow Conservative members that were reluctant or refused to abandon free trade. The internal conflict within the Conservative ranks led to Chamberlain and his pro-tariff Conservative supporters to resign from the government in 1903 to actively pursue a protectionist policy unrestrained from their ministerial duties. Conservatism suddenly looked weak and divided, a massive contrast from the united patriotic front it had used to succeed in the 1900 General Election. The Conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour's reputation also took a mighty blow during this internal turmoil through his apparent inability to control and galvanise the Conservative party he led.¹⁹⁷ The major reason he was unable to galvanise the party was due to the fact he was unsure on how he could appease both divides in the Conservative party. Balfour was willing to adopt some tariff reforms yet not the amount that

¹⁹⁷ Ruddock Mackay, H. C. G. Matthew, 'Balfour, Arthur James, first earl of Balfour (1848–1930)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30553, accessed 20 Sept 2014].

Chamberlain and his supporters sought and overall Balfour failed to find 'a middle ground between tariff reformers and free traders.'¹⁹⁸ Douglas Irwin has theorised that failure to define the precise



in 1905. ly supported is Lord whilst who

nature of the tariff reforms he advocated and his general inability to unite the Conservative party over the issue 'left his administration to criticism and growing discontent.'¹⁹⁹ Irwin's theory is heavily supported through the emergence of political cartoons mocking Balfour's handling of the situation and the massive fall in support for Conservatism as a whole.²⁰⁰

(Image 1) The idea of 'protectionism' had in one fell

swoop critically divided and weakened the Conservative party, leading to a large loss of support in the 1906 General Elections. The ramifications of protectionism were felt nationwide, eventually

¹⁹⁸ Douglas A. Irwin, 'The Political Economy of Free Trade: Voting in the British General Election of 1906', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1994, pp. 75-108, p. 80.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ 'History Reverses Itself', *Punch*, 3 December 1903; W.K. Haselden, 'Which guy will Mr. Balfour burn?', *Daily Mirror*, 4 November 1905, http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/browse/cartoon_item/anytext=chamberlain%20arthur%20protectionism?page=1 (Accessed 23/08/2014).

reverberating into Halifax and the 1906 election. The Conservative party may have been violently shaken by the pursuit of Protectionism but this did not mean it was entirely ruined. For the Liberal party to earn the landslide victory it achieved in 1906, it attempted to use its free trade stance to win the support of the working-class. Whitley was masterfully able to perform this duty within Halifax in the 1906 Parliamentary Elections.

From the very off-set of Whitley's campaign in 1906, Whitley emphasised to the Halifax electorate that 'the main issue of this election, there was no doubt, was free-trade.'²⁰¹ Whitley and the Liberal party were staunchly against tariffs which opposed a founding Liberal principle of 'free and undistorted competition' within the global economics. The Conservatives were directly challenging this notion through their plan to levy taxes against foreign imported products and therefore restrict other nation's economic strength in a bid to promote British goods. During his campaign, Whitley defended free trade but was at his most effective through highlighting to the Halifax community the effects protectionism would have on the nation. Whitley ably stressed that adopting Protective tariffs would prove highly detrimental to the Empire, the gleaming pride and joy of the British nation. Whitley was able convince the Halifax community that 'the worst thing possible for this Empire was to put a ring fence around itself' and the implementation of tariffs on non-colonial goods would ultimately create such a barrier.²⁰² It was Imperialistic pride and the need to conserve the British Empire's position of strength that had swept Crossley and the Tories to success within Halifax in the 1900 elections, however Whitley was able to convince the Halifax community that the Tories policies now threatened it. Many in the Halifax community refused to support a policy that they felt threatened to weaken the British Empire and Whitley put forward the idea that the Conservative's tariff policy would ultimately 'set the rest of the world against them.'²⁰³ Whitley was able to weaken the communities' positive perception of Crossley and the Conservatives through displaying the potential global backlash against the British Empire that could occur if protectionism was

²⁰¹ 'Let the People have a Turn', JHW/2/5/15, p. 11.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

implemented. Whitley was able to portray free-trade as the best policy to protect the Empire's position of strength. This idea is supported by John C. Wood who agrees with Whitley that if 'Britain adopted any form of protection she would be poorer, and less powerful.'²⁰⁴ Whitley was highly successful through standing by his orthodox Liberal belief in free trade but more importantly he showed the people of Halifax how it was relevant and beneficial to maintaining the British Empire's global dominance. This earned Whitley and the Progressive forces within the town valuable votes that would eventually see his success in 1906. However, Whitley did not simply display protectionism as a threat to the British Empire, he also highlighted the effect it would have on the wellbeing of the Halifax working-class community.

Whitley stressed that 'when tariffs were made it was not the small business man whose interest would be considered' and instead the Tories were showing that they would rather ignore the needs of 'the weak than cringe to the powerful.'²⁰⁵ Halifax's main source of employment for its people was through various businesses such as The Crossley Carpet Trade which offered employment to around 6000 people, other businesses within Halifax had similar workforce sizes.²⁰⁶ If protectionism negatively affected these businesses, it could potentially have massive ramifications throughout the town. Whitley used this to promote the necessity and safety that came with sticking with free trade which meant the community needed to vote for Whitley and the Progressive forces within Halifax. Whitley also effectively emphasised the impact protectionism would have on the price of food throughout Britain. Ian Packer has stated that during the period around the 1906 General Election, 'most workers were more worried about anything that would put up food prices, rather than the more distant threat of job losses' and Whitley noted these fears in his 1906 campaign.²⁰⁷ Chamberlain had called for protectionism to also adopt a 2s duty on imported corn as well as a five

²⁰⁴ John C. Wood, 'Alfred Marshall and the Tariff-Reform Campaign of 1903', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1980, pp. 481-495, p. 487.

²⁰⁵ 'Let the People have a Turn', JHW/2/5/15, p. 11.

²⁰⁶ 'Yorkshire; 50 Years of Progress', *The Yorkshire Post* (Leeds, 1887) p. 30.

²⁰⁷ Packer, I., 'The great Liberal landslide: the 1906 general election in perspective', *Historian*, No. 89, 2006, pp. 8-16, p. 10.

per cent duty on foreign meat and dairy products.²⁰⁸ This would eventually lead to a rise in prices for food items within Britain to compensate for the food duties, adding to the struggles of the working-class community within Halifax. Whitley allayed the concerns for the working class with regards to an increase in food prices through his assurances this would not occur if they voted Progressive and remained with free trade. Whitley challenged the Conservative candidate, Crossley, to explain his stance on taxes on foreign foods and though he noted Crossley was 'not in favour of 2s tax on corn,' it only further highlighted the divisions within the Conservative party and made them look weak.²⁰⁹ This once again ultimately led to Whitley earning further votes from a working-class community that sought to improve their standard of living rather than have further burdens placed in the form of a food tax.

The Conservative pursuit and eventual divide over protectionism would ultimately prove highly beneficial to Whitley's campaign for re-election in the 1906 Halifax Parliamentary Elections. Not only did it cause a crippling gulf in the Conservative government that severely weakened the public perceptions of the party, it also allowed Whitley to highlight the ineptitude of the entire Tory decade of government. Whitley claimed 'protection was the climax of ten years of Tory policy,' ten years that had saw no real improvement to the standard of living for the working class that the Tory government had ultimately failed.²¹⁰ Protectionism would have seen 'the heaviest burden falling on the poorer classes' and Whitley's scathing criticisms of the policy led to many working-class voters supporting him in the 1906 election.²¹¹ However, most significantly the battle against protectionism was another topic that Liberalism and the Labour movement found themselves in alliance with. Parker and Whitley both fought for retaining free-trade and ultimately the battle against

²⁰⁸ Irwin, D. A., 'The Political Economy of Free Trade: Voting in the British General Election of 1906', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1994, pp. 75-108, p. 80.

²⁰⁹ *Halifax Courier*, 10 January 1906.

²¹⁰ 'Let the People have a Turn', JHW/2/5/15, p. 11.

²¹¹ Wood, J. C., 'Alfred Marshall and the Tariff-Reform Campaign of 1903', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1980, pp. 481-495, p. 487.

protectionism proved to be another aspect that helped create the Liberal-Labour pact that succeeded in the 1906 Halifax election.

The history of Liberalism and Labour had been one of fierce rivals battling for the Progressive vote that both movements needed for electoral success. The Halifax Parliamentary Elections of 1900 are a clear example of this friction between the groups on a local political level. However the 1906 Parliamentary Elections proved to be a vastly different story as instead of a rivalry a relationship emerged between the two movements. Whitley and the Parker had both found themselves in agreement against Tory policies such as the 1902 Education Bill and both were fiercely opposed to protectionism and tariff reform. Another topic they found an alignment over was in 1906 was the issue of Land Reform.

Whitley's 1906 electoral campaign was not simply built upon a reactionary campaign to Conservative policies, he also advocated for traditional Liberal causes such as Land Reform. This was a topic that highlighted Whitley's dedication to his Liberal principles as he had already raised the issue in his first electoral success in the 1900 local elections.²¹² Michael Freedon claims that Liberalism viewed Land Reform as a 'main... arena of social reform' and this idea is supported through the continual exposure and emphasis Whitley gave the topic in both his 1900 and 1906 election campaigns.²¹³ Previously the Liberals were criticised for its campaign for Land Reform as it was seen as a subject that offered no immediate social help for struggling communities. However, the Land Reform issue became highly pertinent in the Halifax Parliamentary elections in 1906, not truly because of what the reform could achieve but because it offered another branch that Labour and Liberalism found itself agreeing upon. Whitley, in his campaign, even highlights that 'Mr Parker and himself were agreed' that action needed to be taken to end the monopoly on land and to open 'up access to the land for the people of England.'²¹⁴ Labour and Liberalism also found itself agreeing on subjects such as Chinese Labour in South Africa, another issue that made the Tory government increasingly

²¹² 'The Liberal Programme', JHW/2/2/1, p.1.

²¹³ Freedon, *The New Liberalism*, p. 43.

²¹⁴ *Halifax Courier*, 11 January 1906; *Halifax Guardian*, 12 January 1906.

unpopular. Rather than offer employment in South Africa to British workers, the Conservative government hired Chinese Labour at a fraction of the cost it would have been if they hired British workers. The Conservative government were sending over 13,000 Chinese labourers a month to work in South African mines and it was widely seen as slave labour from the Progressive parties.²¹⁵ The ILP opposed it on a Socialist level as their political beliefs stemmed from the Marxist mantra of the workers of the world uniting against exploitation.²¹⁶ Similarly, the Liberal party opposed it on the ethical grounds of the poor pay and treatment of the Chinese labourers. Through finding common ground on a multitude of political topics leading into the 1906 Parliamentary Elections, it became clear that for the first time a Progressive united front could form in Halifax politics. This alliance would prove to be the most significant factor in the success of both Whitley and Parker in the 1906 Halifax election. It proved to be a success for not just Liberalism and Labour but for political Progressivism as a whole.

Throughout Whitley's campaign in 1906, he consistently advocated the idea that the community needed to 'send two Progressive members to stand' as MPs to represent Halifax. This is a notable shift from the message in his previous campaign in 1900, where he pushed for Halifax to return two specific Liberal MPs to represent the town. The Liberal campaign followed the Liberal-Labour pact that had been set-up in 1903 but it does not explain why it was specifically necessary within Halifax to aid Whitley's campaign. Why did Whitley and Liberalism promote general Progressive success in 1906 rather than success for two Liberal candidates as they had in 1900?

Whitley and the Liberal party could no longer ignore the fact that the ILP were becoming an increasingly powerful movement within Halifax. The impressive display from Parker in the 1900 election alarmed Liberals and revealed that the ILP had now cemented a considerable amount of working-class votes as its base support. The ILP had also earned a significant level of trade union backing, placed squarely behind the ILP candidate as he had proved himself a worthy champion for

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (London, 1888) p. 3.

the rights of the trade unions. Parker had previously shown his support for the unions in the 1897 union troubles within Halifax where he 'offered support, both moral and financial, for the striking workers.'²¹⁷ However he received the greatest backing from the Trade unions after the Taff Vale case in 1901. Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds have both commented on the fact that 'the Taff Vale decision did convert many trade unionists to the ILP' as they realised it was in their best interests to secure some form of political representation.²¹⁸ Parker received a major boost to his support base and it strengthened the ILP cause immensely.

The Liberal party was faced with a dilemma in the lead up to the 1906 election. It could either continue to see the Labour movement as a threat to its working-class base support or it could ally with them in a Progressive union. Of the two choices, it was obvious which one held the most benefits for Whitley and the Liberal party in the 1906 Halifax elections. The boom the ILP received from trade union support could be used to actively promote Labour and Liberalism if they aligned together, greatly benefitting Whitley's campaign. A Liberal-Labour pact would also ruin any threat of a Tory-Labour alliance emerging. Dawson advocates this idea through stating that Labour had 'established a trend to split their votes with the Tories' and this notion is supported by the large split vote Parker and Crossley received in 1900.²¹⁹ This legitimate threat to the Liberal party could not be ignored and it was highly fortunate that in Whitley, Halifax Liberalism had a candidate who could relate and agree with Parker and the ILP on a number of topics.

Whitley had previously pushed for a Liberal-ILP alliance within Halifax politics as early as 1897 when he was building towards the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary Election.²²⁰ At the time, he received a response from Parker stating that the Liberal party and Labour were opposed on too many issues to unite under a single Progressive banner.²²¹ However, this was not the case in 1906 as the two movements found a multitude of topics they both agreed upon. The 1902 Education Bill,

²¹⁷ Dawson, 'Halifax Independent Labour Movement' in Laybourn, James, *Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 59.

²¹⁸ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*, p. 105.

²¹⁹ Dawson, 'Halifax Independent Labour Movement' in Laybourn, James, *Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 60.

²²⁰ JHW/2/1/62, p. 61.

²²¹ Ibid.

Protectionism, Chinese Labour and Land reform were all topics that Whitley and Parker both found themselves either united against or advocating together. These issues created bonds that could allow an allied Progressive front to emerge that Parker and Whitley could front in their battle against the previous Conservative dominance within Halifax. Whitley was highly effective in being able to highlight this alliance within his campaign to earn valuable working-class and Radical support that would carry him to success in 1906. Whitley highlighted to the electorate that ‘a double member constituency was peculiarly a place where given these conditions, reasonable opportunity should be given to the representation of Labour,’ acknowledging that ‘this was one reason (that) influenced the Liberal decision’ to not put forward two Liberal candidates, like it had in 1900.²²² Whitley knew that Liberalism could use the dual constituency system within Halifax to his and the Liberals advantage to secure enough split votes to defeat Crossley. The strategy of a Liberal-Labour alliance was clearly vindicated when the voting patterns are examined.²²³(Table 7 and Table 8)

Candidates	Number of Split Votes
Whitley and Parker	8572
Crossley and Whitley	358
Crossley and Parker	154

Candidates	Number of Plumper Votes
Crossley (Conservative)	4529
Whitley (Liberal)	424
Parker (ILP)	211

²²² ‘Halifax Contest Opens’, 3 January 1906, JHW/2/5/12, p. 7.

²²³ ‘Analysis of the Voting’, 15 January 1906, JHW/2/5/24, p. 20.

**Table 7: Split Votes Cast in 1906
Halifax Parliamentary Election**

**Table 8: Plumper Votes Cast in 1906
Halifax Parliamentary Election**

Whitley and Parker were both able to succeed due to the Liberal-Labour alliance that led to a massive amount of split votes for the pair. Table 7 shows that around eight and half thousand people within the Halifax electorate bought into the united progressive front and used the split vote franchise to return Whitley and Parker.²²⁴ The four and half thousand plumper votes Crossley rallied together pales massively in comparison and he ultimately paid the price for the unpopular measures he and the Conservative party tried to introduce.²²⁵ He also could not stand up to the joint Progressive message that was proclaimed from both of the Conservative's rivals, a joint message Whitley was masterful at proclaiming. Table 9 shows the overall voting for each candidate in the 1906 Halifax Parliamentary elections²²⁶:

**Table 9: Votes Cast in 1906
Halifax Parliamentary Election**

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ 'Analysis of the Voting', 15 January 1906, JHW/2/5/24, p. 20.

²²⁶ 'Mr Whitley M.P. in Halifax', 31 March 1906, JHW/2/5/27, p.21.

The Liberal-Labour alliance was able to achieve a high volume of split votes through a variety of means. The Conservative implosion since its success in the 1900 election earned them a negative

public

Candidate Name	Number of Votes
Whitley (Liberal)	9354
Parker (ILP)	8937
Crossley (Conservative)	5041

perception entering the 1906 election and this definitely contributed to voters turning to the Liberal-Labour alliance. However, an even more critical factor that led to the Halifax electorate buying into the idea of the Liberal-Labour pact was the fervent campaigning from Whitley. He had previously shown his more Radical policies in the 1900 election that earned him respect from Labour supporters and reciprocated this support by also convincing Liberals to vote for Parker. He exclaimed that he could 'not see how any man with Liberal ideals could hesitate to use the full franchise' to

split their vote Parker and himself.²²⁷ Though Whitley continually distanced himself from being a Socialist, claiming 'Mr Parker was a Socialist, whilst he was a social reformer', he revealed the similarity in their messages and more importantly the firmness of their Progressive alliance.²²⁸ This was most clearly highlighted through the Whitley speech where he voiced that 'Whitley and Parker or Parker and Whitley- it did not matter which came first- at the top of poll' as long as both sides of Progressivism triumphed against the Conservatives.²²⁹ The message Whitley was able to put forward showed exactly what the Conservatives lacked, this being unity within the movement. At a time when the Conservatives could not have been more divided, the galvanisation of the major Progressive forces within British politics sent a message of strength to the nation. This unity was combined with the social reforms Whitley had promised in his Liberal messages and his challenges to highly unpopular Conservative policies. This trifecta culminated in allowing Whitley to secure return as top of the poll in the Halifax local elections.

The 1906 Halifax Parliamentary Elections contrasted with the 1900 elections in two significant ways. The Conservative strength and pro-war unity had vanished and instead Liberalism's traditional political foe were unpopular with large parts of British society. This was due to the Tories' controversial policies and the emergence of crippling divides within the party. Secondly, Whitley and Liberalism found themselves once again face-to-face with an ever-growing ILP movement but instead of facing them as rivals, they found a new Progressive ally. Whitley was perfectly suited to lead a union between the two groups, his more Radical Liberalism and search for social reform aligned well with Parker and ILP's drive to help the working-class. Liberalism emerged victorious in the 1906 Parliamentary Elections due to the ability of Whitley to unite the Progressive forces in Halifax. Ultimately, this was the overriding factor that swept both movements towards electoral success.

²²⁷ *Halifax Courier*, 11 January 1906.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter Six:

The Thoughts of a Few

*'I still look to the Liberal party nationally as the best instrument of progress in our times at any rate.'*²³⁰

J. H. Whitley, Private Letter, 10 July 1895 in J.H. Whitley

Whitley was able to rise from his position of a respectable local figure and secure electoral success within Halifax not because of one single reason. Instead his success in his hometown of Halifax came from a culmination of various political, social and personal aspects. There has been a vast amount of historiography created examining Liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The early chapters in Roy Douglas's book *The History of the Liberal Party* gives a solid overview and understanding of the state of Liberalism during this period yet is too broad an examination to explain exactly why Whitley was able to succeed in Halifax.²³¹ Works such as P.F. Clarke's *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* also shed valuable light on the changing dynamics of Liberalism. He puts forward the notion that Liberalism was transitioning away from the 'old' Liberalism and moving towards a 'new' form.²³² However, again this is a similar piece of work that does not specifically isolate why Whitley succeeded in Halifax. In contrast works such as Keith Laybourn and Jack Reynolds *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour* offer valuable local insights into the Halifax that combined with the broader context of Liberal historiography offer an understanding of how Whitley could succeed.²³³ How did Liberalism stave off the growing ILP? How did it impact Whitley and the Liberals in Halifax? What was the most important factor in allowing Whitley to succeed? Through examining the different perspectives put forward on Liberalism and comparing them, on both a local and national scale, a firm theory can be put forward that Whitley succeeded due to a combination of his local connections within Halifax as well as his ability to unify traditional Liberalism with his more Radical traits. These two factors when combined proved to be the perfect

²³⁰ J. H. Whitley *Private Letter*, 10 July 1895, JHW/2/1/40, p. 31.

²³¹ Ray Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party* (London, 1971) pp. 1-91.

²³² Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, pp. 3-25.

²³³ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*.

mixture that would allow him to thrive within the fierce political arena that emerged within Halifax local politics.

A topic that ties into the period during which Whitley entered local politics is that during the early twentieth century, there was a transitional phase from 'old' to 'new' Liberalism. P. F. Clarke's work is of particular note at highlighting this area, with him commenting that 'there was a need for a new Liberalism which could more effectively engage the support of the working-class voters.'²³⁴ Michael Freedon is also supportive of the idea that Liberalism had come to a cross roads where if it was to stay relevant it would need 'a drastic change in temper' in being more progressive in creating social reforms.²³⁵ Both historians recognise that Liberalism had to adapt to meet new demands from a more political aware working class. As the Labour movement began to emerge around the dawn of the twentieth century, Liberalism's base of working class support that it relied heavily upon was suddenly under threat. Socialist groups such as the ILP firmly believed that 'from the misery of the people the socialist future will arise' and the working-class were clearly disgruntled with the conditions they faced.²³⁶ The ILP claimed that through them, the working-class could achieve a better standard of living. Freedon and Clarke are both correct in stating that Liberalism had to evolve and incorporate social reforms to challenge such a movement which threatened to siphon away working-class support.

Both Freedon and Clarke's ideas of a new socially-active Liberalism emerging can be seen through Whitley and the policies he promoted throughout his campaigns. Whitley claimed that he and the Liberal party he served were 'social reformers' and pushed for issues such as old-age pensions to help the struggling working class within Britain.²³⁷ This sense of Liberalism needing to help the working class and avoid becoming 'fossilised or cramped in its ideas' is a hallmark of Whitley's

²³⁴ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 4.

²³⁵ Freedon, *The New Liberalism*, p. 2

²³⁶ Ramsay Mac Donald, *Socialism Today* (London, 1909) p. 2.

²³⁷ 12 January 1906, JHW/2/5/20, p. 16-18.

political campaigns and can be seen as a testament to his success within Halifax.²³⁸ Whitley recognised and acted upon the plight of the working class and through his adoption of 'new' Liberal views whilst maintaining the core values of Liberalism was built upon, he was able to maintain the party's stature and support within Halifax. Freedman and Clarke's analysis of the emergence of a 'new' Liberalism is poignant in highlighting how Whitley perfectly fitted this new mould of Liberal social reformers. However, their work does not explain the finer details of why Whitley was able to succeed within Halifax. Their separate works both highlight how Liberalism had to adapt to remain appealing to a working-class who now had two progressive parties to vote for yet for a complete understanding to of how Whitley was able to succeed in Halifax, one has to examine the local political landscape.

One of the leading historians in the analysis of early twentieth century Halifax politics is Keith Laybourn, whose regional research provides great assistance in showing the impact the ILP had on a local level.²³⁹ His research, in *Sons and Daughters of Labour* highlights the ILP and overall socialist influence surrounding the West Riding area and from this we can get an understanding of how it affected the Liberal party.²⁴⁰ Though his research as a whole offers 'more than purely local and sub-regional interest,' it is the precise locality of his research that benefit's any investigation into the West Riding area but more specifically Halifax.²⁴¹ Another piece of work that greatly benefits any examination of the Halifax political scene from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is Patricia Dawson's 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism 1890-1914'.²⁴² Both historians analyse the impact the rise of the ILP had on Halifax, Dawson's work in particular highlights the effect this had on the Liberal party which Whitley represented. Laybourn and Dawson both argue that the ILP was able to grow in stature as it was able to 'erode the Liberals'

²³⁸ *Halifax Courier*, 26 September 1900.

²³⁹ Laybourn, Reynolds, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour*.

²⁴⁰ Brendan Evans, Keith Laybourn, John Lancaster and Brian Haigh, *Sons and Daughters of Labour* (Huddersfield, 2007).

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

²⁴² Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*.

working-class support' within Halifax and this is true to a degree. Liberalism had struggled during 1895, 1897 and 1900 elections with a major factor in this being the loss of working-class votes to the ILP. Yet, it is important to note that Whitley was able to enter and succeed in local politics during this apparent period of Liberal decline and ILP growth. Dawson is correct in suggesting the ILP attracted votes away from Whitley and the Liberal party but not to such a massive extent that Whitley could not triumph. Whitley was able to counteract the emergence of the ILP through his Progressive ideas and actions. Dawson claims Whitley was 'not a progressive.' However, an examination of his policies proves this to be untrue.²⁴³ Whitley was specifically able to challenge the ILP and retain working-class confidence through his progressive policies, such as old-age pensions. Whitley openly spoke about the fact the 'more he studied social and political matters the more advanced and more Radical his opinions became' and he translated this onto the political scene during his 1900 and 1906 electoral campaigns.²⁴⁴ The fact the by 1906, the ILP were willing to form an alliance with Liberal party, who had Whitley as its candidate, is a testament to his progressive nature and effectively refutes Dawson's claim. Whitley's progressive Liberal policies were critical in drawing and retaining working-class support to his cause and supports the theory that his 'new' Liberalism was a major factor in his 1900 and 1906 success in the Halifax Parliamentary Elections.

David Howell also puts forward a theory that holds particular significance to Whitley and the success he had in the 1900 and 1906 elections. Howell argues that within Halifax politics 'status in the community had an impact on support' and the success Whitley had during in his election campaigns supports this theory.²⁴⁵ Whitley did not simply arrive in Halifax as a Liberal mercenary in the hope of becoming its M.P., he was a Halifax local who had already provided a great service as a town councillor. The previous work he had performed in improving education within the town and organising evening classes for the youth already displayed that he genuinely cared for the well-being

²⁴³ Dawson, 'The Halifax Independent Labour Movement: Labour and Liberalism' in James, Laybourn, *The Rising Sun of Socialism*, p. 56.

²⁴⁴ 'Trenchant Speech by Harry Whitley', JHW/2/1/44, p. 33.

²⁴⁵ Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, p. 198.

of the community. His reputation within the town had already established local support for him and is most evident in the fact that it was Whitley, and not Billson, who succeeded as the Liberal candidate in the 1900 election. Billson preached the same Liberal message as Whitley throughout his campaign but did not have the local roots and connections Whitley had been able to build through his time living in Halifax. Howell's theory of local relationships proving a decisive factor within Halifax politics is highly supported by the success Whitley achieved and it was critical factor in his early political success.²⁴⁶

There is no single theory that can encapsulate why Whitley was successful in his 1900 and 1906 electoral campaigns, instead there are a multitude of reasons and explanations. However, there are elements that are more crucial than others, with stand-out factors being Whitley's implementation of a 'new' progressive Liberalism as well as his local roots being essential factors. His ability to combine these two aspects allowed Whitley to crucially retain a strong base of working-class support for his Liberal cause amidst the rise of the ILP within Halifax. He was able to modernise the Liberal party to meet the growing demands of the working-class at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as using his local past to show a genuine care for the town he sought to represent. This powerful blend proved exactly what Liberalism and Whitley needed to formulate success within Halifax local politics.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

Chapter Seven:

Conclusion

'In Halifax people gladly and proudly accorded him the admiring affection that is always given to the local lad who makes good.'

W. A. Davies, *The RT. Hon J. H. Whitley*²⁴⁷

During a time when the political landscape within Britain was changing dramatically, Whitley emerged to forge a career in British politics that spanned nearly three decades. At the dawn of the twentieth century Conservatism dominated, the ILP grew into a formidable progressive rival and Liberalism faltered. However, Whitley rose through it all to forge a successful political career that eventually made him a major political character in British twentieth-century politics. For this to take place he first had to carve out success on a local level, and he proved the perfect candidate to carry the banner of Liberalism within Halifax throughout a period of Liberal uncertainty. Liberalism 'needed to be reformulated in a sense relevant to a new era' yet the Liberal Four Hundred managed to find a candidate in Whitley that was already shaped and ready to carry the party wholeheartedly into this new Liberal dawn.²⁴⁸

Whitley possessed a combination of qualities and experience that proved undeniable to the electorate in Halifax and elevated him to success in the local political arena. He was already an established figure within the town, known as a generous employer and, more importantly, a superb

²⁴⁷ Davies, *The RT. Hon J. H. Whitley*, p.45.

²⁴⁸ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 4.

town councillor. His constant endeavours to improve the town that he loved and lived in endeared him to the local Halifax community and it proved a crucial factor in his later electoral success. His previous work in the community had not gone unnoticed, nor had it been forgotten when he finally ran for election in 1900. Halifax knew that in Whitley it did not have a simple political mercenary who would move on to the next electoral battle if unsuccessful without a care, in Whitley they had genuine local man wanting do right by his community. The role Whitley's reputation and stature had in helping him succeed in 1900 and 1906 cannot be underestimated and played perfectly to a working-class Halifax community who felt the leading political parties were ignoring their problems. Whitley understood the issues the Halifax community faced through the simple fact he had personally witnessed them as a Halifax local. Whitley's recognition of these problems and desire to find solutions to them had a great effect on the second factor that made Whitley a successful candidate for the Liberal party.

In Whitley, Halifax Liberalism found a candidate with more than just intimate local knowledge of the town. They had also found one that could bridge the gap between traditional Liberal values whilst incorporating new principles and social reform the Liberal party needed to remain relevant in twentieth century politics. As the ILP emerged to challenge for working-class votes Liberalism depended upon, Whitley was able to match them through his Radical and Progressive social reform policies. The working-class yearned for change in a bid to somehow improve their standard of living and Whitley was able to assure them that, through the social reforms he advocated, Liberalism could be their answer. Crucially, Whitley was also a political visionary in regards to realising that 'Liberalism of the future must be a co-operation groups' and because of this, he was always willing to work and collaborate with the perceived Liberal enemy, the emerging ILP.²⁴⁹ Though Whitley fought the ILP in the 1900 Halifax Parliamentary elections and succeeded, he recognised the growing threat of the ILP to his and the Liberal's position within Halifax. It was down to Whitley's progressive nature that the ILP noted that he was 'advanced' in his progressive ideas and the greatest testament

²⁴⁹ 'The Future of Liberalism', JHW/2/1/46, p. 34.

to this is the fact the ILP eventually became willing to work with Liberalism. Whitley was the single most important factor in Liberalism in Halifax being able to work with the ILP in the 1906 election. It was his policies, his promotion of social reform, and his progressivism that revealed to the ILP that with Whitley as a Liberal candidate, a Liberal-Labour progressive alliance could actually come to fruition. Halifax Liberalism had found itself a champion in Whitley who was able to attract support from all parts of the community through the trifecta of his local connections and reputation, his 'old' traditional values and his 'new' Liberal and progressive social policies. Whitley proved to be the shot in the arm the Halifax Liberal movement needed to revitalise it in preparation to enter the twentieth century.

Liberalism throughout Britain threatened to stagnate if it did not adapt to the changing social needs that emerged within British society. The working class in particular were becoming further disillusioned with the existing political parties that seemed to repeatedly promise change and then deliver none. Liberalism needed a new impetus to adapt to the changing political landscape or it would fall to the political wayside as the Labour movement emerged to take its place. Though this ultimately would be the case as Labour did 'replace the Liberals as the progressive party in British politics', this was delayed due to 'eager and dedicated men of ideas...(who) transformed Liberalism from within... and retrieved for it the qualities of immediacy and relevance without which every ideology must ossify.'²⁵⁰ Whitley belonged to that category of men, men who were able to transform an ailing Liberal movement and make it into a success in the early twentieth century. The emergence of a 'new' Liberalism was essential in retaining the Liberal party's strength and support at the dawn of the twentieth century. It was this Liberal transformation that was desperately needed to halt a possible exodus of Liberal working-class support that had begun to turn an emergent Labour movement. Liberals such as Whitley were able to drag Liberalism from the brink through their vision of the necessity of uniting 'old' Liberal values with 'new' progressive social reform. From this

²⁵⁰ Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour* (Huddersfield, 1990) p. 1; Freedon, *The New Liberalism*, p. 1.

combination Whitley and Liberalism were able to build on their initial success in the 1900 General Election to then dominate British politics from 1906 up to the First World War.

John Henry Whitley's career may have eventually reached grand political heights but this was all achieved from the foundation of local success he managed within Halifax. Any future success Whitley had in his career owes to his previous work as a local Halifax man who brought a radical and progressive to a faltering Liberal party, in the hope of helping the town he loved.

Word Count: 24,143

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