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The twilight world of British business politics: the Spring Sunningdale conferences since the 1960s

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Abstract

This article explores a previously unknown form of interaction, known as Spring Sunningdale, between the British business elite and its civil servant equivalent in Whitehall. These began in 1963 and were still continuing only a few years ago. The continuity and stability of these meetings stands in contrast to wider changes in the nature of business-government relations in Britain during this period, particularly since the election of the Thatcher government in 1979. The article analyses why there was such continuity and what the senior civil servants and the captains of industry who attended these annual meetings gained from them.

Keywords: Business politics; Britain; elites; corporate political action; civil service

The opening sentence of *The Oxford Handbook of Business and Politics* notes, ‘The relationship between business and government is undeniably important: both are major forces in our lives. They are locked inextricably in a relationship with each other’.¹ Not only is this a symbiotic relationship but one in which the broad consensus since Charles Lindblom’s classic 1977 work, *Politics and Markets*, is that business

holds a position of privilege and advantage in the world of politics.² Accordingly, much has been made in both the popular literature and its academic counterpart about the ability of business to exploit that political power to subvert democracy.³ Yet, despite the fundamental nature of this relationship the consideration of business politics by political scientists tends to focus on lobbying by business representative bodies framed by interest group theory, as illustrated in the recent *Oxford Handbook on British Politics*.⁴ Within management studies it is only in the last decade that there has been any significant move to incorporate political action into the study of corporate strategy.⁵ What is striking is how sparse is recent writing on business and politics in Britain. There have been recent textbooks by Michael Moran and Stephen Wilks to add to the more longstanding and multi-edition texts by Graham Wilson and Wyn Grant but there appears to have been no major research monograph in this area for a number of years.⁶ Business historians have traditionally given considerable attention to business-government relations but, to date, coverage of the period since 1945 remains relatively limited, certainly for Britain.⁷

In other respects, however, the impact of 'business' frames much of the public administration and political science literature on the development of government in Britain over the last fifty years, in particular the impact of Thatcherism. From the late 1950s, most notably in the 1968 Fulton Committee Report, criticism of Whitehall, especially of the higher civil service, grew.⁸ At its heart were repeated calls for improved management skills and the need to integrate business ideas, business methods and business people into the civil service.⁹ These came to a head with the Thatcher governments and the New Public Management associated with reforms like the 'Next Steps' programme.¹⁰ That there was an ensuing epochal transformation, a

revolution, of the British state and of the role of business in it from the late seventies is now seen as ‘virtually stating the obvious’.¹¹

While it may seem obvious that this constituted a revolution in business politics in Britain there is a surprising level of disagreement about the precise nature of the changes brought about as part of that transformation. According to Moran, the style of administration shifted from what has been termed ‘club government’, where informality, mutuality, secrecy and self-regulation predominated in Whitehall, to a world of hyper-innovation in regulation, codification and transparency.¹² This weakened the collective political power of business in his eyes and introduced much firmer regulation of business. In particular, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) lost its insider status, which had ‘locked it, often profitably, into the world of the Whitehall elite’, as part of that fragmentation.¹³ Here, Moran builds on the work of Mitchell and Useem who both point to the power and influence of business, based on close relations between the members of a mandarin elite and their equivalents in business: business, particularly large companies, represent ‘the consummate insiders’, part of *The Inner Circle*.¹⁴

In contrast, Wilks, writing after the financial crisis, believes that Moran exaggerates the power of business prior to the 1970s. In particular, manufacturing was ‘semi-detached’ from this mandarin elite, itself part of ‘The Establishment’.¹⁵ There was a fundamental cultural difference between business and the top of the civil service.¹⁶ Here, Britain is depicted as having ‘arm’s length government’ and where the ‘Whitehall village’ remains relatively isolated from the rest of society.¹⁷

This article not only better illuminates the nature of business politics in Britain since the Second World War but also suggests that the degree of change assumed conventionally needs qualification: the transformation in British business politics

since the 1980s has been exaggerated on the basis of the evidence presented here. The article examines a form of interaction called ‘Spring Sunningdale’, an annual meeting between the mandarins in Whitehall and leading captains of industry ‘in a relaxed and private setting’.¹⁸ To date, these meetings have been absent from existing contemporary and historical accounts: there are two footnote references to Spring Sunningdale in Lowe’s recent official history of the civil service.¹⁹ Beyond that there is one reference in a National Audit Office report to a presentation made to the 2004 Spring Sunningdale conference, one other in an article referring to a briefing for the chairman of British American Tobacco in 2000 as preparation for Spring Sunningdale.²⁰ Similarly, it has been impossible to find any reference to these meetings in *The Times*, *The Financial Times* or *The Economist*. This silence seems extraordinary given that these meetings have continued for over forty years and bring together the top of the civil service with leading captains of industry, but reflects their secret nature.²¹

Starting in 1963 about fifteen selected top businessmen met a similar number of selected top civil servants for a weekend of discussion and socialising. This weekend conference, which became known as ‘Spring Sunningdale’ because of its timing and location at the Civil Service College at Sunningdale Park, has occurred annually since then, at least until 2010, its structure, it would appear, virtually unchanged. Having outlined the basic structure and organisation of these meetings the paper gives particular attention to their perceived importance, explaining why they were seen to be important by both business people and civil servants, and the implications of these contacts for our understanding of business-government relations in post-war Britain.

Spring Sunningdale

On Friday 25th April 1969 fifteen civil servants and fourteen businessmen sat down for dinner together at what had just become the Civil Service College at Sunningdale Park, 'a rather delightful country house with extensive grounds' 25 miles west of London.²² The seating plan ensured that civil servants and businessmen were thoroughly intermixed. They reacquainted themselves with each other or got to meet each other for the first time over their starter of smoked salmon, followed by roast duck, served with a 1961 Chateau Batard Montrachet, a white burgundy, and rounded off by pear flan, cheese, coffee and a 1955 Taylor's port. This was the start of a weekend of discussion among themselves in private and with no record kept, what had by this time become known as 'Spring Sunningdale'. After dinner the first discussion began. Like the weekend as a whole it was chaired by Sir William Armstrong, the Head of the Civil Service and Sir Archibald Forbes, then the Chairman of Midland Bank (1964-75), but an ex-President of the CBI's predecessor, the Federation of British Industries (1951-53), and previously chairman of the Iron and Steel Board before and after nationalisation (1946-50 and 1953-59). Normally the first discussion took the form of an informal discussion about government-business links and the purpose of Spring Sunningdale. Every discussion took place in a circle of armchairs. That year there was a three-hour discussion the following morning on 'The accountability of large firms' framed around two papers on the subject, one by a civil servant, the other by a businessman, both of whom introduced the subject. After lunch the participants had free time: some went to Windsor Great Park, others played golf, arranged by Forbes who also paid any green fees, while some just walked in the grounds of the college. The second three-hour discussion was on 'Education' that year and, broken by dinner, filled the evening. There was only one paper on this occasion

but, as usual, two participants to introduce it. The final session, on ‘Consultation with government’ (with two papers and two opening speakers) occurred on the Sunday morning, followed by a winding up and feedback session, and after lunch the participants dispersed.

Table 1 Participants at the 1969 Spring Sunningdale weekend conference

PUBLIC SECTOR		PRIVATE ENTERPRISE	
Sir Herbert Andrew	Dept. of Education and Science	Donald Barron	Chairman, Rowntree & Co. Ltd.
Sir William Armstrong	Civil Service Department (co-chair)	John Davies	Director-General, CBI
K. Barnes	Dept of Employment and Productivity	A.E.C. Drake	Chairman, British Petroleum Co. Ltd.
Frank Cooper	Ministry of Defence	Sir George Edwards	Chairman, British Aircraft Corporation Ltd.
Sir Basil Engholm	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	Sir Archibald Forbes	Chairman, Midland Bank (co-chair)
Samuel Goldman	Treasury	Philip Grimshaw	Director of Finance, Royal-Dutch Shell Group
G.G. Macfarlane	Ministry of Technology	Denis Haviland	Chairman, Staveley Industries Ltd.
R.B. Marshall	Ministry of Power	Hector McNeil	Chairman, Babcock & Wilcox Ltd.
W.A.C. Mathieson	Ministry of Overseas Development	A. Gerry Norman	De La Rue Company
Prof. Claus Moser	Central Statistical Office	David Orr	Director, Unilever
Sir William Nield	Dept. of Economic Affairs	Gordon Richardson	Chairman, J. Henry Schroder Wagg Ltd.
Sir Antony Part	Board of Trade	Michael Vernon	Chairman, Spillers Ltd.
W.D. Pile	Home Office	Charles Villiers	Managing Director, Industrial Reorganisation Corporation
I.V. Pugh	Ministry of Housing and Local Government	Sir Hugh Weeks	Director, Industrial & Commercial Finance Corporation Ltd.
R.T. Walters	Ministry of Public Building and Works		

Source: TNA T249/233, C. Gilbraith, 'Sunningdale conference 25th-27th April, 1969'.

All of the civil servants present were of the highest seniority – the majority headed their ministries' administrative staff - while all the businessmen were managing directors, chairmen or senior board members of some of the largest companies in the UK, or headed key business organisations, such as John Davies, the Director-General of the CBI (the head of its staff) who the following year was to become the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the new Conservative government (Table 1 sets out all those present). There were three types of participants: 'regulars' – those with a personal interest in the conference or with close working interests in government-business contact; 'horses for courses' – those invited because the particular topics chosen; and 'others' – those invited for no particular reason other than it was their turn or it was felt that they would benefit from the experience.²³ The public service side was selected by Armstrong, or his equivalent as head of the civil service in other years, and the private enterprise side by Forbes, and after his retirement usually by the President of the CBI, and they also chaired the small steering committee which decided on the topics for discussion, and the speakers, and confirmed the format and arrangements. They often considered the draft papers prior to circulation to the participants and any feedback received from the participants. The format and structure of the conference in 1969 was typical, as was the range and type of participants. It was the eighth such conference since 1963 with a move from Ditchley House to Sunningdale in 1966.

In 1997, nearly 40 years later there had been extraordinarily little change, apart from the dropping of the period of free time and sessions now lasting one and a half to two hours.²⁴ Still located at Sunningdale Park, it began on the evening of

Thursday 20th February with dinner followed by an introduction and review of the previous year's conference by Sir Robin Butler, the Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Home Civil Service, and Sir Colin Marshall, the CBI President (and chairman of British Airways), the other co-chairman of the meeting. The next day there were four sessions – 'Transport policy in the UK', 'The City – its role and future', 'The cost-effectiveness of social security', and 'Eastern Europe – commercial and political prospects' – followed by dinner and a discussion on the Interchange Panel report (on the interchange of staff between the civil service and other employers). There was a final session on the Saturday morning on 'Controversial issues in corporate governance'. Each session was introduced by a public sector representative and a private sector participant and took place in a circle of easy chairs as previously too.²⁵ As shown in Table 2, those present remained key representatives of the corporate and mandarin elites and the numbers involved had not changed either. By 2004 the conference was shorter – a dinner followed by a full day of discussions - but otherwise remained the same.²⁶

Table 2 Participants at the 1997 Spring Sunningdale conference

PUBLIC SECTOR		PRIVATE ENTERPRISE	
Sir Anthony Battishill	Inland Revenue	John Browne	BP
Ann Bowtell	Dept. of Social Security	George Bull	Grand Metropolitan
Sir Patrick Brown	Dept. of Transport	Peter Davis	Prudential
Sir Terence Burns	Treasury	Sir Richard Evans	British Aerospace
Sir Robin Butler	Cabinet Office (co-chair)	Niall FitzGerald	Unilever
Sir John Coles	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	Sir Ronald Hampel	ICI
Sir Russell Hillhouse	Scottish Office	Peter Job	Reuters
Rachel Lomax	Welsh Office	Sir Sydney	Zeneca

		Lipworth	
Barbara Mills	Crown Prosecution Service	Sir Colin Marshall	CBI President
Richard Mottram	Ministry of Defence	Sir Brian Moffat	British Steel
Hayden Phillips	Dept. of National Heritage	Sir Bob Reid	London Electricity
Michael Scholar	Dept. of Trade and Industry	Sir Nigel Rudd	Williams Holdings
Andrew Turnbull	Dept. of the Environment	Peter Smith	Coopers & Lybrand
Sir Nigel Wicks	Treasury	Brian Staples	United Utilities
Richard Wilson	Home Office	Robert Wilson	RTZ

Source: FoI request 316964, released November 2012.

Importance of Spring Sunningdale

Contemporary lack of coverage of Spring Sunningdale does not mean that it was unimportant: it was an omission caused by ignorance not because of its insignificance. These meetings' importance can be illustrated in a number of ways. First, there is their longevity. Senior civil servants and major company chairs and CEOs would not have attended if it was not found to be of value and the conference would have quickly been wound up rather than lasting as long as it has. Having constructed a dataset of attendees from available records covering 1963-1971 and 1986-2004 (except 2001), it is clear that over 40 per cent of attendees at Spring Sunningdale conferences went to more than one. Table 3 sets out the most frequent attendees on the public sector and private sector sides: they are clearly the cream of the mandarin class and of the captains of industry. As might be expected given the smaller pool of mandarins, the most frequent attendees came from the civil service side.

Table 3 Ten most frequent attendees on each side at Spring Sunningdale conferences 1963-71 and 1986 to 2004 (except 2001)

PUBLIC SECTOR			PRIVATE SECTOR		
Sir Peter Gregson	Perm Secretary, Energy 1985-89, DTI 1989-96	11	Sir John Egan	Chief Exec BAA 1990-99, Chairman MEPC 1998-2000, Chairman Inchcape 2000- 06, CBI President 2002-04	7
Sir William Armstrong	Joint Perm Secretary, Treasury 1962-68, Head of the Home Civil Service and Perm Secretary, Civil Service Department 1968-74	9	Sir Iain Vallance	Chief Exec BT, 1986-95, Chairman BT 1987-2001	6
Sir Clive Whitmore	Perm Secretary, Ministry of Defence 1983-88, Home Office 1988-94	9	Lord Sterling	Chair P&O 1983-2005	6
Sir Robin Butler	2nd Secretary, Treasury 1985-87, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service 1988-98	8	Niall FitzGerald	Chair and CEO Unilever 1996-2004	6
Sir Russell Hillhouse	Perm Secretary Scottish Office 1988-98	8	Sir Archibald Forbes	Chairman Spillers 1965-68, President Spillers 1969-80, Chairman Midland Bank 1964-74	5
Sir Richard Mottram	2nd Secretary, Cabinet Office 1992-95, Perm Secretary, Ministry of Defence 1995-98, Dept Environment, Transport, and the Regions 1998-2001, Transport, Local Government and the Regions 2001-02, Work and Pensions 2002-05	8	Sir Peter Davis	Chief Exec and Chairman Reed International 156-94, Chief Exec Prudential 1995-2000, CEO Sainsburys 2000-04	5

Sir Andrew Turnbull	2nd Secretary, Treasury 1993-94, Perm Secretary, Dept of the Environment 1994-98, Treasury, 1998-2002, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service 2002-05	8	Sir John Banham	CBI Director-General 1987-92	5
Sir Richard Wilson	Perm Secretary Dept of the Environment 1992-94, Home Office 1994-97, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service 1998-2002	7	Sir Michael Angus	Chairman Unilever 1986-92, CBI President 1992-94, Chairman Whitbread 1992-2000	5
Sir Douglas Allen	2nd Secretary, Treasury 1963-66, Perm Secretary Home Office 1966-72	6	Sir Clive Thompson	Chief Executive, Rentokil 1982-2002, Chairman 2002-04, CBI President 1998-2000	5
Sir Terence Burns	Perm Secretary Treasury 1991-98	6	Lord Young	Previously Conservative minister, Exec. Chairman Cable & Wireless, 1990-1995, President Institute of Directors 1993-2002	4

Source: Dataset constructed from various TNA and MRC files and the freedom of information release.

Other evidence of the perceived value of these occasions is also available, first in the attitudes of the organisers and, secondly, in the comments made afterwards by the participants. The organisers may not have had to spend a great deal of time preparing for Sunningdale but it was taken seriously with Steering Committee meetings at various points in the year to reflect on past experience and to plan the topics and speakers for the coming meeting. In particular, both sides were keen to make sure that only good quality individuals attended, a time-consuming process. On the business side, Archibald Forbes took on this task for ten years and even when civil servants recognised that his contribution at Sunningdale was beginning to wane, they recognised the importance of his contribution in ensuring the selection of appropriate individuals.²⁷

In addition, the value of Spring Sunningdale was clear from the comments made afterwards by participants. From the very beginning there was a constant stream of praise from both civil servants and from the representatives of private industry. The responses of two businessmen in 1963 having been at the first meeting were typical: 'I found it very interesting and extremely worthwhile'; and 'The conference was extremely interesting and I am quite sure very useful and it was, of course, conducted in the most congenial surroundings'.²⁸ Over 30 years later the same sentiment remained: 'Sunningdale was, as always, a most stimulating couple of days and I much appreciated being asked to participate. It is a forum which has worked extremely well over the ten years that I have been involved and I certainly value my invitation'.²⁹ Perhaps most effusive was Sir Alexander Glen, the Arctic explorer and chairman of H. Clarkson & Co. , 'Having attended quite a number of weekend courses both in this country and in the States, I would certainly rate this by far the most fascinating I have ever had the good fortune of attending'.³⁰

However, perhaps the most significant evidence was that Spring Sunningdale became the parent of a range of offshoots. A second form of interaction and networking between public servants and private businessmen was created as part of the original initiative behind Spring Sunningdale. It proved slightly harder to get started and so did not run until 1964 but, like Spring Sunningdale, then became an annual institution. ‘The Node’ was ‘a “junior” version of Sunningdale’ in the eyes of Armstrong and Forbes.³¹ Nevertheless, the format was different from Sunningdale, although it again involved bringing businessmen and civil servants together. ‘The Node’ was so named because, apart from its very first year, it took place at the Shell-Mex B.P. Staff college of that name. The course lasted for about two weeks during the summer and there was a director of studies – in 1969 it was the historian Asa Briggs. There were 22 participants that year, 11 from private business, 10 from the civil service and one from the nationalised industries. Like Spring Sunningdale, its format did develop over time but, again, remained remarkably consistent, certainly into the 1990s, by which time it was called the Summer Node, although it did not always take place at the Node any more. By then there was also a Winter Node – a weekend much like Sunningdale which began in 1987 because the general election made the timing awkward for the Summer Node – and, the most recent innovation, a Young Node for ‘young high fliers’ – a two-week programme – which began in 1991.³²

All of this - its longevity and stability in an era of reform, the praise it received from participants and the offshoots that have been created both at the outset and since – suggests that Spring Sunningdale was a forum valued by both senior civil servants and leading business people. Now we can turn to consider why this was the case.

Explaining the value attached to Spring Sunningdale

One reason to explain the enduring value attached to Spring Sunningdale has already been mentioned above by the participants: it was intellectually stimulating. However, there were two other related aspects which were consistently highlighted as the aims of Spring Sunningdale and the Node and which were also referred to by participants. One was the desire to improve mutual understanding.³³ Armstrong often made this point in his invitation letter to civil servants: these conferences ‘provide a valuable opportunity for exchanging ideas and experience with people in commerce and industry’.³⁴ Robin Butler, Armstrong’s 1990s equivalent, felt similarly: ‘These conferences are valuable, not least in enabling your side and ours to spend some time together and get a sense for the way each other thinks’, and businessmen expressed similar views.³⁵

Indeed, this was one of the initial motives for the suggestion to create these sorts of events. Both Spring Sunningdale and the Node arose out of an informal dinner party in August 1962 attended by six of the most senior civil servants and six equally senior businessmen to discuss the relationship between the civil service and private enterprise and how it might be improved.³⁶ The initiative for the dinner came from Sir Norman Kipping, the Director-General of the Federation of British Industries, and its purpose was:

To dream up methods of exposing industrial and commercial management on the one hand and the administrative civil service on the other to one another, with a view to avoiding the loss of all the mutual understanding and respect which grew up through the many contacts during the war.

Several people have spoken to me about this, in particular Nutcombe Hume who unfortunately cannot be there, and several of them have emphasised that they are not concerned only or even mainly about the top-level people, but about much younger men lower down, who simply do not meet out at all out of school.³⁷

Certainly there had been a huge explosion in the number of businessmen who were incorporated into the government machine during the war, including Archibald Forbes who joined the Ministry of Aircraft Production.³⁸ The vast majority returned to business, just as many academics returned to universities. However, many maintained the personal links built up during the war, but by the early 1960s many of these individuals were reaching retirement.

Possible solutions to this problem suggested by Kipping in 1962 included staff interchange, some sort of staff college, the formation of dinner groups etc., and the formation of joint committees. Following the meeting Kipping suggested that a weekend conference of fifteen senior civil servants and fifteen representatives of private enterprise might meet to discuss the matter further. This proposal was endorsed by the then joint heads of the civil service and it was from this that what became Spring Sunningdale emerged and, in turn, the Node course.³⁹

However, there was a second, related, motive behind Kipping's initiative. The quote above continued, 'It is possible to see very clearly the growth of those extreme forms of cageyness and even distrust which make for the worst kind of personal relationships and this we want to try to correct', and his proposals were, 'based on the idea that meeting together and discussing together are the best available methods of encouraging the development of mutual respect, and if you can throw in as well

drinking together, so much the better'.⁴⁰ Or, as Sir Nutcombe Hume put it on learning of these developments, they were to try 'to recreate war-time camaraderie'.⁴¹ In a similar vein, one senior civil servant later emphasised the role of 'hospitality, meals and receptions' in improving communication between civil servants and business. She continued, 'My experience is that there is no doubt that you learn a great deal more about the facts of business, the constraints, opportunities, attitudes and values, across a table which is essentially a social occasion, than if you confine yourself to formal meetings'.⁴²

Such informal and relaxed social interaction was viewed as extremely valuable. Indeed, participants at Spring Sunningdale regularly commented on the opportunity offered to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones.⁴³ The Node was less about renewing contacts as making new friends and that the main advantage was the prospect of a longer-term pay-off. One participant put it like this:

The main advantage of this kind of course, which is directed at a relatively small number of individuals each year, is the prospect of a longer-term pay-off insofar as at least some of the members may be expected to rise to top positions in their field of activity.⁴⁴

Indeed, the explanatory background note for the 1979 Node course made this explicit:

The main object of the course is to establish long-term contacts between the civil service and industry through a mutual understanding of each other's problems and methods of work.... Contacts made at the Node usually endure. Most courses have regular reunions, sometimes two or three times a year. Even

more important, regular contacts are often maintained through the medium of problems which are related to the two sectors.⁴⁵

Clearly mutual understanding and the creation of a lasting network of contacts was of value to the participants and it might be argued should have led to improved decision-making both in Whitehall and in business. However, to what extent was this opportunity exploited by the participants and how close was the relationship between this business elite and its Whitehall counterpart?

What did the two sides gain?

a) Gains for business

Since the state is potentially the greatest influence on the business environment clearly any opportunity to understand and to influence civil servants' thinking was advantageous to business.⁴⁶ However, although the topics discussed at Spring Sunningdale are known, there is no evidence of the content of the discussions so it is hard to evidence the impact of the discussions. An issue where it is possible to say more is that these talks were bilateral, thereby excluding trade unions. Clearly, occasions like Spring Sunningdale and the Node offered immediate and long-term advantages to business given that there was no equivalent bilateral meeting between civil servants and trade unionists. Whether trade unionists should be invited to Spring Sunningdale was discussed in the first years of its existence. Participants at this time regularly commented that the presence of trade unionists would have been useful.⁴⁷

Then at the 1969 Spring Sunningdale conference there was a concerted call for trade union attendance:

Almost from the outset, it was noted that the unions have never been represented at these conferences and this was almost universally regretted.... Archie Forbes and I had to explain that there had been more than one approach (although not in the last year or so) to George Woodcock [General Secretary of the TUC] about this but that he had not proved receptive; possibly some fault lay with us in that I am not sure that the unions were clearly offered full parity of representation. It was certainly recognised last weekend that such parity would be desirable from the conference's point of view and probably essential from the TUC point of view. It was also recognised that such representation would create a new kind of conference and that we might need to see how best this could be arranged, possibly outside the procedure for the Spring Sunningdale conference... and, at least in the first instance, ad hoc. But in any event, it was thought that it would usefully have a similar prime objective, namely the provision of an informal occasion for senior people on all sides to meet each other, with the discussion of particular subjects providing simply the focus for discussion.⁴⁸

Perhaps reflecting why it was seen as so important in 1969 to involve trade unionists in Spring Sunningdale, this was not a propitious time for such a venture given the high tensions between the TUC and the Labour government over the latter's proposals to reform industrial relations following the publication of the controversial White Paper *In Place of Strife* that January.⁴⁹ Armstrong was advised to delay any approach to the TUC until after its autumn conference as there was no chance of a favourable response before then.⁵⁰ The issue was raised again after the conference, though there was some uncertainty about how best to proceed, and in November the TUC and CBI

had their own bilateral meeting, but at the next Spring Sunningdale steering committee meeting there was no reference to trade union participation and the issue was left untouched during 1970.⁵¹ Thereafter the issue was mentioned occasionally but Spring Sunningdale remained a bilateral conference solely for public servants and business people.

In addition to the opportunity provided by Spring Sunningdale for a general pro-business agenda to be presented to senior civil servants without interference, it also offered an opportunity for individual companies to exploit. It has been argued that such corporate political activity is important in achieving and sustaining a company's competitive advantage.⁵² Having access to such senior civil servants and networking with them increased the capabilities and resources of the companies concerned in absolute terms and relative to other companies.⁵³ In 1994 in her letter of thanks for Sunningdale Baroness O'Cathain added, 'I have already taken advantage of the fact that we got to know people at Sunningdale in smoothing out a little local difficulty – much quicker than would have been prior to Sunningdale!'⁵⁴ Similarly, Ian McAllister (Ford Motor Company) noted, 'Of course the contacts will be extremely useful in the future'.⁵⁵

More serious was the evidence found by Fooks et al. that Martin Broughton of British American Tobacco Industries (BAT) was briefed about using the Spring Sunningdale conference in 2000 to put the company's line to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Chris Kelly.⁵⁶ In preparing the brief it was noted that this three-day 'pow-wow' at Sunningdale offered 'plenty of time for talking one-on-one for key stakeholders'.⁵⁷ Broughton wanted to know the history of BAT contacts, particularly on 'the scientific issues', with those civil servants to be present as he 'was

keen to break the impasse with Mr Kelly'. Following Sunningdale, Broughton wrote to Kelly:

I very much appreciated the opportunity for our brief conversation at the Spring Sunningdale and in particular your willingness to consider how we might take the discussion forward.

As I mentioned when we met, we have been giving a great deal of thought as to how we might engage more constructively with regulators, legislators, public health authorities and the academic community to address the issues surrounding our products.

I very much regret that the co-operative efforts of the past between the UK tobacco industry and the government have in recent years become all too often characterised by conflict and mutual misunderstanding. I would particularly appreciate an opportunity to learn more from you about the major concerns and priorities for the Department of Health on tobacco, to help us understand the concerns in more depth, and to help inform our own thinking about how we might be able to contribute appropriately to positive solutions.⁵⁸

That the conference offered the opportunity for such a politically sensitive company as BAT to talk in private about building a relationship with the head of the department responsible for the government's health policy well illustrates how advantageous Sunningdale could be for the individual companies that participated.

Research would also tend to suggest that Sunningdale should also have been of benefit to the individual business people involved. Social network analysis highlights the implications of being at the heart of a network and on the business side

most of the frequent attendees were part of Useem has called the *Inner Circle*, those at the heart of the network of business interlocks in Britain.⁵⁹ More than being central, those that attended Spring Sunningdale spanned the boundary between business and the civil service.⁶⁰ As such, they filled a key function as social brokers that bridged two separate networks (within business and within Whitehall). Maclean et al. have argued that such brokerage is particularly important in Britain where there are relatively weak ties within the corporate elite.⁶¹

b) Gains for civil servants

If businessmen gained privileged and exclusive access to senior civil servants through the Spring Sunningdale conferences, what did these senior civil servants gain from these occasions? First, networks often have the feature of homophily, that is sustained networks tend to be made up of ‘people like us’.⁶² Sunningdale offered an opportunity to find businessmen with similar values.⁶³ This could be useful in providing potential members of public authorities and committees, something for which there always seemed to be a shortage of suitable candidates. Thus in the 1990s much was made of the appointment of a businessman as an ‘outsider’ to the civil service’s Senior Appointments Selection Committee. This ‘outsider’ was Sir Michael Angus, organiser of Sunningdale as CBI President in the early 1990s and frequent attendee (see Table 3). As has been commented, ‘SASC is trying to have it both ways; on the one “hand they are claiming there is an outsider within their number, but on the other hand it is a chap we know who will not rock the boat”’.⁶⁴

Of more direct personal benefit to senior civil servants was the creation of contacts in business which might lead to appointments on their retirement from the civil service at the age of sixty. After the Second World War a number of senior civil

servants did move to the boards of major companies. Sir Leslie Rowan from the Treasury became chairman of Vickers and attended Spring Sunningdale in that capacity. Sir Richard Powell, who had been Permanent Secretary at the Board of Trade, became the first individual to attend Spring Sunningdale as both a civil servant and then as a businessman in 1971.⁶⁵ Much has been written about the probity of civil servants taking such business appointments – the ‘revolving door’ between business and Whitehall - and of the value to major companies of having an ex-Whitehall mandarin on the board.⁶⁶ Certainly, there would appear to be a demand from business for such individuals: Antony Part was apparently offered three jobs on his last day in the civil service, accepting two.⁶⁷ Such non-executive directors are seen to play a key role in providing a bridge between the company board and other elites and acting as ‘conduits of social influence’.⁶⁸ As one civil servant who moved into the private sector put it, his advantage over competitor companies was not getting favourable treatment, but having ‘a way in’, ‘I knew the right person to phone and understood how the organisation works, its dynamics, motivation’.⁶⁹ All of the civil servants listed as the most frequent participants at Spring Sunningdale in Table 3 went on to hold positions as company chairmen or non-executive directors, though, for some, this was just one of a range of retirement activities.

However, it is the case of William Armstrong himself that stands out in this respect. In the early seventies Armstrong reached the height of his influence, which exceeded that of other heads of the civil service.⁷⁰ However, at the start of 1974 he had a complete mental and physical breakdown and decided to take early retirement.⁷¹ Having become closely linked with the 1970-74 Conservative government’s economic policies, he was unpopular with Labour MPs. They were incensed in April 1974 because he was given special dispensation to retire early and take up a post in private

business after about six months whereas the existing code of practice laid down that senior civil servants had to wait two years before they were allowed to do this. It is not the special dispensation from the Prime Minister which is relevant here, rather it is that he was taking a directorship at the Midland Bank with a view to becoming the bank's chairman in 1975.⁷² What is relevant here and has received no attention previously was that the bank's retiring chairman was none other than Sir Archibald Forbes with whom Armstrong had worked with in organising and chairing Spring Sunningdale.

Spring Sunningdale and the closeness of relations between the corporate elite and the mandarin elite

A number of authors agree with Useem and Mitchell that there has been an inner circle of business people who have ready and regular access to senior civil servants, as such substantiating the idea of a 'power elite' in Britain.⁷³ Useem points to 'the frequent, casual contact among London managing directors and senior civil servants', continuing, 'Luncheons, receptions, and dinners are continuous, and weekend retreats add special intimacy'.⁷⁴ Similarly, one Labour minister referred to the 'atmospheric pollution' of the civil service by contact with business: 'It's the way they drink together, play golf, or go shooting beforehand [before civil servants take jobs in business]. Nothing is ever said directly; but the civil servants know what to expect'.⁷⁵ Others, including civil servants, have referred to good relations between the civil service and business.⁷⁶

It has been shown here that Spring Sunningdale has played a role in creating and maintaining personal ties between individual business people and individual civil servants. In that respect, they helped to make the boundary between Whitehall and the

rest of society more permeable than is conventionally presented in the image of ‘arm’s length government’. However, while the contact between business and the civil service may have been in relative terms far greater than with trade unionists and other parts of society and that this has given business a privileged position, one needs to be careful not to exaggerate the extent of interaction. After all, the dominant critique of the civil service since the late 1950s has been its’ closed, isolated and monastic tendencies – the Whitehall village of Heclo and Wildavsky - and that senior civil servants - the ‘cardinals of bureaucracy’ of Lord Rothschild – reflect these tendencies most of all.⁷⁷ Similarly, although some talk about the close relationship between mandarins and the captains of industry, others, including some of those involved, focus on the degree of separation. Thus Digby Jones, Director-General of the CBI 2000-06 and an attendee at Sunningdale, has commented that ‘business and the government do not pull the boat in the same direction in this country’, while Sir Peter Carey, a permanent secretary and another attendee at Sunningdale, saw his job as ‘building bridges’ because ‘industry understands very little about how government works’, continuing, ‘I think in this way we break down what is at the moment, it seems to me, a cultural barrier between the private sector and the public sector, which is highly undesirable and works against the national interest’.⁷⁸

Turning to Sunningdale itself, the original initiative in the early 1960s was to respond to a fear that ‘mutual understanding is being replaced by mutual suspicion’.⁷⁹ One industrialist at that time felt that he was ‘constantly encountering a feeling of “we” and “they” among fellow industrialists when relations with Whitehall were mentioned’.⁸⁰ Again, much of the praise for Spring Sunningdale and the Node and the value attached to them was because such contact was so rare.⁸¹ If top businessmen really were insiders one would not expect an annual weekend like Spring Sunningdale

to be talked about in quite the glowing terms that it was. Here it is relevant that one of the notes drafted for the 1962 dinner which led to these developments suggested that one of the problems was that ‘business life in this country is very “compartmentalised” i.e. as between Whitehall, industry, the City, and the educational world and there is insufficient serious appreciation of each other’s life and problems’.⁸² Over thirty years later a participant at the Node course commented that the course would remain a stimulating experience ‘whilst the UK remains such a compartmentalised society’.⁸³ The use of the same word to describe British society is striking. It was because of such compartmentalisation that these meetings remained of such perceived value to the participants. Business people were insiders more than trade unionists but there were limits to what being an insider meant.

Reasons for secrecy

Particularly in the early years it was this issue of not being seen to privilege business over trade unions that explains why there is so little knowledge of Spring Sunningdale despite it taking place for so long. Certainly, that it remained secret was not an accident: there was a conscious effort not to advertise its existence. In December 1962 a joint meeting was held to discuss the first conference (held at Ditchley). At the meeting Laurence Helsby, the new head of the civil service, noted that he hoped that the conference would not attract any public notice.⁸⁴ Accordingly, Norman Kipping wrote to the provost at Ditchley before the conference making clear that not only was it a ‘quite private and informal gathering’ but that, ‘we do not want to attract any press or other kind of notice’.⁸⁵ In addition, a press briefing was prepared just in case the press found out about it. The note quoted the Plowden Committee *Report on the Control of Public Expenditure* which had recommended that the civil service could

‘learn from the experience in the private sector, and vice versa’.⁸⁶ This appears to have been more of a subterfuge than a true explanation since there had been no mention of the *Report* in any of the discussions between business and the civil service that led to the meeting and had no basis as one of the reasons for why business had approached civil servants in 1962.

Each year a press briefing was drafted in case of press questioning but the meetings remained ‘entirely unnoticed by the Press’ into the 1970s.⁸⁷ The desire of those involved to keep the existence of Spring Sunningdale secret remained. Thus, when the historian Alan Bullock was asked as convenor of the Node conference to draft an article for *The Times* to publicise the course, Archibald Forbes was worried that it would lead to unwanted publicity for Spring Sunningdale, and when William Armstrong was interviewed by Graham Turner, for his book *Business in Britain*, Armstrong declined to mention either the Node or Spring Sunningdale because it was policy to keep Sunningdale private.⁸⁸ This was even though he was aware that in the light of the criticisms of the Fulton *Report* mentioning these events would have presented a much better story of the relations between civil servants and business people.

Why were Sunningdale conferences kept so secret? They ‘have always deliberately been kept quiet’, wrote one civil servant, ‘because of the risk of misunderstanding politically and vis à vis the trade unions’.⁸⁹ However, concerns about trade union reaction cannot have been the only reason for the secrecy: as the position of trade unions has weakened over time and the status of business risen so this explanation becomes less persuasive. Just as Armstrong did not publicise the meetings so they remained secret through the 1980s despite the many criticisms made of the civil service and its need to learn from business. It might have assuaged some

of the criticisms of the isolation of the higher civil service if the existence of Spring Sunningdale had been made public. Indeed, while the Prime Minister knew of the meetings and had to endorse the expenditure, other ministers seem to have been as ignorant of their existence as the general public.

This would suggest that Spring Sunningdale should be seen as a sign of the continuation of 'club government' by senior civil servants and that the changes after 1979 towards greater formal regulation in Whitehall and transparency did not completely overturn this tendency. That secretive, informal twilight world continued into the twenty-first century hidden by a cloak of 'non-publicity and virtual non-existence'.⁹⁰ There were limits to the revolution in Whitehall.⁹¹

Conclusion

This article has brought into the open a previously virtually unknown form of interaction between business and government in post-war Britain. In so doing it has sought to explain the significance of Spring Sunningdale and why it has endured so long in the form that it has. It has been shown that it brought together leading business people and top civil servants in the same bilateral way for a surprisingly long period. This suggests that both parties viewed these links as valuable and successful despite the changing environment in which they took place. Making and sustaining contacts of this sort and building a better understanding of each other were seen as important and necessary. Equally, these arrangements smack of social elitism in the way that trade unions were not party to them at any point over many years, even when there was a Labour government. This gave big business preferential access to Whitehall compared to small firms and trade unions. It is hard to quantify or illustrate the impact of this but sustained as it was over such a long period it certainly cannot have done

any harm to the cause of big business and examples have been given of how these business people and civil servants were able to use links created or developed at Spring Sunningdale for their benefit.

Nevertheless, it would be overstating the case to suggest that this epitomised a cozy relationship between business and the top of the civil service in some absolute sense. As has been shown, business-government relations, and British society more generally, in this period could be depicted as compartmentalised. Indeed, it was precisely because of this compartmentalisation that such a meeting – just one weekend each year – was perceived to hold such value. This does not smack of an inner circle of business people closely integrated with a bureaucratic elite or, more generally, of a coherent power elite. Related to this, the nature of the business-government interaction at Spring Sunningdale adds to our understanding of corporate political activity. The conventional approach to studying this has been to view the business elite as those at the heart of the network of interlocking directorates.⁹² However, many of those businessmen who were the most frequent participants at Spring Sunningdale were known more for their direction of single companies – Lord Sterling, Iain Vallance, Niall FitzGerald and Peter Davis are examples – yet clearly from their presence at Spring Sunningdale they should be seen as key elements of any inner circle that existed in British business.⁹³ This suggests that while the notion of interlocking directorates is a key aspect in understanding the political activities of business, it may be misleading to focus exclusively on this aspect. There is a danger that trying to explore corporate political activities solely through the idea of interlocking directorates may be overly narrow in the way that it frames business politics.

However, perhaps the most significant finding is the continuity that is illustrated by this case. The longevity of Spring Sunningdale, the lack of change in its structure and format show that revolutionary as the transformation in business politics may have been in many areas since the 1980s, here is an important example of sustained continuity. Moran has argued that the Thatcherite transformation destroyed the CBI's insider status.⁹⁴ This may well be true for its relationship with some Conservative ministers but its relationship with senior civil servants did not change in the same way. It was the CBI President, or sometimes his proxy, who acted as the key organiser on the business side and who would select the invitees from business. Similarly, while the case of Martin Broughton trying to influence government policy came from the 2000s, it would be dangerous to assume on this one piece of evidence that this represented a shift towards Spring Sunningdale being dominated by the large companies more than previously. Big business had always been those given preferential access right from the start in 1963 and there is no evidence to suggest that those present acted any differently in exploiting the opportunities offered by Spring Sunningdale in the 2000s than they did in the 1960s.

Turning to the mandarins, again there is no evidence to support the conventional account of the weakening of their position, rather it is continuity that stands out. The example of Spring Sunningdale shows that the twilight world of club government was not eradicated by the changes introduced since the 1980s, as Moran has suggested. To the contrary, it continued as if nothing had changed. That Spring Sunningdale could remain as good as secret to this day raises doubts about the degree of transparency that has been introduced. Moreover, civil servants were willing and able to keep the existence of Spring Sunningdale out of the public domain rather than using its existence to deflect public approbation at the isolation of the higher civil

service from business. This was one area where mandarins were able to retain their autonomy and power. Likewise, the comments of business people remained as enthusiastic about the experience and value of Spring Sunningdale in bringing them together with senior civil servants as they had been in the 1960s.

Finally, the example of Spring Sunningdale illustrates that historians, including business historians, still have much to contribute to key debates about postwar Britain. Much remains unexplored despite the relative wealth of archives and quantity of contemporary social science research undertaken at the time. Historical research on corporate political activities is starting to flourish and adding cases like Spring Sunningdale increases our understanding of just how complex and diverse interactions between business and government have been and still are.

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¹ Coen, et al., ‘Overview’, 1. See also Heemskerk, et al., ‘Fading of the State’, 253.

² Lindblom, *Politics and Markets*. See for example Hillman, et al., ‘Corporate Political Activity’.

³ Monbiot, *Captive State*; Dahl, *Who Governs?*; Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* are some well-known examples.

⁴ Flinders, et al. (eds), *Oxford Handbook*. Also see Coen et al., ‘Overview’, 14.

⁵ Hillman, et al., 'Corporate Political Activity'; Lawton, et al., 'Corporate Political Activity'.

⁶ Moran, *Business, Politics, and Society*; Wilks, *Political Power*; Wilson, *Business and Politics*; Grant with Sargent, *Business and Politics*.

⁷ For an overview of the general situation see Kipping, 'Business-Government Relations'. Recent exceptions are Phillips, 'Business and the Limited Reconstruction' and Morelli et al., 'Managing'.

⁸ Balogh, 'Apotheosis'; Fabian Group, *Administrators; Report* [Fulton] *Committee*; Hoskyns, 'Whitehall and Westminster'.

⁹ Sampson, *Who Runs This Place?* 111.

¹⁰ Kavanagh, 'Changes'; Burnham and Pyper, *Britain's Modernised Civil Service*; Heywood, 'Integrity Management'.

¹¹ Wilks, *Political Power*, 113.

¹² Marquand, 'Club Government', 19-36; Moran, *British Regulatory State*; Hood, et al., *Regulation Inside Government*.

¹³ Moran, 'Company of Strangers', 465; and idem, 'Representing', 71.

¹⁴ Mitchell, *Conspicuous Corporation*, 157; and Useem, *Inner Circle*.

¹⁵ Wilks, *Political Power*, 64-70.

¹⁶ Corfield, 'An Industrialist's View', 91 and 94.

¹⁷ Mueller, 'A Civil Servant's View', 105; Shonfield, *Modern Capitalism*; Heclo and Wildavsky, *Private Government*.

¹⁸ Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC) MSS200/C/2004/77/42, Michael Angus to Robin Biggam (BICC), 22 October 1992.

¹⁹ Lowe, *Official History*, 446, n146 and 462 n49.

²⁰ National Audit Office, *Managing Risks*, 26; Fooks, et al., 'Corporate Social Responsibility'.

²¹ Freedom of Information (FoI) request 316964 was lodged with the Cabinet Office asking for the programmes and attendees of the Spring Sunningdale meetings since 1983 and whether the meetings still took place. Material was supplied for some years up to 2004 but some was refused and no answer was given as to whether the meetings still occurred. Subsequent research has shown leading civil servants claiming expenses in 2009 and 2010 to attend Spring Sunningdale but there is no information as to whether the format remained the same [see transparency data on expenses available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>].

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- ²²O'Toole, *Ideal*, 106; Bird, *Civil Service College*, ix; The UK National Archives (hereafter TNA) T249/233, C. Gilbraith, 'Sunningdale conference 25th-27th April, 1969', Annex A. Two industrialists (Lord Melchett, Chairman of the British Steel Corporation, and Sir John Wall, of International computers Ltd.) had to drop out at the last minute. Usually there was someone from a nationalised industry and someone from commerce or finance, and sometimes a government scientist.
- ²³ TNA T249/234, S.P. Osmond (Civil Service Department) to William Armstrong, 'Civil service attendance at the Spring Sunningdale Conference', 15 January 1970.
- ²⁴ FoI request 316964.
- ²⁵ MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/43, Sir Bryan Nicholson to Nigel Rudd, 17 January 1996.
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- ²⁸ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, John Davies (then with Shell-Mex) to John Gough (Secretary of the Federation of British Industries), 4 March 1963 and Maurice Laing to Gough, 4 March 1963.
- ²⁹ MRC MSS200/C/2004/77, (illegible) to Sir Bryan Nicholson (President, CBI), 16 March 1995.
- ³⁰ TNA BA21/19, Sir Alexander Glen to Armstrong, 27 April 1970. His extraordinary life is set out in his memoirs: Glen, *Footholds*.
- ³¹ TNA BT296/522, Armstrong to Forbes, 13 November 1969.
- ³² MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/42, 'Node and Spring Sunningdale Steering Committee: Note of a meeting held on 11 November 1992'; and Bird, *Civil Service College*, 47-8.
- ³³ Grant, 'Overview', 80.
- ³⁴ For example TNA T249/233, Armstrong, draft letter of invitation to Spring Sunningdale, 12 February 1969.
- ³⁵ MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/43, Butler to Michael Angus, 21 March 1994. For an example of a businessman expressing this view see MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/42, Sir Patrick Sheehy (Chairman British American Tobacco Industries) to Angus, 18 October 1993.
- ³⁶ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, 'Informal Dinner Party – Thursday August 2nd'.
- ³⁷ Ibid, Kipping to Sir Robert Sinclair, 1 August 1962.
- ³⁸ See Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 88-119.

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- ³⁹ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, Kipping, 'The Civil Service and Private Enterprise', 21 August 1962 and Frank Lee (Joint Permanent Secretary to the Treasury) to Kipping, 22 August 1962.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, Kipping to Sir Robert Sinclair, 1 August 1962.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, Hume to Kipping, 18 September 1962.
- ⁴² Mueller, 'Civil Servant's View', 105-06.
- ⁴³ For example TNA BA21/19, Armstrong to Forbes, 28 April 1970; TNA 249/233, Frank Cooper (Ministry of Defence) to Armstrong, 8 May 1969; and MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/43, Ian McAllister (Chairman and Managing Director, Ford Motor Co. Ltd.) to Angus, 24 March 1994.
- ⁴⁴ TNA BT296/823, J. Gill (Department of Trade and Industry), 'The Node Course 1974', 3 July 1974.
- ⁴⁵ TNA BT296/823, 'The Public Service/Private Enterprise Course: "The Node"', undated but December 1978.
- ⁴⁶ Coen and Grant, 'Managing Business', 19.
- ⁴⁷ For example MRC MSS200/F/3/O3/5/18, S.T. Graham, 'Second Course for Senior Personnel from the Public Service and Private Enterprise', March 1965; and TNA T249/233, Armstrong to Sir William Nield, 14 May 1969.
- ⁴⁸ TNA T249/233, Armstrong to Sir Denis Barnes (Permanent Secretary, Department of Employment), 29 April 1969.
- ⁴⁹ *In Place of Strife: A Policy for Industrial Relations* (Cmnd. 3888, January 1969). See Tyler, "'Victims of Our History"?'.
- ⁵⁰ TNA T249/233, Armstrong to Sir William Nield (Permanent Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs), 14 May 1969.
- ⁵¹ TNA T249/234, C.M. Regan, '1970 Spring Sunningdale conference', 10 November 1969; 'Week-end Talks help to Heal CBI-TUC Rift', *Financial Times*, 20 October 1969; and TNA T249/234, 'Note of a Meeting of the Joint committee on the Node and the Spring Sunningdale Conference on Monday 12 January 1970'.
- ⁵² Lawton, et al., 'Corporate Political Activity'.
- ⁵³ Oliver and Holzinger, 'Effectiveness'.
- ⁵⁴ MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/43, O'Cathain (Managing Director, Barbican Centre) to Angus, 29 March 1994.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid, McAllister to Angus, 24 March 1994.

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- ⁵⁶ Fooks et al., 'Corporate Social Responsibility'.
- ⁵⁷ Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, University of California, San Francisco (hereafter LTDL), Simon Millson to various, 'Martin Broughton and Sunningdale', 12 May 2000 [<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/rez13a99/pdf>, accessed 11 April 2013].
- ⁵⁸ LTDL, Broughton to Kelly, 30 May 2000 [<http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/vxp53a99/pdf>, accessed 11 April 2013].
- ⁵⁹ Useem, *Inner Circle*. See also Etzion and Davis, 'Revolving Doors?', 157–163.
- ⁶⁰ Maclean et al., *Business Elites*, 189; Martin, 'Consider the Source!', 58.
- ⁶¹ Maclean et al., *Business Elites*, 192–4 and 243. More generally see Burt, *Brokerage*.
- ⁶² MacPherson et al., 'Birds of a Feather'; and Jackson, *Social and Economic Networks*, 68.
- ⁶³ Useem, *Inner Circle*, 8; Richards, *Civil Service*, 67. Comment was sometimes made on the large measure of agreement on the issues discussed at Spring Sunningdale. For example see MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/43, Peter Smith to Nicholson, 15 March 1995.
- ⁶⁴ Richards, 'Appointments', 672.
- ⁶⁵ TNA BA21/19, R. Daly, 'Spring Sunningdale Conference 14–16 May 1971: Notes for Future Conferences', 18 May 1971.
- ⁶⁶ Doig, 'Public Service'; idem, 'Question of Balance'; Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 373–77; Transparency International UK, *Fixing the Revolving Door*.
- ⁶⁷ Doig, 'Public Service', 54; Part, *Making*, 183; Kellner and Crowther-Hunt, *Civil Servants*, 194; Kavanagh and Richards, 'Prime Ministers' 192.
- ⁶⁸ Maclean et al., *Business Elites*, 189; and Sampson, *Changing Anatomy*, 182.
- ⁶⁹ Quoted in Transparency International UK, *Cabs for Hire?*, 16.
- ⁷⁰ Theakston, *Leadership*, 173–201.
- ⁷¹ Wheen, *Strange Days Indeed*, 60–2.
- ⁷² 'Anger over Civil Service Head's Move to Banking', *The Times*, 11 April 1974, 2.
- ⁷³ The idea of a power elite goes back to Mills, *Power Elite*. See also Domhoff, *Power Elite*.
- ⁷⁴ Useem, *Inner Circle*, 88.
- ⁷⁵ Quoted in Kellner and Crowther-Hunt, *Civil Servants*, 199.
- ⁷⁶ For example Hilton Poynton quoted by Barberis, *Elite of the Elite*, 151; Hilton, *City within a State*, 123; Useem and MacCormack, 'Dominant Segment'.

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- ⁷⁷ Barberis, *Elite*, 147; Plowden, *Ministers*, 4; Nicholson, *System*, 481; Heclo and Wildavsky, *Private Government*; Lord Rothschild quoted in Hennessy, *Whitehall*, 240.
- ⁷⁸ Jones quoted in Maclean et al., *Business Elites*, 189; and Carey quoted in Doig, 'Question of Balance', 70.
- ⁷⁹ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, Kipping, 'The Civil Service and Private Enterprise', 21 August 1962.
- ⁸⁰ TNA T249/291, E. Sniders to Sir Harold Caccia (both Foreign Office), 'Contacts between industry and Whitehall', 10 October 1963. The industrialist was Michael Clark, a director at Plessey.
- ⁸¹ TNA BA21/19, Armstrong to Sir Reginald Verdon-Smith (Bristol Aeroplane Co.), 8 May 1970.
- ⁸² MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, Unsigned, 'Notes on Problems of Relationships between Civil Service and Industry', undated but August 1962.
- ⁸³ MRC MSS200/C/2004/77/42, Marianne Neville-Rolfe, 'Summer Node 1993', November 1993.
- ⁸⁴ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/20, Helsby, 'Note for the Record: Ditchley', 12 December 1962.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid, Kipping to H.V. Hodson (Provost, Ditchley Foundation), 19 February 1963.
- ⁸⁶ MRC MSS200/F/3/S2/10/21, M.F.G. Hall (Treasury) to John Gough (FBI Secretary), attached 'Guidance for Speaking to the Press in Response to Enquiries', 25 February 1963. See the *Report of the [Plowden] Committee*, para. 58.
- ⁸⁷ TNA T249/235, C. Gilbraith, 'Sunningdale Conference, 24 to 26 April 1970', April 1970.
- ⁸⁸ TNA T249/292, J. Anson (Treasury) to Osmond, 'Hitchin Course', 11 March 1965; and TNA T249/292, Armstrong to Helsby, 'Public Service/Private Enterprise Courses and Conferences', 14 June 1967. See Graham Turner, *Business in Britain* (London, 1969).
- ⁸⁹ TNA T249/292, Osmond to Louis Petch, 15 June 1967.
- ⁹⁰ Nicholson, *System*, 470.
- ⁹¹ Hood et al., *Regulation Inside Government*, 189.
- ⁹² Mizruchi, *Structure*.
- ⁹³ For a similar finding see Maclean et al., 'Dominant Corporate Agents', 340.
- ⁹⁴ Moran, 'Representing', 71.