

The Development of Environmental Discourse in British Political Manifestos since 1945

英国政党の基本政策宣言（マニフェスト）に
おける環境言説
1945年以降の発展

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INTRODUCTION

A Copernican revolution in our view of the world and mankind's place within it is taking place. In Britain a deepening sense of apprehension about the state of the environment is gradually evolving. Seemingly intractable tragedies like the foot and mouth fiasco and controversies such as the one surrounding the introduction of genetically modified crops are hastening people along the road to a new ecological enlightenment. In the half-century since the end of World War II, problems like these have given rise to what many environmentalists regard as potentially the most significant transformation in British politics since the first tender shoots of parliamentary democracy first took root in the species-rich wetlands of Runnymede. Of potentially more lasting significance than either 80s Thatcherism or New Labour's Third Way, environmental politics looks likely to become as salient a feature of Britain's political cartography as the Magna Carta itself. Slowly and belatedly, and in an uncoordinated and piecemeal fashion, successive governments since 1945 have been responding to the environmental problems (see outline in Appendix) which have been brought to their attention. The challenge before our elected representatives today is a much greater one: whether they can fundamentally readjust our cultural bearings according to an ecocentric rather than an anthropocentric projection and chart a completely new course that leads the ship of state away from the shoals of ecological catastrophe.

It seems that we have become so familiar with parties of all persuasions paying lip-service in their manifestos to the need to govern more greenly in exchange for

our vote that it is difficult, at least for people of my generation, to remember a time when political parties did not greenwash their manifestos like this. But fifty-six years ago, as the British electorate contemplated their options for choosing the first government of the post-war period, how few of them spared a thought for the long-term ecological consequences of the peace and prosperity to which they so justifiably looked forward. Yet the war, with the national spirit of communal effort and self-sacrifice which it engendered, not to mention the rationing which it necessitated and which was still in force, had obliged most of those heading for the polling stations on that summer's day in July 1945 to lead far more thrifty and sustainable lives than most of us today. Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop chain, once observed that it was not the fashionable young women who brought their shampoo bottles back to the shop for refilling but their grandmothers who had lived through a time when every tin and jam jar was a precious commodity to be saved and reused.

What has changed during the past half-century to bring us to the point where, despite knowing so much more about the damage we are doing, we still talk so much about the need for growth — of the economy, of the population, of science and technology? Part of the motivation for this study comes from questions such as these. It was undertaken on the assumption that in democratic societies, elections represent a kind of momentary crystallization of the socio-political totality at a particular point in its development. At such moments, where the form of elections remains largely constant over long periods but the contents are always determined by the unique contemporary conjunction of forces and structures, we can gauge the political temperature of the several aspects of policy which form the basis of government. In this study I shall attempt to investigate the rise of environmentalism in British political discourse through the linguistic analysis of a sequence of party manifestos. I have chosen to focus on manifestos not merely to satisfy my predilection for escapist fiction but because, as a consistent feature of elections, they show many regularities which facilitate diachronic comparison. Of course, once in office politicians are frequently struck by amnesia regarding their pre-election promises or discover that 'events' assume a life of their own in even the most well-regulated administrations. But as succinct diagnoses of the ills of a country and best-case ideologically-flavoured prescriptions of how to effect a cure, manifestos are nevertheless extremely valuable. The question I set out to answer in this paper is: what can a study of elections tell us about when and how during the

post-war years British political discourse began to take on a greener hue? I shall be particularly concerned to discover to what extent environmental discourse has been taken up into the distinctive discourse of New Labour. To assist readers who may be less familiar with the history of environmental politics in Britain, an outline has been included as an appendix to this paper. Elections are wars of words. My concern will be to discover what words parties have chosen as ammunition when aiming for the green vote.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study comprises the full texts of the manifestos of the three largest British political parties — Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrats^[1] — for each of the sixteen general elections held in the country from 1945 to 2001. In addition to this main corpus a smaller one consisting of the British Green Party's manifestos for the 1997 and 2001 elections was also prepared. In total the corpora contain just over half a million words.

The texts for the elections up to 1997 were obtained from the British Politics Internet site maintained by Keele University^[2] while the texts of the 2001 manifestos were taken from the parties' own sites^[3]. Manifestos were first downloaded as text or source files onto a Macintosh computer and then converted into a standardized format using *NisusWriter* wordprocessing software. Care was taken to retain or restore as much of the original formatting as possible including headings, paragraphing, bullet points and emphases.

Despite these efforts to preserve the semiotic integrity of the manifestos, one aspect that reduction to a text-based corpus necessarily excludes is the visual. This is important because as manifestos have become more elaborate over the years they have also become more multimodal. The non-verbal component of manifestos has increased dramatically since 1945 when, for example, the Conservatives' took the form of a letter simply headed 'Mr. Churchill's Declaration of Policy to the Electors'. Particularly noticeable since 1983, the steady 'colonization'^[4] of manifestos by advertising discourse may be detected in the growing use of photographs, charts and colour and a generally heightened attention to graphic design and layout. In 2001 yet further complexity was added to the Internet versions of the manifestos with the inclusion of such features as animated graphics, pull-down menus and hyperlinks.

Given this undoubtedly significant tendency towards greater use of non-verbal semiosis and electronic media for getting the message across to voters, and the importance of the newer forms of literacy to which it gives rise, the decision to concentrate on the decontextualized verbal dimension alone may be regarded as increasingly untenable. It is only very recently however that semioticians working within the Hallidayan paradigm to which I subscribe have begun to apply the kind of functional linguistics used in critical discourse analysis to ‘the grammar of visual design’^[5] and the analytical tools so far developed, while showing considerable promise, remain somewhat unwieldy. Therefore, while bearing this deficiency in mind and with a view to investigating this aspect in future, for the present study all visual elements were excluded from the files. Any accompanying captions or headings were, however, retained and the position of visuals in the text marked as accurately as possible.

Since the principal focus in this study was on detecting changes over time in environmental discourse within British politics as a whole rather than in its development within any particular party, however new, the files were grouped and combined for analysis by election year. To allow for cross-party comparisons however a system of distinctive line references was added for each manifesto. Once the files had been prepared in this way, word concordances and frequency indices for each election year group were created using the concordancing software package *Conc.*^[6]

Before analysing the concordances, all the manifestos were read and references to the environment or expressive of environmentalist attitudes or values — considered in the widest sense — were recorded. Including all grammatical forms, this produced a list of 397 lexical tokens of which 246 were distinct word types. The types ranged from ‘access’ to ‘xenotransplant’ and from the very common to many which only occurred once. From this list, 50 keywords were selected for investigation on the basis of their representativeness and their high frequency in the indices.

INVESTIGATING THE MANIFESTOS

Growth of manifestos

As can be seen from Table 1, the most striking feature of this historical sequence of manifestos, apart from their visual aspect noted above, is the way that they have

grown in length over the 56 year period. In 1945 the average size of the three parties' manifestos was approximately 4,800 words. In 2001 the figure was 21,000. In fact, the increase in size seems to be somewhat periodic rather than continuous, with a pattern of doubling in length approximately every 15 years. Thus the sequence under investigation is clearly divisible into three roughly equal periods. For the 14 years from the 1945 to the 1959 election the average was 4,404 words; for the 15 years from 1964 to 1979 it was 8,348 words; and for the 14 years from 1983 to 1997 it was 17,185 words. What the significance of this periodicity might be, and whether or not the average for 2001 represents the beginning of a fourth phase of expansion remains to be determined, but we may safely conclude that the trend to ever-larger manifestos looks set to continue.

During the entire 16 election period, the Conservatives have had the largest manifesto eight times and Labour seven times. Some of the variation between parties and across years in terms of manifesto size must be due to the financial resources available for their respective election campaigns. In 1997 for example, the Conservatives spent £28.3 million on their campaign, Labour £26 million and

Table 1. Size of manifestos in British general elections since 1945

Year	Winner	Leader	Majority	Manifesto Size (words)			Average
				Labour	Liberal	Conservative	
1945	Lab	Atlee	146	4,981	3,391	6,097	4,823
1950	Lab	Atlee	5	4,886	3,022	7,427	5,112
1951	Con	Churchill	17	1,790	2,066	2,629	2,162
1955	Con	Eden	54	2,865	2,397	11,846	5,702
1959	Con	Macmillan	100	5,069	2,532	5,063	4,221
1964	Lab	Wilson	5	9,709	4,155	8,070	7,311
1966	Lab	Wilson	96	10,739	5,944	4,569	7,084
1970	Con	Heath	30	11,742	2,879	10,620	8,414
1974, Feb	Lab	Wilson	0	4,752	9,332	13,757	9,280
1974, Oct	Lab	Wilson	3	8,661	5,860	14,281	9,600
1979	Con	Thatcher	43	9,280	7,059	8,854	8,398
1983	Con	Thatcher	143	22,707	13,216	11,992	15,972
1987	Con	Thatcher	102	9,083	19,498	17,791	15,457
1992	Con	Major	21	12,440	17,153	29,796	19,769
1997	Lab	Blair	179	17,556	13,978	21,015	17,516
2001	Lab	Blair	167	29,082	20,974	13,231	21,097

the Liberal Democrats just £2.3 million. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats manifesto is usually the cheapest — £1.50 in 2001 compared to £2.50 for the other two.

Notwithstanding their much-vaunted green credentials, the fact that the Liberals have had the largest manifesto just once probably has more to do with their much smaller financial reserves rather than a desire to spare innocent trees, whereas we find these two factors happily united in the Green Party's manifestos (6,353 words in 1997; 8,037 words in 2001). Notably large manifestos have included Labour in 1983 (22,700 words) — an uncompromisingly 'old' Labour document memorably described by a member of the shadow cabinet as 'the longest suicide note in history'; Conservative in 1992 (29,800 words); and Labour in 2001 (29,000 words).

Mini-manifestos

Complicating the long-term tendency towards gigantism has been the more recent trend for parties to issue supplementary mini-manifestos targeted at specific communities of interest to whom they wish to appeal. In 2001 for example, Labour's 'The best place to do business' continued New Labour's wooing of the national and particularly multinational business communities, while the Liberal Democrats produced a free manifesto 'summary' in the form of a tabloid newspaper full of attention-grabbing headlines and human interest story-style photos. A study of the ways in which the parties' ideologies are 'spun' for the various readerships of such documents would undoubtedly reveal interesting insights about the tactics parties employ to bridge the strategic reality-rhetoric gap of modern politics.

Particularly relevant to the present study is the fact that in 1997 the Conservatives caused considerable surprise in environmentalist circles by being the first major party in Britain to produce a supplementary 'Green Manifesto'. However, this effort towards addressing the concerns of the environmental lobby was not repeated in 2001, perhaps due to the party's general disarray at the time of the election, which is also reflected in the fact that their main manifesto was their shortest for 18 years. Taking their lead from the Conservatives though, the Liberal Democrats in 2001 produced a 'Manifesto for the Environment' whose opening commitment to 'Put the environment genuinely at the heart of government, including green thinking in every aspect of our policies' closely echoes Labour's

oft-quoted 1997 manifesto promise to ‘put concern for the environment at the heart of policy-making, so that it is not an add-on extra, but informs the whole of government.’

Interpreting the changes

One may well ask why it is that these changes towards larger and more numerous manifestos have occurred and in what ways they may be related. Beyond the obvious facts of the greater availability and lower cost of materials and advances in production technology, one may begin by noting the increasing budgets expended by parties on their electoral campaigns. While it is true that success is coming to depend ever more on the size of the parties’ electoral war chests, the law of diminishing returns dictates that proportionately less advantage is gained for successive increments of expenditure. This leads to a beggar-thy-neighbour struggle for the attention of an electorate whose response to the sporadic flurries of party propaganda and media hype during the hustings is increasingly one of apathy, as evidenced by the turnout of just 59 percent in 2001, the lowest at a general election for 80 years. In these supposedly post-ideological, post-historical times it also leads to doctrinal convergence between the mainstream parties around a set of lowest common denominator policies designed to offend the fewest potential voters (not to mention business and industry), a process which has arguably reached its apogee in the form of New Labour’s Third Way, over whose every ‘policy initiative’ far more time is spent gauging the reaction of focus groups and canvassing the City analysts than actually debating the issues in parliament.

But all this politicking is simply a relatively superficial consequence of more basic changes in the power structure of British society as it undergoes the political and economic transition from a social democratic Fordist state to a new globalised neo-liberal post-industrialism. The massive changes entailed by national leaders’ headlong rush to embrace economic globalisation has given a steadily increasing salience to language in establishing and sustaining new forms of social practices and relations more in line with the needs of global capitalism. This manifests itself in many contemporary social phenomena such as the ‘knowledge economy’ and the increasing influence of the mass media in politics. Opposed to, but in a co-evolving relationship with, these top-down changes there have been democratising forces at work too, obliging those with power to more adequately explain and justify their actions and beliefs to those over whom they seek to exercise control.

Therefore power in modern capitalist societies has increasingly to be won and maintained through, in Chomsky's phrase, 'the manufacture of consent'. Language is crucial here because ideology is the key mechanism for achieving rule by consent, and language is the principal vehicle for ideology. Thus the ever-growing amount of explanation and detail in the manifestos may be regarded as a facet of this discursal aspect of globalisation. At the same time, just as social relations and practices are becoming more and more the focus of what Foucault refers to as 'technologies of knowledge/power', the language in which such communication is effected is itself becoming increasingly 'technologised', in the sense of being subject to design by experts on behalf of powerful groups. Thus increasingly language is becoming both a site of, and a stake in, social struggles for power: hence the critical interest in discourse amongst the many groups and individuals engaged in challenging or resisting domination, including environmental activists and academics.

Regarding the question of why manifestos are becoming more diversified, the answer is to be found in the quasi-ecological concept of 'niche marketing'. As parties find it increasingly difficult to hold the attention of the electorate as a whole, manifesto messages are being targeted, or 'spun', to appeal to certain groups. Once again, this diversification is facilitated by new media and communications technology, but more fundamentally it reflects the colonisation of political institutions and technologisation of political language by the advertising, marketing and PR industries.

Turning now to the manifestos themselves, we may ask the straightforward question: are parties simply writing more words about the same things or have the number of things written about increased? The answer, of course, is both. Take for example, education — a consistent feature of every manifesto since the war and one of Tony Blair's three famous priorities in 1997^[7]. In 1945 the average number of words devoted to education was 141 per manifesto. In 1970 the average was 409, and in 2001 the figure had grown to 1,930. In 1945, the Labour manifesto's entire message to the electorate on the subject of education was encapsulated in the following 77 words:

'An important step forward has been taken by the passing of the recent Education Act. Labour will put that Act not merely into legal force but into practical effect, including the raising of the school leaving age to 16 at the earliest possible moment, "further" or adult

education, and free secondary education for all. And, above all, let us remember that the great purpose of education is to give us individual citizens capable of thinking for themselves.'

The ambitious 1945 Education Act was a milestone in the history of British schooling and any such comparable reform these days would undoubtedly be heralded by a far bigger fanfare in the manifesto and the media. By contrast, in 2001 Labour devoted 2,344 words to education, including the following 99 on information technology alone:

'IT has enormous potential to raise standards, and it is vital that every child leaves school able to make use of the new technologies. Today, nearly all schools are connected to the internet. Labour is committed to spend £1.8 billion over six years on equipping our schools for the information age. We will pioneer Curriculum Online to ensure materials are available to pupils in school and at home. We are committed to continue to extend access to IT for pupils and teachers, including the possibility of a national leasing scheme to make top-quality hardware available at very low prices.'

There is a telling contrast in these two passages between the relative unfamiliarity to the writer(s) of the 1945 manifesto (or their imagined readership) of the concept of *further* education, signified by the use of scare quotes around the new term, with the breezily confident use of the abbreviation 'IT' in 2001. Likewise the contrast between the idealism of the last sentence of the 1945 manifesto and the modern emphasis on 'standards' and education as a 'vital' (for whom?) training in skills to increase employability in a global economy, the influence of which is evidently penetrating 'at very low prices' ever further into areas of public life from which it has hitherto been largely excluded as being not merely inappropriate but positively antithetical. Such contrasts, which are to be found on almost every page of the manifestos, are a sobering reminder of how much times, and the Labour Party, have changed.

INVESTIGATING THE KEYWORDS

Frequencies

In this section some of the overall characteristics of the corpus will be described. To facilitate clarity of expression in the discussion which follows, usually only one form of each keyword will be mentioned or represented, generally the commonest or most recognizable one. Thus for example ‘protect’ includes ‘protects’, ‘protecting’, ‘protection’ and so on. Moreover, longer words beginning with any of the keywords were also included. This was most clearly the case with the one prefix in the list, ‘bio-’, which includes ‘biological’ but also ‘biofuel’, ‘biogas’ and ‘biodegradable’. It is also the case with other words such as ‘greenhouse’ when it refers to the atmospheric gases and ‘wilderness’. Another word where the presence of a hyphen was significant was ‘recycle’. Although the sample size is not large enough to make any categorical assertions, the data suggest that when this word first began to be used it tended to be written in the hyphenated form as ‘re-cycle’ but that this form has been dropped. This pattern of change frequently occurs when new lexis appears and is absorbed into a language. Similar patterns were seen in this corpus with ‘reuse’ and ‘wildlife’.

All non-green uses of any of the keywords, such as ‘increased *access* to legal aid’ or ‘unemployment has continued to *grow*’ were excluded from the analysis. Congruent references to words such as *country* and *road* were only counted if there was an unambiguous environmentalist meaning. Thus ‘Our trunk *roads* are the best in Europe’ was not counted, but ‘More *roads* mean more pollution’ was. Sometimes the environmentalist evaluation had to be inferred from the wider context as in: ‘The practical solution is to offer *road* users alternatives.’

The list in Table 2 shows all 50 of the keywords ranked according to frequency in the main corpus. Unsurprisingly, we find that the frequency list is headed by the word ‘environment’ itself with 503 occurrences, far outstripping all other words. One obvious reason for the high frequency of the word environment and its various cognate forms is that it is such a broad term, signifying our ‘surroundings’ from the most immediate to the biospheric, including both the physical and the social. As a catch-all term it is perhaps hopelessly vague, yet its very breadth is suggestive of how interconnected and all-pervasive are its referents. The second most frequent word, ‘protect’, is also an extremely general one applicable to everything from plants to planets.

What this table does not make clear is whether environment, pollution and the

Table 2. Keywords in order of frequency of occurrence

environment..503	waste.....60	river.....34	insulation.....18	solar.....9
protect.....152	clean.....58	wild.....34	coast.....16	hedgerow.....7
pollution.....146	nature.....49	recycle.....31	warming.....15	ozone.....7
animal.....124	road.....49	renewable.....30	genetic.....14	stewardship.....7
countryside...112	water.....43	derelict.....29	population.....13	tree.....7
conserve.....91	emissions.....41	forest.....25	species.....13	finite.....6
sustain.....83	grow.....41	climate.....24	beauty.....12	flood.....6
green.....75	slum.....39	park.....24	earth.....11	indicators.....6
global.....64	air.....35	access.....21	habitat.....10	pesticide.....5
develop.....62	congestion.....34	bio-.....20	acid.....9	ecology.....3

other high-ranking terms owe their preeminence to having been used frequently throughout the period of study or whether they have only recently entered the discourse but been widely employed since then. These days the most pressing issues for mainstream environmentalists are pollution, conservation, preserving the natural world, control of toxic/nuclear waste, and global warming/CO₂ reduction. However, since it is highly probable that priorities have changed over the half century of this study, a more revealing way of understanding how changes may have happened emerges if the keywords are ranked according to when they first appeared in a manifesto. The results of ordering the words in this way are shown in Table 3 below. Note that the letter or letters beside each word indicate which party or parties first introduced the word (L is for Labour, C for Conservative and B for Liberal). Note also that no new keywords were introduced in either the 1951, October 1974 or 1983 elections. The Liberals were the first to introduce a keyword in an environmental sense 21 times including an impressive clean-sweep of five in one year in 1979; the Conservatives 24 times, and Labour 16 times.

From this table, we can see that during the first decade following the war, the words introduced in the manifestos tended to be of the more general unspecialized kind: ‘countryside’ rather than ‘habitat’ or ‘ecosystem’, or indeed ‘environment’; ‘forest’ rather than ‘broadleaved woodland’. Although as an academic discipline ecology had been well established in Britain since the 1920s, its specialist concepts and associated vocabulary had evidently not yet filtered out into the wider community. The use of the more common terms well reflect the contemporary level of expertise and interest of politicians at the time. Furthermore, the writers were

Table 3. Keywords in order of first occurrence

1945	1950	1955	1959	1964	1966
congestion.....B	access.....B	air.....C	bio-.....L	coast.....C&L	beauty.....C
countryside.....B	park.....B	clean.....C	conserve.....C	derelict.....C	grow.....L
forest.....C	slum.....L	pollution.....C	nature.....C	develop.....L	
populationL&B			river.....C	environment...C	
protect.....B				green.....G	
tree.....C				road.....L	
water.....C					
1970	1974 Feb	1979	1987	1992	1997
pesticide.....L	animal.....B	ecology.....B	acid.....All	indicators.....B	genetic.....B
waste.....L	earth.....L	habitat.....B	climate.....C	ozone.....All	
wild.....C	finite.....L&B	renewable.....B	emissions.....L	stewardship.....C	2001
	global.....L&B	species.....B	hedgerowC&B	warming.....All	flood.....L&B
	insulation.....C	sustain.....B			
	recycle.....C&B				
	solar.....C				

addressing their manifestos at least in part to an urban population many of whom were living in bomb-damaged or prefabricated ‘temporary’ housing in congested towns and cities. What these people needed and demanded above all was gainful work, a decent home, hospitals, schools for their children and opportunities for recreation; not lessons on recycling or making do with less. However, the steep learning curve of ecological literacy which both leaders and people would follow in subsequent years is adumbrated in the use by the Conservatives in 1955 of the most technical word in this group: ‘pollution’. Judging from a similar lack of specialized lexis in the manifestos of the two 60s elections, political parties in that decade seem hardly any more concerned with the environment than those of the 40s and 50s. But the picture changes considerably as we move into the 70s where we find the introduction of several important environmental terms. In all the 1987 manifestos ‘acid’ refers to acid rain and ‘climate’ to climate change. Interestingly, the more colloquial term ‘global warming’ does not appear until the next election, which is the opposite of the trend from common to specialized lexis noted during the earlier decades, indicating perhaps the increasingly leading role of science in dealing with environment problems. The one new term introduced in 2001 is a very

topical reference to the recent series of very wet winters that Britain has been experiencing and which have been taken by many to be an indication that global warming is a reality.

While the above table adds some detail to the presentation in Table 2, we still do not have very complete picture of how keywords have been used since their first entry into the manifestos. A further step in this direction is provided by the data in Table 4 below. This summarizes the occurrence of the 50 keywords in the corpus on a year by year basis. The table is in three parts. The upper part of the table records the occurrence of lexical types, that is, whether or not a particular keyword occurred in a manifesto. Hence the theoretical maximum possible value in any one manifesto would be 50, indicating that all of the keywords were used. In fact, the highest score, recorded by the Green Party's 1997 manifesto, was 39. Note that the 'All three parties' line of the table refers to the total number of *different* keywords. Even if two or more parties used the same keyword it was counted only once. Thus in 1945 the figure is 7 not 8 even though the Liberals used four: 'congested', 'population', 'protect' and 'countryside'; the Conservatives used three: 'forestry', 'trees' and 'water'; and Labour used one: 'population'. The middle part of the table records the number of tokens (the aggregated total number of occurrences of each keyword used).

The first thing to notice from these two parts is the clear trend towards increasing use of the keywords during the period of study. From a low in 1951

Table 4. Occurrence of Keyword Types and Tokens

Keywords: Types	45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74F	74O	79	83	87	92	97	01
Liberal	4	2	0	0	0	2	2	3	14	0	20	13	31	37	36	31
Conservative	3	0	1	4	9	16	9	14	20	13	12	23	29	37	29	22
Labour	1	2	1	2	4	11	14	20	7	9	12	28	21	32	29	33
All three parties	7	4	2	6	11	20	17	24	26	14	26	32	36	44	42	37
Green															39	37

Keywords: Tokens	45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74F	74O	79	83	87	92	97	01
Liberal	4	2	0	0	0	4	4	4	36	0	51	47	102	250	202	298
Conservative	3	0	1	4	10	22	13	23	46	29	23	44	89	190	86	59
Labour	1	2	1	2	6	12	24	45	7	21	27	77	50	116	113	174
Total	8	4	2	6	16	38	41	72	89	50	101	168	241	556	401	531
Green															180	259

Type: Token Ratio	1.1	1	1	1	1.5	1.9	2.4	3	3.4	3.6	3.9	5.3	6.7	12.6	9.6	14.4

(understandable given the nature of the election), numbers of keywords and instances of them increase steadily. The bottom line of the table shows the type:token ratio, that is, the number of times on average that a keyword was used. Here again we find evidence that not only has the number of keywords (things to be written about) increased but so has the amount being written about them.

The feature which is most outstanding in all three of these patterns is that for all their ideological differences, the three main parties appear remarkably similar in the number of environmental issues (signalled by the keyword types) that they refer to in their manifestos. However, it appears that whereas the Labour and Conservative parties may pay cursory lip service in their manifestos to the environmentalists' concerns, only the Liberal Party gives a level of attention comparable to that given by the Green Party. Critics of the Liberals often claim that the only reason why they can afford to fill their manifestos with so much greenwashing, as they see it, is because the Liberals have no chance of forming a government. However, my experience of meeting Liberal Democrat Party politicians, albeit at the local council level, bears out the widely expressed belief that there is a genuinely deep green sentiment within the party, particularly among those who came from the former Liberal Party. This in turn may be partly due to the fact that the Liberals have traditionally compensated for their poor showing at the national level by being a significant force in many local councils. It is at the local level that environmental issues are most immediately evident and amenable, given sufficient political will and financial resources, of some measure of solution.

Having now considered the overall trends in the data we may narrow the focus onto individual words. Table 5 shows a representative sample of nine keywords. These are the eight most frequent words as indicated in Table 2 plus one other word, 'slum', which has been added because of the unique pattern it displays.

We may begin by considered the case of 'slum' since its peak of occurrence precedes that of the other keywords. As befitting the parliamentary representative of the industrial proletariat, it was the Labour Party which became the first party to refer to a problem which was to exercise manifesto writers at every election until 1974: slum clearance. The table shows the number of times the term 'slum' was used in each party's manifesto for each of the sixteen years under scrutiny. It occurs first in the Labour manifesto of 1950: 'We must move forward until every family has its own separate home, and until every slum is gone'. The combined efforts of the three parties seem to have been effective, since after October 1974

Table 5. Patterns of occurrence for nine keywords

	45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74F	74O	79	83	87	92	97	01	Total
environment	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	21	19	21	30	41	138	105	119	503
Liberal								1	10		9	11	21	67	47	76	242
Conservative						1		3	10	8	4	4	11	36	15	8	100
Labour								4	1	11	8	15	9	35	43	35	161
Green															28	30	58
protect	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	5	3	3	7	21	40	38	30	152
Liberal	1								2		1		8	16	21	17	66
Conservative			1	1					3	2	2	3	6	15	6	5	44
Labour						1		1		1		4	7	9	11	8	42
Green															2	11	13
pollution	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	5	2	4	7	9	15	38	26	36	146
Liberal								1	1		2	1	5	30	17	29	86
Conservative				1	1	1			1	3	2	3	6	6	4	2	30
Labour						1		4		1	3	5	4	2	5	5	30
Green															13	14	27
animal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	15	32	17	25	17	17	123
Liberal									1		3	10	8	5	11	8	46
Conservative											7	8	7	14	5	5	46
Labour											5	14	2	5	1	4	31
Green															6	16	22
countryside	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	6	3	0	1	8	12	34	20	17	112
Liberal	1								1				3	8	8	3	24
Conservative						1	2	3	2		1	3	6	22	9	11	60
Labour		1	1	1	1		3	3				5	3	4	3	3	28
Green																	0
conserve	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	8	5	12	12	17	19	7	7	91
Liberal									2		9	6	6	10	4	5	42
Conservative					1	1		1	5	5	1	2	8	8	1	1	34
Labour								1	1		2	4	3	1	2	1	15
Green															3	4	7
sustain	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	9	23	15	30	83
Liberal											1		5	13	6	16	41
Conservative						1							3	2	5	1	12
Labour						1		1				2	1	8	4	13	30
Green															3	14	17
green	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	7	4	13	46	75
Liberal													3	1	6	34	44
Conservative						1			2			1	3	3	5	4	19
Labour											1		1		2	8	12
Green															10	8	18
slum	0	1	0	1	3	11	2	9	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
Liberal						3	3	2									8
Conservative					3	6	3	2	2	1							17
Labour		1		1	3	2	2	5									14
Green															1		1

they felt no need to mention it again. The term's reappearance however in the Green Party's 1997 manifesto: 'someone whose family lives in a bed and breakfast slum' shows that the spirit of 19th century moral indignation that fired so much philanthropic activity in those vigorous spirits of the Victorian middle classes, who chafed at the life of idle gentility to which their bourgeois status confined them, lives on in their (generally middle class) environmentalist successors today. Incidentally, one may speculate as to the reasons why the Conservatives wrote on this topic in their manifestos for longer and more extensively than the other two parties. Was it, perhaps, that they were not so much representing the interests of slum dwellers but those of the building and development industries?

The case of 'slum' is interesting because it is the only one of the more frequent keywords which demonstrates this discrete three-stage pattern of emergence, peak and decline. All the other keywords which were used sufficiently often for a pattern to be discernible follow the general trend suggested by the case of 'environment', 'protect' and the others of being sporadically introduced around the 60s, frequently not to be taken up immediately in the following manifesto, but then rising rapidly from the 74 or 79 elections. Of these, 'countryside' has the longest-running pattern which is consistent with its general applicability and familiarity. Indeed, many earlier manifestos had a section on 'The Countryside' or some such appellation which subsequently evolved into the environment section. Will the other terms have an equally long trajectory? There is, although at a much higher level than in the case of slum, clear evidence that 1992 was a high water mark in the career of most of the other keywords, after which time a drop off occurred in the 1997 and 2001 elections. This finding is all the more surprising since these were the two elections in which the Labour Party was standing as unequivocally 'New' Labour, part of whose programme, as was noted in passing above, was to put the environment 'at the heart' of policy-making. It will be interesting to discover whether this pattern of decline is continued at the next election, and whether new green vocabulary will emerge to replace the old. The pattern shown by 'sustain' (referring to 'sustainable development' or 'sustainable growth') suggests that it has not yet reached its peak, particularly within the discourse of the Labour Party where 'sustainable development' is rapidly being established as an important component of the Third Way lexicon.

Looking at the pattern for 'environment' itself, we see that, as is not uncommon, the Conservatives were ahead of the other two parties in introducing the term in the

60s but that they were subsequently overtaken and ended up with the lowest total. Environment shows particularly sharply the overall trend for very little mention of the keywords to be made until the early 70s and for occurrences to increase rapidly thereafter, particularly with the Liberals. These days the Liberal Party has such a well-established green image that it is difficult to realize that it was not always the case. If we exclude the Conservative 64 outlier (coincidentally it is actually referring to ‘eliminating slum environments’ so it rather enters the lists by default), all three main parties start using ‘environment’ in the same year, 1970, with the Conservative manifesto actually being the first to use the word in a section heading: ‘A Better Environment’. Such a pattern is not uncommon, especially in the early 70s elections when words are being introduced quite rapidly and with great topicality in response to the various environmental crises. In this case, the synchronous launch in all three manifestos was quite possibly triggered by the fact that 1970 was designated as European Conservation Year, one of the most successful ever of the official European ‘years’. Moreover, it had been during the 1969–70 parliament that both of the big two parties had appointed their first ever Ministers of the Environment. In the months immediately prior to the election, the Labour government also published the White Paper, ‘The Protection of the Environment: the fight against pollution’ which was the first ever government paper to be written from an explicitly ecological standpoint^[8].

Before going into more detail on the conditions under which the pattern of explosive growth in green rhetoric occurred in the early 70s it may be as well to address one objection to the research methodology being currently employed in this study, namely the analytical value of absolute occurrence data such as those presented for ‘slum’ and ‘environment’. Compare for example the data for ‘environment’ in Table 5 with the corresponding data in Table 6.

In this table, the numbers of absolute occurrences have all been converted into a

Table 6. Frequency of Occurrence for ‘environment’

environment	45	50	51	55	59	64	66	70	74F	74O	79	83	87	92	97	01	Total
Liberal								3.5	10.7		12.7	8.3	10.8	39.1	33.6	36.2	155
Conservative						1.2		2.8	7.3	5.6	4.5	3.3	6.2	12.1	7.1	6.0	56
Labour								3.4	2.1	12.7	8.6	6.6	9.9	28.1	24.5	12.0	108
Total	0	0	0	0	0	1.2	0	9.7	20.1	18.3	25.8	18.2	26.9	79.3	65.2	54.2	317
Green															44.1	37.3	81

common ‘occurrences per 10,000 words’ basis. Of course, the overall pattern of occurrences has not changed, but a close inspection of the values will reveal that whereas, for example, the Green Party has the smallest total number of occurrences of ‘environment’ (58), when expressed on a common basis to compensate for the small size of their manifesto their total (81) exceeds that of the Conservative’s (56). Clearly this way of presenting the data has an advantage, particularly for those wishing to proceed to more statistical analysis. However, for the present study, I have chosen to retain absolute occurrence figures because they serve as a constant reminder that the forces pitted against each other in the environmental debate are by no means equal. In fact, somewhat paradoxically since it is often the Liberal Party who scores highest in absolute occurrence despite usually having the smallest manifesto, common-basis figures tend to heighten even further the contrast between them and the other two main parties.

Returning to the historical narrative, we may recall that the subtitle of the Labour government’s 1970 White Paper made reference to combatting pollution and it is appropriate that we now consider the occurrence of this particular keyword. Again the story begins with the Conservatives in 1955, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the form of pollution referred to in that case was air pollution, specifically due to coal-burning fires in homes rather than in coal-fired power stations in the countryside. Britain has considerable reserves of coal and until the middle of the last century coal was the most common form of domestic heating. The problem was that the sooty smoke caused the notorious ‘pea-souper’ smogs which, although they might help make a suitably mysterious *mis en scene* for Sherlock Holmes films, were often fatal, as in the case of the infamous London smog of 1952 which claimed 4,000 lives. This calamity led in 1956 to the passing of The Clean Air Act which established smoke-free towns and cities. Nevertheless as the 50s drew to a close, with the economy booming and people’s standard of living rising rapidly, more sinister storm clouds were gathering. Until the 60s, the environment was still largely thought of in amenity or recreation terms but the swinging decade focussed attention on two issues in particular: pesticides and the conservation of endangered wildlife. Pesticides had originally been seen as a valuable tool in the drive for greater efficiency in agriculture, but the publication in Britain in 1963 of Rachel Carson’s horrifying exposé *Silent Spring* changed everything. Given the enormous controversy pesticides caused in the 60s, it may appear somewhat surprising that the word only occurs five times in the manifestos.

However, there have been suggestions that the industrial interests behind pesticides were responsible for keeping political pressure away from firm action on the subject. Part of the problem, of course, is that the effects of pesticides on the environment tend to only become apparent gradually as they accumulate in the tissues and reproductive apparatus of top predators such as birds of prey and humans. But if that provided a convenient excuse for people to ignore the problem the same could not be said for the *Torrey Canyon*, a vast oil tanker that ran aground on the rocky coast of the Scilly Isles in 1967 creating a massive 10km long oil slick. The subsequent pictures of oil-smothered seabirds transmitted nightly into the living rooms of the population via the rapidly spreading medium of television set off a great clamour for more coordinated and concerted action on conservation.

Despite these not inconsiderable setbacks, the 60s were on the whole a decade of optimism about the environment in Britain as about most things. It was a time when the nation's capital seemed like the capital of the modern world and there was a sense that whatever environmental problems peacetime prosperity might throw up, science and the 'white heat' of technology would be capable of providing a solution. However, in the 70s the mood changed dramatically due to an oil shock of a quite different nature: the sharp rise in the price of crude oil following the Arab-Israeli war. This lent a practical economic urgency to the hitherto largely neglected warnings of environmentalists about the need to conserve energy. It also put a sharp break on economic growth and the prosperity of the British people. It was during this decade that many of the conservation groups with which we are now so familiar began.

The 70s was in many ways the pivotal decade for environmental politics in Britain. As well as the economic jolt to the system caused by the oil shocks during this decade, it was characterised most of all by the emergence of the new generation of activist environmental pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. Prior to these groups, most conservation bodies had been extremely sedate and quietistic. They tended also to be narrowly-focussed single-issue groups and eschewed getting involved in the wider economic or political arguments about conservation. The spectacular campaigns of these new groups changed the landscape for environmental politics fundamentally by emphasising the essential interconnectedness of all environmental problems and showing how skillful exploitation of the mass media could help put pressure on governments to act.

Despite all this activism in the 70s however, according to David Evans the 80s were a decade when ‘the politicians were still of the opinion that the question of the environment could safely be lip-serviced’^[9]. Things only started to change towards the end of the decade with the publication of the Bruntland Commission report on Sustainable Development. This and more immediately the fact that the Green Party polled 15% in the European Parliamentary Elections caused all the main parties to revise their manifestos in a green direction, with sustainable development becoming the common mantra. However, although the Bruntland report’s definition was clearly focussed on the environment, successive governments in Britain have deliberately sought to widen and weaken it. Thus first John Major’s government emphasized, as perhaps was inevitable during a period of prolonged recession, the need to combine it with an economic growth component. This led to the slightly bizarre case of the government arguing that extending coal mining rather than gas was part of sustainable development. New Labour’s contribution has been to add a social justice element, which ties it in closely with Third Way thinking: now not just economic growth *and* protection of the environment *but also* help for the poor. During the 90s however, it becomes increasingly difficult to consider environmental discourse in isolation in a single country since there has been an ever-greater emphasis on the supra-national dimension to tackling such things as climate change and marine and atmospheric pollution. While taking a high-profile lead in such international events as the Kyoto Conference, the most characteristic response of New Labour here has been to embrace tackling environmental problems as a business opportunity for Britain. This policy has been described as ‘ecological modernization’^[10] and represents another weakening of the already fuzzy concept of sustainable development as the government strives for, as the 2001 manifesto puts it, ‘the right balance of environmental protection, safer communities and economic growth’. An early sign of what that might mean is that Labour has introduced the world’s first national CO₂ emissions trading system. It seems that under New Labour, even the air we breathe can become a commodity.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to show how developments in the history of the environmental movement in Britain have been reflected in the manifestos of the political parties during the last half century. I have been particularly concerned

with discovering whether it is possible to detect any significant innovations in the environmental discourse of the New Labour party in its two election manifestos and have shown that although there may be a deepening of the party's green rhetoric this may not have been translated into genuinely sustainable action such as the environmental lobby has been hoping for. Tony Blair has always claimed that one term would not be long enough for Labour to effect the changes it wants to make. After 18 years of Conservative rule there has been widespread acceptance that achieving results will take time, and Labour has generally been given a sympathetic hearing by the environmental lobby so far. It will be during the next four or five years that environmentalists will expect to see the manifesto rhetoric translated more concretely into tangible environmental action.

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APPENDIX

Key Events in the History of British Environmental Politics since 1945

- 1947 Town and Country Planning Act (establishes Green Belts).
Conservation of Nature in England and Wales (report of the governmental Wild Life Conservation Special Committee chaired by J. S. Huxley) recommends establishment of National Nature Reserves.
- 1948 Nature Conservancy established as the world's first statutory, non-voluntary conservation body.
- 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.
International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN) founded.
- 1951 First National Parks opened (Peak District, Dartmoor, Lake District, Snowdonia).
First National Nature Reserve opened (Beinn Eighe).
Forestry Act (obliges forestry managers to respect the amenity potential of forests).
The Rivers (Prevention of Pollution) Act (sets up pollution monitoring and control boards).
- 1954 Protection of Birds Act.

- 1956 Clean Air Act (world's first law to control domestic smoke).
- 1958 The Council for Nature formed.
Litter Act.
- 1959 British Trust for Conservation Volunteers set up.
- 1960 Toxic Chemicals and Wild Life Group set up.
- 1961 The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) established by IUCN.
- 1963 Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* published in Britain.
The Deer Act (establishes hunting seasons for deer in England and Wales)
Council for Nature sponsors the first National Nature Week.
- 1967 Cow Green Reservoir scheme approved.
Torrey Canyon oil tanker incident.
- 1968 The Countryside Act (sets up Countryside Commission to promote greater public access to the countryside).
- 1969 Council for Environmental Conservation (CoEnCo) formed.
- 1970 European Conservation Year.
Labour government appoints first Minister of the Environment, creates Department of the Environment.
Labour publishes *The Protection of the Environment: the Fight against Pollution*, the first White Paper to be written from an ecological standpoint.
Conservation of Seals Act (permits culling).
Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution set up.
Friends of the Earth UK founded.
- 1972 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) created.
Limits to Growth published by the Club of Rome.
Blueprint for Survival published by *The Ecologist* magazine.
- 1973 Britain ratifies Ramsar Wetlands Convention.
EEC's first Action Plan for the Environment introduces legislation to combat pollution.
People's Party launched (later renamed Ecology Party and later Green Party).
Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA) set up within Labour Party.
- 1974 Control of Pollution Act.
- 1975 Conservation of Wild Creatures and Wild Plants Act.
- 1976 Britain ratifies Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
- 1977 UK Underwater Conservation Year.
NCC publishes *A Nature Conservation Review: the Selection of Biological Sites of National Importance to Nature Conservation in Britain*.
EEC's second Action Programme for the Environment introduces Environmental Impact Assessment criteria.
Endangered Species (Import & Export) Act.
Conservative and Liberal parties each set up Ecology Groups.
Greenpeace UK founded.
- 1978 The Green Alliance formed.

The Development of Environmental Discourse in British Political Manifestos since 1945

- 1980 IUCN/UNEP produce World Conservation Strategy.
Marion Shoard's *The Theft of the Countryside* published.
- 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act.
- 1982 Britain ratifies Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.
- 1983 Evidence of effects of acid rain in Britain first officially recognized.
Centre for Economic and Environmental Development (CEED) set up.
- 1985 EC Environmental Assessment of Development Projects Directive (not implemented by UK until 1990).
Food and Environment Protection Act.
- 1986 Department of the Environment (DoE) publishes *Conservation and Development: the British Approach*.
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.
- 1987 UN World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland) report *Our Common Future* published urging adoption of sustainable development and Agenda 21.
HM Inspectorate of Pollution established.
- 1988 UK government blocks implementation of EC Fauna, Flora and Habitat Directive.
- 1989 Water Act establishes National Rivers Authority.
Green Party polls 15% of vote in European Parliamentary Elections.
- 1990 European Environmental Agency established.
Environmental Protection Act.
This Common Inheritance: Britain's Environmental Strategy White Paper published.
- 1991 English Nature (taking over from the NCC and the Countryside Council for Wales) set up.
- 1992 UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
- 1994 *Climate Change: the UK programme* published by DoE.
Sustainable Development: the UK strategy White Paper published.
- 1995 Environment Act (establishes Environmental Agency).
- 1996 Environment Agency publishes *An Environmental Strategy for the Millennium and Beyond*.
- 1997 UN Climate Summit in Kyoto, Japan.
House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee set up.
- 1999 *A Better Quality of Life: a strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK* White Paper published by Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions (DETR).
Chancellor of the Exchequer announces Climate Change (fossil fuel) Levy in Budget.
- 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

NOTES

- ⁽¹⁾ Until 1981 the central position on the political spectrum was occupied by the Liberal Party. Then, from 1981 to 1990 the Liberals formed an 'Alliance' with the newly formed Social Democratic Party which was set up by a breakaway group of right-wing Labour Party members. The two

parties united to form the Liberal Democrats in 1990. For the sake of brevity, they will be referred to throughout this paper as the Liberals.

- ^[2] British politics website's manifesto page: www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man.htm (visited 19 July 2001)
- ^[3] Websites of the three parties: www.conservatives.com; www.labour.org.uk; www.libdems.org.uk (all visited 19 July 2001)
- ^[4] Fairclough, 2001: 163–4.
- ^[5] Kress, G., van Leeuwen, T. (1996)
- ^[6] Version 1.80 beta (1996). Created by John Thompson of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and available from their website: www.sil.org/computing/conc/ (visited August 2000)
- ^[7] The other two were 'education' and 'education'.
- ^[8] Evans, D. 1992: 128.
- ^[9] Evans, 221.
- ^[10] Hajer, 1995.