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The Romney Street Group: Its Origins and Influence—1916–1922

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Abstract

Contemporary historians tend to be drawn to study formal institutions, largely because they leave formal records. But as political scientists have long argued, informal networks can be of equal importance and influence. Throughout the last century, dining groups were amongst the most common

of these networks, and the Romney Street Group, which has been existence in various guises since 1917, is eminent amongst them. This article looks at the methodological problems of analysing such groups, as well as its early history. Amongst its early members were R.H. Tawney and Tom Jones, symbolizing the link the group forged between the liberal intellectuals behind *The Athenaeum* and Lloyd George's newly formed Cabinet Secretariat. Its principal focus was the postwar reconstruction of industrial and international relations. Although its immediate impact appears to have been small, it continued to keep reconstruction ideals alive, in general through journalism and the private contacts of its members and in particular through Tom Jones, who was successively the confidant of Lloyd George and Baldwin.

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