

Trade unions and the political culture of the British Labour Party, 1931-1940.

Submitted by

James Michael Trevor Parker

to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History in September 2017.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Abstract

The events surrounding the collapse of the second Labour government in the summer of 1931 represented a watershed in twentieth century British politics. They brought to a close the 'uneasy equilibrium' which had characterised the country's political life since 1918, ensconcing a Conservative-dominated National government in power for the remainder of a decade marked by continuing economic uncertainty and the mounting threat of war. They also precipitated a crisis of political identity within the Labour party. Deprived of the founding generation of its leadership and with its parliamentary strength decimated, the 'gradualist' approach which had long characterised its politics was seemingly left in tatters. Yet Labour returned to office in 1940 as a key partner in the wartime coalition; in 1945, it secured a sweeping electoral landslide of its own, allowing it to implement much of its traditional programme. It is the contention of this thesis that the party's recovery during the 1930s was made possible by the crucial contribution of the trade unions. With Labour's political leadership substantially weakened after 1931, the unions assumed a pivotal role in shaping the party's direction, to the extent that by 1940, its political culture, organisation and policy had been decisively remade. The identity which developed in these years continued to characterise Labour's politics for a generation, through the 'high tide' of the 1945 Attlee government, into the 1950s and beyond. This was a hugely significant and underappreciated achievement in the context of the destruction of labour movements that attended the retreat of political democracy across much of Europe during the 1930s. This thesis seeks to investigate and understand the crucial contribution of the trade unions to this redevelopment of Labour's political culture through an exploration of key aspects of the party's organisation in the period 1931-1940.

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible by the generous financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Andrew Thorpe. Completing this thesis has been a challenge intellectually and personally, and Andrew's expertise and encouragement have been inspiring. I am hugely thankful for his generosity, patience, and wisdom.

I am also very grateful to my second supervisor, Professor Richard Toye, for his advice and kindness, and to my examiners, Professor Keith Gildart and Dr David Thackeray, for a really stimulating viva. Keith's insight into labour history has greatly benefitted the thesis, whilst David and Richard also offered many helpful comments on the work I submitted for upgrade to PhD level. Professor Sarah Hamilton kindly chaired proceedings.

The staff of the Humanities Graduate School at Exeter, particularly Morwenna Hussey and Cathryn Baker, have been supportive throughout.

My research has benefitted from many conversations with friends and colleagues, particularly Phil Child, Dave Selway, James Freeman, Simon Mackley, Ettore Costa, and Professor David Howell. David supervised my MA thesis at the University of York and has given advice and encouragement in the years since. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss aspects of the project with participants in the *Ex Historia* seminar series, the Exeter-Bristol Labour History group, the annual University of Exeter Humanities PGR conference, the Radical History School at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, the Critical Labour Studies conference at Ruskin College, Oxford, and the 2015 'Shaping the Labour Party' conference at Bangor University, amongst other events.

Archival work has been integral to the thesis, and I am thankful for the invaluable support and kindness of staff at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, the Labour History Archive and Study Centre at the People's History Museum in Manchester, the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, the Richard Burton Archives at Swansea University, Gwent Archives at Ebbw Vale, Oldham Local Studies & Archives, and the National Archives at Kew. The staff at the Modern Records Centre were unfailingly helpful, whilst Darren Treadwell made every visit to the LHASC a pleasure with his enthusiasm and expertise. I am grateful to Jim Mowatt and Joyce Ajimoto for permission to make use of the TGWU collection at the MRC. Several conversations with Alain Kahan at the WCML helped develop my analysis of the Amalgamated Engineering Union in particular. The university libraries at Exeter, Swansea and York, along with Newport Library, have also been very helpful. The records of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers are held by its successor union, USDAW. I am enormously grateful to Susan Bickers and George McLean for their kindness and hospitality in allowing me access to the union's archives and library at its Central Office in Manchester. I am especially thankful to Susan for her generosity and encouragement over multiple visits. I had several conversations with Alex Gordon of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union following a chance meeting

at the Modern Records Centre, and am appreciative of his kindness and the good grace with which he bore my enquiries about his then-role as union president and the lives and careers of his NUR predecessors. Paul Flynn MP kindly shared his thoughts on his predecessor Peter Freeman, Labour candidate for Newport in 1935, as well as on various aspects of local Labour history.

On a more personal note, I am greatly obliged to many individuals without whose support I could not have written this thesis. I will always be grateful to my History teacher at Bassaleg Comprehensive, Mrs Gail Kinsella, for first introducing me to Ernie Bevin and company; her description of Stafford Cripps' cold baths remains a vivid one. I am extremely appreciative of the support of Dr Harriet Dickson, Rebecca Hitchcock, and Dr C. M. L. Dunn-Jones. Many friends have helped keep me going and provided welcome distraction, as well as tolerating prolonged periods of radio silence at my end. Nicola Williams regularly put me up on many visits to Manchester and Salford; Joe Hickinbottom was a great encouragement through the final stages of writing-up. I am thankful for the friendship of Claire Sissons, Joe Allen, Jason O'Connor, Laura Humphreys, Ashley Coad, Emily Collins, Ian Humberstone, Abi Overton, Jasmine Hunter Evans, Clare Garland, Rhiannon Jones, Ed Taylor, Emma Curry, Hannah Boast, Gareth Mogg, Simon Peplow, Jess Monaghan, Rob Winter, Leanne Walker, Peter Rothery, Dom Green, Ryan Patterson, Tara Etherington, Rhian Keyse, Zaneta Davies and Niall Kiernan. Wen and Meg, as well as Jasmine the Cat, offered canine and feline assistance respectively.

My family have given support and encouragement throughout. I am grateful to Janet and Barry Protheroe, David Hyatt and Roberta Taylor. My great-auntie, Beti Watkins, kindly translated Rhys J. Davies' Welsh, as well as sharing her memories of George Hall, Labour MP for Aberdare.

My siblings Dan and Rebecca Parker have been enormously supportive companions, always taking an interest in my research and as happy to discuss trade union political finance in the 1930s as the present politics of Newport East Labour Party, with which they are now both intimately entangled.

My greatest debt is to my parents, Sheila and Glyn Parker. They have supported me in countless ways; their love and encouragement has made this project possible.

Debra Jackson has been my greatest cheerleader, particularly through the final stages of the project; she has put up with a lot. I am hugely grateful for her support and companionship.

My nan, Olwen Parker (1924-2015), is much missed and was very much an inspiration behind both this project and my wider interest in labour politics. She was born a week before the first Labour government took office, and was later one of the first women to be a Bakers' Union shop steward. We spent many evenings putting the world to rights. There was controversy within the labour movement in 1935 over the acceptance of knighthoods from the National government by the trade union leaders Walter Citrine and Arthur Pugh; the third Labour recipient of that honour tends to be overlooked. Nan never forgot that her own MP had been *Sir* Charles Edwards. This thesis is dedicated to her; I hope she would have enjoyed reading it.

Table of contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	4
Table of contents	6
List of figures	8
Abbreviations	9
A note on money	14
 Introduction	 15
 Chapter 1: Britain and her trade unions in the 1930s	 31
Politics	32
The economy	37
Trade unionism	39
 Chapter 2: Membership and money	 48
The political levy	52
Party finance: problems and possibilities	80
Unions and general election finance	93
Regulation: the Hastings Agreement and after	104
 Chapter 3: Candidates and constituencies	 118
Patterns of union sponsorship	122
Choosing the candidates: parliamentary panels	136
Union officials as candidates	157
The 'adoption market': electoral geography and placing union candidates	174
 Chapter 4: Parliamentary politics	 191
The Parliamentary Labour Party, 1931-1940	195

The 'Loyal Lump': trade union Members of Parliament	204
Liaison	213
Union MPs in the wider Labour movement	232
 Chapter 5: Party strategy: two studies	 244
Exposing British fascism	247
'Intellectuals', trade unions, and the Socialist League	270
 Conclusions	 290
 Appendix: union membership and political finance	 297
Bibliography	314

List of figures

Figure 1.1 TUC membership by trade group, 1931-1940	43
Figure 1.2 Overall trade union density, 1918-1946	44
Figure 1.3 Work stoppages due to industrial disputes, 1918-1945 (in-year)	47
Figure 2.1 Total assets of selected trade unions, end of year (£)	53
Figure 2.2 Industrial membership, selected trade unions	59
Figure 2.3 Political membership, selected trade unions	60
Figure 2.4 Affiliated membership, selected trade unions	65
Figure 2.5 All trade unions: political funds and Labour party affiliations, 1927-1940	67
Figure 2.6 Central political funds of selected trade unions (£)	72
Figure 2.7 NUGMW Central Political Fund Reserves, 1924-1940	77
Figure 2.8 Labour party central finances, 1929-1940	82
Figure 2.9 General election expenditure by Labour candidates, 1929-35, by sponsor	95
Figure 3.1 All Labour candidatures by sponsoring organisation, general elections 1918-45	125
Figure 3.2 Successful Labour candidatures by sponsoring organisation, general elections 1918-1945	126
Figure 3.3 Sponsoring unions: numbers of candidates at general elections, 1929-1931	131
Figure 3.4 MFGB Areas: candidates at general elections, 1929-35	135
Figure 3.5 Extract from NUR Parliamentary Panel Written Examination Paper, 1936	141
Figure 5.1 Labour party fascism questionnaire, June 1934	257

Abbreviations

AACBRRO	Amalgamated Association of Card, Blowing and Ring Room Operatives
AAOCST	Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twiners
ABFSWS	Associated Blacksmiths, Forge and Smithy Workers Society
ADM	Annual Delegate Meeting
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASDBFKT	Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers and Kindred Trades
ASSNC	Aircraft Shop Stewards' National Committee
ASW	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
AUBTW	Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers
AUOBCAW	Amalgamated Union of Bakers, Confectioners and Allied Workers
AWA	Amalgamated Weavers' Association
AWCS	Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries
BDC	Biennial Delegate Congress
BISAKTA	British Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades' Association
BLP	Borough Labour Party
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CLC	Central Labour College
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
CMSA	Chain Makers' and Strikers' Association
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CSCA	Civil Service Clerical Association
CSEU	Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions
CWS	Co-operative Wholesale Society
DLP	Divisional Labour Party

DMA	Durham Miners' Association
EC	Executive Committee/Executive Council
EEF	Engineering Employers' Federation
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FBI	Federation of British Industries
FEST	Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions
FGPC	Finance and General Purposes Committee
FUBW	Fascist Union of British Workers
GC	General Council (Trades Union Congress)
GEC	General Executive Council (Transport and General Workers' Union)
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ISP	Independent Socialist Party
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades' Confederation
ITWF	International Transport Workers' Federation
LCC	London County Council
LCMF	Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation
LLY	Labour League of Youth
LNU	League of Nations Union
LPTB	London Passenger Transport Board
LSC	London Society of Compositors
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
MAGB	Mining Association of Great Britain
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain/Mineworkers' Federation of Great Britain
MHIWU	Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers' Union
NAFTA	National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association
NALGO	National Association of Local Government Officers
NAOP	National Association of Operative Plasterers

NASOHSPD	National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators
NATSOPA	National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants
NAULAW	National Amalgamated Union of Life Assurance Workers
NAUSAWC	National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks
NC	National Committee (Amalgamated Engineering Union)
NCCL	National Council for Civil Liberties
NCEO	National Confederation of Employers' Organisations
NCL	National Council of Labour
NCLC	National Council of Labour Colleges
NCLW	National Conference of Labour Women
NEC	National Executive Committee (Labour Party)
NFBTO	National Federation of Building Trades Operatives
NFPW	National Federation of Professional Workers
NFRB	New Fabian Research Bureau
NFWW	National Federation of Women Workers
NJC	National Joint Committee
NMA	Nottinghamshire Miners Association
NMFU	Nottinghamshire Miners' Federated Union
NMIU	Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Industrial Union
NMM	National Minority Movement
NPB	National Publicity Bureau
NSPW	National Society of Pottery Workers
NUAW	National Union of Agricultural Workers
NUBOMKT	National Union of Blastfurnacemen, Ore Miners, Coke Workers and Kindred Trades
NUBSO	National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives
NUCAW	National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers
NUDAW	National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers
NUDBTW	National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers

NUFW	National Union of Foundry Workers
NUGMW	National Union of General and Municipal Workers
NULOEA	National Union of Labour Organisers and Election Agents
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
NUS	National Union of Seamen
NUSM	National Union of Scottish Mineworkers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
NUTW	National Union of Textile Workers
NUVB	National Union of Vehicle Builders
NUWM	National Unemployed Workers' Movement
OBDFEA	Operative Bleachers', Dyers' and Finishers' Association
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
POEU	Post Office Engineering Union
PSU	Prudential Staff Union
RCA	Railway Clerks' Association
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions
RWG	Railway Women's Guild
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
SJCIWO	Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations
SL	Socialist League
SSIP	Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda
SSP	Scottish Socialist Party
SWMF	South Wales Miners' Federation
SWMIU	South Wales Miners' Industrial Union
SWRCL	South Wales Regional Council of Labour
TA	Typographical Association
TC	Trades Council
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress

UDC	Urban District Council
UMS	United Mineworkers of Scotland
UPA	United Patternmakers' Association
UPOW	Union of Post Office Workers
USBISS	United Society of Boilermakers and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders
UTFWA	United Textile Factory Workers' Association
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild
WEA	Workers' Education Association
WLL	Women's Labour League
WTUL	Women's Trade Union League
WU	Workers' Union
YCL	Young Communist League
YMA	Yorkshire Mineworkers' Association

A note on money

Reference is made throughout this thesis to sums of money, for example, trade union political levies and general election expenses. All sums referred to are those of the time; when the British system of money was based on pounds (£), shillings (s.) and pence (d.). 12d. was equal to 1s. and 20s. to £1.

Several indices can be used to give a sense of the comparable worth today of these sums: see <https://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> for full details. The simplest way to do this is to multiply the historic sum by the percentage increase in the Retail Price Index; £100 in 1935 is therefore roughly equal to £6,371 in 2016 prices.

The average weekly earnings in 1935 for men in manual work of 21 years and over were 64s. 6d. (£3 4s. 6d.), including 53s. 4d. in mining; 67s. 7d. in metals and engineering; 83s. 8d. in printing; 61s. 2d. in building, 57s. 10d. in public utilities; and 69s. 1d. in transport. For women in manual work of 18 years and over, average weekly earnings were 31s. 3d. (£1 11s. 3d.), including 30s. 3d. in textiles; and 30s. 1d. in other manufacturing. See Table 38, Department of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract, 1886-1968* (London, 1971), p. 96.

The cost of living indices (July 1914=100) for all items were as follows: January 1929=167; January 1930=166; January 1931=153; January 1932=147; February 1933=141; January 1934=142; January 1935=143; January 1936=147; January 1937=151; January 1938=159; January 1939=155; January 1940=174; and January 1941=196. See Table 38, Department of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract, 1886-1968* (London, 1971), pp. 166-171.

Introduction

The events surrounding the collapse of the second Labour government in the summer of 1931 represented a watershed in twentieth century British politics. They brought to a close the 'unstable equilibrium'¹ which had characterised the country's political life since 1918, ensconcing a Conservative-dominated National government in power for the remainder of a decade marked by continuing economic uncertainty and the mounting threat of war. They also precipitated a crisis of political identity within the Labour party. Deprived of the founding generation of its leadership and with its parliamentary strength decimated, the gradualist approach to socialism which had long characterised its politics was seemingly left in tatters. Yet Labour returned to office in 1940 as a key partner in the wartime coalition; in 1945, it secured a sweeping electoral landslide of its own, allowing it to implement much of its traditional programme. It is the contention of this thesis that the party's recovery during the 1930s was made possible by the crucial contribution of the trade unions. With Labour's political leadership substantially weakened after 1931, the unions assumed a pivotal role in shaping the party's direction, to the extent that by 1940, its political culture, organisation and policy had been decisively remade. The identity which developed in these years continued to characterise Labour's politics for a generation, through the high tide of the 1945 Attlee government, into the 1950s and beyond. This was a hugely significant and underappreciated achievement in the context of the destruction of labour movements that attended the retreat of political democracy across much of Europe during the 1930s. This thesis seeks to investigate and understand the crucial contribution of the trade unions to this redevelopment of Labour's political culture through an exploration of key aspects of the party's organisation in the period 1931-1940.

¹ The phrase is Ross McKibbin's; see his *Parties and People. England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 33-68.

The relationship between the Labour party and the trade unions was one of the most significant and distinctive aspects of twentieth century British politics. In no other major industrialised nation did such a close association between a trade union movement and a political party develop. The relationship had its origins in the decision of the 1899 Trades Union Congress to pursue parliamentary representation independent of the Liberal and Conservative parties; the following year the Labour Representation Committee was established. Rechristened the Labour party in 1906, by the First World War the new organisation was able to count on the allegiance of a broad section of the trade union movement. A constitutional overhaul in 1918 gave the party a formal, if ambiguous, commitment to socialist politics, whilst fostering the establishment of local Labour parties, grounded in individual membership, as the basis for the party's work in the constituencies. Yet the original federal structure of the party, through which trade unions affiliated to Labour and were integrated closely into its national organisation was retained. In the years that followed, the party's support grew; by 1924 it held office as a minority government under Ramsay MacDonald. This experience was short-lived but exposed tensions in the party's relationship with the unions which were also apparent during the General Strike of 1926. Labour returned to office, again as a minority administration headed by MacDonald, in 1929. This too proved a largely unhappy experience in the context of economic slump and rapidly rising mass unemployment, which the government seemed powerless to arrest. The Labour Cabinet resigned in August 1931, unable, in the face of a mounting financial crisis, to agree on spending cuts to which the TUC General Council was fervently opposed. While the bulk of the party went into opposition, MacDonald formed a 'National government' including the Conservative and Liberal parties, alongside a handful of Labour ex-ministers. A general election followed in October resulting in a National landslide, with Labour castigated as having 'run away' from the crisis under the pressure of trade union 'dictation'.

In this context there was a reassertion of trade union priorities within the party, including a consolidation of organisational links such as the revitalisation of the National Joint Council to coordinate policy. With a depleted parliamentary leadership, the balance of power within the party moved towards the trade unions to the extent that Labour appeared to become, in one famous phrase, 'the General Council's

Party'.² There were signs of recovery in the economy, and correspondingly in the unions' industrial strength, from late 1933, but these remained difficult years for the party. Although conflicts over its direction and domestic policies had largely been resolved by 1935, the National government secured a second comprehensive victory at the polls that November. Rearmament and the threat of war dominated the politics of the later 1930s; during this period the TUC, under the leadership of Walter Citrine, was increasingly concerned with establishing a corporatist partnership with government and employers. Labour remained far from national office, and would likely have suffered a further electoral defeat had war not intervened in September 1939. However, the military crisis of May 1940 discredited the National – by now overwhelmingly Conservative – administration of Neville Chamberlain, and propelled Labour into a coalition government led by Winston Churchill, with one of the outstanding personalities of the trade union movement, Ernest Bevin, joining the Cabinet as Minister of Labour. The requirements of the wartime economy, and the period of majority Labour government which followed in 1945, helped entrench a system of tripartite corporatism between unions, employers and the state which endured through both Labour and Conservative administrations until the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. The trade unions' organisational links to the Labour party, although in some respects much modified, have continued until the present day.

Labour's time in opposition from 1931 to 1940 was frustrating, leaving the party effectively powerless to affect 'practical problems and immediate events'.³ However, a number of developments took place within Labour politics during this period which were of significance not just to the party itself, but also to British political culture more broadly. Firstly, there were changes in Labour's organisation and policy which were to shape the party's identity into the time of its first majority government in 1945-51, and beyond. The sense of crisis engendered by the events of 1931 seemed to validate a more radical conception of socialism than the party had been prepared to entertain during the MacDonald era, and emboldened the Labour left to seek sweeping changes to the party's policy. By the mid-thirties, however, it was the party's moderates who were triumphant; it would be they, not the left, who would have the greatest influence on Labour's future direction. Secondly, the strategy of pursuing a united front with

² Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, tenth edition (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 71-87.

³ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 1.

other parties in opposition to the National administration was decisively rejected. In the latter half of the decade, communists and others sought common action with Labour to challenge the government, particularly over its attitude to continental fascist aggression; their advances were spurned and their supporters within the Labour party defeated. Finally, despite the Labour opposition's political weakness, liberal democratic politics were maintained in Britain, and extremists of both left and right successfully side-lined; noteworthy in the context of the destruction of democratic political systems in, for example, Germany and Spain during the period.

Britain's trade unions had an important role to play in these developments. Not only did they have a critical share in the remaking of Labour's organisation and policy, but they also made a significant contribution to shaping the party's strategy to marginalise the political extremes. Perhaps most importantly, they helped ensure the viability of political democracy in Britain. One aspect of this was in their growing status as 'governing institutions' within a system of 'corporate bias', which aimed at maintaining the existing parliamentary system of government by the avoidance of crises through 'institutional collaboration'.⁴ This process had yet to be completed by the late 1930s; in their relationship with Labour, however, the trade unions made a major contribution to shoring up support for parliamentary democracy: they provided the material and moral resources for the party to function effectively. This was not only a question of funding, although that was far from irrelevant; they also developed structures to provide the party with candidates and MPs drawn directly from the working class. They provided solidity in times of crisis; their culture of collective solidarity and democratic respect for majority decisions had a critical influence on Labour's political culture.

Neither British political culture in the interwar period, nor Labour's role within it, have wanted for historians; this was the period of the expansion of the democratic franchise and Labour's 'emergence in its modern form as the main institutional focus of the British left'.⁵ The field has expanded in recent years.⁶ Prominent works include those

⁴ Keith Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society. The experience of the British system since 1911* (London, 1979), pp. 20-21.

⁵ Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Three. Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike. The Lost Internationalist World of A. A. Purcell* (London, 2013), p. 349.

⁶ On the broader political culture of the period, see two collections of essays, Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas, (eds.), *Brave New World. Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2011), and Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye, (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945* (Basingstoke, 2013).

by Ross McKibbin, who argues that the Second World War threw the politics of the interwar years 'off course', interrupting the Conservative hegemony of the 1930s and replacing the individualist democracy of that period with a social-democratic version; he emphasises the importance of class relationships and the extent to which Labour benefitted from their changing nature.⁷ Andrew Thorpe has analysed the experience of Britain's main political parties during the Second World War, providing much insight into their organisational development; he has also contributed a detailed study of the 1931 general election.⁸

A number of studies have illustrated the diverse influences on Labour's political culture in the period. David Howell's *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* analyses the party's culture and organisational development in the 1920s, emphasising the complexity of Labour's relationship with trade unions, women, the Independent Labour Party, and those of other 'progressive varieties', although the post MacDonald period is largely beyond its scope.⁹

Laura Beers' work analyses the development of Labour's relationship with the media from the party's early days to the end of the Second World War. She argues convincingly that the party developed an increasingly sophisticated media strategy during the 1920s and 1930s, making use of 'the popular press, radio, cinema, and political advertising to project itself as a truly national party representing all the productive elements of British society'; this allowed it to compete with the Conservatives and served to 'normalise' Labour politics, playing a crucial role in the party's political recovery in the years after 1931.¹⁰ Kevin Morgan's *Bolshevism and the British Left* trilogy considers the labour movement's reception of Russian Bolshevik influences between the wars, emphasising several important aspects of political organisation and challenging to notion of an inevitable 'forward march' of Labour: the significance of money in politics and the often porous boundaries of the party in a time

⁷ Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998); *Parties and People. England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010); *The Ideologies of Class. Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1991).

⁸ Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991); (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989); *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford, 2009).

⁹ David Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002).

¹⁰ Laura Beers, *Your Britain. Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2010), pp. 6-7, 202.

of organisational flux are key insights of Morgan's work.¹¹ Nicole Robertson has analysed the role of the Co-operative movement.¹² Peter Catterall has examined the relationship between the Labour party and the Free Churches and the influence of Nonconformity on Labour's political style.¹³ Clare Griffiths has explored the challenges to Labour's success in rural Britain and the nature of the party's relationship with the countryside.¹⁴ Stefan Berger examines organisational developments in the light of continental experience.¹⁵ Matthew Worley's work integrates an analysis of Labour's activity at the local level into a discussion of the party's interwar development; two collections edited by Worley emphasise the variety of local and other influences, whilst there have been a number of studies focused on particularly towns or regions.¹⁶ Trade unions have often had a less central role in recent labour histories: this is due in part to a necessary rebalancing to recognise of gender and culture in the history of a movement which has often appeared overwhelmingly male; it is also reflective of the more marginal role played in British society in recent years by trade unions, in contrast to much of the earlier post-war period.¹⁷

Rather fewer works have dealt with Labour's experience of the 1930s specifically: as the preceding discussion suggests, often their scope has included the whole interwar

¹¹ Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part One. Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006); *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Two. The Webbs and Soviet Communism* (London, 2006); *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Three. Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike. The Lost Internationalist World of A. A. Purcell* (London, 2013).

¹² Nicole Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960. Minding their Own Business* (Abingdon, 2010).

¹³ Peter Catterall, *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918-39. Radicalism, Righteousness and Religion* (London, 2016).

¹⁴ Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside. The Politics of Rural Britain, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2007).

¹⁵ Stefan Berger, *The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900-1931* (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁶ Matthew Worley, (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009); *Labour Inside the Gate. A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars* (London and New York, 2008); (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005). Book length studies include Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics. The Labour Movement in Preston 1880-1940* (Cambridge, 1987); Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn, *Labour Heartland. The history of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire during the inter-war years 1918-1939* (Bradford, 1987); Peter Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement 1880-1939* (London, 1985); R. J. Waller, *The Dukeries Transformed. The Social and Political Development of a Twentieth-Century Coalfield* (Oxford, 1983); John Marriot, *The Culture of Labourism. The East End Between the Wars* (Edinburgh, 1991); Chris Williams, *Democratic Rhondda. Politics and Society, 1885-1951* (Cardiff, 1996); Sam Davies, *Liverpool Labour. Social and Political influences on the development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (Keele, 1996); Declan McHugh, *Labour in the City. The Development of the Labour party in Manchester, 1918-31* (Manchester, 2006).

¹⁷ See for instance Selina Todd, *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010* (London, 2014).

period, or focused more closely on the 1920s. General histories of the party discuss the 1931-40 period, although naturally their treatment is often fairly slight. Early 'official' histories were slighter than most: Francis Williams' two volumes, for instance, both dedicate less than twenty pages – in each case out of close to four hundred – to the thirties; here, the period is viewed as the unfortunate result of MacDonald's 'betrayal' representing merely a prelude to Labour's ascent to majority government.¹⁸ Henry Pelling adds more detail on Labour's 'convalescence' after 1931, although brevity limits his analysis of the extent to which Labour became the 'General Council's Party' in those years.¹⁹ Historians sympathetic to the Marxist left criticised Labour's supposed timidity in the period: for Ralph Miliband, Labour's parliamentarism had frustrated the possibility of achieving socialism; the party's approach to the problems of the 1930s represented nothing more than 'MacDonaldism with MacDonald'.²⁰

The classic study of Labour in the period remains that by Ben Pimlott, published in 1977. *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* directly addressed the stance of Miliband and others, arguing that it was in fact the divisions in the party caused by the left which prohibited Labour from exerting influence on the political direction of Britain in the period. Pimlott's view of Labour as a mere 'electoral machine', however, is rather narrow, and arguably precludes a more sensitive understanding of the politics of the labour movement in general, and the unions – who are mainly to be found in Pimlott's work mustering their block votes at party conference to defeat Stafford Cripps and his allies – in particular.²¹ Richard Shackleton's chapter in an edited volume on 'Trade unions and the slump' is arguably the most sustained attempt to analyse the unions' influence on Labour politics in the 1930s. Shackleton considers the unions' role in the party's recovery after 1931, and their influence on issue including unemployment and the approach of war; he also provides a useful schema of the chronology of this influence, observing a sometimes inconsistent tightening of links during 1932-34, followed a period of conflict in 1935-36, and an 'apogee' of union power in the years prior to the outbreak of war. However, the piece is brief, and closer attention is required

¹⁸ Francis Williams, *Fifty Years' March. The Rise of the Labour Party* (London, n.d. [1950]); and *Magnificent Journey. The Rise of the Trade Unions* (London, 1954).

¹⁹ Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, tenth edition (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 71-87. For a more recent and thorough-going general account, see Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, fourth edition (London, 2015).

²⁰ Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism. A Study in the Politics of Labour*, second edition (London, 1972).

²¹ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977).

to several of its themes.²² Tom Buchanan's account of the party's response to the Spanish Civil War is nuanced, taking account of the broader movement, but remains largely a study of Labour's experience of that conflict.²³ John Swift's monograph is the most recent full-length analysis of the party in the period, yet it is largely dedicated to a rehabilitation of Clement Attlee's leadership in these years and gives little consideration to trade unions.²⁴

Trade unions do have a separate historiography of their own, although it has not always focused closely on their relations with Labour. Amongst contemporaries, one writer to take early notice of these relations was the German social-democratic journalist Egon Wertheimer. His *Portrait of the Labour Party*, published in English in 1929, observed that the 'influence of the trade unions has not only had [a] tremendous effect on the organisation but also on the psychology' of the party.²⁵ Another contemporary, the American academic Dean E. McHenry, in *The Labour Party in Transition, 1931-1938* was, although by no means unsympathetic, sceptical in suggesting there had been a reassertion of the unions' 'dominant power' in the party after 1931; he argued for reform of the party's federal structure on a constituency basis, interpreting the existing arrangement as permitting a 'lopsided 'parliament of industry' within the party structure'.²⁶ The Labour intellectual G. D. H. Cole recruited a number of trade union figures to contribute to his survey of *British Trade Unionism To-day*.²⁷ For Cole, with his long interest in industrial organisation and guild socialism, the unions were not only an inevitable feature of the party, despite the growth of individual membership; they also provided 'a valuable guarantee of stability and an assurance against doctrinal splits actually rending the party organisation asunder'.²⁸

With the confirmation of the unions as partners in tripartite corporatism in the 1950s and early 1960s, a number of studies addressed aspects of their role in society and politics, alongside a burgeoning field of institutional histories. V. L. Allen's volume on *Trade Unions and the Government* considered how the unions' behaviour varied – or

²² Richard Shackleton, 'Trade unions and the slump' in Ben Pimlott and Chris Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991), pp. 109-136.

²³ Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge, 1991).

²⁴ John Swift, *Labour in Crisis. Clement Attlee and the Labour Party in Opposition, 1931-1940* (Basingstoke, 2001).

²⁵ Egon Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour Party* (London & New York, 1929), p. 5.

²⁶ Dean E. McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938* (London, 1938), pp. 305-309.

²⁷ G. D. H. Cole, *British Trade Unionism To-day. A Survey* (London, 1939).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

did not – in periods of Labour administration.²⁹ The work of Hugh Clegg and others highlighted the unions' commitment to a pluralist model of industrial relations.³⁰ Party-union relations were the focus of a 1960 volume by Martin Harrison, which whilst astute and insightful, dealt primarily with the post-war years.³¹ Whilst criticism of the unions' role in protecting the party leadership from the intrusion of Bevanism was common on parts of the left in the 1950s, with the passing from the trade union scene of right-wingers such as Arthur Deakin, Tom Williamson, and Will Lawther, and their replacement with more left-inclined leaders like Frank Cousins, critical accounts tended to be fewer.³² In the context of the fragmenting of the corporatist compromise in the later 1960s, stronger criticism came from the left in works such as those by Miliband, whilst the often controversial role played by unions in the public life of the 1970s prompted critiques from the social democratic right, in, for example, the work of David Marquand. The work of Keith Middlemas analysed the unions' role in the more corporatist relationship between government and industry that emerged from the Second World War; his *Politics and Industrial Society* argues for the existence of 'corporate bias' in the interwar years.³³

Perhaps the major contribution to the study of party-union relations has been the work of Lewis Minkin. His *The Contentious Alliance* offers a detailed and wide-ranging analysis of the relationship, positing the existence of a system of informal 'rules' which governed a relationship based on the principles of trade union restraint, the autonomy of the industrial and political spheres, democracy, unity and solidarity, as represented, by, for instance, an adherence to majority decisions. Minkin's work is largely focused on the post-war period, although many of its insights also be traced prior to

²⁹ V. L. Allen, *Power in Trade Unions. A Study of their Organization in Great Britain* (London, 1954); *Trade Unions and the Government* (London, 1960); *Trade Union Leadership. Based on a Study of Arthur Deakin* (London, 1957).

³⁰ H. A. Clegg, *General Union. A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers* (Oxford, 1954); H. A. Clegg, A. J. Killick, and Rex Adams, *Trade Union Officers. A Study of Full-Time Officers, Branch Secretaries and Shop Stewards in British Trade Unions* (Cambridge, MA, 1961).

³¹ Martin Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945* (London, 1960).

³² Joseph Goldstein, *The Government of British Trade Unions. A Study of Apathy and the Democratic Process in the Transport and General Workers Union* (London, 1952).

³³ K. Middlemas, *Politics in Industrial Society. The experience of the British system since 1911* (London, 1979), and *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 1: Britain in Search of Balance, 1940-61* (Basingstoke and London, 1986). See also Robert Currie, *Industrial Politics* (Oxford, 1979).

1945.³⁴ There have been a number of studies addressing the politics both of trade unions more broadly, and those of particular organisations.³⁵

This thesis seeks to integrate insights from these varied historiographies to provide an original account of the part played by trade unions in Labour's political culture in the 1930s: it places a distinctive focus on organisational developments and their implications for party culture, seeking to add considerable detail and complexity to an understanding of Labour's politics in the 1930s. Much recent work on British interwar politics as outlined above prioritises policy development or electoral culture; this study suggests that party organisation is also worthy of careful consideration. Moreover, some recent work tends to overlook or underplay the contribution of the trade unions to the Labour party's development: this account seeks to put them back in the picture during a critical period in the party's history.

The relationship was always much more than a series of practical, organisational functions; the unions also imbued the party with much of its characteristic political culture. Henry Drucker has described Labour as being built around an ethos – a dimension of party ideology separate from mere adherence to doctrinal principles – arising out of working class experience. This ethos 'is not open to recruitment by agreement' but 'gives rise to distinctive practices and institutions', quite separate from those which were products of the middle class ethos of the Liberal and Conservative parties, having its origin 'overwhelmingly in the trade unions'. Ideology-as-doctrine might be easier to locate, for example in policy statements, manifestos and party conference resolutions, yet ethos was not 'less real or less important'. He identifies several practices which reveal Labour's ethos, including reluctance to sack leaders, personal style, financial practices and adherence to formal rules.³⁶ Drucker's is a compelling argument, offering a nuanced approach to understanding Labour's politics;

³⁴ Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991). See also Minkin's *The Labour Party Conference. A study in the politics of intra-party democracy* (Manchester, 1980), and *The Blair Supremacy. A study in the politics of Labour's party management* (Manchester, 2014).

³⁵ David Howell, *Respectable Radicals. Studies in the politics of railway trade unionism* (Aldershot, 1999); Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and David Howell, (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996); Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and John McIlroy, (eds.), *The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1945-64* (Monmouth, 2007 [1999]); Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and John McIlroy, (eds.), *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79* (Monmouth, 2007 [1999]).

³⁶ Henry M. Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (London, 1979), pp. 9-18.

the trade union movement seems the logical starting point for an investigation of this aspect of the party's culture.

The very notion of 'the unions' is problematic; it is important to establish that the trade unions did not represent a homogenous bloc:

British Trade Unionism was not created as a scientifically organised movement inspired from a single centre; it was not even remoulded at any time in accordance with a common plan. It grew and developed of itself, as a direct response to needs immediately felt by one body of workers after another; and each group, when it could not find an existing Union to meet its needs, created a new Union of its own and only subsequently, if at all, linked itself up with the rest of the movement. The consequence is that, from the standpoint of the formalist, British Trade Unionism is a chaos.³⁷

As this comment by the socialist thinker G. D. H. Cole implies, the trade union movement was diverse, and in many respects an organic response by particular groups of workers to their own circumstances at work. Attempting to get a full impression of the movement could be akin to 'visiting an ancient city full of architecture of different periods and styles' each reflecting 'the social needs, the materials available and the ways of bringing them together that were proper to their several periods'.³⁸ Unions of different kinds could bring a variety of experiences to Labour party culture. Unions could be organised on a national, regional or even local basis, drawing on a variety of skill levels and gender bases. Alastair J. Reid's analysis provides a useful interpretative schema for understanding the complexities of the trade union world, identifying 'three main types of occupational experience, each producing its own outlook and form of organisation'.³⁹ The first group, assembly workers such as engineers, were concerned with assembling products from a range of materials and as such were skilled, educated, and well-paid. The form of trade unionism they developed is usually referred to as *craft* unionism: this emphasised a firmly 'voluntarist' approach

³⁷ G. D. H. Cole, *British Trade Unionism To-day* (London, 1939), p. 13.

³⁸ N. Barou, *British Trade Unions* (London, 1947), p. 11.

³⁹ A. J. Reid, *United We Stand. A History of Britain's Trade Unions* (London, 2004), p. ix-xi, and *passim* for much of what follows; A. J. Reid, 'Labour and the trade unions' in Duncan Tanner, Pat Thane and Nick Tiratsoo (eds.), *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge, 2000), 221-247, pp. 222-223.

to industrial relations, based on well-resourced organisations in single industries dealing independently with employers, and sharing a strong craft identity. They often maintained welfare funds and offered members a range of benefits. Initially based on local organisation, by the mid-nineteenth century, the craft unions had begun to centralise their organisation and funds nationally: the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, established in 1851, provides a well-known example of such a trade union. Such organisations prioritised local democracy, even once established nationally, and retained a hostility to outside interference in their affairs.

The second occupational group, process workers, were involved in the processing of a single raw material, such as coal or cotton. Skills were gained through learning on the job, meaning such workers were relatively easy to replace. Combined with low pay, their organisations, which Reid characterises as *seniority* unions, found it difficult to maintain the funds available to the craft unions, with the consequence that they were less able to engage in successful collective bargaining, and far more amenable to state intervention in order to achieve their aims. Miners' unions, for example, pursued statutory safety protections from the mid-nineteenth century, although they often struggled to gain recognition by employers. This type of trade union, then, was more inclined towards taking political action: miners unions sponsored candidates for Parliament as early as the 1870s. The third occupational group, general manual labourers, were in the most precarious position, being the least skilled and worst paid. Trade union organisation was difficult to maintain amongst such workers, and the form it increasingly took from the 1890s was that of *federal* or *general* unionism – large national organisations representing workers across a variety of trades, and seeking state support for general minimum standards. This three-fold system provides a valuable overview of the variety inherent in the trade union movement, but it was the voluntarist approach, most characteristic of the craft unions but common to other types of union, Reid contends, that was to provide the 'basic underpinning of wider labour politics' in Britain.⁴⁰ Taking the heterogeneous nature of the movement, and the varying traditions which shaped its development, into account is crucial to a full understanding of Labour's political culture; this project attempts to do so.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. xi.

Given the practicalities of the project, it has been necessary to make a selection of trade unions on which to focus. Seven key unions have been chosen, although various others are referred to throughout. Although there has been an element of self-selection in some cases – particularly that of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain [MFGB], the union with the largest membership affiliated to Labour in the period, as well as the most significant sponsor of candidates and Members of Parliament – a number of factors have been taken into consideration. Achieving a representative cross-section of the movement was one such factor; this had several aspects. Firstly, to incorporate examples from each of the three occupational groups identified by Reid. The Amalgamated Engineering Union [AEU] gives a good example of craft organisation, although it has further significance as a union experiencing rapid growth later in the decade, with which political membership failed to keep pace. The MFGB provides a strong example of seniority unionism, whilst the two main general unions, the Transport and General Workers' Union [TGWU], and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers [NUGMW], represent the third category. Variety in union structure was also a factor: the two general unions exhibited a kind of dual structure, being organised both geographically by region, as well as by trade group. The National Union of Railwaymen [NUR] operated on the lines of geographical branches which dealt directly with the union's central office; in other organisations such as the AEU, relations between the branches and the national leadership were mediated by regional organisation. The MFGB is perhaps the best example of a federated union, based on area unions in the various coalfields. The United Textile Factory Workers' Association [UTFWA], the federal body for cotton workers, is another example, but the MFGB has been preferred here on the basis that the UTFWA's complex multiplicity of local affiliates, each representing different parts of the craft, would have involved more convoluted analysis of themes which are more apparent in a study of the MFGB; crucially given that the thesis aims to deal with the unions' work in Parliament, the UTFWA had no sponsored representatives in the House of Commons throughout the period under consideration until a by-election in 1939. It is therefore not one of the main unions considered, although it is discussed in relation to specific issues such as candidate selection. Industrial factors were also relevant: whilst the MFGB represented workers in a struggling export industry, others such as the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers [NUDAW] organised in the growing distribution trade whilst the NUR represented an industry 'sheltered' from international competition. The smaller railway

union, the Railway Clerks' Association [RCA] has also been used; union size was important but not paramount. The RCA gives an excellent example of a smaller 'white-collar' union organising clerical workers; it also had a notably high proportion of political levy-paying members, as well as a string commitment to securing parliamentary representation which marked it out even in contrast with larger organisations. The NUDAW also achieved a high rate of political membership, whereas the AEU provides a fascinating contrast with its low level of political levy-payers.

The analysis takes place largely at the national level, although local developments are examined more closely in the discussion of constituencies in Chapter 3. This national focus is deliberate; the political activities of trade unions in general were mediated through their national organisation. Future research might carry these themes through at the local party and union level; unfortunately, a detailed attempt to do so here has been beyond the scope of this project.

The thesis draws heavily on extensive and detailed archival research, primarily the records of trade unions including minutes of union executive and other committees, reports of annual or biennial conferences, annual and other financial reports, union journals and correspondence. Many of the records used are held at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, and the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. Whilst these are relatively conventional sources, they are often underused in studies of Labour politics. It is a contention of the work that thorough, empirical examination of sources of this kind can yield new and important insights into the history of Labour politics in the period. The records of the TUC, including general council minutes, annual congress reports and correspondence; the minutes and reports of the National Joint Council/National Council of Labour; the records of the Labour party, including National Executive papers, annual conference reports and other publications, head office files and correspondence; and the minutes of meetings Parliamentary Labour Party [PLP] and its executive have also been used. The Labour History Archive and Study Centre at the People's History Museum in Manchester has been invaluable in this regard. These archival sources have been supplemented by a large body of contemporary books and other works, as well as the memoirs and diaries of key individuals. The record of parliamentary proceedings, Hansard, has also been used, along with a range of other official sources and national and local periodicals and newspapers. One challenge in researching trade unions in the period is the often

rather short paper trail left behind by key individuals. Personal papers tend not to have survived, certainly not to the extent they have done for Labour politicians of the era, although there are exceptions such as Bevin and Citrine, as well as some individuals' papers which have made their way into union archives. The institutional sources referred to above have therefore been crucial; often they can be used to reconstruct a good deal of the lives, careers and politics of individual trade unionists. Whilst only a handful of the trade union figures discussed have been the subjects of full-scale biographies, the multi-volume *Dictionary of Labour Biography* has been of great benefit in providing biographical information for many of the personalities referred to.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first, 'Britain and her trade unions in the 1930s', briefly establishes the political, economic and social context in which the developments discussed in the later chapters took place, including an overview of the experience of the Labour party in the period. It discusses the trade union movement itself, examining its structure and organisation, the position of the unions in industry and their role in collective bargaining, the role of the TUC, and aspects of the distinctive culture of the movement.

The second chapter, 'Membership and money', examines the political funds of trade unions and assesses their contribution to party finance. The party's financial problems during the period are considered in detail; the focus then turns to the unions' role in electoral finance, before examining the development of a system of regulation of constituency finance, known as the Hastings Agreement. The appendix relates largely to the contents of this chapter: it provides full membership and financial details of the seven unions referred to.

The third chapter, 'Candidates and constituencies', analyses trade unions' sponsored parliamentary candidates. It identifies the major patterns in sponsorship across the period, and examines the procedures employed by unions for the selection of their candidates, notably the parliamentary panel system. The participation of union officials as candidates is considered; the discussion then turns to the role of electoral geography in placing the candidates, including a number of selection disputes.

The fourth chapter, 'Parliamentary politics', considers the role played by trade union Members of Parliament. It assesses their position within the PLP and offers case studies of the parliamentary groups of two of the unions. Attention is given to the nature

and development of liaison between the unions and their MPs, noting the establishment of an increasingly professionalised service to this end within the TGWU. Finally, the position of trade union MPs within the wider Labour movement is considered, including their role at union and party conferences, and in union publications.

In the final chapter, 'Party strategy', two case studies focus on the part played by the unions in shaping Labour strategy. Particular attention is given to the marginalisation of domestic extremist politics, whether of the right, in the form of the British Union of Fascists; or the left, discussing the marginalisation of the left within the party and the images recruited to assist in this.

A conclusion then brings together the main arguments of the thesis, discussing some of the longer term implications of the developments considered in the earlier chapters.

Britain and her trade unions in the 1930s

Few decades in recent British history have suffered such a poor reputation as the 1930s. Indeed, it is almost commonplace to preface any discussion of the period with the obligatory reference to W. H. Auden's 'low, dishonest decade' of mass unemployment, hunger marches, the means test, and appeasement. Sharp divisions of opinion, both among contemporaries at the time and historians since, have sometimes obscured a more complex picture.

The military disaster of May 1940 shattered the prestige of the National government politicians who had presided over most of the preceding ten years. The experience of full employment and improved social welfare during the Second World War, and under the Labour government which followed it in 1945, appeared to confirm the cruelty, incompetence, and paucity of imagination of Britain's 1930s leaders, who by this stage had few defenders on the political scene. Historians writing during the more prosperous 1950s and 1960s echoed this view of the period. The post-war success of Keynesian demand management policies appeared to vindicate their earlier advocates, who had been ignored by the less dynamic figures in office in the 1930s.⁴¹ Revisionist approaches emerged in the 1970s following the crisis of Keynesianism which accompanied economic stagnation; whilst not dismissing the criticisms of earlier interpretations, they did start to move towards a something of rehabilitation of the 'Devil's Decade' in pointing to Britain's relative stability when contrasted with many European neighbours, and the 'dawn of affluence' that began to break for many; these insights have influenced much historical work since.⁴² Recent works continue to tend towards a more optimistic interpretation of 1930s Britain.⁴³ What follows establishes

⁴¹ C. L. Mowat, *Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940* (London, 1968 [1955]); A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1976 [1965]); Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump. The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (London and Basingstoke, 1994 [1967]).

⁴² See especially John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump. Society and Politics during the Depression* (London, 1979)

⁴³ Juliet Gardiner, *The Thirties. An Intimate History* (London, 2011); Martin Pugh, *We Danced All Night. A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009).

the political, economic, and social climate in which Labour's political culture developed through the 1930s, before turning to a closer analysis of the trade union context.

Politics

The 1930s saw a significant restructuring of British politics. Since the First World War, the Labour party had emerged as a serious challenger to the older Conservative and Liberal parties; competition between all three parties shaped the electoral politics of the 1920s, although the Conservatives were the dominant party of government.⁴⁴ A minority Labour government was returned to office in 1929, following arguably the last genuinely three-party contest at a general election. Beset by economic problems, the government resigned following a Cabinet split over cuts to unemployment benefit in the face of a financial crisis in August 1931. The Labour prime minister, Ramsay MacDonald, then formed a National government with the support of the Conservatives and Liberals, alongside a handful of Labour colleagues. A landslide victory at the general election held in October 1931 entrenched the National government in power for much of the next decade; a second comprehensive electoral victory followed in November 1935.

The National governments dominated British politics in the 1930s.⁴⁵ Although rumours of some kind of multi-party combination had circulated during the last year of the Labour government; it was not until the financial crisis prompted the resignation of the Labour administration in August 1931 that such an arrangement became a serious proposition. After consultation with the King and the opposition leaders, MacDonald formed a National government on 24 August. He continued as prime minister; three Labour colleagues – Philip Snowden, J. H. Thomas, and Lord Sankey – joined him in a new Cabinet of ten which also included four Conservatives and two Liberals.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For the Conservatives, see John Ramsden, *A History of the Conservative Party. Volume 3: The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940* (London, 1978), and David Jarvis, 'The shaping of the Conservative electoral hegemony, 1918-39' in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 131-152.

⁴⁵ Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-40* (Basingstoke, 1999) provides an overview.

⁴⁶ Snowden remained Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Colonial Secretary, and Sankey Lord Chancellor. For the Conservatives, Stanley Baldwin became Lord President of the Council, Neville Chamberlain Minister of Health, Samuel Hoare India Secretary, and Philip Cunliffe-Lister President of

Initially conceived of as a temporary arrangement to weather the crisis, with the purpose of balancing the budget by pushing through the cuts in public expenditure that Labour had balked at, halting the run on the pound and preserving the gold standard exchange rate. Within weeks, however, the continuing crisis had forced the abandonment of the gold standard, and a general election was called for 27 October, with the National government seeking a 'doctor's mandate', a deliberate ambiguity which allowed the Conservatives to argue for their traditional policy of protective tariffs, whilst the Liberals under Sir Herbert Samuel could continue to advocate free trade. Another Liberal faction, the 'Liberal Nationals' led by Sir John Simon, supported the Conservatives in pushing for the introduction of tariffs.⁴⁷

The result was a landslide, with the National government winning some 554 seats in the House of Commons, 470 of them held by Conservatives. A further 33 seats were held by Samuelite Liberals, and 35 by Simonite Liberal Nationals.⁴⁸ This had the effect of isolating MacDonald, who remained Prime Minister at the head of a group of just thirteen 'National Labour' MPs, whilst allowing Conservative priorities to predominate. Neville Chamberlain, now Chancellor of the Exchequer in a reformed National Cabinet, pushed through the Import Duties Act in February 1932, introducing protective tariffs on imports. Collective Cabinet responsibility on trade policy was suspended for a time under an 'agreement to differ' to keep the Samuelite Liberals in the fold, but this rather embarrassing arrangement was brought to an end by the departure of the Samuelites from their government posts in September 1932 following the adoption of a system of imperial preference at the Ottawa Dominions conference; Samuel and his followers moved into opposition in late 1933, by which time the Conservatives held fifteen of twenty Cabinet posts. This ended Samuel's hopes of re-uniting his party; Simon and another Liberal National, Walter Runciman, now held important posts in a National administration that could claim some success, despite few radical departures in policy, with unemployment starting to fall from 1933, and the 1931 cuts being restored in 1934. A potential crisis over the institution of new scales of unemployment relief under

the Board of Trade. For the Liberals, Sir Herbert Samuel became Home Secretary, and Lord Reading Foreign Secretary.

⁴⁷ For the circumstances surrounding the election, and the campaign itself, Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991) provides an authoritative account. See also Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁴⁸ A third, smaller group of four Liberal MPs – David Lloyd George and members of his family – remained in opposition.

a national Unemployment Assistance Board introduced by Chamberlain was navigated effectively early in 1935. In many cases it was found that the new rates of benefit would be lower than those currently paid by local Public Assistance Committees; this sparked an outcry not just from Labour and the left, but also by Conservative MPs representing constituencies with high levels of unemployment, with the result that the government backed down, allowing whichever was the higher rate to be paid.⁴⁹ The ailing MacDonald swapped places with Baldwin that May; the government's record, as well as its declared support for collective security through the League of Nations in the context of an Italian invasion of Abyssinia, helped it to another comprehensive general election victory in November 1935. Conservatives now held 387 of the government's 429 seats, along with 33 Liberal Nationals and eight National Labour MPs. The opposition Liberals could muster just 21 seats, whilst Labour had climbed to 154.⁵⁰

Foreign affairs became more prominent in the National government's second term. Its support for the League of Nations was shown to be without substance by the revelation of the Hoare-Laval Pact in late 1935, under which the British and French foreign ministers agreed to cede Abyssinian territory to Italy. Rearmament had begun in 1935; with collective security now effectively dead, the government pursued a policy of trying to secure peace through placating aggressors, whilst rearming in preparation for the conflict that might come. No action was taken when Nazi Germany re-occupied the Rhineland in 1936, whilst the government stuck to a policy of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, despite obvious breaches of an international agreement to this effect by Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. Baldwin, his prestige enhanced by his management of the crisis accompanying Edward VIII's abdication in December 1936, gave way to Chamberlain in June 1937. National Labour, by this point, was largely an irrelevance. The new premier's policy of appeasement caused dissent amongst several Conservatives who favoured a more resolute approach, including Winston Churchill, a vocal, long-time opponent of the administration's attitude in relation to Germany, and Anthony Eden, who resigned as Foreign Secretary in February 1938,

⁴⁹ Frederic Miller, 'The British Unemployment Assistance Crisis of 1935', *Journal of Contemporary History* 14:2 (1979), 329-352; and Frederic Miller, 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government, 1931-36', *Historical Journal*, 19: 2 (1976), 453-476.

⁵⁰ For the election, see Tom Stannage, *Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition. The British General Election of 1935* (London, 1980).

although these critics were never in a strong enough position to seriously challenge the government's authority. Chamberlain's negotiation of the Munich Agreement in September 1938, ceding the Czech Sudetenland to Germany, appeared to have secured peace; within a year Britain was at war following the German invasion of Poland. The failure of the Norway campaign in spring 1940 shook confidence in Chamberlain's conduct of the war and made necessary a broadening of the government; Conservative dissenters now combined with the Labour opposition, with the refusal of the latter to serve under Chamberlain prompting the prime minister's resignation and replacement with Churchill, and bringing Labour into the government.⁵¹

This was a world away from where Labour had found itself in the autumn of 1931. Much of the party's leadership had been wiped out. Arthur Henderson, J. R. Clynes, Herbert Morrison, A. V. Alexander, Arthur Greenwood, Wedgwood Benn, Margaret Bondfield and Hugh Dalton, amongst many others, lost their seats. The leadership of the party in Parliament was taken by the elderly George Lansbury; Henderson remained as nominal leader until 1932. The crisis caused a sharp debate over the party's future direction; the gradualist socialism it had espoused had failed to arrest unemployment whilst in office, whilst the more radical manifesto on which it stood in 1931 had been decisively rejected. The experience of government had opened tensions between the party and the trade unions; the unions now began to reassert themselves, pushing for the reestablishment of the National Joint Council [NJC; later National Council of Labour, NCL] to co-ordinate policy.⁵² The Independent Labour Party [ILP], which had moved further to the left in the late 1920s, chose to disaffiliate from Labour in 1932; yet there was still a swing to the left in the party, to the frustration of Henderson, who had continued to try to steer a more moderate course.⁵³ 1932 saw

⁵¹ A recent account of the early part of the war is Daniel Todman, *Britain's War. Into Battle, 1937-1941* (London, 2017).

⁵² Labour's period in government and its impact on the broader Labour movement including the unions is dealt with in detail by Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999); see also the collection edited by John Shepherd, Jonathan Davis, and Chris Wrigley, (eds.), *Britain's Second Labour Government, 1929-32. A Reappraisal* (Manchester and New York, 2011).

⁵³ For an overview of the ILP, see Robert E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre. The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London, 1966); a more up-to-date account is Ian Bullock, *Under Siege. The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (Edmonton, Alberta, 2017). On its disaffiliation, see Gidon Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', *History* 86:282 (2001), 200-221; Keith Laybourn, 'The disaffiliation crisis of 1932: the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the opinion of ILP members', in K. Laybourn and J. Shepherd (eds.), *Labour*

the foundation of a group on the party's left, the Socialist League, centred around the barrister and newly-prominent frontbencher Sir Stafford Cripps; whilst the League had some successes at the party's 1933 conference, however, the major developments in policy were being undertaken by the National Executive Committee's [NEC] policy subcommittee, which included Dalton and Morrison; its schemes for planning and public ownership would influence the post-war Attlee government.⁵⁴ Although several Labour leaders such as Henderson and Greenwood were returned at by-elections, the locus of power in the party remained outside the House. Advances were made in local government, with control of the London County Council being captured for the first time in 1934.

Lansbury's pacifism was not compatible with support for sanctions against Italy following its invasion of Abyssinia; he resigned to be replaced, initially temporarily and then permanently, by Clement Attlee, who led the party into the 1935 general election. Whilst defence issues continued to divide the party, its domestic programme was being honed, and was given concise form in *Labour's Immediate Programme*, published in 1937. In the context of the rise of continental fascism there was pressure from the left, including the ILP and the Communist Party of Great Britain [CPGB], which had previously denounced Labour as 'social fascist' during the Communist International's 'Third Period', for a united front against the National Government; Communist affiliation to Labour, however was resisted: the Socialist League was forced to disband over its support for such a front.

The Communists remained a small but frustrating thorn in Labour's left side, although they were only successful in securing one seat at the 1935 general election. A small fascist organisation, the British Union of Fascists, also aroused hostility on the left, but again, their influence was limited.⁵⁵

and *Working Class Lives. Essays to celebrate the life and work of Chris Wrigley* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 110-132, and Laybourn, "Suicide during a Fit of Insanity' or the Defence of Socialism? The secession of the Independent Labour Party from the Labour Party at the special conference at Bradford, July 1932", *Bradford Antiquary* 5 (1991), 41-53. On the aftermath of disaffiliation, see Gidon Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007).

⁵⁴ David Howell, *British Social Democracy. A Study in Development and Decay* (London, 1980) gives a good overview of this process. The career of the Socialist League is discussed in a later chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁵ For the CPGB, *Class Against Class. The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2002). The BUF is also discussed in a later chapter.

The economy

The broad outline of British economic development in the period 1931-1940 was one of slow progress from depression to recovery, yet without closer analysis such an assessment can obscure considerable divergences between industries and regions. The 1930s have a rather gloomy reputation in economic terms, and indeed, mass unemployment remained a persistent problem until the onset of war. However, when a combination of cyclical and structural factors are taken into account, a more complex picture emerges of the economy in this period, and the role played by government policy in shaping it.

Britain emerged from the First World War into an economic boom. For the previous four years, much of industry had been focused on war production; this left a 'large backlog of investment to be made good' following wartime neglect. As well as the replacement of machinery, wartime shortages led to an increased demand for consumer goods, whilst with the cessation of most housebuilding activity during the conflict, there was a major shortage of housing.⁵⁶ Whilst the boom, which ran from roughly March 1919 to April 1920, encouraged by government expenditure, did produce a substantial increase in exports, which had also collapsed during the war, demand continued to exceed productive capacity, leading to an increase in prices, its 'outstanding feature' was a 'financial orgy' of speculative buying.⁵⁷ This led to overcapitalisation in several industries, massively increasing their debts, and was followed by a swathe of cuts to public expenditure, the 'Geddes Axe'. Production fell, unemployment rose, and by June 1921 the economy was in a state of severe depression. Unemployment stood at some 17 per cent of the insured workforce, with 2.2 million workers in total unemployed.⁵⁸ Although there was a steady recovery up to 1925, with substantial increases in overall production and exports, unemployment persisted significant, with well over a million insured persons still out of work at the height of the recovery in 1924.⁵⁹ This 'intractable million' was to endure until the Second World War.

⁵⁶ Derek Aldcroft, *The Inter-war Economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (London, 1973), p. 31.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ W. R. Garside, *British Unemployment, 1919-1939. A study in public policy* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Aldcroft, *The Inter-war Economy*, p. 37

That a return to the Gold Standard exchange rate, suspended during the war, would aid British economic prosperity was axiomatic across political divides as well as in the Treasury and the City of London; Britain was taken back onto gold at its pre-war parity by the Conservative Chancellor, Churchill, in April 1925. Although controversial at the time, it is now generally accepted that this had the effect of overvaluing sterling and thus overpricing British exports: this had the greatest impact on the staple industries such as coal, cotton and shipbuilding which relied heavily on the export trade; although also significant here was the growth on international competition, particularly from countries with undervalued currencies such as France and Belgium. Another, weaker boom, certainly by international standards, followed in the later 1920s, although by 1929, exports were again declining; this was compounded by the Wall Street Crash in the United States in October 1929, which 'greatly aggravated and accelerated the deflationary tendencies in Britain'.⁶⁰ Another depression followed, although again, comparisons with other countries, particularly Germany and the United States, suffered more severe economic consequences. Total unemployment passed two million in July 1930, and 2.5 million in December, eventually peaking at 2.86 million in August 1932.⁶¹ The staple industries were most affected: the average unemployment for 1932 was 62.0 per cent of the shipbuilding workforce, 47.9 per cent in iron and steel, 30.6 per cent in cotton, and 34.5 per cent in coalmining.⁶²

By the end of 1932, the force of the depression had been arrested; a tentative recovery began to be felt from 1933, with 'sustained growth' across all sectors of the economy from 1934. Initially this took place in often newer, non-export trades including vehicle manufacture and building; although an export recovery from 1934 began to help the older staple industries too.⁶³ The recovery continued apace until 1937, by which point industrial output had almost doubled over five years and real income by nineteen per cent; this constituted the 'largest and most sustained period of growth in the whole of the inter-war period'.⁶⁴ A relatively mild recession followed in 1937-38, again most pronounced in the export industries, although this decline had been reversed by 1939;

⁶⁰ Aldcroft, *The Inter-war Economy*, p. 40. See also G. C. Peden, *British Economic and Social Policy. Lloyd George to Margaret Thatcher*, second edition (Hemel Hempstead, 1991), pp. 58-64.

⁶¹ Department of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract, 1886-1968* (London, 1971), table 162, pp. 307-311.

⁶² Garside, *British Unemployment, 1919-1939*, p. 13.

⁶³ Aldcroft, *The Inter-war Economy*, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

production continued to rise, encouraged by rearmament, and later the conditions of war.

Cyclical factors alone cannot account for the changes in the British economy in the period; structural factors were also influential. Whilst the staple industries were in a long-term decline, a number of new electrical and light manufacturing industries were growing; the uneven development of these, however, accounted for the substantial regional variations in unemployment: the North East and South Wales, where shipbuilding and mining were the dominant industries, were particularly badly affected; yet the south east of England saw low unemployment and relative prosperity.

Trade unionism

The experience of the First World War had wrought major changes in the landscape of British industrial relations. With millions of men enlisting into the armed forces, manpower requirements strengthened the position of labour in general, and skilled labour in particular. The need to maximise the efficiency of war production and prevent shortages increasingly drew the state to intervene in industry to secure co-operation between employers and workers; this heightened the status of unions and employers' organisations and encouraged the expansion of collective bargaining. Under the Treasury Agreement of 1915, given legislative force by the Munitions of War Act the same year, unions agreed to the compulsory arbitration of disputes and the relaxation of restrictions on output, including allowing the dilution by semi-skilled – often female – labour of certain work previously reserved for skilled men, in exchange for the limitation of employers' profits, for the duration of the war. Government control of munitions, coal-mining and railways led to national wage agreements in those industries; the changes in engineering drastically increased the importance of shop stewards in workshop negotiations, whilst union leaderships were drawn into the organisation of war production. Membership rose from 4,145,000 in 1914 to 8,348,000 by 1920, whilst collective bargaining was enhanced through the establishment of Whitley councils and the Industrial Court. With the growth of trade unionism, direct action tactics became popular as a means of forcing concessions. A national railway

strike in 1919 was settled in the railwaymen's favour, but the miners were less successful in 1921.⁶⁵

A General Strike was called by the TUC to support a further coalmining lockout in 1926; its failure critically damaged the direct action approach. In the aftermath of the General Strike's failure, there were new departures, pushed by the TUC and its general secretary, Walter Citrine, towards industrial co-operation with employers, symbolised by the Mond-Turner discussions on 1928-30. Whilst the slump halted union growth and resulted in a period of industrial retrenchment, the movement began to recover from the mid-1930s.⁶⁶

The strength of trade union organisation varied broadly across different sectors of the economy. The traditional staple industries continued to exhibit high levels of organisation through the 1930s; the coal, cotton and shipbuilding unions were 'remarkably successful' in this regard despite 'prolonged depression and a steady shrinkage in the total numbers employed'.⁶⁷ The membership of unions in the mining and quarrying trade group stayed above half a million during every year in the period. Union density – the proportion of the potential membership of a union who were in fact members, and therefore a useful metric by which to assess union strength – in coalmining had been as high as 76.7 per cent in 1921; although this slumped to 51.8 per cent in the wake of the 1926 lockout, and further to 51.3 per cent during the depression, it had climbed to 81.1 per cent by 1939. Although total union membership in mining was lower in 1939 than it had been in 1926, the reduction in the workforce was even greater, meaning a higher proportion of unionised miners.⁶⁸ Most miners were organised in district unions within their respective coalfield; these unions in turn

⁶⁵ Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 149-180; Chris Wrigley, 'The First World War and State Intervention in Industrial Relations, 1914-1918' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 23-70.

⁶⁶ For the TUC and Citrine, see Robert Taylor, *The TUC. From the General Strike to New Unionism* (Basingstoke, 2000); Ross M. Martin, Martin, R. M., *TUC: The Growth of a Pressure Group 1868-1976* (Oxford, 1980); Jim Moher, 'Walter Citrine: a Union Pioneer of Industrial Cooperation' in P. Ackers, and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 179-210.

⁶⁷ G. D. H. Cole, 'Strength and Weakness', in Cole (ed.), *British Trade Unionism To-day. A Survey* (London, 1939), 273-278, p. 277.

⁶⁸ Statistics taken from George S. Bain and Robert Price, *Profiles of Union Growth. A Comparative Statistical Portrait of Eight Countries* (Oxford, 1980), table 2.6, p. 45. Density figures given are for 1921, 1928, 1932 and 1939. Of a potential membership in 1926 of 1,277,100 in 1926, 790,100 mineworkers were union members; although membership in 1939 was only 741,300, this was from a total workforce of 914,200.

were constituent members of the national federal body, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.⁶⁹ The largest memberships were in Durham, South Wales, and Yorkshire, with the coalfields of Scotland and Lancashire and providing sizeable memberships; smaller coalfields such as Kent, North Wales and the Forest of Dean were also represented. MFGB remained Britain's largest union until 1937, when its membership was exceeded by that of the TGWU.⁷⁰ The decline in both trade union membership and the total numbers employed in another staple, the cotton industry, was more marked, with the former falling by some 38 per cent from 1931-1940.⁷¹ By contrast, union density remained stable: 54.6 per cent in 1930, and 54.4 per cent in 1939, despite a small dip in the years 1931-35.⁷² While this might have weakened the cotton operatives in terms of their weight in the labour movement, it did not necessarily do so within the industry itself. Cotton workers were organised in a number of federations based on craft, usually referred to by the operatives themselves as 'amalgamations', in turn consisting of a large number of local unions, a 'cumbrously decentralised' arrangement.⁷³ The three most important were the Amalgamated Weavers' Association, with a 1931 membership of 158,660; the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twiners, 1931 membership 44,168; and the Amalgamated Association of Card, Blowing, and Ring Room Operatives, with 53,473 members in 1931.⁷⁴ Each amalgamation was part of a still larger federation, the United Textile Factory Workers' Association [UTFWA], which dealt with political

⁶⁹ Some MFGB members were organised on a trade group basis rather than by geography, for example the Power Group. Surface workers were sometimes organised in engineering or general unions, which could provoke disputes over demarcation. In 1931, the Cleveland iron ore miners, until then a section of the MFGB, switched their allegiance to the NUGMW. A detailed institutional history of the MFGB in this period is provided by Robin Page Arnot, *The Miners in Crisis and War. A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain from 1930 onwards* (London, 1961). There are many works on the area unions; see, for example, Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1980); W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* (London, 1971); J. E. Williams, *The Derbyshire Miners. A study in industrial and social history* (London, 1962).

⁷⁰ MFGB TUC membership that year was 518,425; TGWU TUC membership was 523,300. Trades Union Congress, *Annual Report 1937*.

⁷¹ Calculated from Figure 1.1.

⁷² Statistics taken from Bain and Price, *Profiles of Union Growth*, table 2.12, p. 51.

⁷³ A. P. Wadsworth, 'The Cotton Trade Unions', in Cole (ed.), *British Trade Unionism To-day. A Survey*, 386-395, p. 387.

⁷⁴ The 1939 figures, by contrast, were: Weavers 86,665; Spinners 24,871; Cardroom 44,903. Statistics taken from Edwin Hopwood, *A History of the Lancashire Cotton Industry and the Amalgamated Weavers' Association. The Lancashire Weavers' Story* (Manchester, 1969), p. 188; Andrew Bullen and Alan Fowler, *The Cardroom Workers Union. A Centenary History of the Amalgamated Association of Card and Blowing Room Operatives* (Manchester, 1986), p. 177; Alan Fowler and Terry Wyke, (eds.), *The Barefoot Aristocrats. A History of the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners* (Littleborough, 1987), p. 242.

and general policy matters. Efforts at closer integration were often 'broken on the rock of local vested interests', and whilst the overwhelming majority of members of the Weavers' and Cardroom amalgamations were women, male officials predominated throughout; in several respects the cotton unions 'hardly kept pace with the times'.⁷⁵

The railways were another area of trade union strength, with an annual average union density of 59.7 per cent from 1929-38, rising as high as 67.6 per cent in 1937.⁷⁶ Union membership was divided between three organisations, the largest of which was the National Union of Railwaymen, an industrial union open to all employees of the railway companies. Although the NUR included a minority of footplate staff, that is, engine drivers and firemen, the bulk of these better-paid workers were organised on a craft basis in the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen [ASLEF]. The Railway Clerks' Association [RCA] catered for clerical staff; a minority of its members were women. Union membership in non-railway transport almost doubled from its 1931 total by 1940.⁷⁷ The majority of unionised workers in road transport were members of the Transport and General Workers' Union, a general union operating across many industries including a significant presence amongst dock workers. Employment in road transport, which included trams and buses as well as commercial haulage, rose steadily across the decade. Union density rose from 46.5 per cent in 1932 to 72.2 per cent in 1938, helping the TGWU to become Britain's largest and most powerful trade union in the process.⁷⁸ The other large general union was the National Union of General and Municipal Workers [NUGMW], which included a large number of gas workers and municipal employees, amongst others. Like the TGWU, it had considerable success in organising unskilled workers, particularly in the later 1930s. Although figures for union density are not available, by 1940 its membership had increased by 67.7 per cent over its 1931 total. Both general unions recruited amongst both sexes, although the vast majority of members in both were men. Engineering was a field of increasing importance in the trade union movement across the 1930s. The main union in this industry was the Amalgamated Engineering Union [AEU], organised

⁷⁵ Wadsworth, 'The Cotton Trade Unions', p. 394.

⁷⁶ Statistics taken from Bain and Price, *Profiles of Union Growth*, table 2.28, p. 67.

⁷⁷ The railway unions are considered in detail in Philip Bagwell, *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London, 1963); N. McKillop, *The Lighted Flame. A History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen* (Edinburgh and London, 1950); Malcolm Wallace, *Single or Return? The History of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association* (London, 1996).

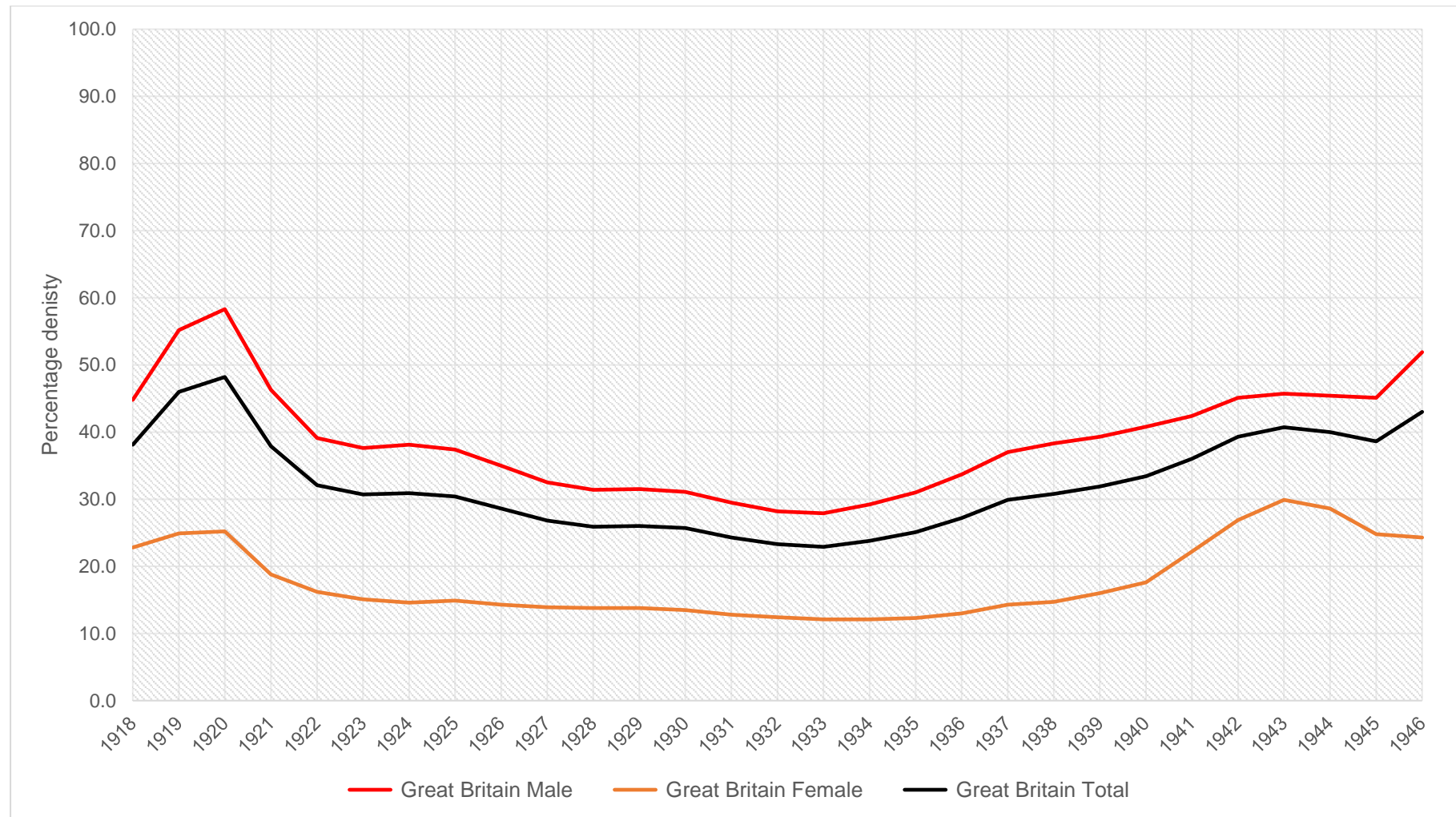
⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, table 2.29, p. 68.

Figure 1.1 TUC membership by trade group, 1931-1940

Trade group	1931	1934	1937	1940
Mining and quarrying	631,507	527,331	544,705	608,054
Railways	427,098	376,676	448,779	466,931
Other transport	473,298	450,912	605,893	740,337
Shipbuilding	72,085	55,540	77,541	92,192
Engineering, founding, vehicle-building	335,891	293,833	449,212	639,896
Iron, steel, minor metal trades	113,635	92,207	119,178	151,113
Building, woodworking, finishing	334,579	290,352	326,619	388,762
Printing and paper	150,898	152,636	168,793	199,529
Cotton	282,009	216,721	185,385	174,725
Other textiles	138,690	106,531	104,771	114,088
Clothing	71,569	71,463	91,792	138,283
Leather, boot and shoe	93,899	91,478	101,995	110,767
Glass, pottery, chemicals, food, etc.	218,798	230,462	275,472	343,616
Agriculture	30,000	30,000	32,000	45,000
Public employees	28,888	28,193	60,429	102,085
Non-manual workers	56,544	48,574	74,310	116,703
General workers	259,233	231,644	341,773	434,630
TOTAL	3,719,401	3,294,581	4,008,647	4,866,711

Source: Trades Union Congress, *Annual Reports*, 1931-1940.

Figure 1.2 Overall trade union density, 1918-1946



Source: Bain and Price, *Profiles of Union Growth*, table 2.2, pp. 39-40.

on a craft basis and recruiting only men, until wartime dilution led to a change in this policy in 1943.⁷⁹ Whilst women were employed in many of the newer industries, although often union organisation could be difficult.⁸⁰ The largest unions organised in the private sector, although the MFGB and NUR favoured nationalisation of their industries; a substantial proportion of the NUGMW's membership were in municipal employment. Although there was union growth in parts of the public sector, unions which catered for such workers were often at something of a distance from the rest of the labour movement; in the case of postal workers and civil servants, this had been enforced as part of the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act passed following the General Strike.⁸¹ Co-operative employees were organised in the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers [NUDAW]. Whilst in many areas such as agriculture, trade unionism remained weak, the overall density figures in figure 1.2 support Clegg's assertion that the unions were in 'fair shape' in 1933, despite the slump.

There were no major departures in structure and few amalgamations during the 1930s. The early 1920s had seen significant organisational reform: the TGWU, NUGMW, AEU and NUDAW were all products of amalgamations in that period, whilst most recently, the TGWU had absorbed the Workers' Union [WU] in 1929. Limited resources and the difficulties of organising during the slump precluded further departures; in many ways, this was a period which saw the consolidation of earlier changes. Most unions were organised on a geographical basis, based on branches; relations with the national organisation might be mediated through regional structures. In the general unions, organisation was a dual basis, with structures for area and trade group representation. Such unions, with their executives drawn largely from lay membership, concentrated much power in the hands of their officials; the key personality in this regard was Ernest Bevin of the TGWU, with Citrine one of the two leading figures within the trade union world in the period. The different coalfield cultures of the area mining unions shaped the organisation of the MFGB; they retained considerable autonomy although there were pressures towards a more unified national union; this would eventually be achieved in the formation of the National Union of

⁷⁹ A rather dry official history of the AEU is James B. Jeffreys, *The Story of the Engineers. 1800-1945* (London, 1945).

⁸⁰ Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble. Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-war Britain* (London and New York, 1990).

⁸¹ See, for instance, Alan Clinton, *Post Office Workers. A Trade Union and Social History* (London, 1984).

Mineworkers [NUM] in 1944. The Federation had endured a chaotic period in the 1920s during the general secretaryship of Arthur Cook; a more disciplined leadership group now came to the fore, with Ebby Edwards of Northumberland one of the key figures.

Factionalism along political lines was present in many unions; most typically between a moderate, Labour-supporting majority and a Communist or Communist-leaning minority. The CPGB had been active within many unions during the 1920s through Minority Movements. The major unions where Communists maintained some influence in the 1930s were the AEU and the MFGB: Arthur Horner, President of the South Wales Miners' Federation [SWMF] from 1936, was arguably the most influential Communist on the industrial side of the Labour movement.⁸²

The years from 1934-39, Hugh Clegg noted, represented 'one of the most successful periods in the history of British industrial relations', based on both the spread of collective bargaining, and the low level of disputes that resulted in strike action.⁸³ Machinery for collective bargaining had been established in some industries since before 1914, but now increasingly took place at the national level. An exception remained coalmining: area agreements had been reinstituted after 1926. As the figures in figure 1.3 demonstrate, disputes were significantly less disruptive than in the 1920s or 1940s; whilst there were major textiles disputes in 1932, apart from two strikes by London busmen of the TGWU in 1932 and 1937, the only other major disruption came through strikes against the non-political unions in the coalfields of South Wales, and most significantly at Harworth colliery in Nottinghamshire. These organisations had been established in several coalfields after 1926, the most prominent being that led by George Spencer in Nottinghamshire, although by the end of the decade, their influence had been reduced to negligible proportions.⁸⁴

⁸² Nina Fishman, *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45* (Aldershot, 1995); for the 1920s see Roderick Martin, *Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924-1933. A study of the National Minority Movement* (Oxford, 1969).

⁸³ H. A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Volume III: 1933-1951* (Oxford, 1994), p. 93.

⁸⁴ A. R. Griffin and C. P. Griffin, 'The Non-Political Trade Union Movement' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 133-162. For an example from a smaller coalfield, see Keith Gildart 'Militancy, moderation and the struggle against company unionism in the North Wales coalfield, 1926-1944', *Welsh History Review* 20:3 (2001), 532-564.

Figure 1.3 Work stoppages due to industrial disputes, 1918-1945 (in-year)

Year	Number of stoppages	Number of workers involved	Aggregate work days lost	Days lost (coalmining only)
1918	1,165	1,116,000	5,875,000	1,165,000
1919	1,352	2,591,000	34,969,000	7,441,000
1920	1,607	1,932,000	26,568,000	17,424,000
1921	763	1,801,000	85,872,000	72,693,000
1922	576	552,000	19,850,000	1,246,000
1923	628	405,000	10,672,000	1,183,000
1924	710	613,000	8,424,000	1,563,000
1925	603	441,000	7,952,000	3,453,000
1926	323	2,734,000	162,233,000	146,434,000
1927	308	108,000	1,174,000	688,000
1928	302	124,000	1,388,000	452,000
1929	431	533,000	8,287,000	576,000
1930	422	307,000	4,399,000	663,000
1931	420	490,000	6,983,000	2,848,000
1932	389	379,000	6,488,000	287,000
1933	357	136,000	1,072,000	446,000
1934	471	134,000	959,000	365,000
1935	553	271,000	1,955,000	1,368,000
1936	818	316,000	1,829,000	852,000
1937	1,129	597,000	3,413,000	1,496,000
1938	875	274,000	1,334,000	697,000
1939	940	337,000	1,356,000	565,000
1940	922	299,000	940,000	505,000
1941	1,251	360,000	1,079,000	335,000
1942	1,303	456,000	1,527,000	840,000
1943	1,785	557,000	1,808,000	890,000
1944	2,194	821,000	3,714,000	2,480,000
1945	2,293	531,000	2,835,000	641,000

Source: Department of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract, 1886-1968* (London, 1971), table 197, p. 396. Figures relate to Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Membership and money

A serious investigation of the relationship between the Labour party and the trade unions in the 1930s – as, indeed, in any other period – must necessarily consider the question of money. Raising and spending money are amongst the most basic functions of all political parties. Both the effective operation of party organisation and Labour's chances of electoral success in the constituencies hinged to varying degrees on financial considerations. The role of the unions in these activities merits close attention for several reasons. Firstly, finance had a part in the engagement with, and representation of, individual unions within the party's federal structure. The annual affiliation fee provided the basis for unions' collective membership of the party, which in turn determined a union's voting strength at party conference, and thus – formally, at least – its weight in the party's deliberations and internal democratic structure. Secondly, the importance of the trade union contribution to the party's finances both at national and local level. In the absence of mass individual membership of the constituency parties, trade unions provided the bulk of Labour headquarters' regular income throughout this period, and thus the foundation for political action at the national level. Union contributions at local level were also significant. Trade union commitment to political action, as Martin Harrison noted half a century ago, would represent 'little more than an oratorical gesture without the backing of substantial finance'⁸⁵ and as will be seen, the contribution of the unions in the period under study here was considerable. Thirdly, party finance and the unions' role in it were central to Labour claims about the party's own democratic credentials, as the following comment from the former Labour MP Mary Hamilton in a 1939 volume for the party's Labour Book Service demonstrates:

By comparison with the older parties in the State, Labour is poor. It is not financed by the wealthy. There are no great capital interests behind it. It has no secret funds. Its accounts are open to the inspection of members as to

⁸⁵ Martin Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945* (London, 1960), p. 55.

that of all the world [...] The resources open to the Liberal and Conservative Parties are not, and never have been, open to Labour [...] Much that in other parties is done for pay is here done through voluntary unpaid effort [...] What is given [...] costs the giver more in personal sacrifice than do the ample donations made to Party funds by well-to-do Conservatives and Liberals. The kernel of Labour Party finance is the small subscription of the many.⁸⁶

That Labour party organisation was not only distinctive but both more transparent and more 'democratic' than that of its political rivals was characteristic of how the party sought to present itself, as well as reflecting an assumption shared by many of its members. Kevin Morgan has argued that such claims of 'democratic self-sufficiency', whereby 'Labour's electoral challenge was sprung solely from the loins of the working class movement', were prompted by the high frequency of general elections between 1918 and 1929 which emphasised the importance of electoral funding. This, he suggests, represents a defining party myth 'routinely expounded' ever since in both party and academic literature.⁸⁷ Morgan illustrates the resilience of a more traditional source of electoral finance in Labour politics, the wealthy individual, concentrating on the constituency activity of well-to-do candidates in the 1920s.⁸⁸ But to focus on the continuing importance of union money to the party does not entail having to swallow the myth whole: the complexities of interpretations such as Hamilton's need careful unpicking. Small subscriptions in the shape of political levy contributions may have been the 'kernel' of Labour finance, but they were subscriptions mediated through trade union machinery, and, concurring with Morgan that Labour's party finance needs looking at anew, this chapter seeks to illuminate the process of such mediation.

Such an approach can help shed light on the party's political culture. Its 'peculiar attitude to money' is one of the four features of Labour's ethos identified by Henry Drucker, who notes that 'nowhere does the Labour Party more clearly reveal its origins

⁸⁶ Mary Agnes Hamilton, *The Labour Party To-day* (London, n.d. [1939]), pp. 56-7. For a similar viewpoint from a prominent trade unionist, see John Bromley MP, general secretary of ASLEF, *HC Debs.*, 28 January 1931, vol. 247, c. 1051: 'Every penny contributed to the political fund through the channel of the levy comes from a more healthy and less contaminated source than, as we have some evidence, some of the old political war chests were derived from'. For Hamilton, see Margaret Cole, 'Hamilton, Mary Agnes (1882-1966)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* V, pp. 97-100.

⁸⁷ Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part One. Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006), pp. 136-7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-195.

in the trade unions [...] than in its attitudes to its own money'.⁸⁹ Drucker highlights several distinctive financial practices of the party and unions, considered in more detail below, which are representative of this ethos. Money also has a role in another of the features identified by Drucker, namely that of personal style, in terms of an emphasis on the virtue of sacrifice and a corresponding contempt for ostentatious displays of personal wealth.⁹⁰ Both are evident in the 'official' party interpretation expressed by Hamilton; and demonstrate the 'stress on moral ends, the tendency to see the Labour party as a vehicle of righteousness and the biblically-flavoured sense of moral outrage that coloured the party's ideology, self-image and rhetoric', which Peter Catterall suggests exemplifies Labour's nonconformist inheritance.⁹¹ An examination of union finance can develop this analysis further.

Party finance in Britain has been, if not exactly neglected, then not afforded the attention it deserves by political historians, although it continues to excite the interest of political scientists.⁹² The major contribution to the field remains Michael Pinto-Duschinsky's survey of *British Political Finance* covering the century from 1880, although there have been a number of other serious works since.⁹³ Inattention may be partly due to a sense of the world of balance sheets, auditors and administrative costs as being at the more mundane end of political activity, or in part due to the past disinclination of parties other than Labour to make public any details of their finances, particularly at national level, leaving earlier researchers such as James Kerr Pollock struggling uncertainly through 'the fog which obscures the party war chests' of the Liberals and Conservatives, although Stuart Ball's recent work has revealed in some detail the interwar finances of the latter.⁹⁴ Labour has fared better than most here. As

⁸⁹ H. M. Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (London, 1979), p. 15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹¹ Peter Catterall, 'Morality and politics: The Free Churches and the Labour Party between the wars', *Historical Journal* 36:3 (1993), 667-685, p. 679. See also Peter Catterall, *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918-39. Radicalism, Righteousness and Religion* (London, 2016).

⁹² For example, K. D. Ewing, *The Cost of Democracy. Party Funding in Modern British Politics* (Oxford and Portland, OR, 2007).

⁹³ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980* (Washington and London, 1981); other works include Andrew Thorpe on 1939-45 in *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 244-276; Michael Dawson 'Money and the real impact of the Fourth Reform Act', *Historical Journal* 35 (1992), 369-381, on the 1918 Act; Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990), *passim*; and Jon Lawrence, *Electing our Masters. The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 71-95 on the pre-1914 period.

⁹⁴ James Kerr Pollock, *Money and Politics Abroad* (New York, 1932); Stuart Ball, *Portrait of a Party. The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 535-539.

well as the relevant chapters by Pinto-Duschinsky, William B. Gwyn has considered Labour's financial difficulties before the First World War; Ross McKibbin the party's finances in the period to 1924; Andrew Thorpe the Second World War years; Martin Harrison the period from 1945-60; and Lewis Minkin developments in the 1980s, as well as the study by Morgan already referred to.⁹⁵ Generally such work on party finance has been part of broader studies of the party – or parties – and as such relatively little attention has been given to the detailed analysis of the political levy and union political funds. Harrison makes the most sustained attempt at this, but his insights apply predominantly to the period after the re-introduction of the 'contracting-out' system in 1946; unions in the 1930s were operating in very different economic and legislative contexts. The system of 'contracting-in' imposed by the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act was in force for the duration of the period under consideration here, which alongside economic difficulties had the effect of depleting trade union political income, and correspondingly, funds available to Labour. Despite this, Pinto-Duschinsky argues that there 'was no real shortage of money for the Labour party from the trade unions' and refers to the availability of 'easy union money' in the period, whilst there is a sense in much of the existing literature that such money would be quickly forthcoming in times of crisis.⁹⁶ Certainly union money accounted for the vast majority of the party's income in the period, and times of acute need did bring greater generosity on the unions' part, but the notion of easy money, along with the often powerful image of union leaders as the party's 'sugar daddies' – a concern acknowledged by those very leaders both at the time and more recently – can be deeply misleading. This chapter seeks to examine more closely Labour party finance during the 1930s, considering in detail the raising and spending of political funds by the major affiliated unions. It then discusses the union part in Labour finance at the national and constituency levels, including the development of a system of regulation for the latter, usually referred to as the Hastings Agreement. It argues that unions' financial support for the party was far from unconditional: instead it was the product of often complex processes of negotiation within their own internal democratic structures, which were in turn refracted through the party's ethos. Analysis of such processes can

⁹⁵ William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the Cost of Politics in Britain*. (London, 1962), pp. 160-246; Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 156-162; Thorpe, *Parties at War*, pp. 256-268; Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 21-108; Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991).

⁹⁶ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, p. 77.

inform a better understanding of the unions' role within Labour's political culture in the period, as well as the broader role of trade unions as civil society organisations in British politics.

The political levy

In making use of the financial resources of trade unions, as Pinto-Duschinsky notes, Labour was establishing a previously unseen pattern of political finance in Britain, replacing individual with institutional contributions as the foundation of its finance.⁹⁷

As suggested by the previous chapter, trade unions were often responsible for managing considerable funds, and whilst political funds typically represented only a small proportion of the total, broader attitudes towards the management and meaning of money could have a significant impact on union political finance. Given the fact of 'having vast sums of money lent out in various ways; having many thousands of pounds passing through their accounts monthly, and at times, in the case of unemployment and strikes, making huge disbursements', sound financial practice was increasingly prized and encouraged, not least through a small literature of manuals and textbooks compiled by union officials.⁹⁸ According to the Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, total trade union assets amounted to £11,966,000 in 1931, and £16,372,000 by 1936.⁹⁹ Richard Rose suggested that the 'most distinctive feature' of Labour financial accounts was the amount of money hoarded, allowed to accumulate 'for its own sake'.¹⁰⁰ This is certainly evident in union accounts in general, as figure 2.1 demonstrates: each of the unions discussed here steadily increased its overall reserves across the decade, the sole exception being the AEU during the pit of the

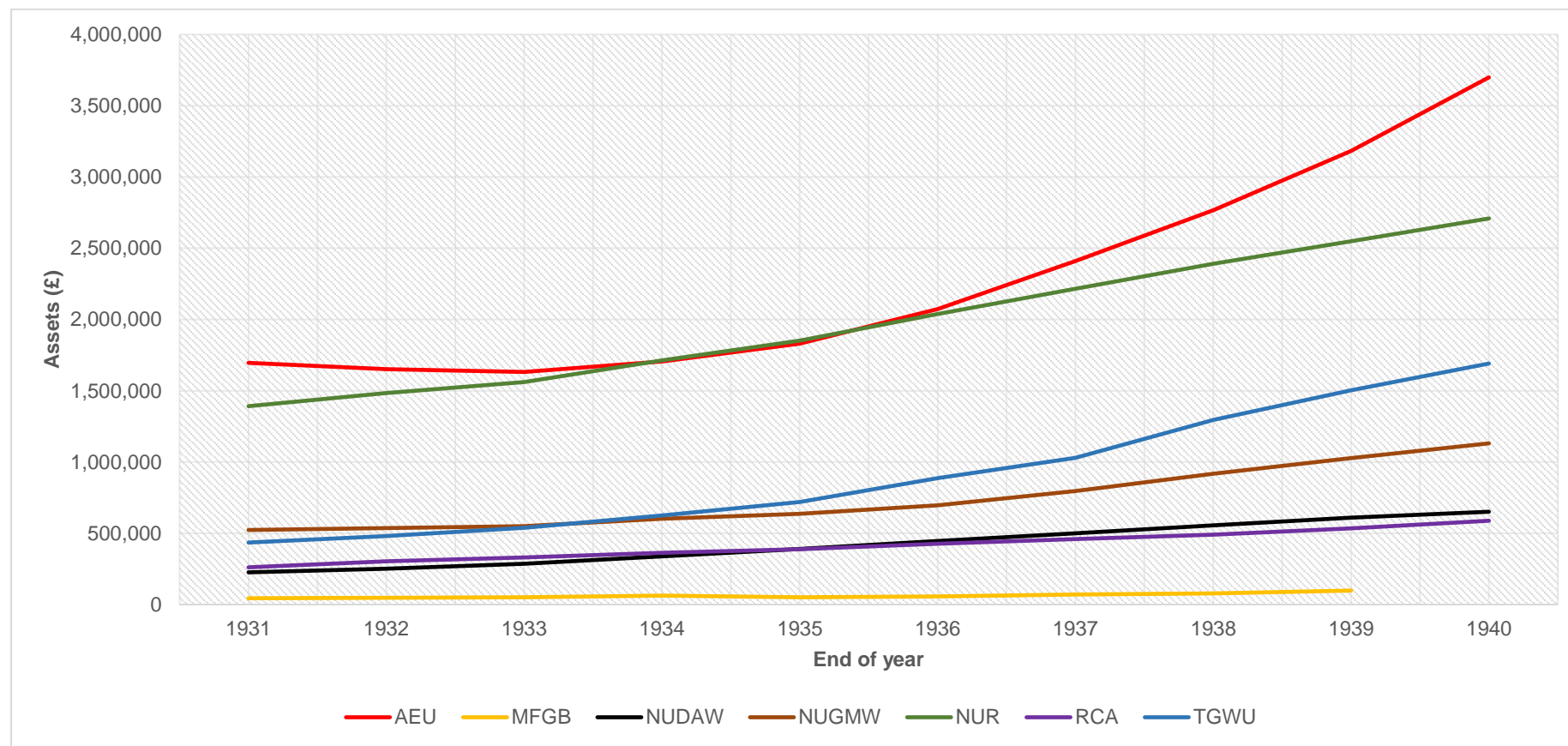
⁹⁷ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, p. 65.

⁹⁸ The quotation is from one such contemporary textbook, Joseph Lynch, *Business Methods and Accountancy in Trade Unions* (London, 1922), p. 5; Lynch had served as Treasurer of the Derbyshire Miners' Association. See also Arthur W. Petch, *A Manual of Branch Administration* (Manchester, 1930). Petch was the NUDAW Financial Secretary and Office Manager from 1921-35; editions of his manual were published in 1925, 1926, and 1930.

⁹⁹ FS 32.77 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1937, Part 4: Trade Unions*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Rose, *The Problem of Party Government* (London and Basingstoke, 1974), p. 242.

Figure 2.1 Total assets of selected trade unions, end of year (£)



Source: calculated from unions' own records. See appendix for full details.

depression in 1932-33, when membership was at its lowest ebb and unemployment amongst AEU members at its highest, at 25 per cent until December 1932.¹⁰¹ The largest reserves were held by the unions which operated the greatest range of optional funds. The bulk of the Engineers' reserves, for example, were held in its superannuation fund; the NUR ran funds to insure for accidents, disablement, death and provision for orphans, as well as sick and benevolent funds. Membership of each of these optional funds cost NUR members 1d weekly whilst AEU rates were considerably higher: regular payments, particularly if members did not need to draw on fund benefits, allowed steady but considerable accumulation.¹⁰² The general unions, which offered fewer optional benefits and charged lower subscription rates, were more reliant on increases in overall membership to build up their reserves.

The practice of such accumulation was indicative of the movement's working class foundations. Paul Johnson has argued that working-class household budgeting mitigated for the unpredictability of income and expenditure 'by committing a set portion of income each week to financial planning', most typically through mutual or club saving': this was the economics of the rainy day, rather than the more typically middle-class practice of investing for the future.¹⁰³ Trade unions, in turn, saved more and invested less than other friendly societies. In sharp contrast to friendly societies as a whole, a much greater proportion of trade union money was maintained as liquid assets, either as cash in hand or in banks: some 36.4 per cent of union assets, as against 5.1 per cent of total friendly society assets, were held in this way in 1936.¹⁰⁴ By contrast, much less trade union money was invested in comparison to friendly societies as a whole, with 45.5 per cent of the 1936 total held in bonds or investments as against 67.9 per cent for all friendly societies.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ J. B. Jefferys, *The Story of the Engineers. 1800-1945* (London, 1945), p. 241. AEU membership reached a nadir of 190,695 in August 1933.

¹⁰² TU/ENG/4/A/14 AEU, Rule Books, 1920-1957 for schedules of rates and benefits. An NUR member subscribing to all of the optional funds might be paying as much as 1s 2d-1s 5d each week, as well as an additional 6d quarterly to the benevolent fund; see MSS.127/NU/4/3/5 NUR Rules, 1935.

¹⁰³ Paul Johnson, *Saving and Spending. The Working-class Economy in Britain 1870-1939* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 8-9, 220-221. Weekly union contributions were characteristic of this approach. See also Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 176-179.

¹⁰⁴ Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1937, Part 4: Trade Unions* p. 5. Approximately £4 million, the bulk of the trade union total, was banked with the Co-operative Wholesale Society at the end of 1936.

¹⁰⁵ Calculations based on data from *ibid.*, p. 5. Comparable figures are available for 1936 only. Over half of union investments were in local government securities (26.1 per cent of all assets in 1936 or 57.3 per cent of all investments), in contrast to a third of all friendly society investments (22.7 per cent

The existence of such large liquid assets, whether held cash in hand or in national and branch bank accounts, could provide a temptation to a dishonest official, particularly where accounting practices were obscure, and cases of corruption and embezzlement were not unknown.¹⁰⁶ As the Chief Registrar noted, given the difficulty of ‘ensuring adequate supervision’ of a large number of minor officials throughout the country, ‘it is not surprising that defalcations frequently occur’.¹⁰⁷ In a movement conscious of the practical and ethical significance of its foundation on the workers’ pennies, this was obviously problematic. As such, although often forced to write off large sums as irrecoverable, unions could be assiduous in pursuing defaulting officials, whether through expulsion or legal action.¹⁰⁸ The highest-profile example during the period was that of Charles Sitch, general secretary of the Chain Makers and Strikers Association – a small union founded by Sitch’s father, the funds of which Sitch, a former Labour MP, ‘controlled virtually unsupervised’ – who was found in 1933 to have defrauded his union of some £4,800 over a four-year period, resulting in the end of Sitch’s public career and a nine month prison sentence.¹⁰⁹

The general pattern of union finance, then, tended towards accumulation of cash assets; J. R. Clynes’ comments in his presidential address to the NUGMW’s 1934 Congress are illustrative of the attitude behind this approach:

These reserves must be carefully guarded, for just as in times of depression we have to fight against reductions and encroachments, and must sometimes compromise or give way, we will find that when conditions

of all assets). This appears to reflect a strong trade union commitment to the development of local government services, including health, education, and utilities.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, two articles by John McIlroy, ‘Financial Malpractice in British Trade Unions, 1800-1930: The Background to, and Consequences of, *Hornby v. Close*’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 6 (1998), 1-64; and ‘Two tales about crisis and corruption at the Central Labour College’, *Labour History Review* 72:1 (2007), 69-93.

¹⁰⁷ FS 32.70 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1930, Part 4: Trade Unions*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ The Chief Registrar only seldom took initiated legal proceedings on these grounds: unions had usually already begun them themselves. FS 32.74 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1934, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p. 3. See *ibid.*, p. 4, for some typical examples of legal proceedings against branch officials.

¹⁰⁹ Eric Taylor, ‘Sitch, Charles Henry (1887–1960)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47381>, accessed 23 May 2017]; Eric Taylor, ‘Sitch, Charles Henry (1887-1960)’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 344-347; FS 32.73 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1933, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p. 3; ‘Ex-MP Faces 43 Charges’, *Daily Mirror*, 24 March 1933; ‘Ex-MP Sent to Prison – Robbed Workers of £4769’, *Daily Mirror*, 29 June 1933.

substantially improve, little can be obtained by merely asking for it. We are not seeking trouble, but we know from experience that trouble is in store for us, and we must be ready to face it with adequate Union support for our members.¹¹⁰

We now turn to the political levy in particular. The trade unions which came together to found the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 did so in part owing to an environment of adverse, anti-union legal judgments, yet at this stage the only restriction on their political expenditure was that the Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies had to be satisfied that any such activity fell within a given union's own rules. As such, those unions which contributed to the fledgling LRC could do so using their general funds, that is, those accrued through ordinary membership subscriptions. Several unions instituted levies on their memberships to this end. This was not uncontroversial: many trade unionists remained opposed to independent Labour politics. A Liberal branch secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, W. V. Osborne, was amongst the objectors, and succeeded in taking his case to the House of Lords; the result, the so-called 'Osborne Judgment' of 1909, effectively barred unions from collecting money for political purposes. The threat this posed to the Labour party was relieved firstly by the introduction of salaries for MPs in 1911, and secondly by the passage of the Trade Union Act, 1913.¹¹¹ This legislation allowed for the collection of political levies, provided they were kept in a separate political fund. Setting up such a fund would require approval by a ballot vote of the membership; once a separate fund was established, those members who wanted to do so would be entitled to 'contract-out' of paying political levies. A flurry of ballots followed, with most unions voting in favour of setting up a political fund.¹¹² These decisions supporting political action retained their symbolic power: thirty years later, the return of the result of the RCA's ballot still hung framed above the general secretary's desk.¹¹³ Several of the unions discussed in this chapter never held ballots: they were products of later amalgamations, and were able to rely on affirmative results in their predecessor unions.¹¹⁴ In practice relatively few members chose to 'contract-out': this system had

¹¹⁰ TU/GENERALB/1/A/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934; NUGMW *Report of the Biennial Congress*, May 1934, p. 15.

¹¹¹ Henry Pelling, 'The Politics of the Osborne Judgment', *Historical Journal*, 25: 4 (1982), 889-909.

¹¹² Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, pp. 67-69.

¹¹³ MSS.55B/7/2 RCA, framed political fund ballot result, 1913.

¹¹⁴ This applies to the AEU, TGWU, NUDAW and NUGMW.

the effect of making membership apathy an ally of Labour politics. Despite continued Conservative hostility, 'contracting-out' remained in place until the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927 was passed in the aftermath of the General Strike. This measure substituted in its place 'contracting-in', under which union members would have to give notice of their willingness to pay into the political fund before any contributions were taken: this would now have to be incorporated into union rules. This not only caused an immediate fall in the numbers paying the political levy, but placed substantial new administrative costs on unions which now had to organise and provide forms for 'contracting-in'. The Act also barred civil service trade unions from political affiliations, affecting the Union of Post Office Workers and the Civil Service Clerical Association in particular, as well as limiting the legality of strike action. Unsurprisingly the trade union movement demanded the Act's repeal, but the attempt of the second Labour government foundered on the rocks of Liberal opposition.¹¹⁵ Resolutions demanding repeal became a 'hardy perennial' of trade union and Labour conferences over the years that followed, before the Attlee government eventually re-established 'contracting-out' by the Trade Union Act, 1946.¹¹⁶

Political and affiliated membership

An advantage of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927 – for the historian of political finance, at least – was the additional statistical data in relation to political funds it required unions to submit to the Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies. Figures for the numbers of members paying the political levy are available from 1928, and although even these need to be treated with some caution, they are not so 'gravely inaccurate' as those for the pre-1928 or post-1946 'contracting-out' periods, when the total number of contributors was calculated by subtracting the figure for those 'contracting-out' from the total membership, not counting the often substantial numbers of members not contributing to the political fund for other reasons.¹¹⁷ Political membership – that is, those paying the levy – diverged considerably from the overall

¹¹⁵ See Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999), pp. 71-75 for an account of this attempt at repeal.

¹¹⁶ Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 22-28. 'Contracting-in' was retained in Northern Ireland. The Thatcher government's Trade Union Act, 1984 forced unions to hold a political fund ballot every ten years, whilst the Trade Union Act, 2016 reintroduces a modified version of 'contracting-in' in the guise of the 'opt-in' form.

¹¹⁷ Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 33-34. For example, certain categories of membership such as the apprenticed, unemployed or retired were routinely exempted.

industrial membership following the 1927 Act. It has been estimated that prior to 1928, some 75-80 per cent of trade union members paid in to the political fund; this declined in 1928 to less than three-fifths.¹¹⁸ Although this figure was maintained during the early 1930s, in the context of union growth later in the decade, the number of levy-payers had slipped to under half of the total membership by 1939.¹¹⁹

Not all unions kept accurate records of their political membership: indeed, this was often difficult to do effectively, and returns to the Chief Registrar might be calculated back from political fund income. This did not necessarily give the true figure: some unions operated different levy rates for different categories of members, whilst members who *had* 'contracted-in' not paying – through, for example, non-collection, part-payment, or those members in arrears – could also compromise the accuracy of these figures.¹²⁰ Union administrative structure also had an effect on record-keeping: the NUR was generally able to maintain reasonably precise figures owing to the fact that its branches reported directly to head office. Where financial returns were mediated through other layers of union bureaucracy, especially in craft organisations such as the AEU and in the general unions which afforded considerable autonomy to district or trade group sections, national union offices often lacked reliable statistics for political membership.

As figures 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate, the political membership of each of the main unions considered here followed roughly the same pattern as industrial membership across the period.¹²¹ NUDAW's record was particularly impressive here: its political membership grew every year, and at a faster rate than its industrial membership in

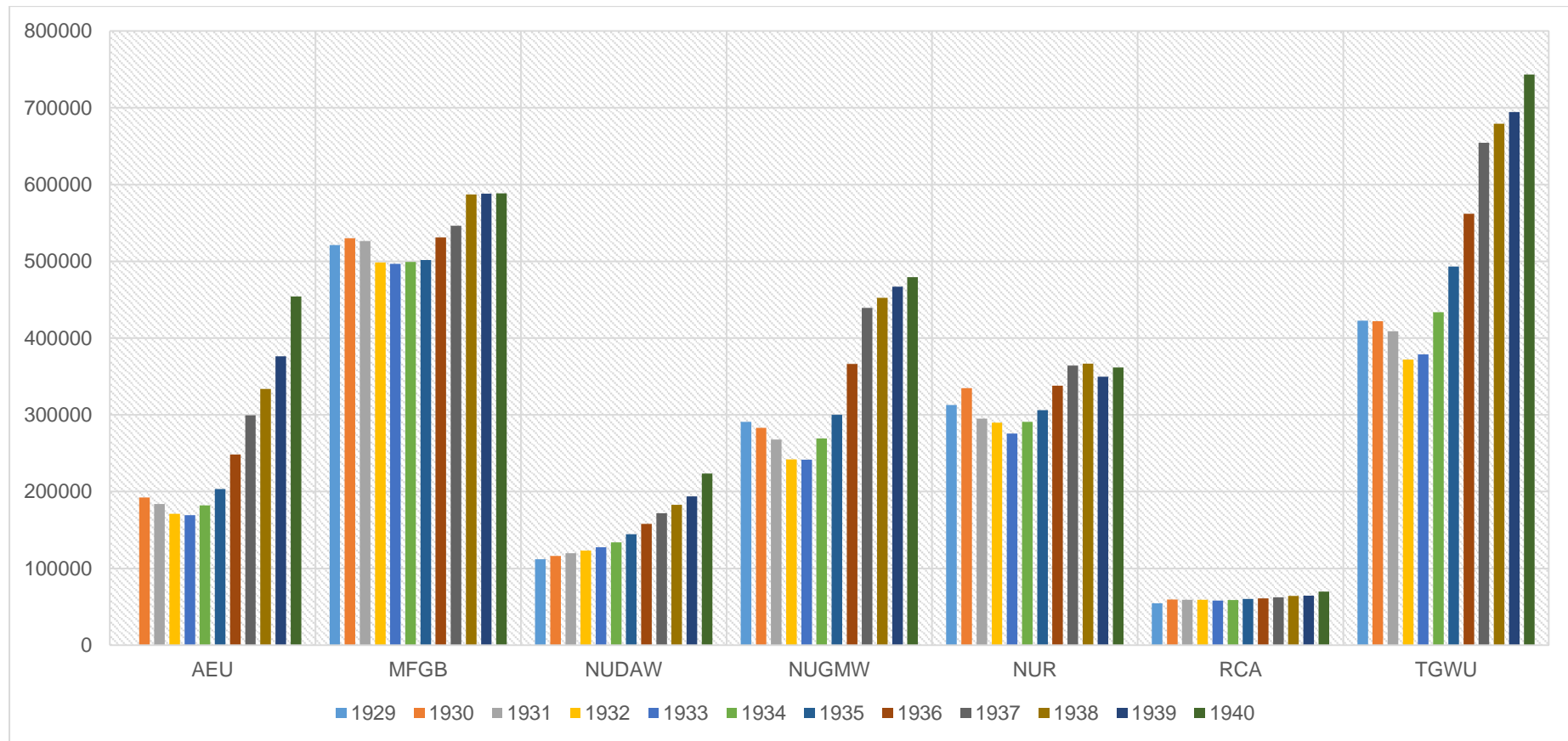
¹¹⁸ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, pp 75-77. Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 32-33; FS 32 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Annual Reports of the Chief Registrar*.

¹¹⁹ See figure 2.5 below for further detail. For registration purposes, there were two categories of trade union, registered and unregistered. Unregistered trade unions were typically federal bodies including a number of constituent unions: for example, whilst the Durham Miners' Association was a registered union, the MFGB – the largest unregistered union – was not. The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927 allowed the Chief Registrar to collect figures from the unregistered unions for the first time, although this did result in some double-counting, although, as Harrison notes, the *Annual Reports of the Chief Registrar* did try to eliminate this as far as possible. Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, p. 33.

¹²⁰ Even so, it has been necessary to calculate in this way in the instances of the NUGMW and AEU owing to the information available. Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 33-34. Certain categories of membership such as the apprenticed, unemployed or retired were routinely exempted from paying the levy; the TGWU varied its political levy rate for junior and apprenticed members.

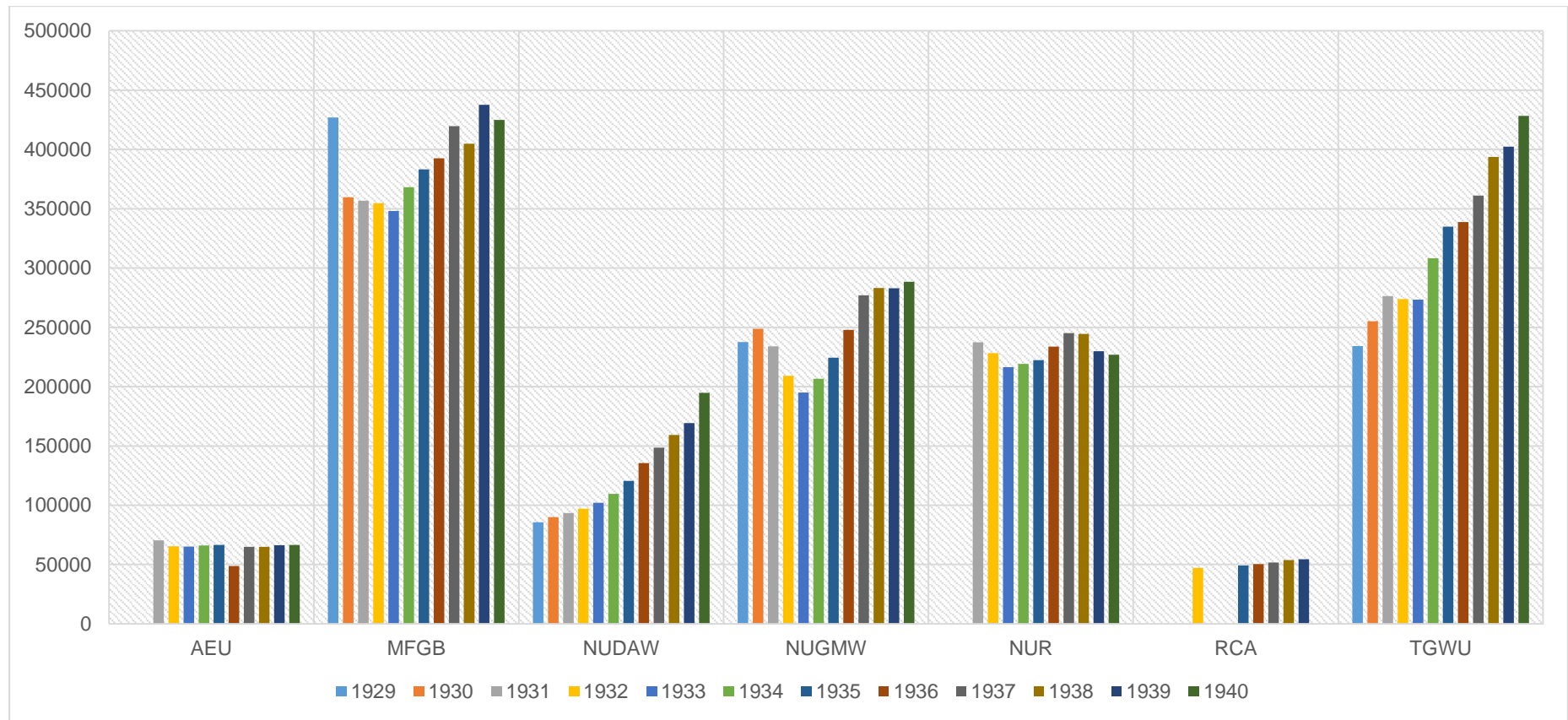
¹²¹ Full membership details of the unions discussed can be found in the appendix.

Figure 2.2 Industrial membership, selected trade unions



Source: unions' own records – see appendix for full details.

Figure 2.3 Political membership, selected trade unions



Source: union records and my own calculations – see appendix for full details.

every year except 1939-40. It also increased by a greater number than industrial membership in every year apart from 1931 and 1937-40, implying a high level of success, especially during 1932-36, in encouraging members both new and old to pay the political levy. From 1933 onwards at least eighty per cent of the industrial membership were also political members.¹²² The same pattern is evident in the RCA's figures.¹²³

More typically, however, both political and industrial memberships reached their nadir in 1932-33 before rising later in the decade: the figures for the TGWU, NUGMW, and to a lesser extent, MFGB and NUR, had this in common.

The notable exception here is the AEU. Its political membership remained static across the period, despite often massive increases in industrial membership – at least 11.5 per cent annually, and sometimes twice that - from 1935 onwards. The union was singularly unsuccessful in getting new entrants to pay the levy, with the result that the proportion of members who did pay declined from 38 per cent of the industrial membership in 1931-32 to just 14.6 per cent by 1940.¹²⁴ The union's leadership viewed this 'marked slackening' with some concern: 'the position of the AEU is not so bad as some; but it is none too good, having regard to the rapid and substantial additions to membership [...] It is evident [...] that a real effort must be made to reawaken amongst the members of this Union a lively interest in the question of its political responsibilities'.¹²⁵ Subscription rates were one factor which could affect the proportions of membership paying the levy. The AEU charged 3d per quarter for political membership, amounting to a shilling annually. Whilst this was a typical political levy rate, as craft unionists AEU members paid some of the biggest average overall contributions of any trade union. In 1931, annual union contributions for workers in the metals sector averaged £2 12s 8d compared to a £1 17s 0d average for all unions; by 1936, these figures had risen to £2 17s 7d and £1 18s 1d respectively.¹²⁶ That they were already making substantial subscriptions towards a variety of other benefits may have been incentive enough for engineers' non-payment of the political levy; this

¹²² See appendix, table j.

¹²³ See appendix, table m.

¹²⁴ See appendix, table a.

¹²⁵ *AEU Monthly Journal*, November 1938.

¹²⁶ FS 32.72 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1932, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p.15; *Report for the Year 1937, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p. 9. Only trade unionists in the printing industry paid higher average annual contributions, £5 12s 8d, in 1936.

seems likely to have particularly applied to new entrants to the industry later in the decade. By contrast, trade unionists in, for example, mining (£1 5s 9d in 1936) and transport (£1 9s 3d in 1936) paid much lower average annual contributions, and these unions experienced much less difficulty in extracting political levy subscriptions from their members.¹²⁷ The Engineers' heritage of craft union independence likely contributed to the level of non-payment; another factor was the legacy of the collapse in shop-steward organisation in the 1920s and its effect on collectors.¹²⁸ Labour's shifting position on rearmament may have been a consideration for different members at different points: the party's ambiguous position before 1937 may not have endeared Labour to engineers in the armaments industry, whereas the party's stronger stance in favour of rearmament later in the decade did not necessarily sit easily with official AEU scepticism.¹²⁹ The AEU's response to its declining political membership was hardly imaginative; rather than a sustained push to advertise the benefits of political action to new joiners, the union counted on existing levy-payers to contribute more: the rate was doubled to 6d per quarter in 1940. By this time Labour had joined the coalition government, which may have made it easier to push the change through the union's National Committee.¹³⁰ With the party back in office, the proportion of AEU levy-payers did increase to 19.5 per cent by 1941, but in the context of rapid wartime membership expansion, this had fallen back to 14.2 per cent by late 1943; it would take until the repeal of the 1927 Act in 1946 to effect substantial change in levels of AEU political membership.¹³¹

Several unions operated variable levy rates in order to better attract contractors-in; the TGWU is a prominent example of a union doing this with some success.¹³² Some of the discrepancy between industrial and political memberships can be explained by the

¹²⁷ Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1937, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p. 9

¹²⁸ Richard Croucher, *Engineers at War* (London, 1982), pp. 23-26.

¹²⁹ See Tom Buchanan, 'The politics of internationalism: the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Spanish Civil War', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 53:3 (1988), 47-55, p. 49 for the AEU's position on rearmament.

¹³⁰ Only one committee member opposed the change, with the resolution carried 34 to 1. TU/ENG/1/A/44, AEU, Bound Reports, 1940: *AEU Report of Proceedings of 22nd National Committee and 5th Rules Revision Meeting*, May-June 1940, p. 318. An amendment to increase the rate to 4d instead was by lost 32 to 3.

¹³¹ Statistics from Labour Party, NEC Minutes 1941, minutes of meeting of Finance and General Purposes committee 16 January 1941; Labour Party, NEC Minutes 1943, minutes of Special Conference of Trade Union Officers, 24 November 1943.

¹³² In this period the TGWU charged 1d per quarter for women and under-21s; 3d per quarter all other members.

ineligibility of certain union members, such as juveniles or apprentices, from paying at all; a memorandum prepared by the TUC Research Department on contracting-in in the wake of the 1927 Act's introduction noted that 'many unionists who have refused to sign contracting-in cards', in this case presumably on the principle of opposition to the imposition of the Act itself, rather than Labour politics, were continuing to pay political contributions as a voluntary donation. Further evidence of this practice has proved hard to find, but it seems likely that it did occur.¹³³

The method used to collect levy payments could also have an impact on political membership. Later observers lamented the inefficiency of collection systems which relied on small amounts being collected in person on a regular basis.¹³⁴ Some systems certainly were inefficient. The AEU again offers an instructive example: its members' political contributions were to be collected quarterly, at a branch's final meeting night of the quarter.¹³⁵ Ensuring regular attendance at relatively infrequent meetings was one impediment to efficient collection; the commitment of collectors hunting down unpaid dues could be another. As Harrison notes, collectors would 'usually prefer to clear up industrial arrears before insisting on payment of the levy'; this was surely even more pronounced during the slump.¹³⁶ The NUR's political membership figures imply that the Railwaymen's system of collecting ½d every week was more fruitful amongst workers on weekly wages; that the political levy was collected separately from other dues may also have contributed to fostering political consciousness.¹³⁷ A criticism of the compound system of collecting, more widespread in the post-war period, was that it did the opposite by merging the levy payment into the usual weekly contribution.¹³⁸ Such a system could, however, prevent a relatively high political levy rate from

¹³³ MSS.292/43.2/1 TUC 'Trade Union Political Fund. Contracting In' file, 1927-1934: TUC Research Department, 'Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, 1927. Contracting-In', memorandum, 26 September 1928.

¹³⁴ Drucker refers to the monthly door-to-door collection of party dues, still prevalent in the 1970s, as an 'absurd' system of collecting money. Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party*, p. 16; see also Rose, *The Problem of Party Government*, p. 233.

¹³⁵ TU/ENG/4/A/14 AEU, Rule Books, 1920-1957.

¹³⁶ Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, p. 48.

¹³⁷ MSS.127/NU/4/3/5 NUR Rules, 1935. NUDAW changed its levy rate from 6d per quarter to ½d per week in 1935; although the union's rulebook still suggested this should be collected quarterly, the alteration likely gave collectors more discretion to follow their own method. NUDAW, Rule Books, 1930-1940.

¹³⁸ Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 48-49. Under compounding, a week or two's full contribution would be given directly to the political fund, representing the member's levy payment for the whole year. A printing union's general secretary described the practice to Harrison as 'a bloody swindle. They know their members wouldn't pay the money if they knew what they were paying for'.

becoming an obstacle to payment, as in the case of the RCA, which charged $\frac{3}{4}$ d per week.¹³⁹

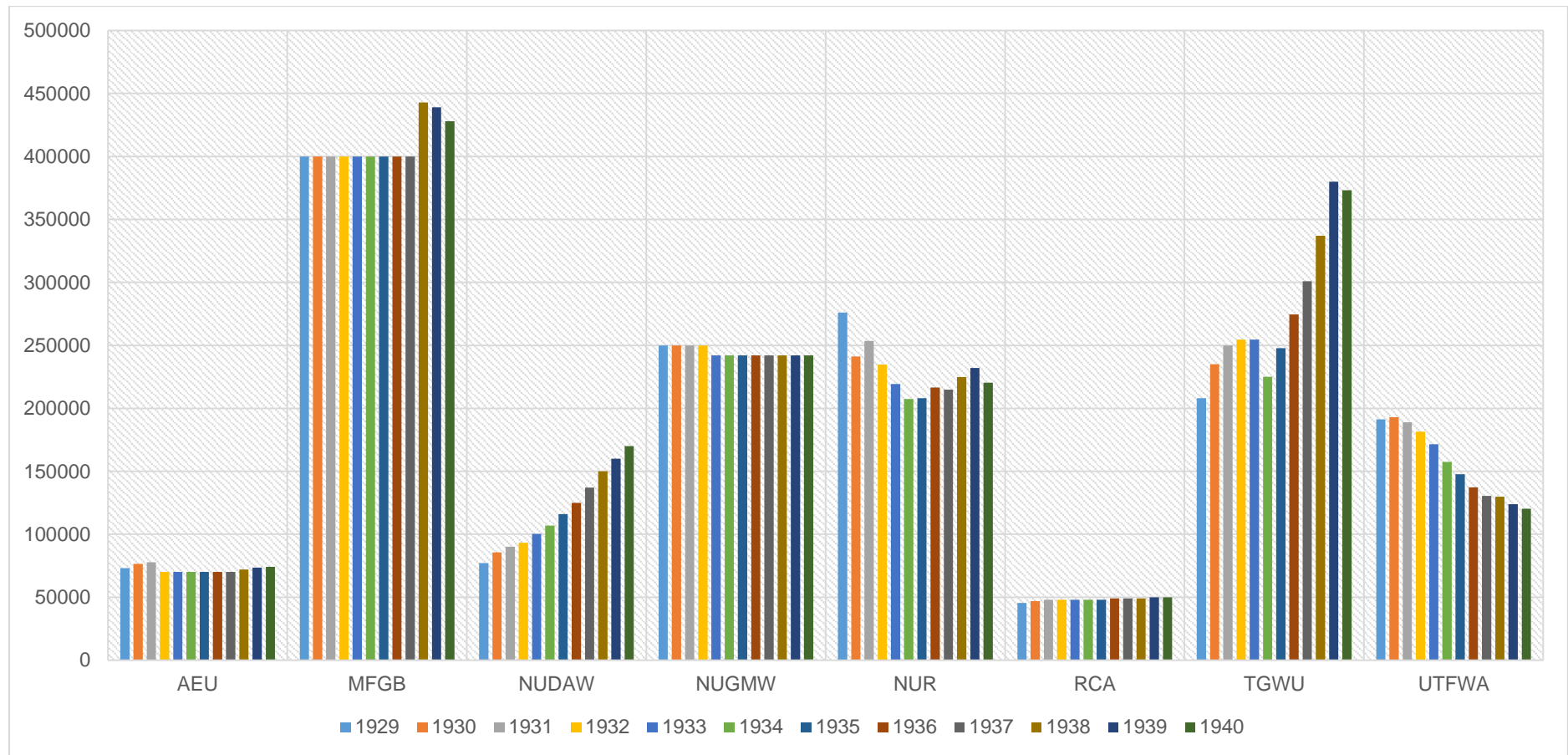
The number of members a union chose to affiliate to the Labour party usually differed from its total political membership.¹⁴⁰ The affiliation fee was the basis of a union's engagement in Labour politics. This had been set at an annual rate of 1d per member in 1912, increasing to 2d in 1918 and then 3d in 1920 as the party's ambitions – and expenditure – grew. In 1929, the fee was raised to 4d, and then $4\frac{1}{2}$ d in 1937. A special levy of an additional 2d per member was collected over the three years between the 1929-32 party conferences.¹⁴¹ Figure 2.4 shows the affiliated membership of eight major unions. NUDAW simply affiliated on the basis of the previous year's political membership. Sometimes a rounded figure would be used, approximating the political membership figure; the RCA offers a good example of this practice. The use of a rounded figure could disguise substantial disparities, however: it might be higher or lower than its actual total of political levy-payers. Affiliating a political membership greater than its real size could increase prestige, deflect criticism that a union was not pulling its weight politically, and maintain the size of its block vote at party conference, although the desire to demonstrate stability and political loyalty should not be underestimated. The MFGB typically affiliated exactly

¹³⁹ Although it could arouse suspicion. Herbert Elvin, general secretary of the National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers, in making inquiries to the TUC in 1934 as to means of increasing his levy-paying membership, implied that the RCA was exploiting the compound system to the disadvantage of non-levy-payers. Elvin thought that compounding allowed the RCA to effectively collect greater dues from non-subscribers to the political levy, by retaining their two weeks' contribution that would otherwise have gone to the political fund for industrial purposes. A degree of clerical union rivalry may have been a factor in his accusation, given the RCA's high proportion of political membership. Walter Milne-Bailey, in reply, noted that the RCA's rules on this point were 'strictly in accordance with the law', but admitted the TUC had 'no information' as to whether such practices actually went on. See MSS.292/43.2/1 TUC 'Trade Union Political Fund. Contracting In' file, 1927-1934: Elvin to Citrine, 14 August 1934; Milne-Bailey to Elvin, 16 August 1934; Elvin to Citrine, 17 August 1934; Milne-Bailey to Elvin, 20 August 1934; Elvin to Milne-Bailey, 22 August 1934; Milne-Bailey to Elvin, 23 August 1934; Elvin to Citrine, 24 August 1934.

¹⁴⁰ This was also true of industrial membership and TUC affiliations; several of the points made in this paragraph also apply in regards of TUC membership.

¹⁴¹ The levy was proposed at the 1929 by Gordon MacDonald of the MFGB, backed by the TGWU's Ernest Bevin. John Bromley of ASLEF, Charles Dukes of the NUGMW, and Arthur Henderson all took part – notably all were figures with strong profiles on both sides of the movement. LPACR 1929, p. 244. A special double levy was charged in 1926 only; prior to 1912, a combination of affiliation fee at 15s per thousand members, and a parliamentary levy of 2d per member to support Labour MPs was used. With the introduction of parliamentary salaries, there was no longer a need for the latter levy, and so a single levy of 1d per member was introduced. See Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, pp. 61-67; Dean E. McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938* (London, 1938), pp. 45-46.

Figure 2.4 Affiliated membership, selected trade unions



Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1929-1940.

400,000 members, although the combined political membership of its districts regularly fell short of this total. The AEU figures for 1932-36 – 70,022; 70,004; 70,006; 70,009 and 70,021 – imply that the union was attempting to give the appearance of an accurately fluctuating figure whilst disguising an embarrassingly lower political membership. Calculations from political fund income confirm that the paying membership was closer to 65,000. The NUGMW usually affiliated to the party on a political membership of 242,000 through the 1930s. This figure had itself been lowered from 250,000 in 1933 in recognition of the impact of the slump on membership. Yet the actual political membership of the union was likely below 200,000 in 1933, only surpassing 242,000 in 1936. Thereafter the union maintained a 242,000 affiliation, despite a substantially larger political membership. The affiliated figure had represented 108 per cent of the political membership in 1935, but only 68 per cent of it in 1939. Using a lower figure could help conserve political fund resources, which was of particular importance to the NUGMW, as will be seen below. The TGWU also tended to affiliate to the party at a lower figure than its actual political membership. That a rounded figure was generally used implies that financial considerations were of significance; the much reduced affiliated figure for 1934 may reflect leadership frustration following the Clay Cross inquiry given that the actual political membership continued to rise.¹⁴² Sensitivity to the charge of union dictation, or the appearance of dominating conference proceedings through a large block vote, might also encourage restraint in affiliating on a lower figure.¹⁴³

Political funds

The reports of the Chief Registrar shed light on the overall political income and expenditure of trade unions in the period, as figure 2.5 demonstrates. The most recent study of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927 has suggested that the ‘impact on political funds was immediate and significant’; the fall of over 700,000 total contributors, and 1.2 million in Labour affiliations, from 1927-28 confirms this.¹⁴⁴ One area in which the shift to contracting-in had an undeniable effect was in the cost of

¹⁴² The Clay Cross controversy is discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁴³ Rose, *The Problem of Party Government*, p. 237.

¹⁴⁴ Adrian Williamson, ‘The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927 Reconsidered’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 37 (2016), 33-82, p. 65.

Figure 2.5 All trade unions: political funds and Labour party affiliations, 1927-1940

Year	Trade union membership (TUC figure)	Contributors in registered trade unions	Contributors in unregistered trade unions	Total contributors*	% paying levy	Total contributions (£)	Total expenditure (£)	Political funds of trade unions, e/y (£)***	Labour party affiliation, trade unions
1927	4,163,994	2,224,000	597,000	2,821,000	67.7				3,238,939
1928	3,874,842	1,634,000	581,000	2,088,000	58.3	170,000	201,000	359,000	2,025,139
1929	3,673,144	1,669,000	584,000	2,119,000	59.1	159,000	218,000	313,000	2,044,279
1930	3,744,320	1,683,000	590,000	2,144,000	59.2	168,000	138,000	354,000	2,011,484
1931	3,719,401	1,587,000	584,000	2,045,000	59.7	144,000	217,000	295,000	2,024,216
1932	3,613,273	1,493,000	542,000	1,916,000	58.5	151,000	131,000	324,000	1,960,269
1933	3,367,911	1,481,000	549,000	1,915,000	57.0	145,000	144,000	342,000	1,899,007
1934	3,294,581	1,576,000	525,000	1,983,000	57.7	157,000	143,000	366,000	1,857,524
1935	3,388,810	1,671,000	525,000	2,078,000	56.5	163,000	229,000	311,000	1,912,924
1936	3,614,551	1,780,000	545,000	2,213,000	54.0	173,000	152,000	344,000	1,968,538
1937	4,008,647	1,922,000	570,000	2,491,000	51.4	192,000**	172,000	365,000	2,037,071
1938	4,460,617	1,975,000	575,000	2,550,000	50.2	199,000**	167,000	392,000	2,158,076
1939	4,669,186	2,017,000	562,000	2,579,000	49.8	196,000**	172,000	416,000	2,214,070
1940	4,866,711								2,226,575

Source: FS 32 Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Annual Reports of the Chief Registrar*; TUC Annual Reports; Labour Party Annual Conference Reports; additional information from Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, p. 75 and Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 32-33. Contribution figures are not available for 1940.

*Total contributors: the Chief Registrar removed some double counting, so this total does not necessarily equal the sum of the figures in the columns for contributors in registered and unregistered unions.

**Figures represent income, rather than just contributions. Chief Registrar's figures unavailable; Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, p. 75.

***Political funds of trade unions, e/y: the Chief Registrar's accounts include unions of employers, of which almost all of the funds belonged to the National Farmers' Union; these figures are close estimates based on subtraction of the NFU's funds. The Chief Registrar's figures for total contributions and total expenditure already exclude the NFU.

political fund administration, both immediately following the Act itself, and on into the 1930s. Substantial resources were required in the short term to encourage as many members as possible to sign contracting-in forms.¹⁴⁵ Over the longer term, the administrative burden on union staff was increased considerably, as the NUGMW-sponsored MP Arthur Hayday complained:

I represent a union that has 300,000 members. [...] When contracting-out was the order, from 2,000 to 3,000 – say 3,000 – contracted-out. [...] We kept records of that small number. Now that we have filed away in index form, say, 280,000 cards and have increased the secretarial staff, the *Morning Post* or some national paper begins to trounce you for taking such a large percentage of 6d per week contribution for management, and then they say that it is to keep the agitator comfortably well off, instead of which it is imposed by the Government, which says to you, 'Keep 280,000 cards; follow them up'. I should like somebody on that side of the House who was responsible for the Act of 1927 to say if they would like the Government to carry that out [...] If they did, I wonder if the country realises that, in order to fix their spite upon trade unionists, they would have to employ two or three thousand civil servants. In our office we have 280,000 names indexed, and we are expected to keep going through them and taking out the names of those who have died and to trace those who may have left the union.¹⁴⁶

General funds could be used to meet the additional administrative costs, although typically a portion of political funds were also spent this way. The average expenditure per member on union working expenses had been 14s 2d in 1927; it rose sharply to 15s 2d by 1932 – twice as fast as average contributions.¹⁴⁷ Although no overall figure for political fund income is available for 1927, it seems that it was the slump rather than the Act which had a more significant effect on income, with totals markedly lower in the years 1931-33. Reserves also fell during these years, partly in order to meet the decline in income, compounded the cost of two general elections in just over two years.

¹⁴⁵ The efforts of the TGWU are reflected in hefty files of correspondence between head office and the union's various area organisations: see especially MSS.126/TG/783/C/1 TGWU, correspondence file, 'Political Provisions – Contracting In'.

¹⁴⁶ Arthur Hayday, *HC Debs.* 22 January 1931, vol. 247, cc. 446-447.

¹⁴⁷ Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies, *Report for the Year 1937, Part 4: Trade Unions*, p. 9

Ernest Bevin suggested in 1931 that the Act was 'more of an insult than an injury'.¹⁴⁸ Pinto-Duschinsky's account supports this view: he contends that not only were unions reasonably successful in mitigating the effect of the Act, in part through making use of previously hoarded income and vigorous efforts to get members to contract in, but the purchasing power of funds increased as the cost of living fell during the slump.¹⁴⁹ Arguably the real significance of the Act was symbolic; for many trade unionists, it was 'passed in a cold-blooded spirit of revenge' after the General Strike, and represented the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms in the service of naked partisanship.¹⁵⁰ Although political fund income had recovered by the end of the decade, the total number of contributors had yet to do so; moreover, as the Chief Registrar's statistics demonstrate, the proportion of levy-payers overall continued to decline.¹⁵¹

The records of individual unions can be more revealing. The financial aspect of trade union political action has been under-researched, and yet, as Martin Harrison has suggested, without 'the backing of substantial finance' such action would be only a gesture.¹⁵² Harrison's own work is perhaps the most systematic attempt to analyse the problems of trade union political finance, although, as he notes, it is often unions' own accounts which present the 'most serious obstacle' to such an investigation. Despite being required by law to supply both their own membership and the Chief Registrar with annual statements, 'nothing binds them to make it either comprehensive or comprehensible'.¹⁵³ Arguably Harrison slightly exaggerates this difficulty, and although it is certainly possible to detect something of the fear of giving anything away to 'the other side' that he identifies in some unions' pronouncements and publications concerning political finance in the 1930s, perhaps the main challenge lies in the lack of uniform accounting practices, which in some instances makes comparison between unions problematic, or at worst somewhat speculative. However, it remains possible

¹⁴⁸ Williamson, 'The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927 Reconsidered', p. 71.

¹⁴⁹ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, p. 77.

¹⁵⁰ Frank Stillwell, 'The New Trade Union Bill', *TGWU Record*, January 1931. Stillwell was secretary of the union's legal department.

¹⁵¹ The TUC was sufficiently concerned by reports that members who had contracted-in prior to the 1931 general election had since refused to pay, to make enquiries of its constituent unions, although little evidence of this was found; the AUBTW reported that the reality was 'Quite the other way. National Govt's programme of economy has resulted in stopping of meaningful activities in building and many men thrown out of work. This has had effect of improving responses to appeals for levy'. The AEU also reported increases. MSS.292/43.2/1 TUC 'Trade Union Political Fund. Contracting In', handwritten note, undated but 1931-33.

¹⁵² Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, p. 55.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

to make use of the financial accounts of trade unions to assess the character of the unions' financial contribution to Labour party politics in the period.

As suggested, accounting practices varied: most unions published an annual financial statement supplementary to their annual reports; the NUGMW, however, published such statements on a six-monthly basis. Unions' financial years were not always consistent: the Miners' Federation used a July-to-June basis for their statements, although during 1931 they changed to using a more conventional calendar year. Generally such statements would be discussed at the next annual conference of the union in question following their publication, although here again, the NUGMW provides an exception in that its congresses were held on a biennial basis. Although the union's biennial reports did give a brief overview of expenditure on political activities in the intervening period, this probably rendered any congress criticism of such activity the more difficult. The major obstacle in terms of the statements themselves, however, is in the variety of systems for categorising political income and expenditure. The Railway Clerks did not itemise expenditure in their political fund statements, making it difficult to tell precisely what money was spent where. This does appear to reflect to some degree the 'fear' described by Harrison: at the union's 1936 conference, defending the decision not to publish itemised expenditure on candidatures, the RCA treasurer commented 'We have not got those figures here [...] If our friends want to know, we can tell them, although it is not usually given in the most public way'.¹⁵⁴ The following year there was an attempt at the RCA conference to move back the political fund section of the annual report on the grounds of lack of information. A. W. Longbottom, an RCA parliamentary candidate, complained that it was 'totally inadequate' that a clerical association was unable to give greater detail on political expenditure. The treasurer's reply was revealing: 'It is one thing to inform our members, but it is another thing to put all our confidential political expenditure into a document that is going to be circulated far and wide [...] what value would it be to any member here?' He was supported by a delegate wary that such information might be used against the Association by the railway companies, and the challenge was defeated.¹⁵⁵ The Railway Clerks seem to have been the exception here, however, although it is perhaps notable that the general secretary's introductory remarks to the

¹⁵⁴ MSS.55/1/CON/64a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1936, p. 78.

¹⁵⁵ MSS.55/1/CON/65a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1937, pp. 183-5.

NUGMW's half-yearly reports usually neglected to mention political expenditure, despite it taking up several pages early on in the reports.¹⁵⁶ Political funds were just one of many separate accounts. Most unions, the NUGMW included, did provide itemised detail on their political income and expenditure, and the difficulty, as mentioned, in comparing them derives from the fact that different unions categorised the same kind of expenditure under different headings, or changed the ways they did so. The Miners' Federation, for example, up to 1935, included delegates' fees and expenses for attending Labour party conferences under expenditure on the Labour party centrally, without indicating how much of the total represented affiliation fees, delegates' fees and delegates' expenses; from 1936, delegates' expenses, but not their fees, were excluded and listed separately.¹⁵⁷

Figure 2.6 gives details of the central political funds of seven unions. In the cases of two unions, half of all political fund contributions were retained by the districts (MFGB) and branches (NUR). These sums did not pass through the unions' central accounts and as such are excluded here; it should be noted that the overall political expenditure and reserves of these unions were therefore greater than the totals shown. The other unions allocated sums from central political funds to their regional and branch organisation; consequently these figures are included as part of their central expenditure. Income followed closely the pattern of political membership, either rising or remaining stable throughout the period.¹⁵⁸ The heaviest expenditure came from the four unions with the largest political memberships – the MFGB, NUR, TGWU and NUGMW, although the NUDAW was catching up by the end of the decade; unsurprisingly the general election years of 1931 and 1935 saw the highest peaks in spending by all seven unions. In spite of its smaller size and political membership, the RCA outspent the AEU by two to one in general election years.

¹⁵⁶ TU/GENERALB/1/A/5-16 NUGMW Reports and Minutes, Half-Yearly Financial Reports.

¹⁵⁷ D.845.14-15 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, Annual Reports, 1935 and 1936. In instances such as these an attempt has been made wherever possible to ensure figures for spending on the party centrally, constituency expenses etc. have been included under the correct headings, apart from where the failure to separate such expenditure within a statement has made an accurate calculation impossible.

¹⁵⁸ I have been unable to satisfactorily account for the substantial drop in AEU income during 1936; an accounting error, although possible, seems unlikely as the figure of £2,506 appears in several places in the union's records for that year, although there is no evidence, for example in executive council minutes, that the union's leadership were particularly concerned about the apparent drop.

Figure 2.6 Central political funds of selected trade unions (£)

	<u>AEU</u>			<u>MFGB</u>			<u>NUDAW</u>		
	income	expenditure	balance, e/y	income	expenditure	balance, e/y	income	expenditure	balance, e/y
<u>1931</u>	3,782	6,459	7,845	10,985	23,367	31,557	9,274	9,782	7,006
<u>1932</u>	3,490	3,029	8,307	18,736	14,259	34,988	9,580	6,322	10,265
<u>1933</u>	3,355	4,260	7,403	20,026	12,550	33,476	10,040	7,482	12,823
<u>1934</u>	3,368	4,384	6,387	20,062	13,049	40,489	10,741	8,771	14,791
<u>1935</u>	3,420	6,219	3,588	20,536	26,931	34,095	12,168	15,655	11,306
<u>1936</u>	2,506	3,942	2,152	21,776	15,416	40,454	14,211	9,777	15,740
<u>1937</u>	3,266	4,317	1,101	21,952	16,562	45,818	15,690	10,743	20,688
<u>1938</u>	3,260	3,573	788	22,823	14,339	54,172	16,982	11,481	26,189
<u>1939</u>	3,325	3,149	964	22,375	21,681	55,104	17,493	11,919	31,763
<u>1940</u>	3,336	1,930	2,370	22,518	16,501	61,071	17,433	10,653	38,543

Figure 2.6 Central political funds of selected trade unions (£), ctd.

	<u>NUGMW</u>			<u>NUR</u>			<u>RCA</u>		
	income	expenditure	balance, e/y	income	expenditure	balance, e/y	income	expenditure	balance, e/y
<u>1931</u>	16,778	25,726	23,887	12,715	24,772	69,777	8,403	12,091	5,330
<u>1932</u>	14,763	15,244	24,876	11,875	9,681	75,684	7,940	5,615	7,654
<u>1933</u>	14,366	15,745	23,262	11,238	12,352	78,173	7,684	6,465	8,874
<u>1934</u>	14,502	16,421	21,343	11,273	10,608	82,573	7,760	6,152	10,481
<u>1935</u>	15,499	26,424	11,418	11,733	26,558	71,892	8,061	14,660	3,883
<u>1936</u>	17,205	18,093	10,530	11,641	10,550	74,801	8,670	6,773	5,779
<u>1937</u>	18,713	19,781	9,460	12,177	17,234	71,614	9,074	7,773	7,081
<u>1938</u>	19,105	17,577	10,987	12,570	12,624	73,399	9,648	6,874	9,855
<u>1939</u>	27,873	18,874	19,986	11,936	16,618	70,506	9,394	5,339	13,911
<u>1940</u>	20,552	16,943	22,595	11,421	10,736	72,786	9,136	5,031	18,015

Figure 2.6 Central political funds of selected trade unions (£), ctd.

	<u>TGWU</u>		balance,
	income	expenditure	e/y
<u>1931</u>	12,872	21,508	9,006
<u>1932</u>	11,623	9,432	11,197
<u>1933</u>	11,473	7,628	15,042
<u>1934</u>	12,625	11,895	15,772
<u>1935</u>	13,846	17,128	12,489
<u>1936</u>	15,308	11,031	16,766
<u>1937</u>	17,871	14,552	20,086
<u>1938</u>	20,270	14,588	25,768
<u>1939</u>	19,381	15,987	29,179
<u>1940</u>	17,988	14,981	32,169

Source: Calculated from unions' political fund records in annual and other financial reports – see appendix for further details.

One of the largest calls on political funds was the party affiliation fee: this ranged between a NUDAW annual average of 27.7 per cent of political fund expenditure, and a TGWU figure of 38.6 per cent over the decade.¹⁵⁹ Another major item was the cost of maintenance and expenses to those constituencies where a union sponsored parliamentary candidates. These averaged 17 per cent of the annual expenditure of the NUGMW, NUR and AEU; the lower TGWU figure of 12.9 per cent is reflective of the lower grants paid by that union. The high NUDAW average of 21.6 per cent of expenditure would likely be exceeded by that of the RCA, which sponsored a high number of candidates despite its smaller size.

Something of the tendency towards saving referred to earlier can be seen in the end-of-year balance figures. Reserves steadily grew across the decade, with the exception of the AEU, where static income forced the union to draw more heavily on reserves to meet expenditure; saving of any substance was out of the equation until the 1940s. Reserves were generally equivalent to a year or two's worth of political fund income, sufficient to meet any large unexpected expense.¹⁶⁰ This reflected an attitude of caution, although the RCA, for one, often appeared to be pushing its political fund to the limit. The major exception is the NUR. In terms of overall reserves, its political fund was the most buoyant, with end-of-year balances regularly in excess of £70,000, sometimes as much as seven times its annual income. This reflected the relative stability of the NUR's membership over the longer term, and allowed the union to easily absorb expenditure larger than income in 1937 and 1939.¹⁶¹ It should be noted, however, that all of the unions discussed here had *relatively* healthy political funds: for many smaller organisations, building up political fund reserves at all remained an ambition until the war years.

The allocation of political fund income throughout a union could be affect the level of reserves available. Some central expenditure was earmarked for use by unions'

¹⁵⁹ Calculated from unions' own records; this figure also includes other regular fees paid to the party such as the by-election deposit insurance fund levy. See Appendix I for full details.

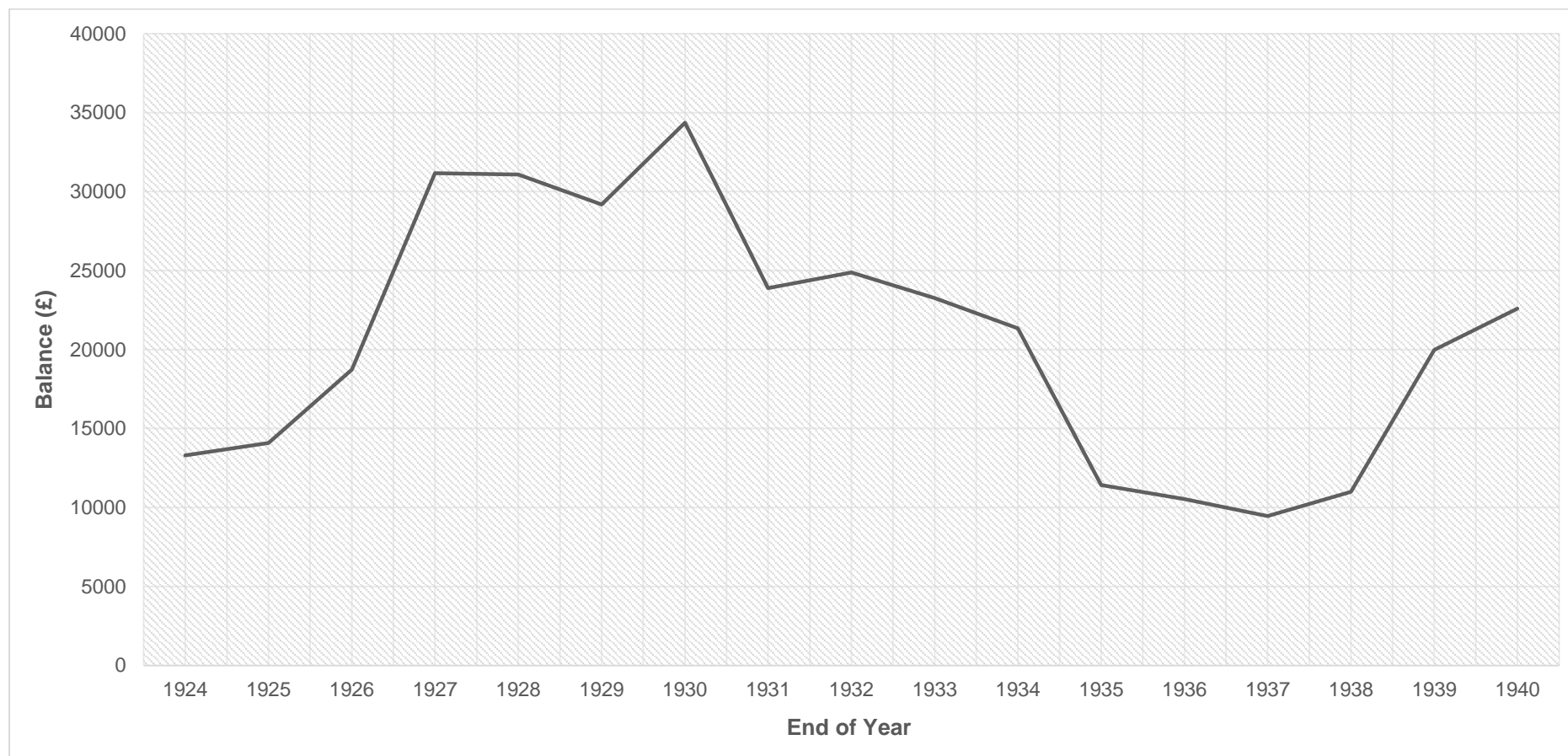
¹⁶⁰ This was the case with the MFGB, NUDAW, RCA and TGWU.

¹⁶¹ Not only had the NUR been longer-established in its present form than the other unions discussed here, but it had not been involved in the kind of prolonged national industrial action that had forced the MFGB to rely on political fund reserves to meet ordinary industrial expenditure in the 1920s. In the only major national dispute on the railways since the First World War, the NUR's deep reserves had been advantageous: expenditure on publicity for the 1919 railway strike 'dwarfed' that of Labour's 1918 general election campaign. See Laura Beers, "Is this man an anarchist? Industrial action and the battle for public opinion in interwar Britain", *Journal of Modern History* 82 (2010), 30-60, p. 41.

regional and local organisation. The NUDAW kept two separate political fund accounts; the first of these was used for all of the union's major political activities, the second reserved for use by branches in order to pay their affiliation fees to Divisional Labour parties. Similarly, although apparently not using a separate account, the NUGMW returned a proportion of contributions received to its district organisations. Unfortunately district accounts do not give any detail on the expenditure of this returned part of the political fund beyond how much was spent, but it is clear that the issue was a contested one across the period. Figure 2.7 illustrates the position of the union's political fund reserves. The proportion of central to district allocation of the fund had originally been set at 80:20 in head office's favour at the amalgamation of the union in 1924, but over the following seventeen years these proportions were successfully altered on five occasions – a further attempt in 1938 met with failure – first increasing the districts' allocation, and then moving back to a position where, in 1941, there was a 70:30 split in which the union kept the larger part for use centrally. In every year until 1938 the union spent more than it received in income, whilst its political fund balance more than halved across the period. For a large union, its political fund seems to have been in fairly poor shape, and this may well have been a factor in its reluctance to give automatic membership of its political panel to a union candidate to replace Charles Dukes at Warrington (Lancashire), for instance. In a relatively high-spending union, this was surely the result of its policy of returning a proportion of the funds to districts, and the fact that these proportions changed so regularly. The MFGB, always returning exactly half, was able to be more consistent and manage its political fund more effectively; its system does not seem to have provoked any great complaint during the period. The regular changes of rule prevented the NUGMW from doing likewise. Moreover, in several years it seems to have spent a considerable sum on political fund administration.¹⁶² As referred to above, it initially split its fund resources 80:20, with the smaller share going back to the districts. In 1926 this was modified to 70:30, and a 1930 attempt to alter this to 60:30:10, with the ten per cent going directly to branches, was defeated in favour of a 60:40 ratio, on the understanding that the union's general council could request

¹⁶² TU/GENERALB/1/A/7-16 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes 1931-1940, NUGMW Half-Yearly Financial Reports.

Figure 2.7 NUGMW Central Political Fund Reserves, 1924-1940



Source: TU/GENERALB/1/A/1-16 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes 1924-40, NUGMW Half-Yearly Financial Reports.

voluntary donations back from the districts if the central political fund ran short.¹⁶³ At the 1932 biennial congress, the ratio was altered again to 50:50, by a narrow vote of 53 to 43. Several delegates stressed the importance of local elections, and Clynes' speech from the platform against the change, based on the argument that many districts were already receiving more than they spent, was ineffectual. This clearly presented a problem: by the end of 1934, with a general election probably not too far away, the union's political fund balance had been reduced to around two-thirds of its level in 1931 even after the election. The leadership did not challenge this at the 1934 congress, but two years later the 60:40 rate was reintroduced. This required a change of rule, and was slipped into a report on the remuneration of officials, possibly with the intention of avoiding a protracted discussion which might increase opposition to the proposal. This part of the report was voted on separately, and a 74 to 33 majority backed the leadership's position.¹⁶⁴ Even so, the amount of political fund reserve continued to fall, and an attempt to revert to a 70:30 ratio in 1938 failed by ninety votes to 64, despite Dukes making a lengthy speech in favour, as well as presenting the congress with a provisional balance sheet for the year which put the position across in stark terms.¹⁶⁵ The 1941 congress, delayed from June 1940 due to the war emergency, did finally agree to this change.¹⁶⁶ Unions with more substantial reserves did not have this problem: the TGWU was regularly able to return around a third of income to its district organisations.

The records of the NUR provide an opportunity to analyse the local political funds of trade unions in more detail; its branches kept hold of half of all political fund income for their own purposes. The NUR's politics were as well-resourced at local as at national level: during the period total branch reserves never dipped below £30,000. Around a quarter of its branches' total political expenditure was on affiliations to local parties; local and municipal election expenses would have been another major item of

¹⁶³ TU/GENERALB/1/A/6 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes 1930, NUGMW Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1930, pp. 102-3. This was carried by 44 votes to 26, possibly – although this is not clear from the congress report – just after a break or on the final day of the meeting when fewer delegates were present.

¹⁶⁴ TU/GENERALB/1/A/12 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes 1936, NUGMW Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1936, pp. 73-4 and 183. Clegg, *General Union*, pp. 98-100 incorrectly ascribes this decision to 1934.

¹⁶⁵ TU/GENERALB/1/A/14 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes 1938, NUGMW Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1938, pp. 40 and 100-9.

¹⁶⁶ Clegg, *General Union*, pp. 98-100.

expenditure, although no breakdown of these figures is available.¹⁶⁷ Deep reserves allowed substantial finance to be committed to general election campaigns at the local level: total branch political expenditure was effectively double the annual average in general election years.¹⁶⁸ The MFGB's districts also retained half of political fund income; the Durham area was best resourced, with comparable reserves to the total for NUR branches nationally.¹⁶⁹ This allowed the DMA to provide, for instance, substantial financial support at general elections even in seats within the county where its own official miners' candidates were not standing.¹⁷⁰

An inspection of political fund accounts suggests that there was not always easy union money available to the Labour party in the period. Some unions, most notably the NUR, had built up a substantial political fund reserve. Others, however, struggled with their political finances, and this very likely had an impact, particularly on the number of candidates they chose to support. Certainly the AEU would not have been able to afford to support any additional candidates, and the struggle of the NUGMW's head office to win back control of a larger proportion of its political fund from the districts was hardly likely to make it amenable to increasing its expenditure in this, or any other, regard. Even NUDAW and the RCA, with high political memberships and well-managed political funds, did not have very large balances left to fall back on in this period.

A comment is required on one other aspect of the unions' spending in the period. Helen McCarthy and Pat Thane have argued convincingly that consideration of the role of voluntary associations is essential to an account of Britain's political stability, a corollary to the 'corporate bias' identified by Middlemas.¹⁷¹ Trade unions had a role to play in the funding of associational society. The amounts spent were not always large,

¹⁶⁷ An annual average 71.5 per cent of branch expenditure from 1931-1940 was on 'other' expenses.

¹⁶⁸ Annual average 1931-1940 of £11,558. 1931 expenditure = £19,362; 1935 = £18,464. Calculated from branch figures in NUR Annual Financial Reports.

¹⁶⁹ W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* (London, 1971), p. 350. The position of other coalfield unions differed significantly; average expenditure in South Wales, for instance, was much lower, whilst the problems in the coalfield in the early 1930s meant that the SWMF was unable to build up a substantial political fund balance even approximating an average year's expenditure until the end of the decade. See D.845.70-77 SWMF, Minutes, 1930-38, SWMF Annual Balance Sheets.

¹⁷⁰ For example at Bishop Auckland, where Hugh Dalton was the candidate from 1929, and Seaham, where the Labour candidates in succession were Sidney Webb, Ramsay MacDonald, and Manny Shinwell.

¹⁷¹ Helen McCarthy and Pat Thane, 'The Politics of Association in Industrial Society', *Twentieth Century British History* 22:2 (2011), 217-229; Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, voluntary associations and democratic politics in interwar Britain', *Historical Journal* 50:4 (2007), 891-912.

and not always drawn specifically from political funds, but they were often regular, demonstrating the commitment of the unions to civil society. The League of Nations Union [LNU] was one recipient of union largesse; the TGWU paid a regular subscription, supported by an occasional larger donation.¹⁷² The NUR paid regular annual subscriptions to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [NSPCC] and the National Council for Civil Liberties [NCCL], as well as making regular donations to a number of hospitals, and more explicitly political bodies such as the Land Nationalisation Society.¹⁷³ The funding of associational culture is an area which requires further research, but these examples give a flavour of the unions' civil society role in this regard.

Party finance: problems and possibilities

Labour party national finances remained in a parlous state during the 1930s. The problem of underfunding dogged the party throughout the interwar years. Beyond the difficulties associated with trade union finance, Labour had been unable to successfully develop a mass individual membership through the 1920s.¹⁷⁴ This not only restricted income from DLP affiliation fees, but had a knock-on effect on other sources of potential revenue: the party's literature regularly made a loss, with only the *Labour Woman* proving consistently profitable across the 1930s.¹⁷⁵ Income from trade union affiliation fees, therefore, were crucial to the Labour's financial survival; as figure

¹⁷² See MSS.126/TG/1186/A/10 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1932, GEC, meeting of 22 November 1932 for the subscription of £5 5s per annum; MSS.126/TG/1186/A/14 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1936, GEC meeting of 18 May 1936 for a larger donation of £500.

¹⁷³ See the minutes of quarterly executive committee meetings in MSS.127/NU/1/1/26 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1938 for a typical year's subscriptions. These included subscriptions of £10 to the NSPCC; £25 to the NCCL; £3,000 in donations to the International Solidarity Fund; £250 to the Spanish Workers' Fund; £500 to the International Transport Workers' Federation's fund for Distressed Victims of Fascism; and subscriptions of £100 each to the Mary Macarthur Holiday Home for Women Workers, the Association of Cine-technicians, and the Hospital Saturday Fund; £35 to the British Workers' Sports Association; and £25 each to the Land Nationalisation Society, the Industrial Health Education Society, the Royal Free Hospital, the Western Ophthalmic Hospital, the Royal Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital, and the Royal Eye Hospital.

¹⁷⁴ Christopher Howard, 'Expectations born to death: local Labour party expansion in the 1920s' in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History. Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge, 1983), 65-81.

¹⁷⁵ The *Labour Woman* made a profit every year apart from 1938; *Labour Magazine* in 1931-2 only, and *Labour* in 1939 only. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Reports*.

2.8 demonstrates, union affiliations typically constituted well over half of the party's annual income. General election years were the exception, yet even here, a substantial part of the additional income came from union sources.

Figure 2.8 provides details of the party's income and expenditure over the period. Labour's finances were managed by the party treasurer; Arthur Henderson held the post from 1929 until his death in 1935.¹⁷⁶ The Finance and General Purposes Committee, a sub-committee of the National Executive, was also significant. A statement presented to the 1931 annual conference at Scarborough noted the 'extremely serious' financial position, anticipating a deficit of some £8,500 by the end of 1931, with a further deficit of £10,500 for 1932; the NEC requested an increase in the affiliation fee from 3d to 4d, or else a repetition of the 2d special levy over three years.¹⁷⁷ The deficit figures may have helped stir the delegates into action; significantly, it was Arthur Hayday of the NUGMW, the serving TUC president, who moved the successful motion for the increase to 4d; he was seconded by Joseph Hallsworth, NUDAW's general secretary.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, the conference chairman was Stanley Hirst, financial secretary of the TGWU, who may have exercised an important influence in securing union support for the measure. The conference was sitting amidst widespread anticipation of a snap general election being called; in this context, it was the trade unions who came to the party's aid in its hour of need, providing both material and moral support in being seen to push the change forward. By the end of the year, however, the party was anticipating a larger deficit of £14,000 for 1932, with several former MPs defeated in October 1931 now re-joining the staff at Transport House on a full-time basis. The affiliation fee increase offset this to a degree, but the outlook remained bleak; an NEC sub-committee of three was appointed to investigate the

¹⁷⁶ He had previously served in the post from 1903-1911, when he was succeeded by Ramsay MacDonald. A change to the party's constitution in 1929 allowed the leader to sit on the National Executive *ex officio*; MacDonald therefore resigned the Treasurership in June, to be replaced by Henderson, who was unopposed. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1930, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ 'Statement on the financial position of the party', Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1931, pp. 77-80. See Labour Party NEC papers, FGPC meeting of 22 July 1931: nearly all of the money raised from the 2d special levy had already been spent, although some contributions remained outstanding. There was unease over the fact that some trade unions had been led to believe the special levy funds would provide sufficient income until October 1932; perhaps the political crisis of August 1931 was fortuitous in allowing potential conflict over this to be avoided.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Figure 2.8 Labour party central finances, 1929-1940

	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1934</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1936</u>	<u>1937</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>
<u>Central party income (£)</u>												
Affiliation fees, total	28,956	41,404	35,695	39,291	38,438	38,075	39,580	40,863	46,220	48,657	52,501	45,130
<i>from trade unions</i>	25,991	35,073	31,227	33,285	31,905	30,938	31,951	32,797	38,210	39,497	44,189	38,518
<i>from divisional parties</i>	2,006	5,623	4,000	5,393	5,850	6,436	6,891	7,274	7,199	8,384	7,554	5,840
Literature sales etc	33,002	7,367	13,710	6,558	5,689	5,444	14,518	5,730	9,770	11,358	9,114	4,377
Donations, grants, loans, funds etc	13,900		13,031	5,548	2,646	7,042	24,899	2,042	9,224	9,116	9,383	450
By-election insurance fund					4,029	4,967	3,085	5,169	5,345	5,404	5,137	4,964
Staff superannuation fund									4,544	5,047	5,444	5,547
Total income	79,546	45,205	62,681	52,247	51,836	57,631	88,531	57,237	75,730	66,484	82,122	65,808
<i>TU affil. fees as proportion of total income</i>	32.7%	77.6%	49.8%	63.7%	61.5%	53.7%	36.1%	57.3%	50.5%	59.4%	53.8%	58.5%

Figure 2.8 Labour party central finances, 1929-1940, ctd.

	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1933</u>	<u>1934</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1936</u>	<u>1937</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>
<u>Central party expenditure (£)</u>												
Organisation	15,379	14,911	15,668	14,273	12,950	10,826	10,952	13,601	13,662	14,532	15,569	15,334
By-elections					4,626	4,804	2,633	5,068	7,018	5,602	4,484	2,120
Literature etc	31,404	6,629	17,091	8,085	6,581	5,431	12,791	6,001	7,381	8,024	10,924	4,789
General office expenses	20,450	21,928	22,678	23,060	23,524	23,062	22,623	25,261	26,323	27,178	27,264	25,801
Staff superannuation									2,995	3,074	3,106	3,031
Special campaigns etc		105			20	6,401	30,254	2,686	11,531	16,319		
<u>Total expenditure</u>	78,530	53,038	61,913	51,974	52,199	56,126	84,703	57,820	73,945	82,259	72,730	53,750
<u>Balance brought forward, end/year (£)</u>	2,614	1,920	-2,613	-1,256	-394	1,721	6,676	3,238	379	236	3,948	6,512

Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1929-1940.

possibility of economies being made across Headquarters departments.¹⁷⁹ Its membership included that year's NEC chair George Lathan, who was to play an important role in Labour finance across the decade, first as the key figure on the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and later, after Henderson's death, as party treasurer. Lathan was chief assistant secretary of the RCA – effectively the union's number two official – as well as acting as president of the National Federation of Professional Workers, making a 'substantial' contribution to the expansion of his union, itself the largest NFPW affiliate. A skilled and dedicated administrator, Lathan served as MP for Sheffield Park from 1929-31, and again from 1935-42.¹⁸⁰ Henderson's absence at the World Disarmament Conference seems to have allowed Lathan considerable scope on financial matters, and under his supervision Labour's management of its financial resources was increasingly professionalised.

The economies sub-committee managed to find substantial savings of some £8,000 in 1932, and a further £6,000 in 1933, mostly in administrative costs and the streamlining of head office organisation, but this was not without an impact on the party's wider activities: a scheme which provided grants towards constituency agents' salaries was cut, with the agreement of the National Union of Labour Organisers and Election Agents.¹⁸¹ Its final report, issued in January 1933, noted that opportunities for increasing party income were limited due to the joint effects of the depression and the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act, and suggested a push to increase contracting-

¹⁷⁹ Labour Party NEC papers, FGPC memorandum dated 10 December 1931, 'Financial position 1932. General Account'. The re-employed staff included both Arthur and Will Henderson, Arthur Greenwood, and Dr. Marion Phillips.

¹⁸⁰ David E. Martin, 'Lathan, George (1875-1942)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IX, pp. 168-170. Lathan's brother, Charles Latham – who changed his surname to avoid confusion – served as chair of the London County Council's finance committee under Herbert Morrison from 1934, earning a reputation as London's 'iron chancellor'; he succeeded Morrison as council leader in 1940. Both brothers' careers demonstrated 'professionalism and efficiency rather than keen partisanship'; David Howell, 'Latham, Charles, first Baron Latham (1888–1970)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edition, May 2013 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.lib.exeter.ac.uk/view/article/34416>, accessed 27 August 2017]. Lathan was joined on the economies sub-committee by Robert Dennison of BISAKTA and T. E. Williams of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society. When Dennison left the NEC following the 1932 party conference, he was replaced on the sub-committee by his BISAKTA successor, James Walker.

¹⁸¹ Labour Party NEC papers, 'Final Report of the Economy Committee', presented to NEC meeting of 18 January 1933. For the revised agents' salary scheme, see Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, pp. 32-33. These grants were cut from fifteen to ten per cent of an agent's salary in 1932 and 1933, then 7.5 per cent in 1934 and 1935. See also Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1934, p. 25.

in membership, something Lathan had already been pursuing.¹⁸² It also criticised the practice of drawing on the reserves held in special funds to meet ordinary expenditure; this was possibly a veiled criticism of Henderson, who had been in favour of using the general election fund to meet the 1931-32 deficit.¹⁸³ It is possible to discern two conflicting approaches to party finance here. Aiming at putting the party on a sound financial basis for the longer term, Lathan sought to ensure the party lived within its means, even if this meant sacrificing certain activities in the interim. The approach taken by the FGPC under his influence was to tackle the problem of underfunding at the root by seeking to secure a higher proportion of political levy-payers, particularly in those unions which did not seem to be pulling their weight. Henderson's method, by contrast, relied more heavily on his personal prestige within the movement to secure funds at short notice. At the NEC's January 1933 meeting, for example, 'referring to the pressing need for funds to carry the party over the next few months', he made a personal appeal to those NEC members 'representing the larger unions to use their influence' to secure 1933 affiliation fees as soon as possible.¹⁸⁴ This did not preclude dipping into special funds when deemed necessary. Arguably this was an approach borne of having to deal with frequent, acute financial crisis, and while it may have yielded results when the appeal came from a figure of Henderson's stature in the labour movement, it was unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term. It also tended towards over-reliance on a few big unions to stump up the money. Whilst this may have been difficult to avoid, given the weakness of many political funds, Lathan's approach, drawing on his work over many years in developing the RCA's membership, sought to involve smaller unions in building up their political membership to provide a more secure basis for party finance. This latter approach was increasingly pursued by the party during the 1930s, although its success was limited until the war years. In the meantime, financial problems continued; Lathan and Hirst were forced to secure 'temporary financial accommodation' from the manager of the Co-operative Wholesale Society bank in 1938 until the following year's affiliation fees began to accrue.¹⁸⁵ A further report on Labour's financial position in March 1939 anticipated having to

¹⁸² Labour Party NEC papers, FGPC meeting of 17 March 1932 for decision to contact unions with low contracting-in rates.

¹⁸³ As reported by Glenvil Hall, Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of FGPC meeting of 10 December 1931.

¹⁸⁴ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 18 January 1933.

¹⁸⁵ Labour Party NEC papers, note to minutes of NEC meeting of 16 December 1938.

arrange a further overdraft to keep paying the party's staff during the last months of the year.¹⁸⁶ This was avoided however: the outbreak of war produced a fresh wave of union donations of over £8,500, whilst the 1940 party conference agreed to a further affiliation fee increase to 5d.¹⁸⁷

Besides financial appeals for general election campaigns, several initiatives were instigated during the period in an attempt to increase income, often with specific campaigns in mind.¹⁸⁸ A 'Victory for Socialism' scheme was launched with much fanfare at the 1933 party conference, with the ambitious goal of raising £50,000 before the next election to fund a literature and platform campaign as part of a 'supreme effort to win *Power*'; large though the sum might be, 'it is only a portion of what will be spent by our opponents in their determination to withstand Labour's attack'.¹⁸⁹ The scheme would only be pursued if an initial £5,000 could be found, but the response was disappointing: by the end of 1934, only £8,641 had been raised, with several larger unions including the MFGB declining to contribute owing to their strained political funds.¹⁹⁰ Some of the total came from contributions from individuals, including J. S. Elias of Odhams' Press, publisher of the *Daily Herald*, who gave £1,000 towards literature, and the NEC was able to report to the 1935 conference that, with the scheme now wrapped up, 'an extensive and sustained campaign' had been carried through, although on a more limited scale than initially envisaged.¹⁹¹ Some of the money was used to cover deficits elsewhere; in 1936 the party's auditors criticised such special

¹⁸⁶ Labour Party NEC papers, report on 'Financial Position of the Party', March 1939.

¹⁸⁷ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1940, pp.46 and 155. A total of £8,862 was donated to a general appeal in the autumn of 1939; all but £310 of this came from trade unions. The largest donors were the MFGB (£5,000), NUDAW (£1,000), the NUR (£1,000), NATSOPA (£500), and UTFWA (£250).

¹⁸⁸ General election finance is discussed below.

¹⁸⁹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, pp 203-204; 290-291. Italics in original. It was anticipated that £30,000 of this total would be raised by 'the national and general movement', and the remainder through 35s/month contributions from each DLP towards party literature.

¹⁹⁰ A sum of £5,000 in 'cash and promises' was passed by the end of March 1934; the NEC had put the campaign on hold earlier that month when only £3,500 had been raised. Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meetings of 1 March 1934 and 27 March 1934. The largest trade union contributions came from the NUR (£500), NUDAW (£500), the AEU (£500), the RCA (£300), NATSOPA and the ASW (£250 each): memorandum on 'Victory for Socialism' campaign appended to NEC minutes for 27 March 1934. The MFGB, BISAFTA, and TGWU all failed to contribute: in the latter case, the simultaneous dispute over the Clay Cross by-election was a factor. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1935, pp. 74-75.

¹⁹¹ For Elias, Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 1 March 1934; Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1935, p. 53.

appeals as 'unsound finance'.¹⁹² However, the national campaign launched in 1937 to publicise *Labour's Immediate Programme* enjoyed considerably more success in terms of both fundraising and impact. A special campaign committee, chaired by Herbert Morrison, organised a series of campaign weeks through 1937 and 1938, accompanied by innovative print propaganda, most notably the *Your Britain* series of pamphlets, which used colour photography to present Labour's policies to the electorate, and helped break party records for literature sales.¹⁹³ This print propaganda, 'more strikingly modern in its presentation than that of its competitors', demonstrated the party's 'willingness to experiment with and invest in new methods of presentation and packaging'.¹⁹⁴ It also underlined what could be achieved through a carefully organised, purposeful, and well-resourced campaign. Although literature sales achieved significant income, particularly as the campaign progressed, the bulk of the donations which made the campaign possible came from the unions: the NUR gave £5,000, the Durham Miners' Association £5,000, and the RCA over £1,000.¹⁹⁵ Not only were union political funds more buoyant than they had been in 1933-35, allowing for greater generosity, but the innovative, focused and professional nature of the campaign, spearheaded by Morrison's committee, was a far more promising prospect than the vaguer 'Victory for Socialism', which likely made parting with union funds easier.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of FGPC meeting of 21 February 1935; Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1935, pp. 55-56.

¹⁹³ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1937, pp. 21-24; *Annual Conference Report* 1939, pp. 65-66. Laura Beers, *Your Britain. Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2010), pp. 158-164. The four *Your Britain* pamphlets sold a combined total of 1,764,000 copies. *Annual Conference Report* 1937, p. 85.

¹⁹⁴ Beers, *Your Britain. Media and the Making of the Labour Party*, p. 158.

¹⁹⁵ For a full list of contributors see Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1939, p. 66. The NUGMW gave £505, and the AEU and NUDAW £500 each. The TGWU, again, did not contribute. In 1937, £8,431 was raised through donations, with £6,927 of that total coming from trade unions; literature sales totalled £3,170. In 1938 the campaign fund received £9,065 in donations including £6,962 from trade union sources; literature sales amounted for £4,427 in income. *Annual Conference Report* 1939, pp. 123, 129.

¹⁹⁶ An associated agricultural campaign, organised by a committee chaired by Christopher Addison, was cut back significantly during 1939 as the party tried to save money. As Clare Griffiths notes, rural campaigns were 'always an add-on to general party activity', and as such easily sacrificed: some £1,750 of £3,050 made in savings came from the agricultural campaign fund. Clare V. J. Griffiths *Labour and the Countryside. The Politics of Rural Britain, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2007), p. 124, and Labour Party NEC papers, report on 'Financial Position of the Party', March 1939. Donations to the fund, including several from unions, continued: see Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1939, pp. 24 and 46.

By-elections provided another, less predictable call on party funds, and could cause difficulties when ordinary income was already stretched. This might result in a by-election not being fought, or an under-resourced campaign. A voluntary levy on CLPs to meet by-election expenditure had been established following the 1924 election, but the large number of by-elections during 1930-31 prompted the NEC to recommend the extension of a by-election insurance fund on a compulsory basis to all affiliated organisations.¹⁹⁷ A draft scheme was prepared for the 1931 Scarborough conference, but the pressures of time in the context of the imminent general election meant the issue was not discussed until the following year at Leicester, when the conference agreed to adopt the less generous of two proposals, which would raise £442 for each by-election from DLPs and affiliated unions, with levy rates varying depending upon membership size.¹⁹⁸ Payment to the fund was made a 'definite part of the basis of affiliation to the Party' in 1934, and the following year's conference decided to replace the inefficient system of collection at every by-election with a single annual payment as well as introducing more flexible levy rates.¹⁹⁹ This allowed by-elections to be fought 'with more adequate funds and organisation than formerly', and although the fund was generally in debit until 1939, continued collection through the war years, with expenditure reduced due the electoral truce, ensured it became a 'notable source of profit', with assets of over £25,000 by 1945.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ There were 23 by-elections between September 1930 and August 1931, thirteen of which took place in constituencies held by Labour. Labour candidates fought in twenty of these contests. By contrast there had been an average of twelve by-elections in each of the last six years (1924-25: 7; 1925-26: 13; 1926-27: 12; 1927-28: 18; 1928-29: 14; 1929-30: 8). Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1931, p. 16.

¹⁹⁸ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1931, pp. 39-41; *Annual Conference Report* 1932, pp. 52-54 and 202. The more generous and expensive scheme would have furnished £590 for each by-election, assuming all DLPs and affiliated organisations contributed. Under this proposal, the NEC was prepared to accept responsibility for expenses up to £500; the figure was £375 in the scheme adopted. This lower figure provided a cushion against possible non-contributions whilst allowing a build-up of reserves, but may also imply the NEC had persistent deficits in other funds in mind. The proposal noted that several unions had 'been very much embarrassed' by having to meet the expenses of several by-elections in the same year, whilst the risk of unexpected expenditure could easily put others into serious difficulty; the scheme was therefore 'a useful form of insurance and a good investment'. The scale adopted would see some £75 of the £442 total coming from the eight largest affiliated unions, whilst £206 would come from DLPs. *Annual Conference Report* 1932, p. 53.

¹⁹⁹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1934, pp. 43, 191; *Annual Conference Report* 1935, pp. 49-53, 219-220. The new levy scales would apply from January 1936; the maximum for each contest was reduced from £375 to £350. The largest organisations would now contribute £150 annually, and DLPs £5 each.

²⁰⁰ McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938*, p. 53; Thorpe, *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain*, p. 259: Thorpe suggests that it 'seems improbable that this was not a consideration in Labour managers' firm ongoing commitment to the truce'.

Another departure towards more regularised finance and professional party organisation was the establishment of a superannuation scheme for party staff. The necessity for such a scheme, as well as a retiring age for party staff, was agreed to at the 1933 Hastings conference; as one delegate argued, 'when Labour is demanding that every man should have a pension when he has reached a retiring age, we must set the pace and ourselves adopt such a scheme'.²⁰¹ The 'extreme financial stringency' of recent years had until now precluded such a development. After consultations with the National Union of Labour Organisers and Election Agents, a scheme limited to 'direct and permanent members' of staff was eventually presented to the 1936 Edinburgh conference: it excluded constituency agents on the grounds of administrative and financial difficulty, whilst conceding the principle that they too should be covered. The scheme would be financed by an increase of ½ d in the affiliation fee to 4 ½ d per member annually.²⁰² Only Lathan, moving the proposed scheme, and Stafford Cripps spoke in favour, but staff superannuation met with little significant opposition, with only two trade union delegates speaking against. William Holmes of the National Union of Agricultural Workers complained of 'the hardship upon his own and similar Trade Unions' that an affiliation fee increase would involve, whilst an AEU delegate, A. E. Eyton, seconded the reference back of the scheme. The reference back was defeated on a card vote by 1,819,000 to 399,000; the voting figures implied that alongside the AEU and NUAW, possibly one other large union, most likely the NUGMW given its political fund difficulties, voted against.²⁰³ On the whole, unions were prepared to contribute in order to secure superannuation for party

²⁰¹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, p. 234. The speaker was Major J. Bellerby of Cambridge DLP; the motion was formally seconded and approved without debate.

²⁰² Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1936, pp. 56-59. The NULOEA produced an initial proposal drafted by Arthur W. Petch, financial secretary of NUDAW and 'a high authority on superannuation'. Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of meeting of the Adjustments Board, 1 August 1935 and attached 'Memorandum in Explanation of Proposed Superannuation Scheme Submitted by the Agents' Union to the Adjustments Board on 1 August 1935 together with Tables relating to Financial Proposals and the Effect of various modifications to the Scheme'. For Petch, see John B. Smethurst, 'Petch, Arthur William (1886-1935)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IV, pp. 136-137.

²⁰³ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1936, p. 216. Speakers from Edinburgh Central and Deptford DLPs also opposed the scheme: the membership of these organisations, in addition to the AEU and NUAW total 93,805, so another 305,000 votes against came from somewhere. The 242,000 vote of NUGMW seems a likely candidate, in light of the discussions above, with the remainder coming from DLPs and smaller unions. The TUC already operated a superannuation scheme for its staff; the party scheme was partly based on this. Labour Party NEC papers, memorandum by W. G. Hall, 'The Labour Party. Staff Superannuation', dated April 1936. The NUAW was having difficulties with its political fund obligations: see Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of FGPC meeting, 21 February 1936, for a NUAW complaint about the hardship imposed by by-election insurance fund payments.

staff, and the professionalisation of party work that this implied. This was echoed in the decision to establish a similar scheme for party agents. A further increase in the affiliation fee to provide the initial funding for the scheme was narrowly defeated at the 1939 conference: having been presented by Lathan and backed by Joseph Hallsworth of NUDAW, the reference back, moved by the MFGB's Ebby Edwards was carried by 395,000 votes.²⁰⁴ In the changed context of May 1940, however, the scheme and the increased affiliation fees needed to establish it were approved by a large majority. Hallsworth again contributed to discussion, very likely in favour. The voting figures of 2,163,000 to 425,000 suggest that MFGB opposition had dissipated: there was no Mineworkers' speaker in the debate, but two – Harold Clay of the TGWU and Charles Dukes of the NUGMW – from the general unions, suggesting that one of the two organisations cast its vote against.²⁰⁵ Trade union support ensured that this significant step in the professionalisation of Labour's agents, bringing the party into line with earlier developments in the Conservative and Liberal parties, took place.²⁰⁶

As Andrew Thorpe has demonstrated, the war had a transformative effect on Labour party finances. In sharp contrast to the 'very gloomy' outlook of 1939, by 1945 the party's national finances had 'never been healthier'. Improving party finances, bolstered by good party-union relations, helped fund major campaigns, overhaul staffing, and permit developments in regional organisation precluded by the party's financial position before 1939.²⁰⁷ Despite the limitations of party finance in the 1930s, the developments outlined here did allow for effective campaigning and eye-catching initiatives like *Your Britain*, the ongoing professionalisation of Labour's organisation,

²⁰⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1939, p. 290. The NUR's John Marchbank also took part in the debate, although it is unclear from the brief summary in the report as to his position, although usually NUR money was forthcoming. Certainly some larger unions must have been opposed: the reference back was carried by 1,453,000 to 1,058,000 on a card vote. For the proposals see pp. 99-101.

²⁰⁵ That this was the NUGMW seems a strong possibility, despite the recovery in its political finances being underway by this point. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1939, pp. 47 and 154-155. The AEU may also have been in the minority.

²⁰⁶ For the process of professionalisation in the older parties, see Kathryn Rix, *Parties, Agents and Electoral Culture in England, 1880-1910* (Woodbridge, 2016), pp. 48-122.

²⁰⁷ Thorpe, *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain*, pp. 256-268. The South Wales Regional Council of Labour had been set up in 1937 in response to Communist activity in the coalfield; the Lancashire and Cheshire Regional Council of Labour followed in 1938; other regions would have to wait until 1942 or later, pp. 259-260. See Cliff Prothero, *Recount* (Ormskirk, 1982), pp. 53-54 for developments in South Wales.

and helped establish the basis for later prosperity: all of this was achieved through the active financial support of the trade unions.

Co-operative politics and finance

Beyond the unions, the Co-operative movement also had a role to play in Labour politics and finance. Retail co-operative societies were important institutions in working-class communities across Britain, offering members a huge variety of goods and services; it was possible to 'live within the Co-op'.²⁰⁸ The movement 'attempted to mobilise support around issues relating to consumption rather than production', offering co-operation as an alternative to capitalism through democratic control and the dividend, a cash return of a society's profits to members on an annual or quarterly basis.²⁰⁹ Total co-operative membership stood at 6.5 million in 1,118 societies in 1931, rising to 8.7 million in 1,065 societies by 1940, exceeding trade union membership by some way, yet, as Nicole Robertson has argued, there were 'a multitude of meanings attached to such membership'.²¹⁰ Some were activists committed to the ideal of the 'Co-operative Commonwealth', others purely 'dividend hunters', whilst many stood somewhere in between. This complexity was replicated in co-operative attitudes to politics: political action had been a topic of debate within the movement for some

²⁰⁸ Lawrence Black and Nicole Robertson, 'Taking stock: an introduction' in Black and Nicole Robertson (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009), p. 4.

²⁰⁹ Nicole Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960. Minding their Own Business* (Abingdon, 2010), p. 4. Robertson's monograph represents a significant contribution to a growing body of work on co-operation in Britain. See in particular the collection by Lawrence Black and Nicole Robertson (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009) for co-operative influences on the culture of consumerism; see also Peter Gurney, 'Co-operation and the 'new consumerism' in interwar England', *Business History* 54:6 (2012), 905-924. For the commercial aspect, see John F. Wilson, Anthony Webster, and Rachael Vorberg-Rugh, *Building Co-operation. A Business History of the Co-operative Group, 1863-2013* (Oxford, 2013) and Johnston Birchall, *Co-op: the People's Business* (Manchester and New York, 1994). For co-operative culture, Peter Gurney, *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester, 1996) and Peter Gurney, 'The Curse of the Co-ops': Co-operation, the Mass Press and the Market in Interwar Britain', *English Historical Review* 130:547 (2015), 1479-1512. For the role of women in the movement see, Gillian Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London, 1998) and Jean Gaffin, and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Women's Co-operative Guild* (Manchester, 1983). Anthony Webster, Linda Shaw, and Rachael Vorberg-Rugh (eds.), *Mainstreaming co-operation. An alternative for the twenty-first century?* (Manchester, 2016) includes a number of interesting essays; useful older works include G. D. H. Cole, *A Century of Co-operation* (London, 1944) and A. M. Carr-Saunders, P. Sargent Florence, and Robert Peers, *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain. An Examination of the Co-operative Movement*, revised edition (London, 1942 [original 1938]).

²¹⁰ Cole, *A Century of Co-operation*, pp. 371-2; Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960*, p. 214.

decades before the 1917 decision of the Co-operative Congress to establish the National Co-operative Representation Committee, which in 1919 became the Co-operative Party. The party was to be a department of the Co-operative Union, the federal body to which all co-operative societies affiliated.²¹¹ Debate focused on the new party's relationship with Labour: whilst the two had much in common in terms of overlapping membership and a shared opposition to capitalism, many co-operators were committed to maintaining their independence: even by 1935, only around 500 co-operative societies out of over 1,000 had affiliated to the Co-operative Party.²¹² Whilst the first Co-operative MP, A. E. Waterson, elected for Kettering (Northants.) in 1918, immediately took the Labour whip in Parliament, and local agreements between DLPs and Co-operative political councils were set up in some constituencies, formal alliance with Labour was narrowly rejected by the 1921 Co-operative Congress.²¹³ The Cheltenham Agreement of 1927 went some way towards formalising relations between the two parties, allowing for local co-operative affiliation to DLPs and establishing a national joint committee of the Labour NEC and Co-operative Party executive.²¹⁴ Nationally, the Co-operative Party did not affiliate to Labour, although some individual co-operative societies did do so, most notably the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society [RACS]. The question of Labour affiliation remained divisive into the

²¹¹ See Rachael Vorberg-Rugh and Angela Whitecross, 'The Co-operative Party: an Alternative Vision of Social Ownership' in P. Ackers, and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 57-92; Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960*, pp. 155-158 for a summary. Most writers on the subject have highlighted grievances at the movement's treatment by the wartime coalition as a critical factor in this decision; Sidney Pollard's account emphasises instead an ideological conversion to political action over a longer period. For this debate, see Sidney Pollard, 'The Foundation of the Co-operative Party' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923* (London, 1971), pp. 185-210; Tony Adams, 'The Formation of the Co-operative Party Reconsidered', *International Review of Social History* 32:1 (1987), 48-68; Sidney Pollard, 'The Co-operative Party—Reflections on a Re-consideration', *International Review of Social History* 32:2 (1987), 168-73; Tony Adams, 'Co-operators and Politics – a rejoinder', *International Review of Social History* 32:2 (1987), 174-179.

²¹² Dean E. McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938* (London, 1938), pp. 117-118. These 502 societies represented 66 per cent of total co-operative membership. For a broader discussion, see Nicole Robertson, 'A Union of Forces Marching in the Same Direction'? The Relationship between the Co-operative and Labour Parties, 1918-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 213-230.

²¹³ Thomas F. Carbery, *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party* (Manchester, 1969), pp. 26-28. As Carbery and Keith Gildart both note, Waterson was 'primarily a Labour party man': he had been leader of the Labour group on Derby Council, and was secretary of the NUR Midland District Council. Keith Gildart, 'Waterson, Alfred Edward (1880-1964)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XII, pp. 292-297; Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960*, p. 168.

²¹⁴ The agreement was only ratified narrowly by the Co-operative Congress, by 1,960 votes to 1,843, demonstrating continuing divisions over political action. Carbery, *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party*, p. 32.

1930s, whilst, as Robertson demonstrates, the position could vary considerably at local level.²¹⁵ The basis of the Co-operative party, at local level in the retail co-operative societies and at the national level under the auspices of the Co-operative Union, meant that it was typically well-funded: a ½ d per year affiliation fee was paid on behalf of some 3.5 million members of societies which affiliated to the Co-operative Party in 1931, with this figure rising to 5.3 million by 1939.²¹⁶ In contrast to Labour's 'modest resources', the Co-operative Party was 'plentifully supplied with funds, which it spends freely on essentials and otherwise'; it had built up a reserve of some £15,000 by 1935.²¹⁷ The tensions which were continue to mark relations between the two parties in the 1930s were in part the result of 'apparent Co-operative affluence in a world of Labour penury'; Labour had been forced to deny that the Cheltenham Agreement did not represent a grab for co-operative resources.²¹⁸ The relative richness of resources available for Co-operative politics would have an impact on Labour electoral finance and candidatures in the 1930s, as will be seen below.

Unions and general election finance

As noted earlier, union political fund expenditure was heaviest in general election years. Unions would often make a substantial grant to the Labour party nationally: the scale of such grants would vary as resources allowed. In 1931, large grants were made by the NUGMW (£5,000), NUR (£2,000) and NUDAW (£1,000). The size of the NUGMW grant is notable: arguably it was influenced by a sense of the union being at the centre of the fight, with two of its most prominent figures and candidates, J. R. Clynes and Arthur Hayday, being Labour deputy leader and TUC President respectively. The biggest grants in 1935 were made by the NUR (£4,000), NUGMW

²¹⁵ Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960*, pp. 167-178; Nicole Robertson, 'The Political Dividend: Co-operative Parties in the Midlands, 1917-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 147-169 for the position in Birmingham, Nottingham, and Kettering.

²¹⁶ McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938*, p. 117; Nicole Robertson, 'The Political Dividend: Co-operative Parties in the Midlands, 1917-39', p. 162.

²¹⁷ McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938*, p. 120. The Co-operative Union provided the Party with around £6,000 annually; large grants also came from the national Co-operative Wholesale Society and the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society; *ibid*, pp. 119-120.

²¹⁸ Carbery, *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party*, p. 41; G. W. Rhodes, *Co-operative – Labour Relations 1900-1962* (Loughborough, 1962), p. 34.

(£2,500) and TGWU (£2,000).²¹⁹ The MFGB did not make election grants to the party nationally in 1931 or 1935: it seems to have preferred to focus resources on constituency expenditure amongst its district unions, although the crisis in Federation leadership in the autumn of 1931, with the illness and death of Arthur Cook and Thomas Richards, and the 1935 wage campaign which coincided with the general election may also have been influential.

The bulk of union general election expenditure went towards supporting sponsored candidates. Figure 2.9 illustrates the contrast between Labour candidates with different sponsoring bodies. In each general election in the period considered here, candidates sponsored by trade unions were able, on average, to substantially outspend their DLP-sponsored colleagues; as such their average expenditure was also higher than the overall Labour average. All of these figures fell in 1931; only the trade union average increased slightly in 1935, due to fewer union candidates being put forward. The best-resourced Labour candidates were those sponsored by the Co-operative Party. On the basis of their comparative success rates, it could certainly be argued that the Co-operative Party were not getting much of a return on their investment, not least in comparison with the unions.²²⁰ Indeed, the amount of money spent by the Co-operative Party on elections seems to have been very great when compared to its influence. The unions would not have been able to spend so liberally on elections in an era of strained political funds, particularly when expectation of success was a factor in deciding to sponsor candidates in the first place, as argued in the following chapter.

²¹⁹ For 1931: TU/GENERALB/1/A/7 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1931, Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheet, July-December 1931; MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931, Report and Financial Statements for 1931; NUDAW, Annual Report 1931; neither the NEC papers of the Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports* detail donations to the 1931 general election appeal, but for 1935 see Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1936, p. 54. The RCA gave £750 and the AEU £250. NUDAW was unable to make a national grant owing to its other commitments; see NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1935, minutes of meeting of 10 November 1935. The TGWU and AEU do not seem to have made national grants in 1931: MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, minutes of special meeting of Finance and Emergency Committee 6 October 1931 makes no mention of a national grant: other financial obligations seem to have been the reason.

²²⁰ See figures 3.1 and 3.2 in chapter 3.

Figure 2.9 General election expenditure by Labour candidates, 1929-35, by sponsor

Body sponsoring candidates	Expenditure (£)	No. of candidates	Average expenditure per candidate (£)
DLPs (1929)	131,381	364	361
Trade unions (1929)	75,544	139	543
Co-operative Party (1929)	7,032	12	586
ILP (1929)	16,802	54	311
All Labour candidates, 1929	230,758	569	406
DLPs (1931)	96,525	315	306
Trade unions (1931)	69,350	138	503
Co-operative Party (1931)	8,431	15	562
ILP (1931)	6,638	23	289
All Labour candidates, 1931	180,943	491	369
DLPs (1935)	119,022	398	299
Trade unions (1935)	65,474	129	508
Co-operative Party (1935)	11,503	21	548
SSP (1935)	556	4	139
All Labour candidates, 1935	196,554	552	356

Source: Calculated from *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of May, 1929*, PP. (114), 1929-30; *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of October, 1931*, PP. (109), 1931-32; *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of November, 1935*, PP. (150), 1935-36.

Election expenses were subject to a legal maximum, which varied in accordance with the number of electors in a constituency. That Labour candidates sometimes exceeded it, as demonstrated below, requires some explanation. In cases where the candidate was defeated, no problem arose, but matters were more complex if they were elected. An election petition had been pursued against J. J. H. Moses, the successful Labour candidate for Plymouth Drake, in 1929 over allegations of bribery and illegal expenditure. With representation from Stafford Cripps, Moses was cleared of all charges and awarded damages of some £3,000; this was to be the last such petition until 1955.²²¹ It is likely that the example of Moses' vindication was sufficient to dissuade other defeated opponents from instigating a petition.²²² Moreover, in the context of large National government majorities, pursuing petitions against Labour MPs might have appeared unduly vindictive. In cases where Labour's opponents overspent and won, the issue seems clearer cut: the cost of a challenge was beyond constituency parties' financial resources, particularly if they proved unsuccessful and Moses' damages were representative. For the same reason, support from the NEC was unlikely to be forthcoming; this was compounded by the delay in the publication of returns of expenses, which usually came in the year following an election.

The NUR's candidates, as might be expected given the position of its political fund, were generally the best-financed. In 1931, the NUR was responsible for almost all of its ten candidates' election expenditure. Only in the case of James Wilson, being the only NUR candidate standing in a double member borough at Oldham, did the union's contribution amount to less than 98 per cent of the total spent. It spent an average of £842 per candidate, although in several cases this was substantially exceeded, most notably in William Dobbie's campaign at Stalybridge and Hyde (Cheshire), where, out of a total expenditure of £1,323, Dobbie only had to find £4 elsewhere. In two cases, the union's expenditure actually exceeded the legal maximum for election expenses, at Ashton-under-Lyne (Lancashire), where J. W. Gordon was the candidate, and at

²²¹ Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps. A Biography* (London, 1949), p. 80; Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London, 1957), p. 109; Chris Bryant, *Stafford Cripps. The First Modern Chancellor* (London, 1997), p. 80-82.

²²² George Ward, the NUR's candidate for Plymouth Sutton, overspent in 1935, but was not challenged; although he did not win the seat, the Moses case may have been in the minds of Plymouth Conservatives. In any case their own successful candidate, Nancy Astor, had also spent more than the legal maximum. *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of November, 1935*, PP. (150), 1935-36.

Rossendale (Lancashire), where the NUR was represented by Arthur Law. Gordon had been defeated in a by-election at Ashton earlier in the year on the death of the sitting NUR MP, Albert Bellamy. The intervention of a New Party candidate, and Catholic opposition to his support for the Labour government's education policy probably contributed to Gordon's defeat on that occasion,²²³ and the large expenditure seems to reflect the union's determination to win the seat back. Such heavy expenditure, however, was far from effective: no NUR candidate was successful.²²⁴ Once again, the NUR spent on average the most per candidate, £892, £50 higher than in 1931, and it continued to be responsible for the bulk of total expenses, still over 95 per cent in single seat constituencies. As in 1931, it spent more than the legal maximum in two seats: at Manchester Ardwick, where Joseph Henderson was the Railwaymen's candidate (116 per cent of the legal maximum), and at Plymouth Sutton, where the NUR's George Ward was able to outspend his Conservative opponent Nancy Astor. Both received £1,006 from the union, in Ward's case his entire expenditure, possibly suggesting that the NUR was particularly targeting the seat. With these exceptions, expenditure as a proportion of the legal maximum varied between 56.6 per cent (Wilson at Gateshead) and 99.7 per cent (Barstow at Barrow-in-Furness). The 'cheapest' NUR seat was Leeds South, where Harry Charleton spent £539, of which the union supplied £527.²²⁵ The NUDAW was also responsible for the bulk of its four candidates' expenditure in 1931, over 95 per cent in all cases apart from that of Ellen Wilkinson at Middlesbrough East, who was able, probably due to her political prominence relative to the other NUDAW candidates, to find nearly £200 of her total expenditure of £668 from other sources. Only Wilkinson's expenses approached the legal maximum, in her case £752. The union spent an average of £608 per candidate, although Wilkinson and Wilson, contesting Jarrow, were paid £486 each. This figure is inflated by the £774 spent by the NUDAW's Political General Secretary W. A. Robinson at Shipley (West Yorkshire): Robinson had unsuccessfully fought a by-election in the constituency in 1930, and although his general election

²²³ MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931, Report and Financial Statements for 1931.

²²⁴ Calculated from: MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931, Report and Financial Statements for 1931; *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of October, 1931*, PP. (109), 1931-32.

²²⁵ Calculated from: MSS.127/NU/1/1/23 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1935, Report and Financial Statements for 1935; *Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of November, 1935*, PP (150), 1935-36.

expenditure was slightly short of the £798 the NUDAW contributed on that occasion, again, this relatively high expenditure is probably indicative of a desire to win back what had been a union seat until the death of the previous MP, William Mackinder.²²⁶ The NUDAW again came closest to the NUR in terms of average expenditure per candidate with £710, although Wilfrid Burke's campaign at Burnley (£898) and Robinson, now fighting St. Helen's (£887) exceeded this significantly. Over 90 per cent of all its seven candidates' expenditure was met by the union, including Wilkinson, now fighting Jarrow (Durham). Only in the case of Burke did total expenditure exceed two-thirds of the legal maximum.²²⁷

The NUGMW paid, on average, the lowest election expenses in 1931 of the unions considered here. Nowhere did it pay more than 60 per cent of the legal maximum, which might initially make its opposition to the implementation of the Hastings Agreement, discussed later, appear incongruous given that it overspent the limits imposed by the Agreement only marginally in four of the eleven seats it contested in 1931. It was, however, responsible for most of its candidates' total expenses. All £600 spent by its President J. R. Clynes at Manchester Platting came from the union, as did all but £2 of the £505 spent by Walter Windsor at Nottingham East. The General Secretary, Will Thorne, only had to find £1 of his expenses elsewhere, although he was unopposed at West Ham Plaistow. The NUGMW paid less than half of the total expenses at Preston, although this was a double member borough in which Edward Porter was the union's candidate. There is an interesting comparison here with the NUR's sponsorship in double member constituencies: the Railwaymen paid 53 per cent of the total expenses for both candidates, the General and Municipal Workers just 45 per cent. Only Jack Jones at West Ham Silvertown relied on a sizeable proportion of non-NUGMW expenditure, and his campaign was the cheapest of all of the union's official candidates, costing £290 in total, of which the union contributed £215. Jones, the only NUGMW candidate to fight and win in 1931, was returned with a majority of nearly 15,000, suggesting that in the right constituency a relatively small expenditure could go a long way.²²⁸ In 1935, the average amount spent on each candidate by the

²²⁶ Calculated from NUDAW Annual Reports, 1930 and 1931; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1931-2 (109).

²²⁷ Calculated from NUDAW Annual Report 1935; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1935-6 (150).

²²⁸ Calculated from TU/GENERALB/1/A/7 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1931, Half-Yearly Financial Reports 1931; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1931-2 (109).

NUMGW rose to £498, but remained lower than the other unions considered here with some MFGB exceptions. Six of its candidates were elected in 1935. Generally the union paid over 90 per cent of its candidates' total expenses, the exceptions being Thorne, Jones, Windsor – now fighting Hull Central – and O. G. Willey at Birmingham West, although the union still met more than three-quarters of the expenditure in each case. On this occasion Thorne did face an opponent whom he was able to narrowly outspend and heavily defeat. Most expenditure reached around half of the legal maximum, although Clynes, Hayday (Nottingham West) and Porter (Warrington, Lancashire) spent slightly more, although nothing close to the maximum itself.²²⁹

The AEU gave grants in blocks to each of its three official candidates in 1931, initially of £250 each, followed by a second payment of £200 to David Adams at Barrow-in-Furness (Lancashire), £250 to Robert Young at Newton-le-Willows (Lancashire), and £300 to J. E. Mills at Dartford (Kent); an average of £500 to each candidate. This accounted for 96 per cent of Young's expenses, but only 71 per cent of Adams' and just 55 per cent of Mills'. This probably reflects the relative strength of the constituency party: Dartford DLP paid affiliation fees for 1903 members in 1931, compared with just 323 Barrow DLP members. The variation between proportions of the total expenditure paid by the union is probably also a reflection of the AEU's system of up-front grants, whereas other unions worked out such expenses after the campaign.²³⁰ Unfortunately the union's records do not show election expenditure by constituency for 1935, but Young, this time successful, was able to spend over £200 more than in 1931.

The RCA did not itemise political expenditure, but the following figures have been calculated based on the union paying 90 per cent of its candidates' expenses. This policy cannot be confirmed in the union's own accounts, but is mentioned as being the union's rate of contributions to election expenses in a document circulated at the Hastings Agreement discussions, which were chaired by the RCA's George Lathan. Assuming the union did meet its full obligations, then the average expended on RCA candidature in 1931 would be £597, and excepting double member seats, the highest

²²⁹ Calculated from TU/GENERALB/1/A/11 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1935, Half-Yearly Financial Reports 1935; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1935-6 (150).

²³⁰ Calculated from MSS.259/AEU/4/1/10 AEU, Reports and Proceedings, 1931, Annual Financial Report 1931; MSS.259/AEU/1/1/44-45 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1931 and Oct.-Dec. 1931, September and October meetings; Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1931; Returns of Election Expenses PP 1931-2 (109).

expenditure by the union would have been in Hackney Central, where Fred Watkins spent a total of £761 (estimated RCA contribution £685), and Bristol South, where the General Secretary A. G. Walkden was the candidate, spending a total of £765 (RCA estimate £689). In these instances, as well as in St. Pancras South East where H. G. Romeril was the union's candidate, expenditure just exceeded 60 per cent of the legal maximum; for most RCA candidates, only around a third of the legal maximum was spent.²³¹ In 1935, the RCA had increased its number of candidatures to ten, and, allowing for the same 90 per cent estimate, probably spent an average of £548 per candidate. Walkden's campaign was once again the most costly at £764, although the union probably only paid £688 of this, whilst F. B. Simpson's campaign in Ashton-under-Lyne was at £558 (£502 union) was cheaper, and more successful, than the NUR's attempt to get Gordon elected there four years earlier (£819). Expenditure by the union's candidates as a proportion of the legal maximum ranged from 36 per cent (Lathan, fighting Sheffield Park) to 77 per cent (Simpson).²³²

The case of the MFGB is slightly different in that expenses paid by the Federation might only account for part of the 'union' contribution to election expenses: district unions might make themselves responsible for some of the expenditure. It has been possible to make some calculations in this regard for South Wales and County Durham.²³³ In some instances, the grant from the Federation to a district was larger than the MFGB candidate expenditure in that district. In 1931 Tom Cape, fighting Workington (Cumberland), received £498, spent £466, and won the seat. In North Eastern Derby (Derbyshire), Frank Lee also received £498, of which he spent £482 in his narrow defeat by a National Conservative candidate.²³⁴ The Durham Miners' Association received £3489 from the MFGB, and its candidates spent a total of £3306. Possibly the remainder was used to aid non-MFGB Labour candidates in the county;

²³¹ Calculated from MSS.55/4/AR/10 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1931-35, Annual Report 1931; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1931-2 (109), Labour Party NEC Papers, minutes of meeting of 12 June 1933, Appendix I to Constituency Finance Conference.

²³² Calculated from MSS.55/4/AR/10 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1931-35, Annual Report 1935; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1935-6 (150).

²³³ Estimates for Durham are calculated on the basis of figures in W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* (London, 1971), p. 350. Garside gives the total political fund expenditure for each year, and my estimates for election expenses are based on the difference between election years and what expenditure would be in a 'normal', i.e., non-election, year. South Wales figures from SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/1 SWMF Balance Sheets, 1918-39, balance sheet for 1931.

²³⁴ Calculated from: SWCC.MNA/NUM/1/1/29 MFGB Proceedings and Reports, 1931, Annual Financial Report 1931; Returns of Election Expenses PP 1931-2 (109); J. E. Williams, *The Derbyshire Miners. A study in industrial and social history* (London, 1962).

that the additional political expenditure of the DMA in 1931 was somewhere near £4100 suggests this may have been the case.²³⁵ On average, £472 was spent by each Durham Miners' candidate, and one, Joshua Ritson contesting Durham, was able to just outspend his opponent. By contrast an average of £212 was spent by each Miners' candidate in South Wales, although four of the ten – George Daggar (Abertillery, Mon.), Aneurin Bevan (Ebbw Vale, Mon.), Charles Edwards (Bedwellty, Mon.) and George Hall (Aberdare, Glam.) – were unopposed. The former trio spent £17 between them; Hall spent nothing. The MFGB granted a total of £2,992 on the basis that South Wales was entitled to five candidates; this would have amounted to £598 per candidate, or £299 if spread evenly between all ten candidates. The lack of opposition in four constituencies meant that opposed candidates could count on a larger share. D. L. Davies at Pontypridd (Glam.) spent the most, £441, but only £2,119 was spent in total, around 80 per cent of the allowance from the MFGB, and a amount of this was refunded to the national Federation after the election.²³⁶ £523 was spent on average by Lancashire MFGB candidates, although the expenses received from the Federation only met 72 per cent of the district's total expenditure of £2,616. In Scotland, the average expenditure was £341 per MFGB candidate. In West Yorkshire, two MFGB candidates, William Lunn at Rothwell and Thomas Grundy at Rother Valley, were able to outspend their opponents, and both were among the six Yorkshire Miners' candidates elected. An average of £542 was spent, and a total of £4,881 compared to an MFGB grant of £4,385. The Yorkshire Association seems to have been in the healthiest position in regard to its own political funds. Only three out of 43 MFGB candidates spent more than half of the legal maximum.²³⁷ Although Yorkshire was relatively well-resourced, in general MFGB candidates were run at a low cost: the large size of the Federation's expenditure in the 1931 election was due to the number of candidates, rather than any particular generosity on its behalf. Out of forty MFGB candidates in 1935, nine were returned unopposed, including seven of the twelve standing in South Wales. The SWMF was thus able to refund some £1,060 of the £2,650 it was allocated by the MFGB, although the total expenditure of its candidates was £2,633, suggesting that some of this money came from its own funds or other

²³⁵ See Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* chapter 8.

²³⁶ SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/1 SWMF Balance Sheets, 1918-39, balance sheet for 1931.

²³⁷ SWCC.MNA/NUM/1/1/29 MFGB Proceedings and Reports, 1931, Annual Financial Report 1931; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1931-2 (109).

sources. W. H. Mainwaring spent the most, £624 in Rhondda East, where his opponent was the CPGB's Harry Pollitt; this was almost twice Pollitt's expenditure. S. O. Davies at Merthyr Tydfil (Glam.) spent over three times as much as his ILP challenger, a total of £319. The SWMF again spent the least of the MFGB's districts on average, £219 per candidate. The average spent by Scottish MFGB candidates was £375, although the Federation's grant of £1,500 covered only just over half the total expenditure of its candidates, who found a further £1,626 elsewhere. Willie Adamson was able to outspend his Communist opponent Gallacher but not defeat him. In Lancashire the MFGB allocation covered 95 per cent of expenses; an average of £487 was spent by each of its three candidates who faced contests; its fourth candidate was unopposed, spending £72. In Durham the Federation now supported five official candidates, all of whom were elected, at an average expenditure of £505 each. The MFGB granted £2,500, and only an extra £27 needed to be found elsewhere. Ritson, once more contesting Durham, could again outspend his opponent. The DMA's above 'normal' expenditure for 1935 was around £4,400, and again it seems to have made grants to Labour candidates in county seats who were not fighting under the auspices of the Federation.²³⁸ Yorkshire MFGB candidates were once more the best-resourced: five of the seven outspent their opposition, at an average expenditure of £550 per candidate. Total expenses reached £3,849, of which the Federation supplied 88 per cent, £3,400. Tom Williams at Don Valley (West Yorkshire) spent the most, £644, which was equal to around 37 per cent of the legal maximum. Four out of forty MFGB candidates spent more than half of the legal maximum: Ritson, Mainwaring, James Brown in Ayrshire South and Tom Smith at Normanton (West Yorkshire). It seems that, in terms of election expenses, the MFGB would have had very little difficulty in complying with the terms of the Hastings Agreement.²³⁹

Unofficial or assisted candidates were generally members of the union concerned, but sponsored by their DLP, rather than being on a parliamentary panel. Often these

²³⁸ Hugh Dalton outspent his opponent at Bishop Auckland; at Seaham, Emmanuel Shinwell's expenditure of £955 was comparatively close to that of his well-resourced opponent Ramsay MacDonald, who spent £1,289. Shinwell's majority was over 20,000. *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1935-6 (150); Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960*.

²³⁹ Calculated from D.845.14 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1935, Annual Report 1935; SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/1 SWMF Balance Sheets, 1918-39, balance sheet for 1935; *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1935-6 (150).

candidates were fighting seats less likely to return a Labour member, and the financial help of their union here could go a long way, even if it did not produce victory. For example, in 1931 a £50 grant by the AEU to one of their members fighting Richmond (Surrey) amounted to a third of his total expenditure, whilst a grant of the same amount to an unofficial NUGMW candidate at Tavistock (Devon) equalled 44 per cent of the candidate's total expenses. Six NUR members fighting seats in 1931 received grants of £50 each, and the ten members of the union contesting the 1935 election, but not on the union's panel, were helped with the same sum. The NUGMW supported eight unofficial candidates in 1931 and twelve in 1935 with sums ranging from £25 to £100, with George Lansbury receiving the latter amount on both occasions. The RCA supported no less than eighteen unofficial candidates in 1935 to the tune of £50 each. None were successful, but some unions were not always as jealous of their funds as might be assumed.²⁴⁰

The development of the Hastings Agreement will be covered in more detail below, but on the basis of election expenditure in 1931 and 1935, unions were in quite different positions in terms of how far they were already in compliance with its prescriptions in terms of the portion of electoral expenditure affiliated organisations would be allowed to supply at elections after 1935. A limit of 80 per cent of 60 per cent of the legal maximum, i.e., 48 per cent, was then to come into force. As mentioned, it seems the MFGB would have little difficulty here: only seven of its total of 83 candidatures over the two elections exceeded 50 per cent of the maximum. This part of the agreement would perhaps be less of an obstacle for the NUDAW and the NUGMW, who at both elections generally paid over 90 per cent of their candidates' total expenses and would instead have difficulty with the requirement that an affiliated organisation not pay more than 80 per cent of total expenses. The NUR, by contrast, would have difficulties on both counts: not only did it usually pay much closer to 100 per cent of its candidates' total expenses, but as a proportion of the legal maximum, its grants tended to be well over the new limit of 48 per cent: in four of its 21 candidatures across both elections,

²⁴⁰ *Return of Election Expenses* PP 1931-2 (109) and PP 1935-6 (150); TU/GENERALB/1/A/7 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1931 and TU/GENERALB/1/A/11 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1935, Half-Yearly Financial Reports; MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931 and MSS.127/NU/1/1/23 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1935, Report and Financial Statements; MSS.55/4/AR/10 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1931-35, Annual Reports 1931 and 1935; MSS.259/AEU/4/1/10 AEU, Reports and Proceedings, 1931 and TU/ENG/1/A/39, AEU, Bound Reports, 1935, Annual Reports for 1931 and 1935.

more than the legal maximum was spent; in three of these instances some 112 per cent of the maximum was spent. The RCA's grants were not problematic in terms of the legal maximum, but likely exceeded the new limit of 80 per cent on total union contributions. It is difficult to tell exactly how much MFGB money was spent on each candidature, as there is no breakdown available of how the money it supplied to districts was distributed between candidates; however, given that the districts themselves very likely contributed too, in total union contributions were probably often more than eighty per cent of total expenses.

Regulation: the Hastings Agreement and after

As the previous section suggests, in many cases trade unions were responsible for providing grants to meet very substantial proportions of the electoral expense incurred by their sponsored candidates. This, or rather this combined with the relative financial weakness of many constituency parties, was increasingly recognised as a problem. At the 1931 Scarborough party conference, a resolution was moved instructing the Executive to 'invite the Trades Union Congress to join in an inquiry to formulate a scheme for the better allocation of the Political Levy and other Political Funds'. The mover emphasised the problem in rural constituencies in particular where 'little support is received from industrial organisations' and suggested that divisional parties were limited in their choice of candidates 'on account of financial stringency'.²⁴¹ Arthur Hayday of the NUGMW and that year's TUC fraternal delegate, opposed the resolution 'not because I have no regard for the feelings that prompt it, but in order to show the futility of its passage' – the TUC had no political funds of its own, or any measure of control over the political funds of its affiliate unions, and as such an approach would achieve nothing. Hayday offered no alternative, but after his intervention the 'previous question' was carried, ending the discussion.²⁴² Although not particularly constructive, Hayday's contribution did at least suggest that trade unions might be amenable to some action on the problem, provided it was not considered by them to be

²⁴¹ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report*, 1931, p. 228.

²⁴² Ibid.

impracticable. In private session at the following year's conference in Leicester, the below resolution was agreed:

That this conference appreciates the generous assistance rendered by Trade Unions and other National organisations which make annual block grants, and in many Constituencies relieve DLPs of the entire costs of Parliamentary Elections. We also recognise that in many Rural Constituencies where Trade Union membership is weak, and where DLPs are solely responsible for electoral commitments, the sacrifice of Party members in these areas is enormous. We call upon the National Executive of the Party to consider and report comprehensively on the question of financing Labour candidates for Parliament and candidates running in association with the Labour Party.²⁴³

Although there is no record of any debate which took place on the resolution, it is not difficult to see why it was able to obtain wider support: the implicit criticism of the unions in the Scarborough resolution had been replaced by praise, and moreover, it was much more practical, simply requiring the Executive to consider and report on the matter without necessarily requiring any union action until after the report had been made. Moreover, it did not raise the difficulty of the potential of any efforts to improve the situation being coordinated through the TUC, and the corresponding loss of control by individual unions over part of their political finances or the development of any additional machinery to administer such funds.

The National Executive, however, did not rush into action; it was only on 21 December 1932 that it decided to empower Henderson to consult with the General Council and the leaders of the larger trade unions on a 'scheme whereby a uniform contribution towards Constituency Finance could be agreed to' and report to the next National Executive meeting. Henderson also seems to have been seeking a loan towards general party finance from the larger unions at this point.²⁴⁴ This informal approach seems to have produced few results: the issue did not come up at any of the following three meetings, until on 20 April 1933 Henderson admitted he had been unable to consult the General Council on the subject. That he referred only to the General

²⁴³ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report*. 1932, p. 202.

²⁴⁴ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 21 December 1932.

Council suggests that possibly some kind of central pooling of union resources perhaps through the TUC was being contemplated at this stage. Given the lack of progress made so far by Henderson, the Executive resolved that its Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee would make arrangements to proceed with the work instead.²⁴⁵ The Sub-committee agreed at its May meeting to invite representatives of those unions promoting candidatures to attend a conference the following month on the subject of 'trade unions and constituency finance'; no representatives of the Co-operative party were to be involved at this stage.²⁴⁶ Some unions, however, had already begun to make their own arrangements: Ernest Bevin had written to C. T. Cramp late in 1932 to inquire as to whether the NUR would be amenable to attending a conference of larger unions to discuss the uniformity of constituency allowances.²⁴⁷ Possibly Bevin was pushing on independently given the delay in addressing the issue by the National Executive, and although Cramp replied in the affirmative, no further action seems to have been taken. It does not appear that Bevin had approached any other union leaders at this point: presumably he expected to be able to rely on support from Cramp given that the two unions, after the MFGB, were responsible for the largest number of candidatures.

Representatives of 22 organisations, now including the Co-operative Party, met to discuss constituency finance on 12 June at a conference dominated, perhaps unsurprisingly, by the contributions of Bevin and Cramp. All major sponsoring unions were officially represented, with the exception of NUDAW, whose Political General Secretary W. A. Robinson attended in his capacity as a member of the National Executive. George Lathan of the RCA, as chair of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-committee, opened the meeting by circulating a document showing the present rates of grants and expenses allowed by different unions plus a number of alternative proposals, and suggesting that the National Executive would be particularly pleased if the saving made by any reduction or regulation of grants was to be redirected either to union branch affiliations to local parties, or to a central fund to enable the Executive to 'finance candidatures in special constituencies'.²⁴⁸ In terms of grants, the alternative

²⁴⁵ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 20 April 1933.

²⁴⁶ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of FGPC meeting of 30 May 1933.

²⁴⁷ MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, executive committee, minutes of fourth quarterly meeting, December 1932.

²⁴⁸ Labour Party NEC papers, 'Conference on Constituency Finance', 12 June 1933.

proposals included suggestions of either a flat rate to be introduced after the next election, or an immediate scaling down to such a rate, with variations for county and borough constituencies. It was suggested that election expenses might also be subject to a flat rate, again varied for county and borough seats, or a percentage of the legal maximum expenditure to apply in all constituencies.²⁴⁹ Shepherd, the National Agent, presented the documents drawing attention to the great variety in schemes now being operated by different unions, and after a general discussion some specific proposals were considered. Cramp suggested that grants for election expenses should be on a sliding scale or percentage, Bevin flat rates for borough and county seats of £400 and £500 respectively. Cramp's proposal was adopted by twenty votes to five, and there was no serious opposition to the suggestion that 'eighty per cent of sixty per cent' of the legal maximum should be the maximum proportion a sponsoring organisation should pay, provided the constituency party was required to make at least some contribution.²⁵⁰ It was agreed nineteen to three that a uniform annual payment should be the basis of organisation expenses in constituencies, and Bevin's suggestion that these should be limited to £200 in county and £150 in borough constituencies was carried 'Almost unanimously'. Cramp's attempt to raise the borough limit to £200 too only found six supporters.²⁵¹ This may well have reflected NUR priorities, as at the stage twelve of its thirteen placed candidates had been adopted in borough constituencies; only four of the TGWU's eleven were borough candidates.²⁵² Lathan again raised the possibility of a central fund, but Bevin suggested that 'it might be impossible for the Unions to agree to the proposal in the form as presented', and that instead the National Executive might circulate a list of the constituencies and candidates it had in mind to affiliated unions to consider supporting. This hardly met the problem and appears to confirm McKibbin's suggestion that unions were 'not prepared to surrender the autonomy of their political expenditure'.²⁵³

The National Executive agreed the proposals with some minor amendments in July, but they had still to gain the approval of the party conference at Hastings in September.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 'Conference on Constituency Finance', appendix II.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. James Walker of BISAKTA suggested 90 per cent of 60 per cent but found no seconder. Only one BISAKTA candidate had spent more than 50 per cent of the legal maximum in 1931, John Baker at Wolverhampton Bilston. *Returns* 1931.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1933.

²⁵³ Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974), p. 161.

Financial matters were dealt with in private session and there is no verbatim report of the proceedings, but it is clear that speakers from the NUR and the TGWU supported the proposals, whilst the RCA opposed, presumably leaving Lathan in a rather embarrassing position given his close involvement in the drafting in July.²⁵⁴ An attempt to move the reference back of the agreement was defeated by 1,426,000 votes to 836,000, a substantial minority. Presumably the AEU delegation voted with the majority: in terms of election expenses the union had used an identical scheme in 1931, whilst James Kaylor, a member of the AEU Executive Council, was one of the party National Executive's appointed speakers on the subject.²⁵⁵ The MFGB delegation almost certainly voted against: the Miners had been due to debate the scheme at a Federation special conference just prior to the party conference, but this was then postponed until December. The MFGB Executive had intended to recommend that no change be made,²⁵⁶ possibly on the grounds that grants for constituency organisation were the prerogative not of the Federation, but its district unions. The General and Municipal Workers very likely opposed the scheme: its political sub-committee had reported in August that the new regulations 'would act as a restrictive measure on unions like ours' and that union delegates should be instructed to vote against them.²⁵⁷ The combined block votes of the RCA, MFGB and NUGMW in 1933 totalled 698,000 – the remaining 138,000 of the opposition's total vote came from several smaller sponsoring unions as well as a number of constituency parties: delegates from Stockport and Nottingham Borough Labour parties had moved and seconded the reference back.²⁵⁸ The 'agreed additional regulations' for 'Parliamentary Candidates and Constituency Finance' were as follows:

1. A written agreement between Affiliated Organisations responsible for the promotion of candidates, and Constituency Labour Parties, to ensure:
 - a. That the CLP shall itself undertake to *pay not less than 20%* of the election expenses of such candidate.

²⁵⁴ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 6 July 1933, *Labour Party Annual Conference Report 1933*, pp. 2, 225-6.

²⁵⁵ MSS.259/AEU/1/1/45 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1931, October 1931 meeting; Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 29 September 1933.

²⁵⁶ D.845.13 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1933, executive committee minutes, meeting of 21 September 1933.

²⁵⁷ TU/GENERALB/1/A/9 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1933, national executive minutes, meeting of 24 August 1933.

²⁵⁸ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1933*, pp. 225-6.

b. That an Affiliated Organisation shall not undertake to contribute to the election expenses of such candidate a sum in excess of 80% of the actual election expenses, *and in no case shall its contribution exceed 80% of 60% of the maximum expenses allowed by law...*

c. An Affiliated Organisation shall not undertake to pay to the funds of a CLP for organisation and registration expenses *an annual sum in excess of £150 in a Parliamentary Borough as defined by the National Executive Committee, or £200 in a Parliamentary County.*

2. Clause 1 shall come into operation *after the next General Election...*

3. ...[Schema for reduction in annual expenditure where association of Affiliated Organisation with CLP continues after the next Election, either by three or four annual reductions].

4. ...[Stipulates that this applies to individuals, whether candidates or not, who make financial contributions to CLPs].²⁵⁹

The use of 'eighty per cent of sixty per cent' is unusual, appearing both rather arbitrary, and a convoluted way of saying 48 per cent. That under half of the legal maximum was permitted from affiliated organisations had the symbolic significance of demonstrating that Labour could do more with less money than its opponents, whilst also helping to counter potential allegations of union financial domination. The formula arrived on appears to have been deliberately obtuse, setting a limit which, while formal, left enough ambiguity for the actual expenditure to be left to the discretion of the sponsoring body.

Pinto-Duschinsky characterises the Hastings Agreement as a compromise in the 'underlying conflict within the Labour movement between the unions, with their large blocks of cash' and the constituency parties, many of whom had become 'lazy' through reliance on union grants.²⁶⁰ How far was this the case? Morgan implies that the 'main target' was not likely to have been the unions, but perhaps instead, the self-financing candidate;²⁶¹ although as Thorpe suggests, the new limits 'still left considerable scope for wealthy candidates'.²⁶² Certainly to suggest that the unions were the target of the Agreement seems to overlook the contribution of Bevin and Cramp in particular in giving shape to the new regulations. Despite, as referred to above, the relative

²⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 36-7. My italics.

²⁶⁰ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980*, pp. 77-80.

²⁶¹ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part One. Labour Legends and Russian Gold*, p. 171.

²⁶² Thorpe, *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain*, p. 264.

buoyancy of the NUR's political fund, both would have been concerned in a period in which generally pressure on political funds was high, to reduce expenditure where possible. The opposition of the NUGMW to the proposals perhaps makes more sense when considered in light of the increasing internal pressure from its districts for a greater allocation from the political fund: at this proportion afforded to the union centrally was only fifty per cent and so it is perhaps unsurprising that its leadership reacted against what must have seemed like a further demand, this time external, to decide how its political fund should be spent. Hayday had argued in 1931 that 'the political funds of the trade unions are raised out of the contributions of men whose wages are all too low, and they represent a great sacrifice on their part...we would not agree to allocate portions of the sacrifices made by trade union members for the promotion of very doubtful candidatures';²⁶³ in the context of the debate, 'doubtful' seemed more likely to mean 'politically unreliable' than 'hopeless', but his point was that such spending had to be done in a way that was responsible and respectful of the sacrifices of members. Such pressures arguably combined with a genuine desire on the part of trade unionists to see the constituency parties stand on their own feet financially: the introduction of the Agreement seems to be an example of the union 'restraint' recognised by Minkin.²⁶⁴

The impact of Hastings

It is difficult to assess the initial impact of the Hastings Agreement in terms of election expenses, given that there was no general election until 1945, by which time, as Andrew Thorpe has demonstrated, the finances of constituency parties were generally very much healthier.²⁶⁵ By the 1950 general election, the limits imposed by the Agreement had been revised upwards to take account of inflation.²⁶⁶ Therefore perhaps the most effective way to assess its early impact is through an examination of annual grants by unions for constituency expenditure. The Hastings Agreement set new limits of £150 in borough and £200 in county constituencies, to come into force after the next general election, and a scheme whereby annual grants might be reduced

²⁶³ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1931, p. 228.

²⁶⁴ Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 26-7.

²⁶⁵ Thorpe, *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain*, esp. pp. 260-9.

²⁶⁶ See Austin Ranney, *Pathways to Parliament. Candidate Selection in Britain* (London, 1965), p. 136.

to the agreed maxima: in boroughs, those between £150 and £200 to be lowered by three annual reductions and those above £200 by four; in counties, those under £300 by three reductions, and those exceeding £300 by four.²⁶⁷ How far were unions already in compliance with these terms, and if not, how successful were they in making reductions after 1935?

Itemised expenditure is not available for all unions, notably the RCA. There seems to have been some fluctuation in the AEU's constituency grants, but by 1934-35, its three adopted constituencies received around £800 between them.²⁶⁸ The MFGB did not make grants for constituency organisation, at least not nationally: instead it contributed to the salaries of its elected MPs, in line with the number of levy-payers in each district, so that, for example, in 1932 five South Wales Miners' MPs received MFGB salaries, corresponding to a political membership of 50,000.²⁶⁹ Perhaps unsurprisingly given the union's role in forging the Agreement, grants paid by the TGWU were already safely within its terms; local agreements made after 1935 continued in the same way.²⁷⁰

The NUDAW's annual grants in 1931 had been £496 and £501 respectively to Shipley and Westhoughton DLPs, and the rather higher figures of £634 and £747 to Jarrow and East Middlesbrough, although possibly these figures balanced the rather lower election expenditure in the latter two constituencies. In 1932, a more 'normal' year, the union paid £370 to Jarrow and £412 to Westhoughton, and a total of £352 to constituencies where Robinson was the candidate, he having abandoned Shipley when adopted for St. Helens. The NUDAW also became responsible for candidatures at Burnley and Manchester Clayton during the year, and in their first full year of NUDAW support, 1933, they received £356 and £282 respectively. At this point, with the exception of Jarrow, which received £467 in 1933, expenditure between NUDAW constituencies appears to have been approaching a degree of uniformity, and in 1934

²⁶⁷ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, p. 37.

²⁶⁸ MSS.259/AEU/4/1/10-11 AEU, Reports and Proceedings, 1931-32 and TU/ENG/1/A/37-39, AEU, Bound Reports, 1933-35, Annual Financial Reports, 1931-5.

²⁶⁹ SWCC.MNA/NUM/1/1/30 MFGB Proceedings and Reports, 1932, Annual Report 1932.

²⁷⁰ See, for example, MSS.126/TG/1154/12 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1933: £100 was the typical annual TGWU grant. For a later local agreement, MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937, minutes of FGPC meeting of 8 April 1937. George Deer became the union's candidate for Lincoln with a £50 annual grant.

its grants to all seven, which now included Rossendale and Thornbury, were between £300 and £400: Clayton's £303 the lowest, and St. Helen's £400 the highest. This pattern continued into 1935, when Jarrow received the most money, £372. The NUDAW then, already seemed to be making some progress towards uniformity and a lowering of grants.²⁷¹

The NUR's 1931 political fund statement grouped all 'Parliamentary and constituency expenses' together, but it is possible to make some estimates as not all of its sponsored candidates were in Parliament. Therefore George Ward and H. Kegie received £200 each in constituency expenses, William Dobbie £150, and J. W. Gordon £250. In 1932, four NUR candidates received £200 in constituency expenses, another pair £100 each. Ardwick was granted £230 through Joseph Henderson's candidature, and South Leeds, where the NUR's Harry Charleton was the candidate, £250. In 1933 £200 was paid on behalf of eight of the union's candidates, and in 1934 all were receiving £200 annually, apart from South Leeds, which continued to receive £250. The NUR's grants, then, seem to have largely been in line already with the Hastings conditions, suggesting that the union's main difficulty would be in reducing its large election expenditure.²⁷² The NUGMW's half-yearly financial statements for 1931-5 demonstrate that generally the union paid around £400 per annum towards organisation expenses in each of its sponsored constituencies, although in some years some constituencies, such as Margaret Bondfield's Wallsend in 1933, only received £300. By 1935, both Plaistow and Preston's allowances had been reduced to £200. Although the NUGMW did pay uniform rates, they would require substantial reduction after 1935 to meet the Hastings Agreement's terms.

The NUR made arrangements early in 1936 to reduce its constituency grants. The union seems to have interpreted the limits to electoral expenditure as being 60 per cent of the legal maximum, rather than 80 per cent of 60 per cent. As its unsuccessful candidates had not yet been re-adopted for their respective constituencies, it suggested a four-year scale of reductions for the three borough seats its MPs sat for. Pontefract, where Adam Hills was the NUR MP, was already receiving a £200 rate, so no reduction was needed. At Ardwick and Rotherham, grants would be reduced from

²⁷¹ NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1931-35.

²⁷² MSS.127/NU/1/1/19-23 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931-35, Report and Financial Statements 1931-5.

£200 to £150 by an annual reduction of £12 10s, and at South Leeds from £250 to £150 in reductions of £25. By 1940, this had largely succeeded, and grants to newly-adopted constituencies were started on the Hastings rates.²⁷³ The NUGMW, given its larger grants, appears to have had more difficulty. Although a scale of reductions was introduced, the reduction in most of the union's adopted constituencies amounted to around £30 annually in 1936, and £24 in 1937, at which point Clynes, for example, in the Manchester borough seat of Platting, was still receiving £336 per year. Although the union had more success in recently adopted seats – Reading, for example, where Bondfield was now the candidate, received £228 in 1937 – in 1938 most of its candidates, even in borough seats were still receiving £280 annually. In the first half of 1939, the union stopped itemising its organisation grants by constituency in the political fund account, so it is impossible to tell how much was spent on each constituency. However, the substantial increase from £1059 10s spent in the last six months of 1939, compared with £1409 spent in the first half of 1940, may imply that, at least for this half-year, the NUGMW found its commitments under the Agreement very difficult to keep.²⁷⁴ The NUDAW seems also to have struggled: in all of its constituencies, despite a big drop from 1935 to 1936 in expenditure, the average spent stayed between £250 and £310 through 1937-39, followed by a slight increase in 1940.²⁷⁵

Labour's relationship with the Co-operative Party was also affected by the Agreement. Relations between the two parties deteriorated in the early 1930s. Labour had assumed that the Cheltenham Agreement reached in 1927 was temporary, hoping that in the longer term, the smaller party would 'surrender its finances and autonomy to Labour's policy and organisation'.²⁷⁶ With the Co-operative Party keen to maintain a degree of independence, tensions arose at constituency level over financial control. In 1932 the Birmingham Co-operative Party tightened its candidate selection procedure, with eligibility for political grants requiring prior approval by the Co-operative Party executive before seeking a Labour nomination: a measure 'both to

²⁷³ MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports 1936, Report and Financial Statements 1936, p. 11-12, and MSS.127/NU/1/1/24-28 for Report and Financial Statements 1936-40.

²⁷⁴ TU/GENERALB/1/A/12-16 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1936-40, Half-Yearly Financial Reports, 1936-40.

²⁷⁵ NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1936-40.

²⁷⁶ Carbery, *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party*, p. 41; Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960*, p. 171.

prevent the Labour party forcing it to foot the bill for 'no hope' elections and to prohibit it from nominating a candidate who would then join the Co-operative Party and attempt to claim the political grant'.²⁷⁷ As Angela Whitecross notes, there is 'no evidence to suggest that the Hastings Conference decision was in anyway targeted at curbing the influence of the Co-operative Party in constituencies', yet its effect was 'immediate'.²⁷⁸ Negotiations began in December 1933 between the parties at national level, with Labour seeking to assert more control over local Co-operative agents and the funds with which their salaries were paid, although this led to a stalemate, with Labour temporarily refusing to endorse Co-operative candidates where the Co-operative Party directly employed the agent in 1935.²⁷⁹ Co-operative Party opposition to implementing the Hastings Agreement's terms also held up endorsements in several constituencies. Whilst a temporary agreement was reached in May 1937, negotiations were continuing by September 1939, when the Co-operative side decided to suspend them for the duration of the war; difficulties would continue into the post-war years.²⁸⁰ The intense focus on organisational problems arguably hindered development of distinctive Co-operative policy solutions during the 1930s.²⁸¹ The variety of financial arrangements under which Co-operative candidates stood jarred with Labour's pursuit of uniformity, and reawakened the dispute over Co-operative affiliation to Labour. A Co-operative party representative was only present at the first of the 1933 discussions on constituency finance; the unions' position shaped the party's priorities here, arguably to the detriment of Co-operative relations. If the Agreement had not been aimed at the Co-operative Party, it did provide Labour with a tool with which to attempt to force the smaller party to accept greater uniformity and control.

²⁷⁷ Nicole Robertson, 'A Union of Forces Marching in the Same Direction'? The Relationship between the Co-operative and Labour Parties, 1918-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), p. 221.

²⁷⁸ Angela F. Whitecross, 'Co-operative Commonwealth or New Jerusalem? The Co-operative Party and the Labour Party, 1931-1951', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2015), pp. 79-103.

²⁷⁹ For a detailed narrative of these negotiations, see Rhodes, *Co-operative – Labour Relations 1900-1962*, pp. 38-63.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.; see also Barbara Smith and Geoffrey Ostergaard, *Constitutional Relations between the Labour and Co-operative Parties: An Historical Review* (London, n.d. [c. 1960]). For a contemporary analysis, Robert C. Hall, 'British Cooperatives in Politics', *Public Opinion Quarterly* (January 1939), 124-135.

²⁸¹ See Angela Whitecross, 'The wasted years? The Co-operative party during the 1930s', in A. Webster, L. Shaw, and R. Vorberg-Rugh (eds.), *Mainstreaming co-operation. An alternative for the twenty-first century?* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 131-150.

Difficulty in implementing the Agreement could foster calls for its modification. A report by the NUGMW's National Executive in 1938 suggested that the Hastings terms 'had engendered no small degree of opposition, which is growing as the maximum grants are being reached. And it is not improbable that an early attempt will be made to modify or return to the status quo in regard to this matter'.²⁸² How far this was the case is difficult to tell, and this may simply have been part of the union leadership's strategy to reassert central control over its political fund: the report warned that if the Agreement was altered, the balance of the central political fund 'would soon be absorbed'.²⁸³ The balance did improve through 1939 but the position remained uncertain at this point. Opposition to the Agreement resurfaced in the Miners' Federation at its 1938 conference. The Federation does not seem to have given the Agreement much consideration before this, and the debate which ensued was in effect that which had been forestalled in 1933 by the cancellation of the special conference. A resolution from the Northumberland district was carried, proposing to seek to rescind the regulations. It expressed disagreement with the decision of the Labour party conference at Hastings, which by this time had been in place for nearly five years. Opposition seems to have been around the requirement of that constituency parties pay at least twenty per cent of election expenses, as the miners of Northumberland were 'levied up to the hilt already for all conceivable objects'.²⁸⁴ This was perhaps more of a concern in mining constituencies, where there was considerable overlap in personnel between the local party and the union lodges, but little opposition to the specific terms of the Hastings Agreement was raised, and the debate seems to have become an opportunity for delegates to air a range of perceived grievances: for example, Foster, a Lancashire delegate was more concerned about the 'danger of losing miners' candidates or miners' representatives' in the county.²⁸⁵ However, the resolution as passed did not carry any particular instructions to the Executive, rendering it more a symbolic statement of opposition than a real attempt to rescind the Agreement. The Federation submitted a resolution on the subject to the 1939 party conference; in the absence of specific instructions, this simply called for the 1933 terms to be rescinded. Support came from Warrington DLP, where the NUGMW's

²⁸² TU/GENERALB/1/A/14 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1938, Report of the Biennial Delegate Conference 1938, p. 101.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ D.845.17 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1938, Annual Conference Report 1938, p. 151.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 154-5.

Edward Porter was the prospective candidate. The NEC agreed to consider the resolution with a view to further consultations with unions and constituency parties: no vote was taken. This effectively stymied opposition pending more discussions, which were in turn delayed by the war situation. The Hastings Agreement would continue to stand for the time being.²⁸⁶

If there was such dissatisfaction with the Hastings system, why was it not modified? Perhaps in the medium term, the impact of the war on the finances of constituency parties has obscured the development of this attempt to regularise Labour constituency finance, and the rather complex world of trade union sponsorship in the 1930s. If the system of union sponsorship and the attempt to regularise it through the Hastings Agreement did tend to focus resources on more supposedly 'winnable' seats, as contemporary critics such as Dean McHenry,²⁸⁷ and others within the labour movement argued, some unions were attempting to stretch their political funds, which were in some instances already quite stretched, further, particularly in terms of supporting a growing number of unofficial candidates through smaller grants in election expenses.

Moreover, after 1931 it was precisely those seats which were 'winnable' that Labour needed to prioritise in order to recover its parliamentary strength. Although the argument that something like a central fund might have been more useful in terms of breaking through in areas of Labour weakness, this was simply not practicable in the 1930s, as Bevin and others observed. The NUDAW general secretary dismissed a proposal for such a scheme at the union's 1937 annual delegate meeting as 'utterly unworkable'.²⁸⁸ In the economic context of the 1930s, trade unions had to show often shrinking political memberships that they were using smaller political fund resources in a realistic and responsible fashion. Allowing outside control over political funds could have provoked widespread opposition and led to a further reduction in political fund income. Opposition to the Hastings terms within unions who might have had the strength to overturn it was never effectively co-ordinated, and often expressed in ambiguous terms. Furthermore, an advantage of the Hastings system over a central fund was the link it maintained between constituency and sponsoring union. A

²⁸⁶ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1939, p. 291.

²⁸⁷ McHenry, *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938*, pp. 306-9.

²⁸⁸ NUDAW Annual Delegate Meeting Report, 1937.

centralised system might have been seen as giving too much control over candidatures to the party's National Executive; the system of union sponsorship still required a nomination from the local branch of a union, and involved those members of union executives or leaderships with responsibility for political affairs closely in constituency problems. Arguably this involved them materially as well as in principle in the organisation of democratic politics, and strengthened support for the electoral system as a means to achieving union goals.

Candidates and constituencies

The direct sponsorship of Parliamentary candidates by the party's affiliated organisations was a distinctive feature of Labour's political identity for much of the twentieth century. Although socialist societies such as the ILP, SDF and Fabian Society, as well as the Co-operative party, did support candidates, in the vast majority of cases, sponsorship involved the financial backing of a trade union. Such candidatures represented a major and frequently complex site of union engagement with democratic politics in general, and those of Labour in particular. As a vehicle for the direct representation of labour in the House of Commons, the practice of union sponsorship was already 'deeply rooted' by the time of the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900; it remained in place, although much modified, as a 'vestigial reminder' of this original purpose into the 1990s.²⁸⁹

Often it could be contentious. Lewis Minkin noted the tendency for sponsorship payments to be 'treated in a censorious way in editorials and the polemic of everyday politics' due to the sway they allegedly gave the unions over their candidates.²⁹⁰ On the surface at least, candidate sponsorship can appear to represent union domination of the Labour party at its most transparent. The party's Midlands District Organiser, Herbert Drinkwater, lamented in 1936 how 'frankly, our movement does not show up at its best at meetings for the selections of candidates, and this is the case more especially when Trade Union candidates come forward backed by the finance of their Union'.²⁹¹ Even the party leader Clem Attlee reflected, rather more laconically, that the

²⁸⁹ Martin Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945* (London, 1960), p. 262; Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 252. Minkin observes that by the mid-1980s, the financial aspect of sponsorship had been phased out, retaining only a symbolic value, p.242. See also Meg Russell, *Building New Labour. The Politics of Party Organisation* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 34-95; Lewis Minkin, *The Blair Supremacy. A study in the politics of Labour's party management* (Manchester and New York, 2014), pp. 24-26, 93-94, 369-400, 750 on the changing context of candidate selection.

²⁹⁰ Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 242.

²⁹¹ Herbert Drinkwater, 'About Selection Meetings', *Labour Organiser*, Oct. 1936.

'influence of the Trade Unions is, perhaps, greatest in the sphere of the choice of parliamentary candidates'.²⁹² The events of August to October 1931 imbued candidate selection with an additional significance. The selection of new candidates, and indeed the reselection of existing ones, had become part of the routine post-election activity of the constituency parties through the 1920s.²⁹³ During the 1924-29 parliament, despite an initial flurry of selections and reselections, many CLPs were able to take a relatively leisurely approach to choosing their next representative.²⁹⁴ The National Government's assumption of office engendered not only a sense of urgency in candidate selection, but its October victory at the polls provided the context for a broader debate within the labour movement around the role and responsibilities of constituency parties.²⁹⁵ The issue of parliamentary candidatures was one aspect of this wider discussion, although other features of which, such as NEC representation, were more prominent in debate at party conference. Trade unionists took an active part in this debate, of which the negotiation of the Hastings Agreement, as outlined in the previous chapter, constituted a major element. Drinkwater's comments above must be understood within this setting. Given the scale of the National Government's landslide, and the collapse of Labour representation in Parliament from its 1929 height, many more constituencies than previously were available for potential candidates to seek selection in, whilst a larger number of former and new candidates sought a constituency to fight.²⁹⁶ Recent experience emphasised the need for loyalty from potential candidates; the Mosley and National Labour defections served to entrench mistrust of moneyed individuals pursuing nomination, although this did not always preclude the selection of such nominees.²⁹⁷ Similarly, difficulties with the Independent

²⁹² C. R. Attlee, *The Labour Party in Perspective* (London, 1937), p. 105

²⁹³ Re-selection was necessary in non-Labour-held constituencies, as electoral defeat terminated Labour candidatures.

²⁹⁴ Excluding sitting MPs, 154 candidates had been endorsed by the time of the 1925 party conference. This total climbed steadily to 281 and then 313 in 1926 and 1927 respectively, but by the 1928 conference some 115 constituencies still lacked an endorsed Labour candidate. Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1925-29.

²⁹⁵ Some of those arguing for reform, notably Ben Greene, also contributed to discussions on candidatures. See Greene, 'The Selection of Candidates', *The Labour Candidate*, December 1932. This was the organ of the Society of Labour Candidates; Greene served as editor. For Greene see Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), especially pp. 111-142.

²⁹⁶ Indeed, more than ever before: on the previous occasion that the party's Parliamentary representation had been so low, during the 1918-22 Parliament, Labour was not yet fighting on a fully national basis, with just over 400 candidates chosen to stand in the November 1922 election. Over 200 more Labour candidates fought in 1929 than in 1918.

²⁹⁷ See Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Volume I: Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006), pp. 131-195.

Labour Party – the behaviour of ILP parliamentarians who regularly voted against the government on grounds of socialist principle during 1929-31, and the dispute over party discipline which this prompted, resulting in the non-endorsement of some 23 candidates at the 1931 general election and ultimately leading to the ILP's decision to disaffiliate from Labour in August 1932 – emphasised the necessity of loyalty.²⁹⁸ Ensuring a suitable nominee was important, as

there is nothing like an early selection of the *right* candidate to hearten the ranks and set the machine in motion. It is important that it should be the right candidate, and constituencies are well advised to enjoy single blessedness a little longer rather than jump at the first offer. We have seen many sad mistakes, and these have by no means all been occasioned by an indecent haste to get hold of a candidate's money.²⁹⁹

Union nominees were a significant part of this picture, constituting a distinct, if highly varied, body of candidates. While there may be 'a false distinction between self-sponsorship and sponsorship by an affiliated organisation', there was more to union candidatures than the financial aspect.³⁰⁰ Their continued presence shaped the party's culture. As George Mathers, an RCA candidate, noted in *The Labour Candidate*, if the 'simple declaration of adherence to principles' was the only basis for selection, there was an increased danger of the movement falling 'into the hands of placemen with no practical knowledge of, or interest in, working class needs and aspirations'. In this sense union candidates proved a 'safeguard', requiring as they did the support of their own organisations.³⁰¹ This point can be too easily overlooked: union candidatures contributed to keeping the party rooted in working class experience, providing Labour in parliament with 'overwhelming majority of its working class members'.³⁰² This was

²⁹⁸ For the ILP MPs during 1929-31, see Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999), pp. 132-169, especially pp. 160-162; Keith Laybourn, 'The Independent Labour Party and the second Labour government c. 1929-31: the move towards revolutionary change', in John Shepherd, Jonathan Davis, and Chris Wrigley, (eds.), *Britain's Second Labour Government, 1929-32. A Reappraisal* (Manchester and New York, 2011), pp. 100-116; and David Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 288-309.

²⁹⁹ Herbert Drinkwater, *Labour Organiser*, March 1936. Italics in original.

³⁰⁰ Michael Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates* (London, 1969), p. 231.

³⁰¹ George Mathers, 'The Labour Party – A Federation of Working Class Organisations or a Mass Party of Individual Members?', *The Labour Candidate*, October-November 1933.

³⁰² Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, p. 179.

a distinctive contribution to the political culture of the period, and as such how trade unions negotiated the terrain of candidate selection requires closer attention.

Much of the existing literature on the subject concentrates on the post-war period. Both Austin Ranney and Michael Rush deal with union sponsorship in broader discussions of candidate selection in the two main parties. Ranney documents the different 'pathways to Parliament' within the Labour movement, through the trade unions, Co-operative party, and the 'unsponsored' route, although his treatment of these is rather brief.³⁰³ Rush offers more sustained analysis, as does Martin Harrison in his study of the party-unions relationship, although in both cases focusing on the decades after 1945; several of their insights are pertinent to this discussion.³⁰⁴ William Muller's survey of trade union MPs only touches on candidatures, but his account of the changing role of union officials in parliamentary representation requires attention in the context of the 1930s; Lewis Minkin's study details the changing role of sponsorship in Labour representation into the 1970s and 1980s.³⁰⁵ Kevin Morgan's important contribution deconstructs the myth of Labour's advance as based purely on organised working class support, highlighting the continuing influence of wealthy individuals. He suggests that the 'momentum for trade union representation was not maintained' into the 1930s, arguing that the 'whole question needs looking at afresh'.³⁰⁶

This study seeks to make a close examination of trade union candidates, considering patterns of sponsorship across the period and how the union contribution to Labour's political identity in terms of candidatures was shaped, through internal trade union selection procedures and the interplay of national and local political contexts which determined the constituencies in which they stood.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Austen Ranney, *Pathways to Parliament. Candidate Selection in Britain* (London, 1965), pp. 221-247, on sponsorship.

³⁰⁴ Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, pp. 131-172, 291-294; Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 262-292.

³⁰⁵ William D. Muller, *The Kept Men? The first century of trade union representation in the British House of Commons* (Hassocks, 1977); Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, pp. 241-276.

³⁰⁶ Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Volume I: Labour Legends and Russian Gold*, pp. 138-140 in particular.

³⁰⁷ Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People. Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 227-228 notes that local studies can sometimes give a false picture of local party organisations insulated from the national picture; although the focus here is on the unions' national organisation, the interplay with the local context could often be significant.

Patterns of union sponsorship

Unions chose to sponsor Labour candidates for a variety of reasons. Several had maintained traditions of sponsorship which pre-dated the formation of the LRC, most notably the Miners, whose first candidates had been returned as Lib-Lab MPs in 1874. The logic of sponsorship was bound up closely with the very principle of independent Labour representation in Parliament. Broad priorities were held in common across the sponsoring unions, although unsurprisingly the emphasis varied. First, these unions all faced industrial questions which they felt could best be solved through legislative change. Safety was the most basic of these, although many unions had an interest in wider questions of occupational health. In certain industries, notably mining, the matter of the legal regulation of working hours and wages was prominent. The organisational problems faced by a given industry might also influence a union's interest in parliamentary representation, for example, in railways or cotton. Such interest was in turn reinforced by action taken by the state on industrial questions. Parity with employers' interests also mattered: the RCA, with the smallest membership of these unions, regularly published in its annual reports a list of railway directors in parliament, next to a list of railway workers' representatives, which made for bleak reading after 1931.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the point was clear: if the employers were represented in parliament, so the union must be too. Secondly, these unions shared concerns around issues of political and social issues which again, could best be met by state action. Indeed, some unions were increasingly integrated into social policy, for example, in the administration of unemployment insurance following the 1911 National Insurance Act. A third priority was the defence of union interests against governmental or judicial interference in their own affairs. The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927 loomed large in this regard throughout the 1930s, whilst earlier challenges such as the Taff Vale and the Osborne judgments retained much of their symbolic power. Minkin points to the instrumental role of sponsored Members in defending union interests, whether as a fall-back in the context of failed negotiations, to put tactical pressure on, or acquire information from, ministers, or to garner publicity. He notes that such sponsorship could appear outdated in the post-war environment of apparently

³⁰⁸ See MSS.55/4/AR/9-11 RCA, *Annual Reports* with accounts and balance sheets, 1926-40.

permanent corporate relations between trade unions and the state, but this was not the case in the period under consideration here, given the limited success of the TUC's corporatism at this stage. Having a sponsored MP could also give a union prestige within the movement, even if the MP was not particularly effective; moreover, it contributed to keeping the party in Parliament rooted in working class experience.³⁰⁹ Rush notes that unions were not interested in losing elections, being 'principally interested in sponsoring MPs rather than candidates'.³¹⁰ Yet there could also be prestige in backing a number of candidates, whilst a sense of loyalty of duty to the labour movement could also prompt unions to become sponsors.

Definition of a trade union candidate, or for that matter a trade union MP, is potentially problematic. All candidates, as party members, were required under the party's constitution, to 'if eligible, be a member of a Trade Union affiliated to the Trades Union Congress or recognised by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress as a *bona fide* Trade Union'.³¹¹ Thus in a certain sense most eligible candidates were 'trade union candidates'. A *sponsored* candidate, however, for the purposes of this discussion, was one who was supported financially by a trade union. This entailed both the supply of election expenses and funding for constituency maintenance, as well as recognition as an 'official' candidate of the union. A substantial proportion of Labour candidates at each general election, for instance, were railway workers of various kinds – based on the available information, at least 52 candidates in 1929, 36 in 1931, and 53 in 1935. Of this total, only twenty, eighteen and 23 respectively were the officially sponsored candidates of the railway unions.³¹²

It is difficult to establish with a high degree of accuracy exactly how many candidates were sponsored by trade unions in the interwar period. The Labour party's own annual reports give no indication as to how many candidates were sponsored by trade unions and Divisional Labour parties respectively at the General Elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924, although they do reveal how many candidates were supported by the Co-operative party. The later practice of noting a candidate's sponsoring organisation after

³⁰⁹ Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, pp. 251-252.

³¹⁰ Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, p. 171.

³¹¹ Labour Party Constitution, 3.III.b., Labour Party *Annual Conference Report*, 1933.

³¹² This calculation is based on candidate information from *The Times House of Commons 1929* (London, 1929), *The Times House of Commons 1931* (London, 1931), and *The Times House of Commons 1935* (London, 1935).

his or her name in the full list of election candidates was not followed in these years. It is possible that this is simply the result of a stylistic preference in the production of the election report on the part of the party's National Agent, Egerton Wake, who died some months before the 1929 election. It is also possible that due to the difficulties of organising the funding of three elections in rapid succession, the identity of the sponsoring organisation was not given particular significance. It is reasonable to estimate that union sponsored candidates during these contests were greater in number than the 139 who fought seats for Labour in 1929: this is suggested by the singling out of the 'remarkable number' of DLP-sponsored candidates for special praise in the 1929 report, and that some unions were reporting having to scale back their grants to constituency parties by 1925 due to the burden of the additional electoral expenses.³¹³ Even when the party did give official figures for the elections of 1929, 1931 and 1935, accuracy as regards numbers remains problematic. The figure of 139 union-sponsored candidates for 1929 does appear to be correct, but the party's own figures for 1931 conflict: the figure of 129 is stated in the main report, but 132 appear on the list of candidates a few pages later. Inspection of union records suggests that 138 is probably a more accurate figure, although neither is this unproblematic. Similarly, for 1935, 129 appears to be closer to the real number than the figure of 132 given in the party report.³¹⁴ Both Harrison and Muller give slightly different modified totals, in Harrison's case based on union records.³¹⁵

Figure 3.1 gives the totals by sponsoring organisation for all Labour candidatures at general elections, figure 3.2 those for all successful Labour candidates. The general pattern was of a slow but tangible decrease in union candidatures across the period, whilst such candidates also tended to be more likely to be elected. This was due in large part to the way in which sponsorship 'followed the contours of local trade union strength in industrial areas'.³¹⁶ The MFGB gives the strongest example of this; Rush notes 'the concentration of its electoral effort in safe and impregnable seats'. Location,

³¹³ Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1923-25 and 1929; NUDAW, *Annual Report* 1925.

³¹⁴ Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1929; 1932, pp. 9 and 11-27; 1936.

³¹⁵ Although presumably not the same ones considered here. Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, p. 265-267; Muller, *The Kept Men?*, p.30. Others such as F. W. S. Craig, in *British Electoral Facts 1832-1987* (fifth edition, Aldershot, 1989), table 7.03 and 7.04, seem to have followed the party's official figures.

³¹⁶ Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 245.

Figure 3.1 All Labour candidatures by sponsoring organisation, general elections 1918-45

Sponsor	1918	1922	1923	1924	1929	1931	1935	1945
Trade unions	163	(157)	(129)	(144)	139	138	129	126
DLPs	140				364	315	398	445
Co-operative Party	0	11	10	10	12	15	21	33
ILP/Socialist Societies	54				54	23	4	
Total Labour candidates	357	413	428	515	569	491	552	604
(Unendorsed)						22		
Union candidates as % of total Labour candidatures	45.7%	(38.0%)	(30.1%)	(28.0%)	24.4%	28.1%	23.4%	20.9%

Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, modified by trade union records; G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948).

Note: The bracketed figures for 1922, 1923 and 1924 are rough estimates based on the lists of MPs and current prospective candidates published in the party's annual reports. They do not give an accurate representation of the numbers of sponsored candidates at these general elections, and are not used to inform calculations elsewhere in this chapter, but they do give an indication of the general pattern of union sponsorship.

Figure 3.2 Successful Labour candidatures by sponsoring organisation, general elections 1918-1945

	1918	1922	1923	1924	1929	1931	1935	1945
Trade unions	49	85	98	86	115	32	79	121
DLPs	5	19	35	25	128	13	66	249
Co-operative Party	0	4	6	4	9	1	9	23
ILP/Socialist Societies	3	34	52	36	36	0		
Total Labour MPs	57	142	191	151	288	46	154	393
(Unendorsed)						6		
Trade union MPs as % of successful candidates	86.0%	59.9%	51.3%	57.0%	39.9%	69.6%	51.3%	30.8%
% of trade union candidates successful	30.1%	54.1%	76.0%	59.7%	82.7%	23.2%	61.2%	96.0%
% of total Labour candidates successful	16.0%	34.4%	44.6%	29.3%	50.6%	9.4%	27.9%	65.1%
<i>Difference in success rate</i>	<i>14.1%</i>	<i>19.8%</i>	<i>31.3%</i>	<i>30.4%</i>	<i>32.1%</i>	<i>13.8%</i>	<i>33.3%</i>	<i>31.0%</i>

Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, modified by trade union records; G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948).

rather than the individual candidate, explains the logic behind the large number of mining candidatures: there was a feeling that coalfield constituencies should be represented by mining candidates.³¹⁷ This concentration in safer seats could be a point of contention: it appeared to represent a maldistribution of resources, with union support going where it was least needed. Pressure on political funds, as highlighted previously, goes some way to accounting for this: the majority of trade unions, Rush contends, were 'primarily interested in *winning seats not losing them*'.³¹⁸

Figure 3.3 gives the total of sponsored candidates at the general elections of 1929-45 by trade union. The 1929 figures can help contextualise union candidate sponsorship in the 1930s. The 1929 general election was contested by the largest number of Labour candidates to date, with the 'remarkable number of 364' sponsored by DLPs.³¹⁹ Thirty out of 85 affiliated unions, representing a political membership of 1,821,450, sponsored 139 Labour candidates, of whom 115 were elected. The MFGB was the largest sponsor, leading by some way. Other major sponsors included the TGWU, NUR, NUGMW and RCA. Most of these unions, allowing for the TGWU-Workers' Union merger, also supported candidates at the 1931 and 1935 general elections. A number of usually smaller unions sponsored either one or two candidates; these organisations, as will be seen below, did not all continue to sponsor into the 1930s. In total union candidatures accounted for just under a quarter of all Labour candidates in 1929, and 40% of those elected. A substantial body of 54 candidates were sponsored by the ILP in 1929, with 36 successful. Tensions within the ILP were already apparent, with disagreement over the function of the ILP parliamentary group and its relation to the wider ILP. One group, including the ILP chairman James Maxton and his fellow Clydeside MP John Wheatley, argued that ILP conference decisions should take precedence over Labour policy; they were opposed by others including Emmanuel Shinwell who felt that their primary loyalty should be to the Labour party.³²⁰ While Maxton and his allies were prepared to directly criticise and even vote against the Labour government, the wider ILP parliamentary group continued to support the

³¹⁷ Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, p. 172.

³¹⁸ Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 243, Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, p. 178, italics in original.

³¹⁹ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report 1929*, p. 8.

³²⁰ Gidon Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', *History* 86:282 (2001), 200-221, p. 208.

government; the group was open to all with ILP membership, and as such its potential membership exceeded 200 MPs including those sponsored by other organisations.³²¹ The 1930 ILP conference resolved to reconstruct the group on the basis of acceptance of ILP conference decisions, which would also be mandatory for future candidates: just eighteen MPs chose to remain in the group on these terms. Labour concerns over the pledge resulted in a tightening of PLP Standing Orders, barring votes against PLP decisions apart from on the grounds of conscience, whilst tension was heightened by the NEC's refusal to endorse Tom Irwin, the ILP's candidate for a by-election at Renfrew East in November 1930; similar disputes followed in several other constituencies.³²²

Candidatures proved problematic for Labour at the 1931 general election. Although some 491 official Labour candidates stood, many were last-minute appointments, particularly in constituencies where the current MP or candidate had chosen to follow MacDonald in supporting the National government.³²³ Union candidatures presented less difficulty. Some 27 unions out of 83 affiliates, representing 1,842,953 political members sponsored a total of 138 candidates. The MFGB and TGWU again supported 43 and 17 candidates respectively. The NUR's total dropped by one due to J. H. Thomas' defection to the National Government, whilst the NUGMW now supported an additional three candidates. The NUDAW's sponsored candidates fell to four, due to the death of William Mackinder, MP for Shipley (West Yorkshire), in 1930, and the union's failure to retain the seat at the by-election which followed. The RCA still sponsored eight candidates.³²⁴ Several unions who had sponsored candidates in 1929 did not do so again in 1931: some of these had been relatively small unions whose candidates had been defeated in 1929, such as the Blacksmiths, whose William Taylor lost at Chorley (Lancashire), and the Blastfurnacemen, who Henry Nixon had unsuccessfully represented at Gloucester.³²⁵ The ASLEF's general secretary John

³²¹ 142 MPs joined the ILP group after the election. David Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002), p. 288-289.

³²² Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', p. 210-211; Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931*, pp. 292-299.

³²³ Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 181-182.

³²⁴ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report 1931*, and most other accounts derived from this, suggest seven RCA candidates: they miss out A. W. Longbottom, who was the official RCA candidate for Halifax. See MSS.55/4/AR/10 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1931-35, RCA Annual Report 1931.

³²⁵ Taylor had played an important part in the successful 1918 campaign for political action within the ABFSWS. See Angela Tuckett, *The Blacksmiths' History. What Smithy Workers Gave Trade Unionism*

Bromley had retired as MP for Barrow-in-Furness (Lancashire), where the AEU's David Adams, a businessman and long-standing Newcastle councillor, was now the candidate.³²⁶ Despite the decision of the 1930 ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates to institute a special levy to support Bromley's candidature in the context of shrinking political fund income and financial problems within the constituency party, in January 1931 Bromley announced his intention to leave the Commons at the next election, citing his frustration both with the caution of the Labour government, and the manner in which its Education Bill had been undermined, partly through the opposition of several Catholic Labour backbenchers; for Bromley such disloyalty contrasted with the discipline of trade unionists who would not have voted to defeat the government in spite of reservations about its policies.³²⁷ F. E. White of the Plasterers, who had fought and lost at Stroud (Gloucestershire) in 1929, did not contest the seat again in 1931. The Plasterers' union had decided in 1924, during a flurry of political activity which also saw them affiliate to the National Council of Labour Colleges for the first time, to promote White, the union's Bristol organiser, as a candidate. By 1931, their political membership, never large, had dipped and the resulting loss of income presumably precluded a 1931 candidature. Two unions who had not been sponsors in 1929 did back candidates in 1931: the Operative Bleachers sponsored J. Barrow at Chorley, previously contested by the Blacksmiths' Taylor. The two years since the last election had seen a huge increase in the Bleachers' political membership from 2,000 to 10,000, equalling that of the Dyers' union, who already sponsored a candidate; this may have prompted the Bleachers to take similar action.³²⁸ The other new sponsoring union was the Life Assurance Workers, who funded S. L. Treleaven's campaign at Liverpool Everton. This seems to have been a case of the union stepping in in an emergency: the sitting Labour candidate, Derwent Hall Caine, had followed MacDonald in August and stood for National Labour.³²⁹ The Conservative toy manufacturer Frank Hornby

(London, 1974), p. 179. Nixon was chairman of the NUBOMKT and had represented the Wrekin for Labour in the 1923 Parliament; *The Times House of Commons 1929* (London, 1929), p. 41.

³²⁶ Barbara Nield, 'Adams, David (1871-1943)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IV, pp. 1-2.

³²⁷ For Bromley see David Howell, 'Bromley, John (1876-1945)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XIII, pp. 42-62; and David Howell, *Respectable Radicals. Studies in the politics of railway trade unionism* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 271-292.

³²⁸ Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports 1929-32*; J. R. Newman, *The N.A.O.P. Heritage. A short historical review of the National Association of Operative Plasterers, 1860-1960* (Wembley, 1960), pp. 13 and 46 for White.

³²⁹ David Howell, 'Hall Caine, Sir Derwent (1891-1971)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XII, pp. 119-123.

won the seat in a three-cornered fight. Treleaven, who came third, was readopted for the constituency in 1932, but this time as a candidate of the local party.³³⁰ Union candidates now accounted for 28 per cent of all Labour candidates, and nearly 70 per cent of those elected. The Co-operative Party, standing by Labour in the crisis, increased its candidatures by three to fifteen: these included its main national personalities A. V. Alexander (Sheffield Hillsborough), Samuel Perry (Kettering, Northants.), Alfred Barnes (East Ham South), and the first Co-operative MP, A. E. Waterson (Nottingham Central). All were defeated apart from the relative newcomer William Leonard, who held the seat, Glasgow St. Rollox, for which he had been returned at a by-election earlier in the year.³³¹ ILP candidatures presented a difficulty. The 1931 Labour party conference had overwhelmingly voted to deny endorsement to candidates who refused to accept Standing Orders. 23 ILP candidates accepted and were endorsed; a further 24 refused to do so, resulting in their fighting the election without endorsement. Seventeen fought as ILP candidates, the rest as 'Independent Labour'; in two cases, they faced official Labour opposition.³³² Six were elected, of whom four – Maxton, John McGovern, George Buchanan and David Kirkwood – were closely associated with the radical ILP traditions of Clydeside.³³³

At the 1935 general election, DLP representation increased to a new record of 398 of a total of 554 Labour candidatures. Union candidatures appear to have declined slightly both in number and as a proportion of all Labour candidates: they now represented 24 percent of candidatures and 51 per cent of successful candidatures. 27 out of 74 affiliates, with a total political membership of 1,770,354 sponsored a total

³³⁰ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1932, p. 289.

³³¹ For Alexander, see John Tilley, *Churchill's Favourite Socialist. A Life of A. V. Alexander* (Manchester, 1995); for Perry, Keith Gildart, 'Perry, Samuel Frederick (1877-1954)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XII, pp. 226-233. Leonard's was 'a seat for which the Co-operative Movement was to be truly thankful' given the approach of the National government to the issue of co-operative taxation, Thomas F. Carbery, *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party* (Manchester, 1969), p. 37.

³³² John McGovern (Glasgow Shettleston) and John Beckett (Camberwell Peckham) faced Labour opponents. Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931*, pp. 182-183. For the full list of unendorsed candidates, see Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1932, p. 295. 24 names are listed; they do not include C. A. O'Donnell, who fought Glasgow Hillhead, apparently also without Labour endorsement: he does not appear in the full list of candidates elsewhere in the Report either, although sources such as *The Times House of Commons 1931* (London, 1931) suggest he fought in the Labour interest, as he had in 1929: he was likely the 25th unendorsed candidate.

³³³ The others were Richard Wallhead (Merthyr Tydfil) and Josiah Wedgwood (Newcastle-under-Lyme).

Figure 3.3 Sponsoring unions: numbers of candidates at general elections, 1929-45.

Union	1929	1931	1935	1945
NUAW (Agricultural)				3
NAULAW (Life Assurance)		1		1
AUOBCAW (Bakers)			1	
ABFSWS (Blacksmiths)	1			
NUBOMKT (Blastfurnacemen)	1			
OBDFa (Op. Bleachers)		1	1	
USB&ISS (Boilermakers)	4	4	2	
NUBSO (Boot & Shoe)	5	5	3	4
AUBTW (Builders)		1	1	1
CMSA (Chainmakers)	1	1		
NUCAW (Clerks)				1
LSC (Compositors)	2	2	2	2
NUDAW (Distributive & Allied)	5	4	7	7
ASDBFKT (Amalg. Dyers)	1	1	1	
ETU (Electricians)				1
AEU (Engineering)	3	3	3	4
NUFW (Foundry)	1	1		
NUGMW (General & Municipal)	8	11	11	10
BISAKTA (Iron & Steel)	5	4	2	2
ASLEF (Loco Engineers & Firemen)	1		1	1
MFGB (Miners)	43	43	40	35
NASOHSPD (Painters)	1	1	1	
UPA (Patternmakers)	1	1	1	2
DPRS (Postal)				1
NSPW (Pottery)	1	1	1	
NATSOPA (Printers)	1	1	1	1
NAOP (Plasterers)	1			
PSU (Prudential Staff)	1			
RCA (Railway Clerks)	8	8	10	9
NUR (Railwaymen)	11	10	12	13
NUS (Seamen)			1	
NAUSAWC (Shop Assistants)	1	1	2	1
UTFWA (Textile Factory)	6	8	6	3
NUTW (Textile)	1	1	1	
TGWU (Transport & General)	11	17	11	18
TA (Typographical)	1	1	2	2
NUVB (Vehicle Builders)	1	1	1	
ASW (Woodworkers)	6	5	4	4
WU (Workers' Union)	6			
TOTAL	139	138	129	126

Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, modified by trade union records; Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*.

of 129 candidates. The MFGB and TGWU totals declined slightly, whilst the NUR, RCA and NUDAW all increased their candidatures to twelve, ten and seven respectively. Three unions who had not contested seats in 1931 now did so: J. W. Banfield, the Bakers' general secretary, had won Wednesbury (Staffordshire) in a 1932 by-election and successfully defended the seat, whereas an ASLEF candidate, Walter Monslow now stood at Newcastle Central.³³⁴ Charles Jarman, of the National Union of Seamen, which had re-affiliated to the party in 1933, contested Birmingham Yardley. No longer sponsoring were the Foundry Workers, whose only candidate, Arthur Henderson, died just prior to the election, the Life Assurance Workers, and the Chainmakers. C. H. Sitch had been the Chainmakers' MP for Kingswinford (Staffordshire) since 1918, and lost his seat in 1931. He was also the union's general secretary, but was gaoled for defrauding the union's funds in 1933. After this the union seemed to be in serious decline politically: by June 1936, its political membership had fallen to just 50. In these circumstances it was unlikely to have wanted to sponsor a candidate; Arthur Henderson junior won the seat as the local party's candidate.³³⁵ In an environment of press and government hostility to co-operation, the Co-operative Party increased its candidatures to 21.³³⁶ The now-disaffiliated ILP stood candidates in seventeen seats; all faced Labour opposition, with four ILPers proving successful. Disaffiliation led to the 'complete reshaping of Scottish Labour politics', with one of Labour's previously strongest regions becoming one of the weakest. One reaction was the formation of the Scottish Socialist Party [SSP], which claimed over 1,000 members by September 1932, including many of the former Scottish ILP's leading figures such as Patrick Dollan, Tom Johnston and David Kirkwood. The SSP's establishment, based on the need to 'replicate the comprehensive organisation of the ILP, rather than address the organisational needs of the Labour Party' led to some confusion and

³³⁴ For Monslow see Keith Gildart, 'Monslow, Walter (Baron Monslow of Barrow-in-Furness) (1895–1966)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XIII*, pp. 251–266. A supporter of Bromley, Monslow had been active in local government in Wrexham and enjoyed a growing reputation in the union, elected to the National Executive in 1937–39, and appointed a full time organiser in 1940. In 1945 he followed in Bromley's footsteps, being elected as an ASLEF-sponsored MP for Barrow-in-Furness, holding the seat until his retirement in 1966.

³³⁵ Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports* 1935–6; Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan, *The Seamen. A History of the National Union of Seamen* (London, 1989), p. 135; Eric Taylor, 'Sitch, Charles Henry (1887–1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47381>, accessed 23 May 2017].

³³⁶ See Peter Gurney, 'The Curse of the Co-ops': Co-operation, the Mass Press and the Market in Interwar Britain', *English Historical Review* 130:547 (2015), 1479–1512.

duplication of functions, although it did affiliate to Labour; the smaller organisation backed four of its own candidates in 1935.³³⁷

The total candidatures of a number of medium-sized sponsoring unions declined between 1929 and 1935 and requires some explanation. BISAKTA had sponsored four candidates in 1931, of whom only one, Tom Griffiths at Pontypool (Monmouthshire), was successful. The union's finance committee revealed that as a result of the election expenses paid, the union's political fund was in deficit of £546: as a result, it was decided to reduce future candidatures to two.³³⁸ Although not popular with many in the union, the NUBSO's 1934 conference reduced its number of candidates from five to three,³³⁹ and the Woodworkers' new rules also limited their number of candidatures, which had been as many as six in 1929, to just four.³⁴⁰ These developments were partly as a result of a decline in the availability of political fund resources, in the context of the 1927 Act and the slump; they also reflected a shift towards the concentration of a larger number of candidatures being sponsored by a few unions.

While finance was a major consideration in decisions about how many candidates to sponsor, political membership could also provide a useful metric, and might be incorporated into the union's rulebook. The AEU's rules stipulated that 'there shall be elected one candidate for every 15,000 members contributing to the Political Fund of the Union'.³⁴¹ In this period the Engineers' political membership was never high enough for it to support another official candidate, and any attempt to do so by its Executive might well have struggled to secure the support of the majority of members – and, after 1935, a rapidly growing majority – who did not contract in to the fund. The AEU was not the only union to tie its support for candidates to a particular political

³³⁷ Keith Laybourn, 'The disaffiliation crisis of 1932: the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the opinion of ILP members', in K. Laybourn and J. Shepherd (eds.), *Labour and Working Class Lives. Essays to celebrate the life and work of Chris Wrigley* (Manchester, 2017), p. 113; W. W. Knox, and A. Mackinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History* 6:2 (1995), 174-193. This was to be the SSP's only general election contest: it was wound up in 1940 following defeat in an ongoing legal dispute over funds with the ILP, and its members joined the Labour Party.

³³⁸ Arthur Pugh, *Men of Steel. A Chronicle of Eighty-Eight Years of Trade Unionism in the British Iron and Steel Industry* (London, 1951), p. 474.

³³⁹ Alan Fox, *A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, 1874-1957* (Oxford, 1958), p. 473.

³⁴⁰ Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Rules* (Manchester, 1937), Rule 36.

³⁴¹ AEU Rules, (London, 1931), Rule 45.2.

membership: the MFGB had adopted a similar policy at a special conference in 1928, agreeing to support one candidate for every 10,000 political members.³⁴² However, the position here was slightly more complicated. Although the Federation nationally was responsible for providing the candidates' election expenses, the district unions were responsible for all other aspects of the candidature, including the actual administration of those expenses. The combined effect of the introduction of contracting in from 1927, and the aftermath of the 1926 lock-out had considerably reduced the political memberships, and the political fund reserves, of the district unions. By 1929, several districts had more sitting MPs who they again intended to back as candidates than their much reduced political memberships allowed under MFGB rules. Figure 3.4 illustrates this. The South Wales Miners' Federation was entitled on the basis of its political membership to MFGB financial support for four candidates in 1929, five in 1931 and six in 1935, yet in fact ten, ten and twelve SWMF candidates stood respectively at each election. In contrast other districts did not take up their full allocation of candidates: the Durham Miners' Association is the best example. This may have been the result of the Durham Miners supporting a larger number of DLP candidates. Although the SWMF was able to give £10 to Monmouth DLP's candidate, Michael Foot, in 1935, the DMA gave more substantial amounts to support Hugh Dalton at Bishop Auckland and Emmanuel Shinwell at Seaham at the same election.³⁴³ The large number of uncontested seats in the South Wales coalfield also likely contributed to the discrepancy: in 1931, SWMF candidates had clear runs at Aberdare, Abertillery, Bedwellty and Ebbw Vale; in 1935, Aberdare, Rhondda West, Neath, Ogmore, Pontypridd, Abertillery and Bedwellty were all uncontested.

The position was quite different in the general unions, which by 1935 supported a relatively small number of candidates despite large political memberships. The TGWU/Workers' Union sponsored one candidate per 12,235 and 13,853 political members in 1929 and 1931 respectively, although by 1935 the figure had decreased to one candidate per 22,520 political members. This fall requires some explanation: it was not due to a significant increase in political membership, but was arguably instead

³⁴² See D.845.62 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1929-30, MFGB executive meeting, 12 April 1929.

³⁴³ MNA/NUM/3/3/58 SWMF Political Correspondence. Sidney Owens (Foot's Monmouth Agent) to Oliver Harris, 31 October 1935; Harris to Owens, 6 November 1935.

Figure 3.4 MFGB Areas: candidates at general elections, 1929-35

MFGB Area	1929		1931		1935	
	Candidates entitled to MFGB support	Total candidates	Candidates entitled to MFGB support	Total candidates	Candidates entitled to MFGB support	Total candidates
Cleveland	1	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cumberland	1	1	1	1	1	1
Derbyshire	1	1	1	1	1	1
Durham	10	7	10	7	10	5
Lancashire	4	5	4	5	4	4
Midlands	0	0	1	1	1	1
Northumberland	2	2	2	2	2	2
Scotland	2	7	3	7	2	7
South Wales	4	10	5	10	6	12
Yorkshire	10	9	9	9	9	7
Total	34	43	36	43	36	40

Note: Figures from MFGB Annual Proceedings & Reports, 1929, 1931 and 1935. The 1929 MFGB Annual Report gives the number of candidates receiving the Federation support to which they were entitled as 32. The MFGB figure excludes two candidates from the Scottish Area, which had not supplied the names of its candidates when the Federation's list was being compiled. See MFGB Executive Committee minutes for 12 April 1929; these candidates are included above. A grant of £100 was supplied for each candidate beyond the limit to which the area was entitled.

the result of the process of consolidating the merger with the Workers' Union.³⁴⁴ The WU had added six candidates to the TGWU's eleven nominees in 1929, and although several of these six were still in place as TGWU candidates in 1935, the union now returned to backing eleven candidates, implying the 1931 figure was an inflated one – more so, perhaps, given the late candidature of Ernest Bevin himself for Gateshead, discussed below. Political fund reserves stayed almost static until 1936, and so an expansion of candidatures would have been difficult to justify, particularly in the aftermath of TGWU frustration with the party's action over the selection at Clay Cross in 1933.³⁴⁵ Perhaps the most interesting figures based on political membership are those of the RCA, the smallest of the main sponsoring unions in terms of political membership, which punched considerably above its weight by supporting one candidate for as few as every 4800 political members in 1935.³⁴⁶ This also strongly suggests that political membership alone was not sufficient to account for the number of candidatures; we must turn to the unions' own procedures for selection developed in order to explore this further.

Choosing the candidates: parliamentary panels

Unions used different systems to select and support their candidates. Making sure the right candidates were chosen was a chief consideration, and many trade unionists were acutely aware of this. Defining the 'right' candidate, however, was more difficult. Ability to effectively represent their organisation mattered, although there was a danger of being rather too representative of the membership to the detriment of other qualities, as the comments of one UTFWA conference delegate illustrate.

He was afraid that the L[egislative] C[ouncil] [...] had too narrow an outlook, and had not found out what the ordinary elector looked out for in a Parliamentary candidate. They did not ask if a man could run four looms, or walk about a mulegate, or if he knew anything about cotton [...] They, as

³⁴⁴ These calculations use affiliated political membership figures. The TGWU affiliated on 235,500 members in 1931, and 247,715 in 1935. Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1931 and 1935.

³⁴⁵ This is considered in detail below.

³⁴⁶ In 1935, ten candidates on an affiliated membership of 48,000. Labour Party *Annual Conference Report*, 1935.

textile people, had got to realise that, and widen their outlook. [...] The sooner they realised that Parliament should not be considered as a rest house for tired trade union officials, the sooner they would get something actively done.³⁴⁷

In some unions, a democratic mandate from the membership at large was considered necessary; political loyalty was also required. As the comments above demonstrate, an individual's aptitude for the role of MP was not always prioritised over other considerations. Internal selection procedure was determined to a large extent by which attributes were most prized. As indicated above, the federal unions allocated places in proportion to the size of their constituent unions. This had a geographical basis in the MFGB, whose district unions were responsible for nominating candidates. This seems to have been on a mainly *ad hoc* basis, although after 1935 the Durham district introduced a new system whereby lodges in a division were balloted to select a union candidate, whom they were then bound to support at the next divisional selection conference.³⁴⁸ The Federation at national level was largely excluded: local representativeness was the key consideration here. A more common approach was the use of a 'parliamentary panel' of candidates, for which the union would then attempt to find suitable seats. The method used for the selection of panel candidates varied, although there was often an elected element. Two unions, the NUR and AEU, prioritised a democratic mandate above all, balloting their entire memberships.³⁴⁹

The NUR offers the best example of this. The union had first introduced a panel system in 1923, when a special conference agreed to ballot for seven additional candidates to supplement the union's existing five MPs. With 'a view to eliminating nominations with no prospect of success', each prospective candidate required the nominations of twenty branches, and to have been a fully paid-up member for not less than five years preceding nomination. The Industrial General Secretary and the Organising Secretaries were prohibited from standing, but there was to be no age limit. Following the election, the Executive Committee would 'endeavour to secure suitable divisions

³⁴⁷ T. McCall of the Textile Warehousemen, TU/3/2/5 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1936, pp. 37-8.

³⁴⁸ W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners, 1919-1960*. (London, 1971), p. 348.

³⁴⁹ This was a reflection of the AEU's craft union tradition of elections for every available position.

near or adjacent to the candidates' place of residence'.³⁵⁰ This had important implications for the NUR's later approach to candidatures: prospective candidates would need to be reasonably well known, at least sufficiently to gain the support of the requisite twenty branches, and furthermore, decisions about sponsorship would be based primarily not on the suitability of particular constituencies, but the convenience of the candidate.

The union balloted its membership to add an additional five candidates to its existing seven MPs in 1930, with William Dobbie, Joseph Henderson, J. W. Gordon, George Ward and H. Kegie being elected.³⁵¹ Ten NUR candidates fought the 1931 general election, and, all of them having been defeated, three, G. H. Sherwood, Arthur Law and F. G. Burgess retired. A series of developments had embarrassed the union through 1930-1: from J. H. Thomas' disappointing record as the Labour minister responsible for tackling the problem of unemployment, his subsequent defeat in the ballot for the party Executive in 1930, and his decision to join the National government in August 1931, the loss of an NUR seat at the Ashton-under-Lyne (Lancashire) by-election earlier that year, and the defeat of all of its candidates in October. In this context, the union seems to have been determined to improve both its Parliamentary standing and reputation in the wider movement, and so its Executive decided early in 1932 to ballot for an additional eight panel members, increasing the size of the panel to fifteen. The candidates who had retired remained eligible for re-election. The union was also concerned to take ability as a future MP into consideration; to this end an age limit of 60 had been introduced in 1931, although Burgess, who was older, was able to avoid exclusion by virtue of having previously been an NUR MP.³⁵² An exhaustive ballot was conducted by the Proportional Representation Society in April on the transferable vote system. There were 44 candidates. The entire political membership was sent ballot papers, of which 53,521 eligible papers were returned – around a quarter of the union's 1932 levy-paying members.³⁵³ This suggests that even

³⁵⁰ MSS.127/NU/1/1/11 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1923, *NUR Agenda and Decisions of the Special General Meeting*, December 1923, pp. 7-8. There were 34 candidates; 80579 valid ballot papers were returned.

³⁵¹ There were a total of 23 candidates; 70,630 valid ballot papers were returned. MSS.127/NU/1/1/18 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1930, minutes of executive committee, July 1930 special meeting.

³⁵² MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, minutes of executive committee, March 1932 quarterly meeting.

³⁵³ The eight elected, including their branch and final vote, were: 1). F. G. Burgess, Maidstone, 25136; 2). Arthur Law, Newton Heath No. 1, 18643; 3). William McAdam, Glasgow No. 8, 16659; 4). G. H.

in unions which did hold a panel ballot, interest in the choice of parliamentary candidates among even the political membership was not particularly high, especially when compared with the 97,898 members who voted to choose delegates to that year's union annual general meeting.³⁵⁴ When Gordon retired from the panel on the grounds of ill health in 1933, he was replaced by the first runner-up, Adam Hills, who had come ninth. To be well-known within the union was clearly an advantage in panel elections: Dobbie, Henderson and Hills had all served on the Executive, but also had backgrounds in local government,³⁵⁵ and a big vote in a particular region could potentially make the difference between panel election and defeat. On Law's death in 1934, the Executive decided not to fill the vacancy on the panel, arguing that not only was the 1932 ballot held so long ago as to be irrelevant, but also that the current panel of fourteen 'is two more than the number in 1923, when we had 90,000 more political members and £3474 more annual income'; moreover, the previous year's decision to introduce an examination for candidates would mean the 'heavy expense' of organising both the examination and a national ballot just to fill one place on the panel. Given such financial considerations, the panel would remain at fourteen members.³⁵⁶ Four NUR MPs were elected in 1935, and three of these were to remain on the panel, in addition to James Wilson, by virtue of his having previously been an MP.³⁵⁷ Harry Charleton would no longer be entitled to the union's support after the next election, having reached the age limit. The five candidates elected to the panel in 1932 would remain until July 1937, by which date a new ballot for a further eight candidates – now reducing the panel back to the original size of twelve – would need to be held. Five years on the panel without success was the limit, and Kegie and Ward were now required to step down.³⁵⁸

Sherwood, Wakefield No. 3, 17500; 5). P. G. Barstow, West Hendon, 14556; 6). John Benstead, Peterborough No. 1, 12164; 7). J. Grierson, Gorton No. 2, 11410; 8). C. J. Kelly, King's Cross No. 2, 10339. MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, *NUR Agenda and Decisions of the Annual General Meeting*, 1932, pp. 78-97

³⁵⁴ MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, minutes of executive committee, March 1932 quarterly meeting.

³⁵⁵ All had been aldermen: Dobbie in York, Henderson in Carlisle, and Hills in Newcastle.

³⁵⁶ MSS.127/NU/1/1/22 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1934, *NUR Agenda and Decisions of the Annual General Meeting*, 1934, pp. 92-3.

³⁵⁷ Wilson sat as one of the two Members for Oldham, 1929-31. He had previously represented Dudley, winning a by-election for Labour in March 1921, before losing the seat at the 1922 general election.

³⁵⁸ MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1936, *NUR Agenda and Decisions of the Annual General Meeting*, 1936, pp. 10-13.

The new panellists would be the first to be examined on their broader credentials. The test covered knowledge of 'English, public speaking, the history and objects of the national and international trade union, Labour and co-operative movements, and...legislation affecting transport', supplemented by an oral test. The NUR was at this stage the only union to introduce such a test, and although perhaps indicative of a consciousness of the need to professionalise its selection of candidates, the subjects tested seem to have been as much to do with political loyalty as with detailed knowledge of the politics of railway issues or parliamentary skills, as the extract in Figure 3.5 demonstrates. The union was the first, however, to make use of an examination of any kind, an approach that would be common more common after 1945.³⁵⁹ The NUR was taking the first steps towards the professionalization of the selection process. 42 of the fifty nominees qualified for the test, and just thirteen scored the requisite sixty per cent to go forward to the ballot. Pending several appeals about the outcome of the test, the announcement of the ballot result was delayed until the 1937 annual general meeting, and the 43,484 eligible papers returned again suggest a lack of interest among the political membership, particular when contrasted with previous ballots; this may in itself have contributed to the move away from basing the choice entirely on an elected basis.³⁶⁰

The RCA had been experimenting with an elected panel system since 1917. At this point it sponsored just one candidate, A. G. Walkden at Wolverhampton West, but its initial attempt at forming a panel was unsuccessful: a two-thirds majority was needed for election, which only one candidate succeeded in attaining. The following year, the union instead selected an additional fifteen candidates to form the panel. From 1919, it was agreed that the panel, apart from those who had been adopted for constituencies, would be elected at each annual conference. A 1923 report on candidatures supported the continuation of this system, but concerns were clearly

³⁵⁹ Tests became a key part of an ambitious AEU sponsorship strategy during the 1950s, also involving training of various kinds. See Irwin Richter, *Political Purpose in Trade Unions* (London, 1973), pp. 52-58. By the 1960s, BISAKTA, NUBSO, and the Scottish Area of the NUM were also using examinations as part of their selection procedure, whilst the NUR had moved over to a co-option strategy. Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, appendix C, p. 293.

³⁶⁰ The eight elected, including their branch and final vote, were: 1). William McAdam, Glasgow No. 8, 18267; 2). P. G. Barstow, West Hendon, 18536; 3). W. T. Proctor, Pontypool No. 1, 17756; 4). A. Balfour, Aberdeen No. 1, 17823; 5). J. B. Hynd, Wood Green, 18888; 6). D. T. Jones, Pontypridd No. 2, 13780; 7). I. O. Thomas, Battersea No. 1, 16642; 8). W. Wilcock, Chorley, 13330. MSS.127/NU/1/1/25 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1937, *NUR Agenda and Decisions of the Annual General Meeting*, 1937, pp. 143-147.

Figure 3.5 Extract from NUR Parliamentary Panel Written Examination Paper, 1936

Questions 7-12: The Political Labour Movement		100 marks
7	Explain the origin of the Labour Party?	20 marks
8	Explain the 'Osborne' Judgment and how the difficulty it created was overcome?	20 marks
9	What are the main objects of the Labour Party and what are the conditions of membership?	20 marks
10	Why has the Labour Party so far refused the application of the Communist Party for affiliation?	10 marks
11	What were the chief proposals in the Labour Party Programme at the last General Election, including all those involving public ownership?	20 marks
12	Name the international body to which the Labour Party is affiliated?	10 marks

Source: MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1936: NUR Executive, minutes of quarterly meeting, September 1936, Political Sub-committee report.

emerging as to whether the union was overstretching itself. Two of the report committee published their reservations as an appendix, arguing that the policy followed so far was 'fundamentally unsound...no attempt has been made to build up any reserve...we should work from responsibilities to finance, not finance to responsibilities' and suggested a policy of one candidate per 10,000 members.³⁶¹ Such concerns continued to resurface. A resolution was moved at the 1934 conference suggesting an identical ratio of candidates to members, although this was easily defeated.³⁶² The Executive seem to have been reluctant to place all of the candidates in constituencies, perhaps due to financial anxieties; despite the full panel consisting of fifteen members, only ten of these fought the 1935 general election. The system of voting for the panel at annual conference, thereby using branch block votes, meant that the proportion of the political membership represented was high: for example, 42,725 of a possible 48,000 votes were registered for F. B. Simpson when he topped the poll in 1934.³⁶³ This allowed the Executive to continue to refer to the RCA's high level of political engagement, but disguised how far the membership at large was interested in participating politically. The Executive did not always have its own way with the panel: in 1936 it had attempted to withdraw its support for the Halifax constituency, where its candidate, A. W. Longbottom, had been readopted. The Halifax branch, with Longbottom as their delegate, appealed against this at the 1937 RCA Conference, arguing that they could not break existing commitments, and that moreover, it was likely that Halifax would return a Labour candidate at the next election. George Lathan's reply for the Executive insisted that the RCA's methods in terms of candidatures were 'infinitely more satisfactory' than those of many other unions, but was unable to convince the conference to reject the appeal, and Longbottom remained the candidate.³⁶⁴ The Executive arguably did make its own position difficult here by refusing to reveal its reasoning for dropping Halifax, but this did demonstrate that on occasion a union conference could exercise control over parliamentary candidatures in the face of platform opposition.

³⁶¹ MSS.55/4/POL/2-24 RCA policy statements, 1914-63, 'Report of Committee to inquire regarding Parliamentary Candidatures and Related Questions', 1923.

³⁶² MSS.55/1/CON/60a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1934.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ MSS.55/1/CON/65b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1937, pp. 71-8.

The NUDAW also used an elective panel system to choose its candidates. By 1925 it was sponsoring seven candidates. Death and retirement had left the union with two parliamentary candidates in 1932, Ellen Wilkinson and Rhys J. Davies MP, in addition to W. A. Robinson, the union's political general secretary. That year's annual delegate meeting agreed a new parliamentary representation scheme, in which an additional four candidates were to be elected to form a panel of six. Six substitute candidates were also to be elected to fill vacancies that might arise in the main panel. Eligibility required five years political membership, and candidates who were without a seat after six years were obliged to retire from the panel, whilst remaining eligible for the substitute panel. Substitute panellists were to retire at the end of every two years in line with other elected positions in the union. Panel members who were adopted for constituencies other than those organised through the union would forfeit their place, as did Tom Myers when adopted for Stretford (Lancashire) in 1934. Getting into Parliament was not impossible for substitute panellists: Evelyn Walkden topped the substitute poll in 1934 and then found himself as NUDAW candidate for Rossendale (Lancashire) at the 1935 general election, owing to the withdrawal of the union's C. R. Flynn, who was also NUDAW's Northern Divisional Officer, at short notice.³⁶⁵ NUDAW was one of the handful of sponsoring unions which operated a substitute panel, and it seems to have been a relatively efficient way of maintaining interest in additional parliamentary representation whilst not, at least for a six-year period, placing existing panellists in any uncertainty. The election of substitute panellists by the annual meeting, as in the RCA, however, does make it difficult to assess the level of engagement with the process through the union more broadly.

Elected panels could be time-consuming, whether conducted by membership ballot or on a card vote at conference. This was particularly the case where existing candidates, having been defeated at an election, had to re-apply as panellists. If a CLP was keen to re-adopt them, it was forced either to wait, or worse, wait and conduct a new selection if the former candidate had not made it back onto the union's panel. The general unions operated selective panel systems, perhaps in recognition of the impracticality of panel elections within unions organised internally along trade as well

³⁶⁵ Although he was defeated on this occasion. NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1934 and 1935. For Flynn see Margaret 'Espinasse and John Saville, 'Flynn, Charles Richard (1882-1957)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography III*, pp. 80-81.

as geographical divisions. This left the choice of candidate to the Executive. Panel size was still a matter of debate, however: the NUGMW panel was set at twelve by the 1930 biennial congress, although the places were only filled at the discretion of the Executive. Alternative suggestions of ten and fourteen panellist were rejected, presumably twelve was chosen as a compromise, although the union did expand its total candidatures to eleven in 1931.³⁶⁶ Attempts to increase the panel to fifteen were rejected by the 1932 and 1934 congresses: it is notable that the union only had two MPs at this time. The selection system excluded the membership from the process to some extent, although the Executive was willing to respond to local appeals for candidates and delegate responsibility to its district organisations.³⁶⁷ Perhaps inevitably, selection resulted in candidates who were well-known to the Executive being chosen – including several officials. Arguably the system introduced by the TGWU in 1933 gave the greatest flexibility. Prior to this the union's approach had been somewhat confusing: although 'reserve' candidates were already in place alongside the TGWU's 'official' or 'active' list, in 1928 the union sought nominations for a 'secondary list' of candidates in order to be prepared for any selection emergencies.³⁶⁸ The absorption of the Workers' Union, including its parliamentary candidates, in 1929 had the potential to complicate matters further, but it was not until the spring of 1933 that an overhaul was made. The problems of parliamentary candidatures were clearly animating Bevin at this stage, with the Hastings Agreement arising from the discussions initiated by him soon afterwards. A report to the TGWU Executive Council recommended that the number of candidates the union might support would be left at the Council's discretion, whilst instead of the existing lists a central file would be compiled of 'suitable' union members recommended 'from time to time' by the union's Area and National Trade Group Committees. A statement of 'the qualifications of the members concerned' would be needed in order to help the Executive make a decision about suitability, this question having been 'not closely examined' in the compilation of the last list in 1931. The file would be used by the Executive in considering all future parliamentary nominations to allow them to select a candidate 'with special regard to

³⁶⁶ TU/GENERALB/1/A/6 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1930, NUGMW *Biennial Delegate Congress Report* 1930; Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1931.

³⁶⁷ TU/GENERALB/1/A/8 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1932, NUGMW *Biennial Delegate Congress Report*, 1932 and TU/GENERALB/1/A/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934, NUGMW *Biennial Delegate Congress Report*, 1934. See the case of Warrington in 1934, discussed below.

³⁶⁸ MSS.126/TG/1154/7 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1928.

the nature of the constituency' involved.³⁶⁹ Not only did this go some way to separating the initial consideration of candidatures from the electoral cycle, consequently reducing delay in the reselection of candidates after an election which was often a hallmark of the panel system, but it lessened the likelihood of area or trade group complaints over the constitution of panels, with the details of possible candidates available only to the Executive, and no formal limit to the number of candidatures the union was prepared to entertain. A supportive area or trade group secretary was a clear advantage to a potential candidate, but nomination was still possible even where personal relations were poor: the future general secretary Jack Jones may have considered his area secretary in Liverpool, Harry Pugh, a firmly hostile 'old adversary', but Pugh was still prepared to recommend him directly to Bevin as 'a very good candidate' for the West Toxteth division of the city.³⁷⁰ This was a different approach to the professionalization of candidatures than that taken by the NUR, but efficiency and flexibility in selection could be much improved by this method.

For their advantages, however, the methods of selection employed by unions often served to entrench the relatively elderly and overwhelmingly male image of the union MP or candidate. In those unions which used an elected panel, to be reasonably well-known within the organisation was essential, and in general, age worked as an advantage here; younger contenders were more likely to be eliminated earlier in the process. The case of the AEU is illustrative: of 36 nominees on the first ballot for the union's 1932 panel, the average age was 48.9 years, but that of the eight remaining on the final ballot was 57.6 years. In the election to the 1936 panel, the 34 first-round candidates were aged 51.1 years on average; the final eight averaged 60 years. The four successful finalists were aged 59 on average in 1932, and 63 in 1936.³⁷¹ The

³⁶⁹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/11 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1933, appendix iii to GEC minutes of 22 May 1933, 'Report and recommendations of the Finance and General Purposes Committee regarding the Union Parliamentary List'.

³⁷⁰ Jack Jones, *Union Man. The Autobiography of Jack Jones* (Abersychan, 2008 [original 1986]), pp. 36-37, 84-85; MSS.126/EB/X/23, Bevin notes of discussions, 1936-40: 'Note of discussion between the general secretary and Brother H. O. Pugh, 21 February 1939'. Jones considered Pugh to be attempting to engineer his removal from the TGWU National Dock Group Committee; given that Pugh referred specifically to Jones' membership of this committee in his conversation with Bevin, it is quite possible that Pugh's recommendation was of less benevolent origin: if elected to Parliament, Jones would forfeit his committee place.

³⁷¹ Calculated from AEU ballot slips in AEU EC Minutes 1932 and 1936. 1932 first ballot, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/47 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1932, meeting of 25 May 1932; second ballot, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/48 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1932, meeting of 18 July 1932. 1936 first ballot, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/63 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1936,

NUR candidates were noticeably more youthful than those of other unions, with an average age of 44 years in 1932 and 42.6 years in 1936 – but here an age limit was applied.³⁷²

More striking was the tiny number of women trade union candidates. Pamela Graves has argued that a ‘deep-seated attachment to the idea of separate gender spheres’ within the labour movement, embodied by the separate Women’s Sections of the party from 1918, inhibited effective co-operation between the sexes, effectively shutting women out of the deliberations of the national party, whilst blinding male colleagues to the value of labour women’s organisational, propaganda and management skills; by the 1930s, in waiving gender claims in support of party unity, Labour women ‘accepted integration into the mainstream party on the terms offered by the male majority’.³⁷³ Fewer women parliamentary candidates was one effect of this process. Allowing for the limited nature of the data for the 1922, 1923 and 1924 elections, after 1918 only two women – Margaret Bondfield of the NUGMW, and Ellen Wilkinson of the NUDAW – contested parliamentary elections as sponsored candidates of Labour-affiliated unions during the whole interwar period.³⁷⁴ Just two others were members of

meeting of 29 June 1936, and second ballot, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/64 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1936, meeting of 26 August 1936. Admittedly the same four nominees were elected in both ballots, so the average age was four years older in 1936.

³⁷² These figures are calculated from the 44 nominees in the 1932 ballot, and 42 in the 1936 one. MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, NUR executive, minutes of March 1932 quarterly meeting, Political Sub-committee report; MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1936, NUR executive, minutes of June 1936 quarterly meeting, Political Sub-committee report.

³⁷³ Pamela Graves, *Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 216, 221-222.

³⁷⁴ Mary Macarthur was the National Federation of Women Workers’ candidate for Stourbridge (Worcestershire) in 1918; for Macarthur see David E. Martin, ‘Macarthur, Mary (1880-1921)’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 255-260. The list of ‘available’ candidates in the 1924 Labour Party Annual Report shows Eleanor Stewart, a senior Scottish District Organiser for the Workers’ Union, as having WU sponsorship. Stewart fought Edinburgh North in 1924 and 1929. In the party’s reports from 1925 onwards, she is recorded as the candidate of the divisional party; it seems likely she was sponsored by the WU in 1924, subject to the caveats relating to the 1922-24 elections outlined above. Her committee rooms were at the WU’s Edinburgh office, and her agent was a WU colleague, Angus Robertson. MSS.126/WU/4/1/18-22 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1923-28 for details of District Organisers and their addresses; ‘North Edinburgh – Miss Eleanor Stewart – Labour Candidate’, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 27 October 1924. Stewart was a prominent figure in the STUC; see C. Burness, ‘Stewart, Eleanor (b. 1889)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/54412>, accessed 3 Jan 2018]. Leah Manning was sponsored by the unaffiliated National Union of Teachers; she was the first woman to be included in its panel, in 1928. The NUT Executive chose a panel of nine from amongst its own members, with three representatives of each major party. Manning remained a panellist until 1932, when the NUT cut its panel size to three and stopped providing constituency maintenance payments: this effectively put an end to her candidature at Islington East, which she had fought in 1931. L. Manning, *A Life for Education. An Autobiography* (London, 1970), pp. 76-77, 83-84. Another teacher,

parliamentary panels, and in both cases only for brief periods: Mary Carlin, TGWU National Woman Officer, and Alice Foley, a Weavers' official, of the UTFWA. Although some of the major sponsoring unions – the MFGB, AEU, and to a lesser extent the NUR – had either an exclusively, or almost exclusively, male membership, and so unsurprisingly favoured male candidates, other organisations did have a more substantial female membership on which they might have drawn for potential candidates. UTFWA is the most obvious example: women made up the majority of the membership in the Cardroom and Weavers' amalgamations.³⁷⁵ Yet the cotton unions were officiated largely by men, and although each amalgamation elected its own panellists, the inflexibility of a system which did not allow one amalgamation to nominate a new candidate, even if panel spaces were available, meant that on the whole, well-known male officials dominated selection. It is notable that Foley's time on the UTFWA panel as a substitute, starting from the 1936 conference, coincided with the Weavers being able to elect a larger number of nominees than previous years owing to an UTFWA conference decision to increase the panel's size.³⁷⁶ By the time of her resignation from the panel in March 1939, several of the other panellists chosen alongside her had already been adopted by constituencies.³⁷⁷

As Foley herself noted, male officials were often 'antagonistic to the idea of women aspiring to be anything more than paying-members within the organisation and for a long time my presence in the office was tolerated rather than accepted'.³⁷⁸ The sexism associated with the male-dominated culture of much trade unionism was plainly a hindrance. Carlin made several attempts to gain a place on the TGWU's list, first

Alice Bacon, was adopted as the Labour candidate for Leeds North-East in 1938, although she does not seem to have had union sponsorship despite being 'active in the affairs' of the NUT. 'North-East Leeds Division – Normanton Woman to be Labour Candidate', *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4 October 1938. See also R. Reeves & R. Carr, *Alice in Westminster. The Political Life of Alice Bacon* (London & New York, 2017), pp. 30-37. This pattern continued into the post-war period: Rush notes that only two women were union-sponsored candidates at elections between 1950 and 1966. Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, p. 222.

³⁷⁵ The 1931 figures were: Cardroom Operatives, 44,000 women and 11,000 men; Weavers' Association: 127,000 women and 32,000 men. TUC Report, 1931.

³⁷⁶ The Weavers had three UTFWA panellists in 1935; this increased to five in 1936, when Foley was first elected, and six when she was re-elected in both 1937 and 1938. TU/3/2/4-7 UTFWA, Reports of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1935-1938.

³⁷⁷ TU/3/1/11 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1939, minutes of 9 March 1939. A coincidence seems unlikely, although the minutes in relation to Foley's resignation as a Weavers' candidate do not elaborate.

³⁷⁸ A. Foley, *A Bolton Childhood* (Manchester, 1973), p. 82. For biographical details of Foley, see C. Jenkins, 'Foley, Alice (1891-1974)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/71614>, accessed 10 April 2017].

applying in early 1932, becoming one of only two applicants to be placed on a 'Special Official Union Reserve List'.³⁷⁹ As the rather ambiguous name might imply, this was hardly promising; when the new system was introduced in 1933, her application was rejected, despite expressing her willingness to compete for the Nottingham South candidature recently vacated by the union's A. R. Ellis.³⁸⁰ Despite being nominated as a prospective candidate for Gloucester in 1934, she was refused permission to accept.³⁸¹ Even with support from the TGWU Women's Guild, through a resolution of its annual conference 'urging the union to finance as many Women Parliamentary Candidates as possible, and recommending that the Secretary of the Guild should be one of the candidates', she was again rejected in 1935, with the Executive pointing to the lack of vacancies on the union's list; the broader appeal of the Women's Guild for more female candidates was simply 'noted'.³⁸² This response was far from encouraging. Whilst it might have been possible to justify Carlin's continued rejections on the grounds that the union did not want to lose the services of its most prominent female officer, this does not seem to have been the case: by 1937, the Executive was considering proposals to effectively abolish the women's guild as a national section of the union through decentralisation of its membership into their geographical or trade groups, whilst the extended leave of absence offered to Carlin may have been a hint that her early retirement would be welcome.³⁸³ A sexist interpretation of Carlin's persistence as her being 'difficult' may have been a factor in the Executive's failure to support her claim; in any case it is difficult to imagine a male Group Secretary, enjoying the full support of his section, with offers of nomination, and equivalent long service on the party's National Executive, being repeatedly refused outright in this way.

In this context Bondfield and Wilkinson were very much the exceptions. By the mid-1920s, Bondfield was arguably the most senior woman within the trade union movement, having been the first woman to be elected to the TUC Parliamentary

³⁷⁹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/10 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1932; GEC minutes, 23 February 1932.

³⁸⁰ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/11 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1933; GEC Minutes, 21 February 1933; also appendix i, general secretary's quarterly report, to the same minutes.

³⁸¹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/12 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1934; GEC Minutes, 17 September 1934.

³⁸² MSS.126/TG/1186/A/13 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1935; GEC Minutes, 21 August 1935.

³⁸³ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937; GEC Minutes, 2 March 1937 and 3 December 1937.

Committee in 1918, and the first female occupant of, in her words, 'the supreme position in the industrial wing of Labour' as TUC chair in 1923-4.³⁸⁴ As Chief Woman Officer of the NUGMW, for the union's most recent official historian she increasingly 'came to represent the public face of the union' alongside Thorne and Clynes.³⁸⁵ However, in practical terms the scope of her union role had already been reduced, first through a narrowing of the responsibilities of the union's Women's Department in 1924, and then the abolition of separate representation for women within the organisation in 1928.³⁸⁶ As such she faced little difficulty in getting leave-of-absence from the union when serving as a government minister, and her prominence was likely considered an asset to the union,³⁸⁷ allowing it to project an image of equality, whilst facilities for distinctive women's representation was submerged within the union's broader organisation. Her standing within the movement was not necessarily an advantage, however, as Bondfield observed 'I never chose, nor was given, an easy constituency. Both Northampton and Wallsend had been hard to fight and difficult to win',³⁸⁸ particularly in comparison with some of the seats fought and won by her colleagues in the NUGMW leadership. Reading, where she was adopted as NUGMW candidate in 1937, was hardly more auspicious: although Labour has won the seat in 1929, it had been with a majority of just 850 in a three-cornered contest where the third-placed Liberal had polled nearly 8,000 votes.³⁸⁹ In the case of Wilkinson, 'her talents for campaigning and her charisma' encouraged NUDAW – 'few unions were as enlightened and progressive' – and in particular its President, her close collaborator

³⁸⁴ Margaret Bondfield, *A Life's Work* (London, n.d. [1948]), pp. 245-6.

³⁸⁵ John Callow, *GMB @ Work – The Story Behind the Union 1889-2012* (London, 2012), p. 188.

³⁸⁶ H. A. Clegg, *General Union. A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 83-84; Cathy Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers, 1906-1921* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 109-114 gives more detail on the NFWW-NUGW merger and its aftermath.

³⁸⁷ Although this was complicated by her unpopular positions on the Blanesburgh Report on Unemployment Insurance in 1927, and spending cuts in 1931.

³⁸⁸ Bondfield, *A Life's Work*, p. 337. George Bernard Shaw wrote of her candidacy at Northampton in 1922: 'You are the best man of the lot, and they shove you off on a place where the water is too cold for their dainty feet, just as they shoved Mary [Macarthur] off on Stourbridge, and keep the safe seats for their now quite numerous imbeciles', *ibid.*, p. 245. Her biographer, Mary Agnes Hamilton, sketches Bondfield's determined personality: 'Of course, work comes first [...] She is the servant of a cause, and accepts the hard implications of that fact. She does not grumble'. Mary Agnes Hamilton (Iconoclast), *Margaret Bondfield* (London, 1924), p. 177.

³⁸⁹ Somerville Hastings had been the previous, CLP-sponsored Reading MP and candidate. Although heavily defeated in 1931, he reduced the Conservative majority to 4,600 in 1935: the seat was still not an easy prospect for Bondfield. For her adoption at Reading see TU/GENERALB/1/A/13 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1937, national executive meeting of 29 April 1937.

John Jagger, to push her forward as a candidate.³⁹⁰ Her reputation was already such that in the union's initial 1923 ballot to select four parliamentary candidates, she topped the poll by over 2,000 votes, despite her known CPGB membership at that stage.³⁹¹ Given her obvious talent, coupled with a strong personal profile within the union as its national women's organiser and a reliable ally at the top of the organisation, it would perhaps have been more surprising if Wilkinson had not been a sponsored candidate.³⁹²

Prospective women candidates faced similar difficulties in the Co-operative Party, despite the apparent strength of women's co-operation. Estimates suggest that two-thirds of co-operators were women; by the late 1930s the Women's Co-operative Guild [WCG] combined a large membership with a well-established reputation 'unique in British politics as a self-governing organisation of working-class housewives'. Under the leadership of Margaret Llewelyn Davies from 1889-1921, the WCG pursued a wide-ranging socialist-feminist agenda, in defiance of Co-operative officials when deemed necessary; membership, like that of the wider co-operative movement, was politically heterogeneous.³⁹³ From the mid-1920s, with Eleanor Barton as general secretary, the WCG's organisation became increasingly centralised, and its traditional radical political identity surrendered to a more orthodox Labour loyalty. Barton's Guild base provided a 'springboard for her role in the Co-operative Party'; she had a place on the official list of Co-operative candidates from 1918, contested Birmingham King's Norton in 1922 and 1923, and Nottingham East in 1929.³⁹⁴ However, the separate gender spheres within the co-operative movement harmed Barton's opportunities,

³⁹⁰ Laura Beers, *Red Ellen. The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2016), pp. 123-124; Betty D. Vernon, *Ellen Wilkinson* (London, 1982), p. 75; Matt Perry, *'Red Ellen' Wilkinson. Her ideas, movements and world* (Manchester, 2014), p. 201.

³⁹¹ Perry, *'Red Ellen' Wilkinson*, p. 37: two of 23 candidates were women; the other was Mary Bamber, also on the NUDAW organising staff.

³⁹² For the internationalist aspect of Wilkinson's politics, see Matt Perry, 'In search of 'Red Ellen' Wilkinson beyond frontiers and beyond the nation state', *International Review of Social History* 58 (2013), 219-246.

³⁹³ Gillian Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London, 1998), p. 3. For the Guild in the 1930s, see Andrew Flinn, 'Mothers for Peace', co-operation, feminism and peace: the Women's Co-operative Guild between the Wars', in L. Black and N. Robertson, (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 138-154; Naomi Black, 'The Mothers' International: the Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Pacifism', *Women's Studies International Forum* 7:6 (1984), 467-476.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-136 for Barton. Scott argues that Barton's 'main objective' in the 1920s was 'as far as possible to dovetail Guild developments with those which promoted her chances as a Co-operative-Labour candidate', p. 135. See also Joyce Bellamy and H. F. Bing, 'Barton, Eleanor (1872-1960)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography I*, pp. 38-40.

despite her being 'the most prominent and powerful Guildswoman committed to Labour-Co-operative politics'. Within the Guild, as a leader she may have been 'strong to the point of intransigence', but in the Co-operative Party she was a more marginal figure. The vast majority of the Party's executive was drawn from the trading side of the movement, with just one Guild representative; despite the establishment of a special fund in 1928 to assist in fighting parliamentary elections, Guildswomen experienced considerable difficulty in securing nominations: Barton herself was not readopted for Nottingham East after the 1929 general election; a by-election in the constituency in 1930 was fought instead by the erstwhile Co-operative MP A. E. Waterson.³⁹⁵ This reflected women's experience in the wider Co-operative movement: where despite their numerical strength, they were rarely able to secure places on committees dealing with the business side of Co-operative activities.³⁹⁶ Caroline Ganley did succeed in gaining the Co-operative Party nomination to fight Paddington North in 1935, although this likely owed as much to her long career in London local government as her participation in the Guild; her background in the largely male world of the Social Democratic Federation may also have been an advantage.³⁹⁷

Despite the limitations outlined above, selection did guarantee both material and moral support from a union to its candidates. Firstly, unions sought to help their candidates to get selected. Political officers and sub-committees expended considerable effort in pursuit of appropriate constituencies for their candidates. Invitations were regularly received from constituencies and some follow-up work was usually required before making a decision, although inquiries were also made on the initiative of union political

³⁹⁵ Jean Gaffin and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Women's Co-operative Guild* (Manchester, 1983), p. 86. For Waterson, Keith Gildart, 'Waterson, Alfred Edward (1880-1964)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XII*, pp. 292-297. Barton took legal advice in order to overturn a decision of the 1928 Guild Congress requiring the general secretary to resign her post if elected to Parliament. One of the Nottingham East Co-operative Party's complaints about Barton was that she interrupted her 1929 campaign to attend Guild Congress; perhaps in light of both issues, she decided not to stand again, instead remaining as general secretary until her retirement in 1937. Scott, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War*, pp. 151-152.

³⁹⁶ Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960. Minding their Own Business*, pp. 65-70.

³⁹⁷ Joyce Bellamy, 'Ganley, Caroline Selina (1879-1966)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography I*, pp. 129-130. Ganley had been a magistrate since 1920, a councillor on Battersea Borough Council 1919-1925, and on the LCC 1925-29 and 1934-37. She was president of the London WCG 1921-25. Co-operative women had more success in 1945. Although there were only three women amongst the Co-operative Party's 33 candidates, all were elected: Ganley at Battersea South, Mabel Ridealgh at Ilford North and Edith Wills at Birmingham Duddeston. For the latter duo, see David Howell, 'Ridealgh, Mabel (nee Jewitt) (1898-1989)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XIII*, pp. 334-338, and David Howell, 'Wills, Edith Agnes (1891-1970)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XII*, pp. 316-320.

officers themselves; the geography of selection will be considered in more detail in the following section. In addition to providing funding for election expenses and constituency maintenance, unions often provided their candidates with travelling and accommodation expenses: the majority of minutes relating to parliamentary candidates in the AEU Executive Council records for the period concern such expenses, for visits to constituency events or selection conferences. In some cases a union might also send a prominent official to offer support at selection conferences: NUDAW's W. A. Robinson attended on behalf of the union's candidates on several occasions.³⁹⁸ Although there was a danger of this looking heavy-handed, the intention was to provide reassurance to the selectors as to the union's support – financial and otherwise – for the candidate. Where funds allowed, support might continue beyond an election defeat: this was particularly the case in 1931. It was TGWU policy to find a defeated candidate who had been an MP alternative employment, typically 'organising work of a general character' for the union, whether 'under the direction of the general secretary' at headquarters, as in the cases of George Dallas, W. T. Kelly and G. H. Oliver in 1931, or in their own region, as in the cases of J. H. Hall, J. H. Palin and J. E. Edmunds after the same election.³⁹⁹ The NUR's rules precluded the formal provision of employment for defeated candidates in the same way, but Cramp still attempted to secure some general manual work at Unity House for F. G. Burgess after his defeat at York.⁴⁰⁰

The disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932 had a significant effect on some trade union candidatures. Two candidates, David Kirkwood of the AEU, and George Buchanan of the United Patternmakers' Association, had been sponsored by their unions in 1929, but stood as unendorsed candidates in 1931 and were elected. The AEU made it clear to Kirkwood, the Member for Dumbarton Burghs, that their future support of his candidature depended on his acceptance of PLP Standing Orders once the ILP had disaffiliated: Kirkwood promptly re-joined the PLP in August 1932. He had been opposed to disaffiliation, and the following month would become one of the founders

³⁹⁸ For example, he accompanied C. R. Flynn to a selection conference at Rossendale, NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1933, report of 4 September 1933.

³⁹⁹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, GEC meeting of 16 November 1931. For Dallas, see Kenneth Dallas, 'Dallas, George (1878-1861)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IV, pp. 69-74; for Palin, see Keith Laybourn, 'Palin, John Henry (1870-1934)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IV, pp. 134-136.

⁴⁰⁰ Although his offer was refused. MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, minutes of March 1932 quarterly meeting.

of the Scottish Socialist Party.⁴⁰¹ Buchanan's case proved more protracted, and demonstrated the extent to which a union might be prepared to support a candidate over an issue of party discipline. Buchanan had been returned as an unendorsed 'Independent Labour' candidate with ILP backing at Glasgow Gorbals in 1931. The UPA did not appear unduly concerned at first, only deciding in late November to inquire why the party would not endorse Buchanan.⁴⁰² Resolution might have proved easier, with the union likely pushing Buchanan to accept the Standing Orders and join the PLP, if Buchanan had not been elected UPA president at the start of 1932.⁴⁰³ Although on the industrial side this was unproblematic, politically it placed the union in a dilemma: the UPA could not easily discipline its president over a political issue. His eligibility as a party conference delegate provided the first instance of trouble, in the context of the ILP's decision to disaffiliate from Labour in the summer of 1932. The NEC made it clear to the UPA's secretary Allen Findlay that Buchanan would be refused as a delegate.⁴⁰⁴ Although there was some pressure from union branches for Buchanan to act according to party rules on pain of withdrawal of support, the UPA largely took on a protective approach.⁴⁰⁵ It is worth noting that the union's political membership had increased during the year, perhaps in part due to sympathy for Buchanan's position.⁴⁰⁶ Following a meeting with party representatives in July, the UPA's position hardened: informing the party at the last minute that Buchanan would

⁴⁰¹ See *AEU Monthly Journal*, December 1931, for copies of correspondence relating to Kirkwood's refusal to agree unreservedly to the party's standing orders. MSS.259/AEU/1/1/48 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1932, meeting of 6 September 1932 for Kirkwood's return to the PLP; it took rather longer for the union to finally agree to meet the remaining balance of Kirkwood's election expenses for 1931. MSS.259/AEU/1/1/54 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1934, meeting of 7 February 1934. W. W. Knox, and A. Mackinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History* 6:2 (1995), 174-193, p. 178.

⁴⁰² MSS.101/P/1/10 UPA, Minute Book, 1930-31, executive council meeting of 25 November 1931. It was still deciding what to do about this in January 1932: *ibid.*, meeting of 11 January 1932. For Buchanan, see William Knox, 'Buchanan, George (1890-1955)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* VII, pp. 50-53.

⁴⁰³ Hostility among Glasgow UPA branches towards the previous president, A. E. Wardale, over his handling of a Clydeside dispute in September 1931 probably contributed to Buchanan's success: the election a more radical, Glasgow-based figure may have seemed an appropriate corrective. Coatbridge, Glasgow South East, Glasgow North, Clydebank, Glasgow South, and Greenock branches had all written to the executive demanding Wardale's resignation. UPA, Minute Book, 1930-31, executive council meeting of 9 September 1931.

⁴⁰⁴ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 22 June 1932.

⁴⁰⁵ For a letter from Gateshead branch to this effect, see MSS.101/P/1/11 UPA, Minute Book, 1932, executive council meeting of 1 July 1932.

⁴⁰⁶ Affiliated political membership increased by 602 to 5399 from 1931-32, TUC membership by 163 to 11239. Although the figures are relatively small, in a union of the UPA's size, a 5 per cent increase – from 43 to 48 per cent of total membership – in such a short period was significant. Calculated from the figures in TUC and Labour party annual reports, 1932.

not be a delegate, the Executive resolved to 'take a vote of the members for or against continuing our affiliation with the Labour Party', scheduled for the branch meetings in November.⁴⁰⁷ This was a significant show of support for Buchanan, although the ballot result showed little appetite for disaffiliation, with only 105 votes against continued affiliation.⁴⁰⁸ This had the effect of fudging the position, and it was not until 1934 that a further attempt at clarification was made. The UPA Executive resolved to meet the party's Organisation Sub-committee to discuss the difficulties 'arising out of their affiliation to the Labour party on the one hand, and the financial support they had given to Mr G. Buchanan in connection with his election expenses on the other'.⁴⁰⁹ Party representatives were not encouraged, with W. R. Smith, who had chaired the meeting, informing the NEC that 'it was extremely unlikely that the Association would take action to bring Mr Buchanan into line with the Party'.⁴¹⁰ This time, however, the UPA did take action, the executive resolving 'that we are only prepared to finance Parliamentary Candidates who are prepared to accept the Constitution and Standing Orders of the Labour Party'.⁴¹¹ Buchanan was thus excluded from receiving the union's official support, but this did not mean that a scheme of voluntary contributions from UPA members was ruled out.⁴¹² Whilst a levy on members to this end was blocked by the Executive, a voluntary appeal fund was established to support Buchanan's candidature at the 1935 election, although branches were barred from making

⁴⁰⁷ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 30 September 1932; UPA, Minute Book, 1932, executive council meetings of 12 July 1932 and 13 October 1932.

⁴⁰⁸ UPA, Minute Book, 1932, executive council meeting of 29 December 1932. The voting was as follows: for continued affiliation, 476; against, 105; majority for, 371. 581 total votes from a political membership of over 5,000 – i.e., around 10 per cent turnout – might appear to reflect a considerable lack of interest in a potentially momentous decision for the union's political identity, but that the vote took place at branch meetings on a late November evening, rather than a ballot vote of the full membership may be behind this low figure: only the most committed members would be in attendance, and the wider membership may not have been aware that the issue was even on the agenda; indeed there were some complaints that Buchanan had not been given the opportunity to outline his own views – note the letters from Rugby and Leeds West branches at the same meeting.

⁴⁰⁹ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of Org. Sub-committee meeting of 14 February 1934.

⁴¹⁰ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 1 March 1934.

⁴¹¹ MSS.101/P/1/12 UPA, Minute Book, 1934, 'business pursuant' to executive council meeting of 3-5 May 1934, undated.

⁴¹² MSS.101/P/1/13 UPA, Minute Book, 1935, executive council meeting of 7-8 February 1935 for an early reference to this. Findlay was instructed to write to the NEC, noting how they were prepared to accept candidates from 'another Association who also ran candidates in another political Party; possibly this was a reference to the National Union of Teachers, although an RCA branch chairman stood as an ILP candidate against Labour at Clackmannan and East Stirling in 1935, as did a Cumberland miners' agent at Whitehaven (see *The Times House of Commons* 1935); see also comments below. UPA, Minute Book, 1935, executive council meeting of 16-17 May 1935.

donations from branch funds.⁴¹³ When Buchanan did eventually re-join the PLP in 1939, the UPA nominated him for the Gorbals Labour candidature, and the NEC offered its endorsement in June.⁴¹⁴ The UPA had successfully negotiated a seven-year balancing act, managing to support Buchanan throughout, although not always through the usual formal channels. The Executive's actions, particularly from 1934-35, demonstrate its desire to meet the party's expectations, whilst avoiding public criticism of its president. This may be represent a spirit of craft union independence: support for Buchanan in the wider union remained strong – even by 1939, Motherwell branch continued to refuse to pay the political levy over the party's position on Buchanan, despite gentle encouragement from the Executive to do so.⁴¹⁵ Buchanan's case demonstrates how far unions might be prepared to back prominent candidates, even against the Labour party, in particular circumstances.

In several instances trade union candidates found themselves facing ILP opponents. This problem was confined in 1931 to two double-member constituencies, Norwich and Stockport, both contested by one official and one unendorsed Labour candidate.⁴¹⁶ Labour's Norwich candidates since 1923 had been Dorothy Jewson of the ILP, and W. R. Smith of NUBSO. In 1929 Smith had been victorious but Jewson defeated: in 1931, the latter was refused endorsement. Smith threatened to resign as a candidate until Norwich Labour Party withdrew the 'moral support' it had offered Jewson; the campaign, marked with bitterness, saw both candidates defeated. In the years following disaffiliation, as Gidon Cohen has demonstrated, Norwich remained an ILP stronghold, with Labour reliant on the ILP for its majority on the council until

⁴¹³ UPA, Minute Book, 1935, executive council meeting of 16-18 October 1935. The council divided 3-3 over the establishment of a levy, reaffirming the present position of only officially financing Labour candidates.

⁴¹⁴ MSS.101/P/1/17 UPA, Minute Book, 1939, executive council meeting of 17-18 May 1939; Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 28 June 1939. By this stage the ILP parliamentary group favoured re-affiliation to Labour; Buchanan took a unilateral decision to rejoin following equivocation by the ILP conference on the issue. See Gidon Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), pp. 159-161; see also p. 71 on the UPA's involvement.

⁴¹⁵ UPA, Minute Book, 1939, executive council meetings of 15-17 March 1939, 17-18 May 1939.

⁴¹⁶ In Stockport, the RCA's A. E. Townend was the official, and the ILP's Tom Abbott the unofficial candidate. Abbott was an important ILP figure in Lancashire; he was to leave the party in 1934 over the organisational reforms pushed through by the Marxist Revolutionary Policy Committee, and went on to be the founding general secretary of the Independent Socialist Party [ISP] later that year. Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II*, pp. 99-101. For the ISP, see Gidon Cohen, 'Special Note: The Independent Socialist Party', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XI*, pp. 231-238.

1936; the smaller party continued to thrive in part due to the financial stability which was the product of the popularity of the ILP social club, Hardie Hall. When Fenner Brockway succeeded Jewson as the ILP candidate in 1935, he faced two Labour opponents, Glenvil Hall and C. J. Kelly, the latter being sponsored by the NUR: on this occasion the official campaign 'largely ignored' the ILP, reflecting the desire for closer co-operation which was shared by many within the Norwich labour movement.⁴¹⁷ Five further union candidates faced ILP opponents in 1935. The NUGMW's Arthur Whiting fought both a Conservative and the ILP's Bob Edwards at Chorley (Lancashire), with Whiting coming second and Edwards losing his deposit. Wilfrid Heywood of the National Union of Textile Workers faced Fred Jowett in Bradford East; here the split Labour vote helped the Conservative take the seat.⁴¹⁸ In Merthyr Tydfil, S. O. Davies of the MFGB comfortably defeated the ILP's Claude Stanfield in a straight fight. Davies was an effective candidate in such a contest, as an established left-wing critic of Labour orthodoxies and a long-standing ILP member himself.⁴¹⁹ In two seats union candidates faced ILPers who were also trade union officials, although fighting without the backing of their union. At Kilmarnock (Ayrshire) the Labour candidate, NUBSO's James Crawford, faced opposition from the ILP's John Pollock, chair of NUDAW's Scottish Area Council. The sitting MP, National Labour's Kenneth Lindsay, held the seat fairly comfortably. NUDAW records make no mention of Pollock's candidacy, ignoring him rather than publicising his efforts, even critically.⁴²⁰ The ILP's electoral strategy in 1935 prioritised candidates with a strong local connection: this made Tom Stephenson, a prominent Cumberland Miners' official, the 'obvious choice' to contest

⁴¹⁷ Gidon Cohen, 'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank'? The Independent Labour Party and Local Labour Politics in Glasgow and Norwich, 1932-45' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 65-70. One concession to this desire was the selection of the former ILP general secretary John Paton as the next Labour candidate for the constituency.

⁴¹⁸ Jowett received 8,983 votes and Heywood 7,329; the Conservative Hepworth was elected with a majority of 2,148.

⁴¹⁹ He had won the seat at a by-election in 1934, in a three-cornered fight in which the ILP's Campbell Stephen finished last. Davies succeeded as MP the late Richard Wallhead, who had been unendorsed in 1931 but re-joined the PLP since. Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II*, pp. 66-67. For Davies, see Robert Griffiths, 'Davies, Stephen Owen (1886-1972)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography VIII*, pp. 45-55 and Robert Griffiths, *S. O. Davies. A Socialist Faith* (Llandysul, 1983).

⁴²⁰ Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II*, p. 68. Pollock himself seems to have had more sense than to make NUDAW headquarters aware of his candidacy: the reaction from the union's political general secretary, Robinson, was likely to have been hostile.

Whitehaven, where he faced Frank Anderson of the RCA.⁴²¹ This was an important marginal seat, and Anderson campaigned effectively against Stephenson, securing the support of national MFGB figures and making it difficult for Stephenson to distinguish his platform from that of Labour.⁴²² Anderson's election literature carried endorsements from Will Lawther, the MFGB vice-president, and Jim Griffiths, president of the SWMF. It dealt with Stephenson harshly, suggesting that if elected 'Poor Tom' would return to his 'spiritual home among the Tories, with other ILP lights', whilst emphasising Anderson's own socialist credentials.⁴²³ The contest was close, Anderson winning a narrow majority of 352 over the Conservative candidate and sitting MP, Nunn, with Stephenson gaining 1,004 votes: the split vote had not cost Labour the seat. Union responses to ILP opponents could vary. Whilst past ILP disloyalty which offended against the culture of acceptance of majority decisions could provoke a hostile reaction, for many trade unionists, the ongoing split was simply a matter of regret. This was expressed succinctly by John Marchbank of the NUR in the union's weekly following the 1935 election.

I will not say much about the position of the ILP. The conflict between it and the official Labour Party is regrettable, and I wish it could be brought to an end: it is costly, on both sides, if we count only the forfeiture of deposits.⁴²⁴

Union officials as candidates

The interwar period has been seen as marking the 'passing of the general secretaries' from Parliament, as part of the same gradual process of separation of the industrial and political functions of the movement – also reflected in the tendency for general secretaries to serve on the TUC General Council while their assistants, or lower-

⁴²¹ Keith Gildart and Gidon Cohen, 'Stephenson, Tom (1895-1962)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XI, pp. 266-274. Stephenson chose to fight Whitehaven rather than his own constituency of Workington, to avoid opposing his friend and Cumberland Miners' Association colleague, Tom Cape.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁴²³ LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935, file 8, 'England: Counties', Frank Anderson's *Election Bulletin*. It is notable that the MFGB figures who Anderson's literature quoted were all national figures, rather than local ones – perhaps seeking to avoid a split within the CMA.

⁴²⁴ John Marchbank, 'The Problem of Minorities', *Railway Review*, 22 November 1935.

ranking officials, sat on the party Executive. Certainly examples of the leading national officers of unions sitting in the Commons after 1940 are very few, with Ernest Bevin and Frank Cousins, both of the TGWU, in 1940 and 1965-66 respectively being the most prominent – and both in exceptional circumstances which propelled them into the Cabinet.⁴²⁵ However, despite this, during the 1930s a surprisingly large number of trade union national officers stood as Labour candidates. They were not always general secretaries, and they were not always successfully elected, but this does suggest that this ‘passing’ took place largely between 1931 and 1940. By the end of the decade only a handful of national officers remained either as candidates or in Parliament. This phenomenon requires rather closer attention than Muller and others have been able to give it. Equally, that some unions persisted in supporting their national officers as candidates requires further explanation. Some unions, such as the MFGB, the Woodworkers, and the Boot and Shoe Operatives, had changed their rules prior to 1931 to prohibit national officers becoming parliamentary candidates, but for others, including those under inspection here, the equivalent process took place during the 1930s.⁴²⁶ This process, as will be demonstrated, did not always rely upon an alteration of rule to achieve, and could be ambiguous or halting. However, by 1940 it appeared to be largely irreversible.

The Railway Clerks’ Association provides an interesting example of this process and is worth exploring in some detail. The first RCA Labour candidate was A. G. Walkden, selected for Wolverhampton West in 1912; Walkden’s Chief Assistant Secretary, George Lathan, also became a candidate as a member of the union’s parliamentary panel in 1918.⁴²⁷ A report on ‘Parliamentary Candidates and Associated Questions’ prepared following the RCA’s 1923 Annual Delegate Conference went into some detail

⁴²⁵ Muller, *The Kept Men?*, pp 28-31; Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume 2, Minister of Labour, 1940-1945* (London, 1967); Margaret Stewart, *Frank Cousins. A Study* (London, 1968), pp. 116-144; Geoffrey Goodman, *The Awkward Warrior. Frank Cousins: His Life and Times* (London, 1979), pp. 379-501.

⁴²⁶ Frank Hodges had been forced to resign the MFGB general secretaryship on his election in 1923 for Lichfield (Staffordshire), see Chris Williams, ‘The odyssey of Frank Hodges’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series, 5 (1999), 110-130, p. 121. The Woodworkers had barred national officials from eligibility as parliamentary candidates as early as 1918, and NUBSO had followed by 1922. S. Higenbottam, *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. Our Society’s History* (Manchester, 1939), p. 283; Alan Fox, *A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. 1874-1957* (Oxford, 1958), p. 462. Craft unions tended to have a longer tradition of the separation of political and industrial functions.

⁴²⁷ For Walkden, see Adrian Tranter, ‘Walkden, Alexander George (1st Baron Walkden of Great Bookham) (1873-1951)’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography* V, pp. 221-226; for Lathan, David E. Martin, ‘Lathan, George (1875-1942)’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IX, pp. 168-170.

on other aspects of candidatures, as noted elsewhere in this chapter, but offered no comment on the position of the union's main officials in relation to candidatures: the issue seems to have simply been beyond the remit of the report committee, which included F. B. Simpson, a future RCA Labour MP.⁴²⁸ However, the success of both Walkden at Bristol South and Lathan at Sheffield Park in 1929 altered the context of the RCA's deliberations. By 1931, the regular absence of both main officials was being felt at the union's head office, and the Executive Council introduced an emergency resolution at that year's Conference approving the present position but expressing the opinion that 'it is undesirable that authority should be given for the nomination of any more full time officers of the Association, except by the direct instructions of Annual or Special Conference'.⁴²⁹ An amendment seeking to establish the principle that fulltime officials elected to Parliament should resign their union position as 'both this Association and their constituents are bound to suffer' was lost, but another, modifying the Executive's resolution to remove any reference to the position in relation to officials, was carried, effectively stalling any development until the following year.⁴³⁰ The Executive tried again in 1932, presenting a report on 'RCA Staff Organisation and Parliamentary Candidatures'. This reasserted the union's 1910 case for nominating Walkden as a candidate, arguing that 'An exceedingly important range of the Association's work had to be accomplished through Parliamentary action' whilst it would also strengthen the general secretary's position 'when dealing with industrial questions', as well as allowing him to deal directly with those railway directors who were MPs. The report suggested that those questioning the desirability of having officials as candidates 'were not active participants in the Association's work in 1910, or even in 1918, and are not, therefore, familiar with what took place in those years', in effect implying rather patronisingly that critics were too young to understand. The various duties of all members of head office staff were then described, and concluded that the present arrangements should continue, although 'we cannot see our way to...the placing of any further members of our staff...as prospective parliamentary candidates.' It was defiant about Lathan and Walkden's right to be candidates: the industrial work of the union 'was not in any way impaired' as a result of their being in

⁴²⁸ MSS.55/4/POL/2-24 RCA policy statements, 1914-63, 'Report of Committee to inquire regarding Parliamentary Candidatures and Related Questions', 1923.

⁴²⁹ MSS.55/1/CON/56a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1931, p. 35-6. Unfortunately verbatim reports of the RCA's conferences are only available for some of the years referred to here.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

Parliament, and 'no further provision would be necessary if both were again elected'.⁴³¹ Probably the appeal to the general importance of parliamentary representation strengthened the Executive's case: certainly there remained sufficient sceptics to ensure that the report was only adopted at the Annual Conference by a relatively narrow majority of 27,700 to 21,100. In moving the reference back of the report, Jacques, a Maidenhead delegate, argued that whilst it was desirable that one or other of the main officials should be MPs, both should not. His argument that the report was confusing and offered the wrong conclusions clearly found substantial support among the Association's membership.⁴³² It is probably no coincidence that in that year's election to the union's parliamentary panel, Lathan and Walkden were only returned in sixth and seventh place respectively.⁴³³ Lathan was readopted for Sheffield Park later that year, and Walkden for Bristol South in 1933: in both cases earlier than a number of RCA panellists elected above them.⁴³⁴

The RCA's 1934 Conference rejected an attempt to bar the general secretary from being eligible for Parliament. The mover of the resolution, Harries of Abergavenny, asked 'if you are going to have your chief officers locked up in Parliament, what chance have you got? It is difficult enough as it is to get the general secretary to come and visit us...' The 'previous question' was moved to preclude discussion, and carried only fairly narrowly on a show of hands 175-137, despite the fact that a rather stumbling left-wing speech earlier in the Conference by Harries had been picked apart easily by Lathan in his reply.⁴³⁵ The Executive's position seems to have been one of defending the prerogative of two well-known and prestigious officials in the face of substantial minority dissatisfaction.⁴³⁶ By the 1935 Conference, however, this position had shifted. Walkden was due to retire from his union post in 1936, Lathan in 1937; moreover, a general election was expected before then. The Executive made clear it wished to

⁴³¹ MSS.55/4/POL/2-24 RCA policy statements, 1914-63, 'RCA Staff Organisation and Parliamentary Candidatures', 1932.

⁴³² MSS.55/1/CON/57a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1932. Frank Jacques had been a Parliamentary candidate himself, although without his union's sponsorship, at Newbury (Berkshire) in 1924 and 1929, and Watford (Hertfordshire) in 1931.

⁴³³ Ibid: 15 out of 31 candidates were elected to the panel.

⁴³⁴ Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1932 and 1933.

⁴³⁵ MSS.55/1/CON/60b-61 RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1934, Vol. I-II. The conference also marked the exit of A. E. Townend as union Treasurer. Townend had been adopted as Labour candidate for Carlisle, but it is not clear whether he was pressured to leave his union post.

⁴³⁶ Walkden had been in post for nearly thirty years and was the TUC President in 1933; Lathan sat on the Labour party Executive and chaired its Finance and General Purposes Committee.

continue to support them as candidates after their retirement, but that in future, 'the best interests of the Association will not be served by having both the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant placed as candidates', recommending that only one or other of their successors be regarded as available for the parliamentary panel.⁴³⁷ This entailed the rescinding of the 1932 report and effectively endorsed the position of Jacques and the minority of 1932. Debate at the 1935 Conference revolved around the union's financial responsibility for candidates after they had retired from union positions. A Leeds delegate moved an amendment to force the Executive to be more specific, suggesting that wording of its resolution left open the possibility of both successors standing as candidates. Burnley, the speaker, recalled the difficulties of 1929-31 and 'the RCA being governed from Westminster in between divisions...I myself...have seen Assistant Secretaries hastening down Whitehall with attaché cases to go into consultation with our two chief officers in the House of Commons' His case was rejected by Simpson, now the President, 'as we do not want the whole position to be prejudiced by individual considerations'.⁴³⁸ Arguably it had been just these individual considerations which had governed the RCA leadership's position up to this point, in seeking to give Walkden and Lathan as much freedom as possible, but now denying it to at least one of their successors. However, anticipation of both being elected in the near future must surely also have been a factor here: potentially losing another pair of only recently appointed officials to regular parliamentary duties would have been highly disruptive. An attempt to formally separate the two secretaries' roles into one industrial and one political, as practiced by NUDAW and other unions, was defeated, Simpson again pleading for freedom of manoeuvre on the grounds of not knowing who the future occupants of both posts would be. By the time the issue was discussed at the 1936 Conference, not only were Walkden and Lathan back in Parliament, but William Stott had been elected to succeed Walkden as general secretary. In this context, the RCA's Halifax branch was able to carry a resolution against the platform stipulating that future general secretaries after Walkden would be ineligible for election to parliament; if already MPs they would be required to stand down at the next dissolution. A. W. Longbottom, Halifax delegate and prospective candidate, sought to put the issue 'firmly and finally...on a proper footing', arguing,

⁴³⁷ MSS.55/1/CON/62a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1935, appendix I.

⁴³⁸ MSS.55/1/CON/62b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1935, Vol. I, pp. 165-7.

with some justification, that for several years the RCA had 'subordinated policy for expediency' due to Walkden and Lathan's positions. Another speaker referred to the increase since the 1935 election in the RCA's representation in parliament rendering the 'dire necessity' of having the general secretary there 'obsolete'.⁴³⁹ Walkden asked the delegates 'not to tie your hands' by carrying the resolution but his appeal was unsuccessful.⁴⁴⁰ The conference then debated the deletion of the Rule 16, which provided for a Parliamentary general secretary. This post had hitherto been filled by Walkden, and seems to have been simply a formal recognition of his parliamentary work: indeed, no nominations for a successor had been submitted, implying it was little-known by the general membership. In the context of the Halifax resolution being carried, the Executive now backed away from their original intention of deletion, and it was decided instead to let the post stand vacant.⁴⁴¹ This seems to have been a final attempt at creating room to manoeuvre on the leadership's part, but clearly the position was now anomalous and the 1938 Conference agreed to its deletion.⁴⁴² After Lathan's retirement, F. B. Simpson, already MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, became Chief Assistant Secretary. His unexpected death in 1939 gave the 1940 Conference the chance to carry a resolution requiring the Chief Assistant Secretary not to seek election to Parliament, by a card vote majority of 31,700 to 24,350. The Executive's speaker, Priestley, noted the 'rather unique pleasure' of asking Conference to support a resolution from the floor and stressed the need for an industrial specialist to fill the role.⁴⁴³ The size of the minority was substantial, but the Executive's position had clearly shifted considerably since 1932. This seems to have been as a result of the combination of persistent pressure from the membership over the separation of industrial and political roles with a growing recognition on the part of the union's leadership that their industrial work would be made relatively easier if able to have the full time services of both national officials. That the process was ambiguous and contested seems to have grown out of the leadership's deference to the personal authority and existing candidatures of Walkden and Lathan, and later Simpson.

⁴³⁹ MSS.55/1/CON/64b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1936, pp. 309-10. The second speaker was Sheppard of Maidenhead.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p. 318-321.

⁴⁴² MSS.55/1/CON/66a RCA, Minutes of Special Delegate Conference, 1938.

⁴⁴³ MSS.55/1/CON/69/1 RCA, Annual Delegate Conference, shorthand notes, agendas etc, 1940, pp. 62-63.

However, the position by 1940 had altered such that after this, the full time national officials of the RCA did not stand as Labour candidates.⁴⁴⁴

This process within the National Union of Railwaymen was less protracted, but also reflected the tensions between industrial and political priorities. There was nothing to prevent NUR Presidents becoming candidates; both William Dobbie and Joseph Henderson did so in this period. The president's presence was not demanded at the union's headquarters, Unity House, beyond chairing quarterly Executive meetings: they were lay officials and working railwaymen. Since 1919, the position of general secretary had been split, with J. H. Thomas acting as parliamentary general secretary and the overall head official, while C. T. Cramp served as industrial general secretary. The two had exchanged their respective memberships of the General Council and party NEC in 1929-30 to allow Thomas, now a Cabinet minister, to focus entirely on the political side.⁴⁴⁵ Thomas' decision to follow MacDonald into the National government in August 1931, however, precipitated a split with the union, and at a special general meeting days after the 1931 general election, Thomas' appeal against the removal of his union pension was overwhelmingly rejected, and the meeting voted 61 to 15 to abolish the post of parliamentary general secretary. The Executive had hoped to report on the matter at a later date, but this decision, no doubt heavily influenced by animosity towards Thomas, precluded a more detailed report. So closely was Thomas personally associated with the position, that in the context of early November 1931, it was simply disposed of.

The position of the General and Municipal Workers' union was rather different, in that most of its prominent national officers served in Parliament at some point during the period, or continued to be candidates. In the 1929 parliament, both the union's Chairman-President J. R. Clynes (Manchester Plating) and Chief Woman Officer Margaret Bondfield (Wallsend, Northumberland) served in the Cabinet, whilst the general secretary Will Thorne represented West Ham Plaistow. The national industrial officer Jack Jones had sat for the neighbouring seat of West Ham Silvertown since 1918, whilst Charles Dukes, Lancashire district secretary and later Thorne's successor

⁴⁴⁴ Although Tom Bradley MP, the union's president, briefly served as acting general secretary in 1977, Malcolm Wallace, *Single or Return? The History of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association*. (London, 1996), p. 494.

⁴⁴⁵ Although he was defeated in the NEC elections of 1930.

as general secretary represented Warrington (Lancashire) from 1929-31. Arthur Hayday, the vice-president, was the candidate for Nottingham West. Clynes' successor as Chairman, Fred Marshall, was elected for Sheffield Brightside in a 1930 by-election, and returned as an MP for the same constituency in 1935, having lost his seat in 1931. Muller suggests that this situation weakened the NUGMW's leadership in the 1930s,⁴⁴⁶ although only Thorne and Jones retained their seats in 1931, but problem of the general secretary having to divide his time between union and parliamentary duties was acknowledged after Dukes' election to replace Thorne at the 1934 Biennial Delegate Conference of the union. A resolution was moved declaring that 'the work of the General Secretary on the industrial side of our Union demands his full time, and he should not accept position as a Parliamentary candidate.' Moving, Keeley, a London delegate admitted that the parliamentary position might be the more spectacular' but was of 'secondary importance so far as the life of our class was concerned'. The 'best men' should be kept on the industrial side. The seconder, Evans, is likely to have been alluding to Thorne in his suggestion that if political work was added to Dukes' new industrial duties 'he would probably be an old man before his time'.⁴⁴⁷ Mark Hewitson of the Northern district attacked the resolution, suggesting that it was a step towards de-politicising trade unionism: 'It would mean starting with the general secretary, but why not include the whole of the officials?' Thomas Williamson spoke in similar terms, suggesting that this implied the withdrawal of union representatives on municipal councils. Marshall and another speaker, Pickles, referred to the usefulness of having someone with the expertise of a general secretary in parliament, and summing up Arthur Hayday stressed how the parliamentary representation enhanced the union's prestige. He also implied that such a stipulation would be unfair, as no notice of it had been circulated with the nomination papers for the general secretaryship.⁴⁴⁸ The resolution was lost by 35 votes to 66, a not insignificant minority voting against, suggesting that Muller's judgment was shared by a proportion of the membership. The conflation of the position of the general secretary with all NUGMW political action by the leadership loyalists Hewitson and Williamson seems to have been enough to mobilise conference opinion against the proposal,

⁴⁴⁶ Muller, *The Kept Men?*, p. 29.

⁴⁴⁷ TU/GENERALB/1/A/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934, Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1934, pp. 121-2. Thorne was 75 years old in 1934. He was readopted for West Ham Plaistow in August 1935. Ibid., NUGMW National Executive meeting of 22 August 1935.

⁴⁴⁸ NUGMW Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1934, pp. 122-3.

although this precluded more detailed debate on the resolution's merits. A decision after the vote that the resolution's defeat meant that 'kindred resolutions on the same subject', of which presumably there were several, 'should be regarded as being disposed of'.⁴⁴⁹ Dukes, however, seems to have had no intention of remaining as a candidate, despite having been re-adopted for Warrington. The union's national executive, on Dukes' prompting, decided in March 1935 to empower the Lancashire district to select a union nominee to succeed Dukes as the candidate. It is perhaps noteworthy that the Executive emphasised that only if adopted by the divisional party as the candidate would the union's nominee be added to the official NUGMW parliamentary panel: the union was prepared to face the loss of Warrington as one of its constituencies; equally it did not want to add to its parliamentary panel unnecessarily if this could possibly be helped. In the event a NUGMW candidate, Edward Porter, was selected, necessitating his withdrawal as a candidate at Preston.⁴⁵⁰ Personal considerations seem to have influenced an attempt at the 1938 Biennial Conference to induce Dukes to stand for Parliament: not only was he named in a resolution asking that he be allowed to stand, but the mover argued that it was 'a tragedy that he had ever been out of Parliament'. On hearing Dukes' response – that the general secretaryship was a full time position and that he felt no urge to return to politics – the resolution was withdrawn.⁴⁵¹ This was indicative not only of a generational difference between Dukes and the older officials, for whom bridging the industrial and political worlds had seemed quite natural, but strongly suggests a powerful sense, increasingly shared by union leaders, of trade union leadership as a professional, full time occupation.

Exceptional circumstances could compel trade union officials who would otherwise likely have stuck to the industrial sphere to enter the political fray, often at short notice; more commonly at by-elections but also in the context of the 1931 crisis. Such instances were usually a result of considerable organised pressure from party headquarters. The cases of two general secretaries in particular are illustrative in this

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁵⁰ TU/GENERALB/1/A/11 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1935, NUGMW National Executive meetings of 7 March 1935, 30 May 1935 and 25 July 1935.

⁴⁵¹ TU/GENERALB/1/A/14 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1938, Biennial Delegate Congress Report 1938, pp. 164-5.

regard: George Hicks of the Building Trade Workers at Woolwich East, and Ernest Bevin of the TGWU at Gateshead.⁴⁵²

The death of the Earl Russell in early March 1931 deprived the Labour government of its Under-Secretary of State for India. Little time was wasted in securing the agreement of Harry Snell, MP for Woolwich East, to serve as his replacement, with a seat in the House of Lords: according to Snell's autobiography, he was approached by Henderson about the post on the evening of Wednesday 11 March, appointed following an interview with MacDonald the following morning, and spent his last day in the House of Commons on Friday 13 March. Snell's reluctance is tangible throughout his account – 'I would not have asked the Government to pass to me the salt' – finding himself clinging 'almost fiercely' to the green benches of the Commons on his final afternoon there, and regretting 'that my friends in Woolwich would be put to the expense and inconvenience of a by-election'.⁴⁵³ Snell had been a 'reassuring local candidate, first elected in 1922'.⁴⁵⁴ A special meeting of the AUBTW Executive Council was hastily convened 'as a matter of urgency' on Friday 20 March to discuss a letter dated two days earlier from William Barefoot, secretary of the Woolwich divisional party, offering Hicks, the union's general secretary, 'a pressing and unanimous invitation' to stand as Snell's successor. Barefoot stressed the 'great joy' Hicks' acceptance would bring to local movement and noted that he had already secured the endorsement of the national leadership, with Henderson 'particularly anxious that you shall accept'.⁴⁵⁵ A deputation from Transport House, accompanied by Barefoot and armed with a letter of support from Henderson, arrived to press the Executive to give its consent to Hicks' candidature. Henderson's letter emphasised both the possibility of securing a large majority in what was a relatively safe Labour seat, and the necessity of demonstrating the party's commitment to restoring trade union rights, despite the recent defeat of the attempt to amend the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, by

⁴⁵² Margaret Bondfield's earlier candidacy for Wallsend at a 1926 by-election could also be included in this category: she wrote that 'It was Henderson's influence really that enabled me to win the Wallsend nomination in the election of 1926'; Bondfield, *A Life's Work*, p. 253 and footnote.

⁴⁵³ Lord (Harry) Snell, *Men, Movements, and Myself* (London, 1936), p. 245-6.

⁴⁵⁴ Snell also served as chair of the Consultative Committee, elected to ensure effective contact between ministers and backbenchers during the 1929 administration, and was later to chair the London County Council. See David Howell, 'Snell, Harold (Harry) (Lord Snell of Plumstead) (1865–1944)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XIII*, pp. 352-362.

⁴⁵⁵ W. Barefoot to G. Hicks, 18 March 1931, reproduced in MSS.78/AU/1/1/12 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, 20 March 1931. The writ for the by-election having been issued, a candidate was needed in place by Sunday 22 March.

returning 'a prominent Trade Union official' to the House. Growing trade union disillusionment with the government's record was a problem, and permitting Hicks to 'step into the breach at this very important by-election' would be of great assistance to the party as it attempting to respond to this.⁴⁵⁶ Members of the deputation reinforced Henderson's points: Party Chairman Stanley Hirst observed the 'great need for representative Trade Unionists' to serve in Parliament and the certainty of a large majority, whilst National Agent G. R. Shepherd noted that although there was no shortage of potential candidates, the party was 'concerned to-day to try and restore the confidence of the working class of this country', insisting that it was 'they and not Bro. Hicks who had made the approach in this matter'; Acting Secretary Jim Middleton added that 'the fact of selecting one who had sprung from the working class and had risen to the highest position in the trade union movement' would serve as a 'great stimulus to [...] rally the workers'. Barefoot argued that the strength of the local party was such that Hicks would need to spend little time in the constituency, and 'moreover, the House of Commons was within easy access of the General Office of the union'.⁴⁵⁷

The deputation seems to have made quite an impression on the AUBTW's Executive – not only was the appeal a pressing one requiring a rapid decision, but it came directly from the major figures in the party's national organisation. The builders' union was hardly a political heavyweight: as it usually only sent a delegation of three to party conferences; this may well have been the first time several of the lay Executive councillors had come into contact with leading figures on the political side, who were now appealing openly to their sense of duty to the Labour movement to help the party in its hour of need. It is notable that the points relating to the convenience and ease of a Hicks candidacy were left to the local representative, Barefoot – as was the question of finance later in the meeting.⁴⁵⁸ The Executive agreed to allow Hicks' name to go forward and provide financial support for his candidature, effectively abandoning its prior policy, agreed only in 1928, not to accept responsibility for financing Parliamentary candidatures.⁴⁵⁹ In thanking the Executive for its support, Hicks referred

⁴⁵⁶ A. Henderson to S. Hirst, 19 March 1931, reproduced in AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, 20 March 1931. For a summary of union disappointment with the government, see Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999), pp. 89-90.

⁴⁵⁷ AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, 20 March 1931.

⁴⁵⁸ Barefoot anticipated a cost to the union of around £600 for by-election expenses.

⁴⁵⁹ MSS.78/AU/1/1/11 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, 24 July 1928. This decision was based largely on the limited nature of the union's political fund reserves, which had hardly improved by 1931. The existing policy did allow for grants of up to £50 maximum to assist AUBTW members who might

to the invitation from Woolwich as an honour 'not only to himself, but to the union as a whole': it seems likely from their response to the appeal that his colleagues felt similarly. The participation of Barefoot – who would act as Hicks' agent – was a guarantee against any local difficulties: Hicks was the sole nominee, unanimously adopted by the constituency party on 22 March.⁴⁶⁰ It would perhaps be going too far to suggest that Snell was manoeuvred out of the Commons to make way for Hicks – he was clearly an able, if aging, figure – but the speed and highly orchestrated manner in which the latter's candidacy was secured does suggest a desire on the part of party leaders to use the opportunity originally provided by the loss of Russell to get a major trade union figure into the a safe seat, providing solidity during a particularly difficult period for the Labour government. Given John Bromley's recent declaration of his intention to stand down at the next election, securing the presence in the House of another prominent member of the TUC General Council was likely also a consideration. The AUTBW's prestige can only have been increased by the fact that Hicks was able to hold the seat in October 1931 as one of a much-reduced number of Labour MPs, which in itself vindicated the move to secure him as a candidate seven months earlier. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that as Hicks' by-election campaign in Woolwich East was underway, another major figure on the industrial side, the Engineers' general secretary J. T. Brownlie, was fighting a by-election in Sunderland following the death of the sitting Labour member, Alf Smith of the TGWU. Admittedly Brownlie was approaching retirement as an AEU officer, whilst Sunderland was a less promising prospect than Woolwich East – as was substantiated by Brownlie's defeat – but this may well be another example of the same phenomenon, given that Brownlie, like Hicks, had not previously been a Parliamentary candidate.⁴⁶¹

be adopted as Labour candidates, but providing any further sums towards election expenses, let alone contributions to constituency maintenance or the salary of an agent, had been firmly ruled out.

⁴⁶⁰ 'Mr G. Hicks as Candidate', *Daily Herald*, 21 March 1931; 'Mr George Hicks as Candidate – To Fight Woolwich E. for Labour', *Daily Herald*, 23 March 1931; 'East Woolwich By-Election', *Daily Herald*, 26 March 1931.

⁴⁶¹ This is not strictly true: Brownlie had been the unsuccessful ASE candidate at Crewe in 1918 as one of 17 Engineers' candidates. Although the number of candidates sponsored by the union had fallen significantly by 1929, the fact that Brownlie, despite being in a position of influence as general secretary, was never among their number, strongly suggests that his candidacy was influenced by specific circumstances on both occasions. In Sunderland, his effort to defend Smith's 1929 majority of over 2000 resulted in a Conservative majority of 422 at the by-election on 26 March 1931. Hicks' majority on 15 April 1931 was 3843, down from Snell's 1929 majority of 8541. See LPACR, 1931, pp. 22-23. A similar example is provided by the candidacy of J. W. Banfield, general secretary of the Bakers' union, at the Fulham West by-election in May 1930. Banfield's candidature was announced within two days of the resignation due to ill health of the sitting Labour MP, George Spero. On this

Ernest Bevin's candidature for Gateshead in October 1931 offers further insight into these complexities. Since the establishment of the TGWU in 1922, Bevin had shown little interest in a Parliamentary career, being preoccupied with his industrial work.⁴⁶² The formation of the National government was the catalyst for a change in his position. His comment on the crisis, that 'this is like the General Strike, I'm prepared to put everything in' may have given Henderson cause for alarm in terms of his desire for closer party-union co-operation and to 'regulate the unions' industrial action to the political and electoral requirements of the party',⁴⁶³ but it also contained a possibility for advancing this strategy further by securing arguably the major figure in the industrial Labour movement as a Parliamentary candidate. This might reflect some of Henderson's frustration at his treatment by TUC leaders during the crisis, by letting them 'face the criticism' of the electors.⁴⁶⁴ When considered alongside the pursuit of Hicks some months earlier, however, it is possible to perceive a more deliberate and persistent attempt to produce the kind of co-operation Henderson desired between the two wings of the movement by securing key trade union figures to contribute to Labour's efforts in the Commons.

By October, in the context of widespread anticipation of an early election, Bevin found himself 'pressed from all quarters to place myself at the disposal of the Labour Party'.⁴⁶⁵ Henderson in particular was applying the pressure: he had approached not only Bevin himself, but Hirst, the Party Chairman and TGWU Financial Secretary 'on several occasions', as well as making a 'strong appeal' to the chairman of the union's General Executive Council, Herbert Kershaw, having invited him to meet privately to

occasion Banfield was the candidate of the DLP rather than his union, perhaps due to his strong local connections as a former Mayor of the borough. He was defeated at Fulham West, but was successful as a Bakers' candidate at Wednesbury in a by-election in July 1932, although this time he was already in situ as Labour candidate some months prior to the death of the sitting Conservative MP. See LPACR 1932, p. 38. It is tempting to interpret the candidature of Dorothy Evans, general secretary of the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, at the Paddington South by-election in October 1930, with Evans standing as a DLP candidate as a further example, but Evans had already been adopted to fight the constituency for Labour. This was the party's first contest in the seat, the Conservative having been returned unopposed in 1924 and 1929, underlining the difficulties in securing constituencies with good prospects of success facing Labour women candidates. See LPACR 1931, p. 17.

⁴⁶² Although earlier he had stood as a Dockers' union candidate for Bristol Central at the 1918 general election.

⁴⁶³ Andrew Thorpe, 'Arthur Henderson and the British political crisis of 1931', *Historical Journal* 31:1 (1988), 117-139, p. 125.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁶⁵ Bevin to Henderson, 2 October 1931, in MSS.126/EB/X/11. Bullock cites this letter, Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume I Trade Union Leader 1881-1940* (London, 1960), p. 495.

discuss the subject on the first evening of the party's annual conference at Scarborough.⁴⁶⁶ This placed Bevin in something of a dilemma. Although confessing himself anxious 'to respond to the call of the Party, and especially so having regard to the probable industrial consequences of the present political situation', the union's rules would require him to give up the general Secretaryship if he entered Parliament. This he was strongly disinclined to do, considering his 'work in connection with the consolidation and development of the Union had not yet been completed'.⁴⁶⁷

Writing to Henderson on 2 October, he acknowledged that 'you will think I am very difficult in regard to this political business', but given this difficulty and the 'divergence of opinion' within the union on the issue, the TGWU Executive would have to make a decision when it met at Scarborough. The delay would mean telling the Seaham (Durham) Divisional Labour Party 'not to bother' considering Bevin as a candidate, so as not to 'interfere or hold up nominations'.⁴⁶⁸ It can be inferred that both Henderson and the local party had appealed to Bevin to stand against Ramsay MacDonald at Seaham, and both Bevin and William Coxon, the DLP secretary and eventual candidate, had been forced to deny rumours of Bevin's candidacy there.⁴⁶⁹ A MacDonald-Bevin contest would certainly have had symbolic value, whilst Henderson and others may well have felt that it would take a candidate of Bevin's stature to have any realistic chance of defeating MacDonald in the constituency: the likes of H. N. Brailsford, Sir Patrick Hastings, and Harold Laski were also among rumoured nominees.⁴⁷⁰ A defeat for Bevin in such a contest, however, would have been extremely embarrassing, and this possibility may have been a factor in his decision not to pursue the offer. In any case, as he explained to Henderson, 'if I ran at all, I should endeavour to get a seat near London, to make things as easy as possible'.⁴⁷¹

The TGWU's Executive met on the evening of 6 October at Scarborough, after the second day's proceedings of the party conference. Members unable to attend were circularised and their views reported. Bevin outlined the case for his candidature, in

⁴⁶⁶ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, special session of FEC and GEC, 6 October 1931.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Bevin to Henderson, 2 October 1931, in MSS.126/EB/X/11.

⁴⁶⁹ 'Seaham seat – another rumour refuted by secretary', *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 24 September 1931; 'Mr Ernest Bevin and Seaham', *Shields Daily News*, 25 September 1931; 'Mr. Bevin and Seaham – rumour he may contest the division', *Leeds Mercury*, 25 September 1931.

⁴⁷⁰ 'Seaham and Labour nominee', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 30 September 1931.

⁴⁷¹ Bevin to Henderson, 2 October 1931, in MSS.126/EB/X/11.

terms of the critical political position, his own role in the events of the crisis, the need for political consolidation of the trade unions and that it was believed that he could 'render real assistance' to that end. Hirst and Kershaw referred to their discussions with Henderson, Hirst noting that the latter had insisted upon the 'necessity of securing the assistance in Parliament of national figures on the industrial side'. After 'lengthy' deliberation, the meeting was adjourned to the following day. It is not clear at what time the meeting reconvened, but it seems likely to have been, again, in the evening after the day's conference proceedings had concluded. By this point the writs for a general election had been issued, which can only have added to the sense of urgency.⁴⁷² Bevin now appeared more determined. After more 'long and careful consideration' the Executive decided to allow him to stand, whilst continuing as general secretary, on the grounds that 'the confidence of the members would be shaken by any change in the leadership of the Union at the present time'. No particular constituency was specified, although some financial issues were discussed.⁴⁷³ Here, as in the AUBTW's case, existing union policy had been abandoned in order to facilitate the candidature of a key official at a critical moment. Henderson's influence had again been important. If the Executive were meeting in the evening, then that very afternoon they would have heard 'Uncle' Arthur opposing a resolution barring permanent officials of the party from filling 'dual roles' as MPs. Henderson emphasised that such a decision would affect not only the party's own staff, but also 'other organisations [...] every Trade Union'. His remark that 'we have been going on for years in this way, and I do not think the Party has suffered' would not have been lost on the TGWU Executive members, and given his efforts, it is not unlikely that Henderson had Bevin in mind when referring to trade unions which managed to follow this practice.⁴⁷⁴

Bullock remarks that, his candidacy being approved, Bevin was 'at once offered the nomination for Gateshead'.⁴⁷⁵ This requires further discussion given that Bevin had expressed his preference for a constituency near the capital. The Labour candidature

⁴⁷² Andrew Thorpe, *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991), p. 123.

⁴⁷³ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, resumed special session of FEC and GEC, 7 October 1931. Bevin's only stipulation was that he should neither 'gain nor lose financially' by becoming an MP, and to this end he proposed paying part of his parliamentary salary into the union's political fund to meet constituency expenses, etc.

⁴⁷⁴ LPACR 1931, pp. 229-230. The 'reference back' was carried, effectively rejecting the resolution.

⁴⁷⁵ Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume I*, p. 496.

for the constituency became available due to the sudden death of the sitting MP, Herbert Evans, on the day of the dissolution of Parliament, 7 October, so had not been under consideration previously.⁴⁷⁶ Certainly it appeared a good prospect, having been held by Labour since 1922 with a brief Liberal interlude during the 1923-4 Parliament. The barrister James Melville had held the seat for Labour with a majority of over 16,000 in 1929, securing over half of the votes in a four-cornered contest, before being appointed Solicitor-General by MacDonald.⁴⁷⁷ Gateshead was the party's strongest area in the north-east in terms of municipal results in county boroughs across the inter-war period, whilst the large proportion of the local workforce in the shipbuilding, engineering and coal industries suffering unemployment, appeared, superficially at least, to provide a ready audience for Labour propaganda.⁴⁷⁸ Evans had held the seat in a straight fight at a June 1931 by-election caused by Melville's death with a much narrower majority of 1,392, so in the context of the crisis, victory was far from assured, particularly once the Conservative, National Labour and New Party candidates dropped out of the running.⁴⁷⁹ Proximity to Seaham did mean that Bevin was able to speak in MacDonald's constituency several times during the campaign, and it seems likely that Bevin's candidature owed something to this.⁴⁸⁰ However, the determining factor was the sudden emergence of a vacancy for a Labour candidate in a reasonably 'winnable' constituency.

Unlike George Hicks six months earlier, Bevin had to face a contested selection conference before being adopted by the constituency party. The sudden nature of the vacancy owing to Evans' death and the pressure of the impending general election, as well as Gateshead's distance from London, mitigated against the kind of close co-operation between national and local party officials that had helped ease Hicks into

⁴⁷⁶ Evans' death was unexpected: he had collapsed at Westminster Underground station on 5 October and never regained consciousness. 'Two Days Unconscious – Major H. Evans dies after Station Collapse', *Daily Herald*, 8 October 1931.

⁴⁷⁷ Archie Potts, 'Melville, Sir James Benjamin (1885-1931)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* IX, pp. 212-215.

⁴⁷⁸ Sam Davies and Bob Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 4: Exeter-Hull* (e-book edition, Abingdon, 2016), ch. 2, 'Gateshead'. Unemployment was 'chronic' throughout the 1920s and 1930s, representing some 23.6% of the population in 1931, rising to a 1932 monthly average of 44.6%.

⁴⁷⁹ J. S. Barr (New Party) and John Fennell (National Labour) withdrew after ballot papers had been printed, so they went on to poll 1,077 and 187 votes respectively. As the Liberal candidate in 1929, Fennell had received 10,314 votes. Barr had unsuccessfully contested Tynemouth for Labour in both 1924 and 1929, coming third on each occasion.

⁴⁸⁰ For example, *Times*, 24 October 1931, for notice of two Bevin meetings in the constituency.

the Woolwich East candidature; the accusations of trade union 'dictation' during and since the August crisis would hardly be assuaged were the General Council's leading personality to be presented with a promising candidature unchallenged, although there was understandable excitement within the Gateshead labour movement over the possibility of his candidacy.⁴⁸¹ Bevin was one of four nominees before the selection conference delegates on 12 October; eventually defeating a wealthy, Oxford-educated journalist, Richard Fisher, by 77 votes to 40 after the other two nominees, both local men with ILP support, had been eliminated due to their refusal to undertake to accept, if elected, the standing orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Whilst there were concerns that Bevin would be unable to give much time to Gateshead owing to his trade union commitments, his experience and superior economic knowledge helped secure his adoption over Fisher, in whom one delegate discerned 'more than a little of the money touch'.⁴⁸² During the campaign Bevin's opponent, the National Liberal Thomas Magnay, made effective use of his own local connections, portraying Bevin as a carpet-bagger who only came to Gateshead 'a few weeks ago' in comparison to Magnay's four decades; he also exploited the claims of TUC 'dictation', a charge to which Bevin was 'particularly vulnerable'.⁴⁸³

In the event, Magnay secured a majority of almost 13,000. Although Bevin declared himself 'very glad indeed' to have been able to poll the previous Labour vote, a unanimous request for him to continue as Gateshead candidate was refused by the union's Executive, on the grounds that the urgency of the circumstances no longer existed.⁴⁸⁴ The union had no desire to make a habit of allowing the general secretary to contest Parliamentary seats, but on this occasion a significant exception had been made.

⁴⁸¹ Ruth Dodds, editor of the local party's *Gateshead Herald*, reported 'tram men very excited at the prospect of Bevin coming'. Archie Potts, 'Bevin to Beat the Bankers': Ernest Bevin's Gateshead campaign of 1931', *Bulletin of the North East Group for the Study of Labour History* 11 (1977), 28-38, p. 31.

⁴⁸² Potts, 'Bevin to Beat the Bankers', pp. 31-32. This article provides a useful account of the campaign in Gateshead more broadly.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

⁴⁸⁴ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, GEC 16 November 1931. See Appendix I to these minutes, Bevin's quarterly report, for his comments on the election. Bevin polled 21,826 votes against Magnay's 34,764. This total would have been enough to win the earlier by-election, when Evans defeated Conservative Cuthbert Headlam by 22,893 votes to 21,501.

The 'adoption market': electoral geography and placing union candidates

In comparison to those aspirant MPs sponsored by constituency parties or by the Co-operative party, trade union candidates were disproportionately more successful, tending to be concentrated more heavily in 'safe' seats. The effect of this on Labour's Parliamentary activity will be analysed in the next chapter, but here closer examination of how unions chose where to pursue candidatures is required. One point of criticism of the sponsorship system was that union resources were often concentrated in constituencies where they were arguably least required, leaving more marginal divisions short of much-needed funds and attention. Despite this union-sponsored constituencies provided a foundation of continuity. The number of union candidatures in seats not previously won by Labour at general elections provides a useful illustration of the extent of this phenomenon. At the 1929 general election forty out of a total of 139 trade union candidates contested seats never previously won by Labour. Of this forty, more than a third were fought by a continuing candidate. In 1931 the total fell to sixteen, and in 1935 to just eleven.⁴⁸⁵ A core of seats which were always union ones was developing, and whilst there was some expansion into new areas in 1945,⁴⁸⁶ the overall figures stayed similar into the 1960s.⁴⁸⁷ This pattern was largely in place by the 1930s.

⁴⁸⁵ In 1931, these seats were: Bethnal Green South West (TGWU); Bury (UTFWA); Hull North West (NUBSO); Leeds North East (NUBSO); Liverpool Exchange (TGWU); Middlesbrough West (NUR); Nottingham East (NUGMW); Plymouth Sutton (NUR); the second Preston seat (NUGMW); Chorley, Lancashire (Op. Bleachers); Heywood and Radcliffe, Lancashire (UTFWA); Middleton and Prestwich, Lancashire (UTFWA); Royton, Lancashire (UTFWA); Stafford, Staffordshire (NUBSO); Pudsey and Otley, West Yorkshire (Painters); and Greenock, Renfrewshire (USBISS); of these, three (Bury; Middleton and Prestwich; Stafford) were fought by the same union as in 1929, and two with a continuing candidate (Bury; Middleton and Prestwich). In 1935, the seats were: Birmingham West (NUGMW); Leeds North East (NUBSO); Liverpool Fairfield (ASW); Middlesbrough West (NUR); Plymouth Sutton (NUR); Thornbury, Gloucestershire (NUDAW); Chorley, Lancashire (NUGMW); Heywood and Radcliffe, Lancashire (TGWU); Middleton and Prestwich, Lancashire (UTFWA); Royton, Lancashire (Op. Bleachers); and Greenock, Renfrewshire (USBISS); of these six were fought by the same union as in 1931, and four (Leeds North East; Middlesbrough West; Plymouth Sutton; and Greenock) with a continuing candidate. Labour had briefly held Heywood and Radcliffe following a 1921 by-election.

⁴⁸⁶ Eleven seats never previously won by Labour were contested by union candidates in 1945. Of these, Exeter (NUR); Hartlepool (NUR); Liverpool Walton (RCA); Faversham, Kent (TGWU); Bosworth, Leicestershire (NUBSO); Harborough, Leicestershire (NUBSO); Burton, Staffordshire (NUBSO); Barkston Ash, West Yorkshire (NUAW); and Aberdeen South (AEU), had not previously been contested by trade union candidates. Only five sponsored candidates were defeated in 1945; notably four of them were amongst these eleven.

⁴⁸⁷ See the figures given by Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, pp. 165-166.

The choice of where to stand candidates was relatively straightforward for the federal unions, based as they were on strong regional identities. MFGB candidates contested coalfield seats, whilst nominees of the textile unions overwhelmingly stood in Lancashire and parts of Yorkshire, although by the late 1930s, frustrated by its lack of Commons representation, the UTFWA annual conference passed a resolution urging consideration of constituencies outside the cotton areas.⁴⁸⁸ Given that the process of selection necessitated nomination by a union branch attached to a constituency party, there was little likelihood of, say, a mining candidate in Suffolk or a cotton one in Hampshire. In their own areas however, with greater authority within local parties, there was a much better chance of getting their nominee accepted as the Labour candidate.

Other unions took a different approach. For those who operated a panel or list system on a national basis, the key relationship was between the union and its individual candidate, rather than a particular constituency – although this did not preclude close and long-standing associations between particular unions and certain constituencies, in some cases even long into the post-war period.⁴⁸⁹ Whilst there was a reduced chance of selection – with a thinner spread of members over the country, fewer were concentrated in any given constituency – this could be advantageous in allowing union executives or political sub-committees extensive scope in terms of constituency choice.

Various factors might influence a decision on where to attempt to place a candidate. The perceived ‘winnability’ of the seat was a key consideration. As described in the previous chapter, union leaderships were often under considerable pressure to produce tangible results from political expenditure. This might involve the marginality of the seat in question. Several unions made use of recent election results in assessing the suitability of a constituency.⁴⁹⁰ The strength of the local Labour party was also significant here, both in terms of its membership activity and financial security: some unions made building up the DLP part of their policy. The level of attention paid to such

⁴⁸⁸ TU/3/2/7 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1938, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁸⁹ For example, Whitehaven (Cumberland) was held by Frank Anderson of the RCA/TSSA from 1935 until Anderson’s death in 1959; in the Yorkshire coalfield, Rother Valley, Don Valley, and Barnsley (later Barnsley Central) were represented by NUM-sponsored members until 1967, 1979, and 1987 respectively. See Andrew Taylor, *The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners* (London, 1984), pp. 133-146.

⁴⁹⁰ See minutes of the NUR’s political sub-committee, printed in NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, and NUDAW, Political Secretary’s Reports to Executive Council, for many examples of this.

details might differ between unions. NUDAW was perhaps the most thorough here, gathering reports on constituencies from the existing agents on some occasions.⁴⁹¹ Constituencies were often rejected as possibilities on these grounds. Even the UTFWA, concentrating almost entirely on Lancashire, had an order-of-preference list which was used when determining which constituencies to allow its candidates to be put forward for.⁴⁹² There could be considerable leeway, however: a request for a textile candidate from Middleton and Prestwich DLP was rejected in 1937 on the grounds that the division was not considered 'a suitable constituency for this Association to finance in the placing of one of its candidates', despite having been fought – albeit unsuccessfully – by an UTFWA candidate at every general election since 1918.⁴⁹³ There is less evidence of lists being kept in the same way by other unions. This is perhaps surprising in some cases – it might be expected that the NUR, for example, would exhibit a preference for 'railway towns', but it does not seem to have pursued them particularly – although the same reflections still applied.⁴⁹⁴

Links with local figures could also play a part in constituency choice. Several national union officials combined these roles with a local identity as a major figure in the Labour movement in their region or city. Arthur Hayday served as TUC chair 1931-32 and NUGMW Midlands district secretary, as well as being the union's vice-president, but his local credentials were more significant in his candidature for Nottingham West.⁴⁹⁵ His connection with the city dated to 1906 when he first visited as an ILP propagandist; he was a borough council candidate from 1910, and served in the key position of

⁴⁹¹ See George Craddock's report on Thornbury (Gloucestershire), NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, report of 10 August 1933.

⁴⁹² TU/3/4/10 UTFWA, Political Sub-Committee, correspondence etc., 1930-35, Sub-committee re: Parliamentary Constituencies and Candidates, 20 June 1932. All were in Lancashire (unless stated otherwise); the order of preference was given as: 1. Bolton; 2. Sowerby (West Yorkshire); 3. Burnley; 4. Preston; 5. Blackburn; 6. Oldham; 7. Heywood and Radcliffe; 8. Huddersfield (West Yorkshire); 9. Bury; and 10. Middleton and Prestwich. The union was only prepared to take financial responsibility for six candidates in total, so on this occasion the committee decided to initially offer their panellists to the first five constituencies, with numbers 6-10 only coming into play if one of the first five rejected the UTFWA candidate, or 'in the event of Bolton not accepting two of our candidates'. The Legislative Council added Ashton-under-Lyne to the list in eighth place following an appeal from the DLP, TU/3/1/5 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1932, meeting of 5 July 1932.

⁴⁹³ TU/3/1/9 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1936-37, meeting of 30 July 1937. Despite Middleton and Prestwich being last on the union's list, that UTFWA had still contested it on these occasions may be indicative of the union's lack of success in getting its candidates adopted for more preferable seats.

⁴⁹⁴ Sam Davies and Bob Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 2: Bradford-Carlisle* (Aldershot, 2000) include several tables detailing percentages of the workforce in particular trades by county borough, calculated from the 1931 Census, appendices 7-15, pp. 689-691.

⁴⁹⁵ He was MP for the constituency from 1918-31, and 1935-45.

Trades Council president from 1913; he was an important figure in pushing the Nottingham labour movement to support the First World War, sitting on the local War Emergency Committee.⁴⁹⁶ His wartime patriotism was a factor in his election in 1918 as Nottingham's first Labour MP, but 'undoubtedly' so too was 'his personal following amongst the town's trade unionists', indeed, he was 'the most important trade union official' in Nottingham, as part of a right-wing leadership group which had 'tightened its grip' on the local movement by the mid-1920s.⁴⁹⁷ Hayday was not the only national trade union leader to have a dual role as a local personality, although he was one of the more successful. The NUDAW political general secretary, William A. Robinson, was one of the senior figures in Liverpool Labour politics. He served as a borough councillor from 1911 and an alderman 1919-25, and again from 1931, including a period as leader of the Labour group.⁴⁹⁸ One of a handful of 'powerful figures [...] elected regardless of their union's importance' in the leadership of the Liverpool Trades Council, he was less fortunate in his attempts to become a Liverpool MP, being defeated at West Toxteth in 1918, Wavertree in 1924, and Exchange in 1929; his eventual election to Parliament for St Helens (Lancashire) in 1935 probably owed more to his position as a NUDAW sponsored candidate than his local connections.⁴⁹⁹

A strong personal connection could prove crucial even when the local figure was not the candidate. The Labour candidate for Hull Central, J. M. Kenworthy, succeeded to a peerage in March 1934 on the death of his father.⁵⁰⁰ Kenworthy had been the MP from 1919-31, joining Labour from the Liberals in 1926. By July, Walter Windsor, a NUGMW panellist, had been installed as his successor. Windsor's local connection appeared tenuous: he was president of the Bethnal Green North West DLP, where he had been the MP from 1923-29, and a member of the London County Council. The

⁴⁹⁶ Peter Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement, 1880-1939* (London, 1985), pp. 140, 155, 163-165, 176.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 194-195, 250

⁴⁹⁸ Sam Davies, *Liverpool Labour. Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (Keele, 1996), pp.112-114.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 73-74. Robinson was also Trades Council President, 1922-23; he was also defeated a Shipley (West Yorkshire) in 1930 at a by-election, and 1931. Several studies of his NUDAW colleague, Ellen Wilkinson, appear to elide William A. Robinson, NUDAW political general secretary and Liverpool councillor, with another NUDAW colleague, Wright Robinson, NUDAW Manchester divisional officer and Manchester councillor. This is an understandable misidentification, but these were two different men: W. A. was always given both his first initials in NUDAW minutes in to clarify this. Wright Robinson left a diary, which has been a useful source for Wilkinson's biographers; a W. A. Robinson diary would have been of particular interest to this study, but one does not seem to have survived! See Beers, *Red Ellen*, pp. 69-70; Perry, *'Red Ellen' Wilkinson*, pp. 144-145.

⁵⁰⁰ 'The New Baron Strabolgi', *Hull Daily Mail*, 13 March 1934.

choice was more surprising given Windsor's earlier withdrawal from Nottingham East, which he had fought in 1931, on the grounds of its distance from the capital preventing him from giving the constituency sufficient attention.⁵⁰¹ The key figure in securing his candidacy for Hull Central was W. E. Copeland, a longstanding Labour councillor in Hull, and NUGMW Executive member.⁵⁰² During discussion of a letter from the union's East Coast District suggesting one of the available candidates be nominated for the Hull Central vacancy, Copeland was on hand: a member of the selection committee in the constituency, he outlined the 'prospects of success'. This was enough to prompt the Executive to disregard an existing invitation to Windsor from Smethwick Labour party, and push him forward for Hull. Within a few weeks, the 'necessary action had been taken'.⁵⁰³ Copeland had been present during earlier discussions about placing Windsor, and his action was carefully calculated; the letter would have come from his close ally and fellow Hull councillor T. W. Kerry, in his capacity as NUGMW East Coast Secretary; Copeland himself was the district president. It is likely he knew Windsor well, having served on the union's executive together from 1929. Windsor was selected in July, and went on to win the seat in November 1935.⁵⁰⁴ He noted that his victory was remarkable given that 'his agent and himself were comparative strangers in the division'; the agent, Ewan G. Carr, had followed Windsor from London.⁵⁰⁵ That he too was soon a Hull councillor surely owed something to the influence of Copeland, himself now an alderman.⁵⁰⁶ Individuals such as Copeland who straddled the national

⁵⁰¹ TU/GENERALB/1/A/8 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1932, executive meeting of 21 January 1932, 18 February 1932; general council meeting of 26 February 1932. The council decided against nominating Windsor for Jarrow (Durham), despite Windsor's own willing: a contest against the higher-profile Ellen Wilkinson was unlikely to go the way of their man, and in any case, the constituency was even further from London.

⁵⁰² Copeland had first been elected to the council in 1920, Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 4*, ch. 9, 'Hull'; he joined the union's executive in 1929, 'Honour for Councillor Copeland', *Hull Daily Mail*, 8 March 1929.

⁵⁰³ TU/GENERALB/1/A/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934, executive meeting of 3 May 1934 and special meeting of 19 May 1934. This involved getting the agreement of the union's London district, where Windsor was an official.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Central Hull Labour Candidate – Former MP as Secret Choice', *Hull Daily Mail*, 09 July 1934; NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934, executive meeting of 26 July 1934.

⁵⁰⁵ 'What Hull Election Winners and Losers Think of It', *Hull Daily Mail*, 16 November 1935; 'Central Hull Labour Party – Appointment of first Full Time Agent', *Hull Daily Mail*, 17 September 1934.

⁵⁰⁶ Carr was returned unopposed in 1938 for West Central ward – within Windsor's constituency. Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 4*, ch. 9, 'Hull'. For Copeland, see 'Honour for Councillor Copeland', *Hull Daily Mail*, 28 June 1929; 'National Appointment for Hull Alderman', *Hull Daily Mail*, 1 August 1939; 'Tribute to Late Ald. Copeland', *Hull Daily Mail*, 22 January 1945.

industrial and local political contexts, then, could play a significant role in the placing of union candidates.

The local electoral context was also relevant to the placing of union nominees, although it seems to have been of rather lower importance as a factor, perhaps because there was not necessarily a correlation between municipal and parliamentary electoral success in a given constituency.⁵⁰⁷ The kind of seats preferred, however, often did contain some wards where an established tradition of Labour voting at municipal elections already existed. A. G. Walkden's Bristol South constituency provides a good example. The seat included some of Labour's strongest wards in the city: Bedminster East, with fifteen victories from seventeen contests across 1918-1939 and Bedminster West, with eleven wins from seventeen. Following the 1936 redrawing of boundaries, Labour won two out of three contests in the new Bedminster ward, and five from five in Somerset ward.⁵⁰⁸

Other factors might include particular industrial features which made a constituency attractive to a particular union. That 62 per cent of the adult male population worked in metal and engineering trades in Barrow-in-Furness (Lancashire) certainly helped prompt the AEU's rapid move to stake its claim to the candidature there after the ASLEF's John Bromley indicated his wish to retire.⁵⁰⁹ Overall there was a preference for borough rather than county seats, with exceptions including county seats in the coalfields, such as Sedgefield (Durham), Rothwell (West Yorkshire), or Bedwellty (Monmouthshire). An effect of this was that 'rural' constituencies did tend to get overlooked, although there was some Agricultural Workers' sponsorship.⁵¹⁰ Of the 202

⁵⁰⁷ For example, Labour won the parliamentary seat of Carlisle in 1922, 1923 and 1929, but was not able to take control of the council during the interwar years. Its peak year in municipal terms was 1935, although the party failed to win the parliamentary seat at that year's general election. Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 2*, ch. 9, 'Carlisle', pp. 586-640.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., ch. 3, 'Bristol', pp. 195-303. Only some of the wards within the Bristol Central constituency, St. Paul and St. Philip & St Jacob South, had comparable Labour-voting records.

⁵⁰⁹ MSS.259/AEU/1/1/42 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1931, minutes of 20 February and 23 February 1931; MSS.259/AEU/1/1/43 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1931, minutes of 28 April 1931; MSS.259/AEU/1/1/44 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1931, minutes of 23 July and 27 July 1931; Sam Davies and Bob Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 1: Barnsley-Bournemouth* (Aldershot, 1999), p. 69.

⁵¹⁰ The NUAW would contribute election expenses, but not constituency payments, so this was not full sponsorship. Although party annual reports did occasionally list candidates as being representatives of the NUAW, none of these contested the 1929, 1931 or 1935 elections. See Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside. The Politics of Rural Britain 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 156-158.

rural constituencies considered by Clare Griffiths, only 47 were contested by a union-sponsored candidate at interwar general elections.⁵¹¹ There does seem to have been a turn away from the rural seats by sponsoring unions by the 1930s; seats such as King's Lynn (Norfolk), Oswestry (Shropshire) and Yeovil (Somerset) had been contested by trade union candidates in 1918, but would not be again. Of the 47 constituencies, just 25 received union sponsorship during the general elections of 1929, 1931 and 1935. As Griffiths notes, there were significant 'cultural and geographical' obstacles in organising the Labour vote in large rural constituencies with scattered populations; nor was the 'continual financial crisis' many rural DLPs found themselves in likely to encourage unions to part with limited political funds, even if there were other factors which did make a constituency appear promising.⁵¹²

Although it fell to the party NEC to give final endorsement to a candidature, the actual selection was down to the DLP concerned. Trade unions' national strength did not always count here; the NUR saw its candidates beaten on several occasions.⁵¹³ Certain unions were particularly ineffective in this regard; the length of time a union's candidates remained on the party's 'available candidates' list without being selected gives a good indication of this. Smaller unions, or those who only put one candidate forward, were most affected here. It might be known that little money would follow their adoption, or a particular individual would not be the sort of candidate required, but was the only one on offer. William Holmes of the Agricultural Workers remained an 'available candidate' from 1932 to 1940 without selection success, whilst J. P. Gardner of the Furniture Trades Association, Chris Lancaster of the Life Assurance Workers, and Bill Heywood of the National Union of Textile Workers all spent several years on the list. Yet UTFWA also struggled: of nine candidates on the 'available' list in 1936, seven were still awaiting a successful nomination a year later.⁵¹⁴ The union's policy of withdrawing its remaining candidates once eight had been selected probably had an influence here, although its officials in particular tended to be 'less effective as

⁵¹¹ Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*: see appendix A, pp. 342-347, for a full list of these constituencies. My calculations exclude the elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924 for reasons outlined earlier.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 176.

⁵¹³ Including twice in one week in June 1935, when William McAdam was defeated at Coatbridge, and C. J. Kelly at Ashton-under-Lyne. The Coatbridge nomination went to a candidate with no sponsorship. MSS.127/NU/1/1/23 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1935, special meeting of EC, 11 July 1935.

⁵¹⁴ See Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1924-1940, 'Available List' details.

politicians' despite being technically adroit' on cotton questions such as wage calculation.⁵¹⁵

It is difficult to assess to what extent a candidate's financial backing might influence his or her selection. Rush argues that it was 'doubtful' whether selection conference delegates were primarily concerned with financial questions: the majority would be swayed by 'the performance of the candidates on the platform, by trade union and other loyalties, and by political considerations', even in constituencies with a small individual party membership where union money might be most appreciated.⁵¹⁶ Nominees, however, might 'think and hope' financial considerations were important.⁵¹⁷ To some extent this is borne out by the evidence available. Mary Agnes Hamilton noted of her successful selection meeting at Blackburn, a double member borough, that 'the crucial question [...] was not about finance – I had stated blankly that I could do nothing, and the silence on this was quite non-committal'.⁵¹⁸ It is possible that faced with an articulate and obviously middle-class candidate, the delegates may have felt that definitions of being able to 'do nothing' were relative, but even after her selection she was not expected to contribute financially, 'poor as the local party was'.⁵¹⁹ The fact that 'Lady Hamilton' was running in tandem with a well-resourced RCA candidate, Harry Gill, may, however, have helped matters. Attending a selection conference at Sowerby (West Yorkshire), Evelyn Walkden of NUDAW noted that there was much 'cavilling against T. U. financed candidates'; as such he made clear that as a union candidate, he had no desire for preferential treatment and if selected would need to consult his union before making any financial commitments. The delegates took him at his word and chose the other nominee, leaving Walkden lamenting 'the peculiar mercenary ambitions of some constituencies'.⁵²⁰ Some local parties' insistence on having a candidate 'answerable to us alone', without any outside financial backing, could be an irritant to trade unionists, when 'immediately a candidate is chosen on such grounds it is to the Trade Unions that an appeal is made for financial assistance

⁵¹⁵ TU/3/1/4 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1930-32, meeting of 29 December 1931 approved six candidates being selected; this later rose to eight: TU/3/1/9 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1936-37, meeting of 13 July 1936. Alan Fowler, 'Lancashire to Westminster: a study of cotton trade union officials and British Labour 1910-39', *Labour History Review* 64:1 (1999), 1-22, p. 17, but *passim*.

⁵¹⁶ Rush, *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates*, pp. 232-233.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁵¹⁸ Mary Agnes Hamilton, *Remembering my Good Friends* (London, n.d.[1944]), p. 173.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵²⁰ NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1936, report of 10 December 1936.

and the very people who voice the above sentiments are the first to criticise if that assistance is not forthcoming in good measure'.⁵²¹ As the selection cycle began again late in 1935, G. R. Shepherd insisted that 'I have the best of reasons for believing that the demand for monied candidates is on the decrease', whilst admitting 'far too many selections' were still made on this basis.⁵²² Despite the Hastings provisions, reports of selections made primarily on financial grounds, although the regular failure of many trade union candidates to get selected would imply this depended very much on the particular constituency. For candidates without sponsorship, 'trade union money' became an easy scapegoat following a selection conference defeat, and some of the criticism should be seen in this light.⁵²³ Certain constituencies almost always selected trade union candidates, although the sponsoring organisation varied: they would seem logical places to detect the sort of 'mercenary ambitions' referred to, yet even here the picture was more complex. The selection of a Seamen's candidate, the union's Scottish district secretary Charles Jarman, for the very much inland Birmingham Yardley, seems a particular anomaly.⁵²⁴ Certainly finance was discussed at a private meeting between Jarman and the DLP secretary,⁵²⁵ yet despite a relatively low individual membership in comparison to other Birmingham DLPs, the Yardley constituency contained Labour's strongest interwar Birmingham ward in terms of vote share, Saltley, with the party winning 56.1 per cent of votes there across the period.⁵²⁶ Moreover, one of the Saltley councillors was the TGWU Area No. 5 Secretary, James Crump, who had Bevin's ear; the two unions had been working together on a joint-parliamentary committee.⁵²⁷ The NUS, having recently voted to re-affiliate to the party, was keen to secure a parliamentary representative, and the availability of a constituency such as Yardley was too good an opportunity to pass over.⁵²⁸

In many seats, close relationships developed over long periods. These could provide stability in terms of continuity of candidate and agent, as well as a regular source of

⁵²¹ George Mathers of the RCA, writing in *The Labour Candidate*, October-November 1933.

⁵²² G. R. Shepherd, 'A Political Miracle', *Labour*, December 1935.

⁵²³ 'The Adoption Market', *The Labour Candidate*, March 1936.

⁵²⁴ The TGWU, rather than the NUS, organised canal workers.

⁵²⁵ MSS.175/1/1/8 NUS, Minute Books, 1934-39, meeting of executive council, 19 July 1935.

⁵²⁶ Davies and Morley, *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis. Volume 1*, ch.5 'Birmingham', pp. 219-336.

⁵²⁷ The next chapter briefly discusses this committee. For Crump, see Eric Taylor, 'Crump, James (1873-1960)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography V*, pp. 76-78.

⁵²⁸ MSS.175/1/1/8 NUS, Minute Books, 1934-39, meeting of executive council, 20 July 1934. MSS.175/6/Jar/1-4 Charles Jarman Papers contain various correspondence relating to Yardley.

funding. Yet they could also cause conflict, particularly where lengthy experience of sponsorship developed a sense of propriety by unions over 'their' seats. This was a particular problem where the party tried to find suitable seats for ex-ministers during the 1931-35 parliament. The NUR issued an 'emphatic protest' to the party over the nomination of Arthur Greenwood for the Wakefield by-election in early 1932: the union had sponsored the constituency for several years and 'we are of the opinion that such action will not tend to produce the solidarity and goodwill necessary for the building up of constituencies for Labour', although urged its members locally to 'afford every support' to Greenwood's campaign.⁵²⁹ This blend of privately-expressed grievance with a public appeal for loyalty was typical of union responses to such disappointments.⁵³⁰ However, a dispute over the selection for the Clay Cross (Derbyshire) constituency following the death of the sitting TGWU MP, Charles Duncan, was more problematic.⁵³¹ Duncan had been seriously ill for some time, and at least one other union was already circling in anticipation of his resignation;⁵³² Bevin had coaxed him into retiring early from his TGWU post.⁵³³ It was clear that the seat, one of Labour's safest with a 1931 majority of nearly 10,000, would soon be vacant. The TGWU had lined up Ben Smith, previously MP for Bermondsey Rotherhithe, as its prospective nominee. Within a day of Duncan's death in July 1933, rumours were circulating that the party secretary Arthur Henderson would be the Labour candidate,

⁵²⁹ MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, minutes of June 1932 quarterly meeting.

⁵³⁰ The NUR made a further protest in 1937 over the same issue, this time in relation to pressure for 'front bench' candidates at the Stalybridge and Hyde (Cheshire) by-election. Labour party NEC Minutes, 1937, NEC meeting of 6 September 1937; MSS.127/NU/1/1/25 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1937, executive committee, June 1937 quarterly meeting. Other examples include the SWMF's protest over its candidate's defeat at Pontypridd, NEC meeting of 26 January 1938; for an AEU protest over the Dartford (Kent) nomination, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/61 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1935, meeting of 4 November 1935. It is notable that majority of these cases occurred over by-election candidatures. During the ordinary process of selection, the rejection of a union's candidate was less of a blow: other constituencies remained in need of candidates, so there would still be further opportunities.

⁵³¹ For Duncan, see David E. Martin, 'Duncan, Charles (1865-1933)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 123-127.

⁵³² NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1932, report of 30 November 1932. Robinson was to report 'on the position of the Clay Cross Division into which he was directed to make inquiries at your last meeting'. The Executive's minutes for the two previous meetings make no reference to Clay Cross, implying that the discussion was 'off the record', although Robinson's report was 'noted' by the Council: NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1932, minutes of 9 October 1932, 13 November 1932, 4 December 1932.

⁵³³ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/10 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1932, GEC minutes of 22 February 1932. Duncan was already in hospital at this point.

although Henderson would not be drawn on whether he sought the nomination.⁵³⁴ An NUR candidate, P. G. Barstow, was in the field, whilst A. V. Alexander of the Co-operative Party had also been nominated. Duncan had enjoyed the strong support of the Derbyshire Miners Association, but no Miners' candidate was amongst the initial nominations. The DMA protested against their exclusion, going as far as to contemplate running against the official Labour candidate if the DLP did not relent; in the event it did so, allowing Samuel Sales to be put forward as the Miners' nominee.⁵³⁵ Ultimately Henderson did stand and was selected; Sales made it clear that the DMA would have been happy to withdraw for Henderson if the other unions had also agreed to do so.⁵³⁶ The TGWU in particular were not. Bevin insisted to his executive that 'every step possible' had been taken to safeguard the seat for the union, and a letter expressing 'protest and resentment' was sent to the party executive, with further action to be determined pending the NEC's reply.⁵³⁷ The TGWU had lost confidence in the party's ability to 'promote the political interests of the union', and refused to pay its 1933 affiliation fee.⁵³⁸ Although the NEC congratulated Henderson on his successful election in September, it agreed to set up a committee of inquiry into the selection, in close consultation with representatives of the TGWU. These discussions continued for several months. A report was finalised in March 1934, after an initial version had been rejected by the union in December 1933.⁵³⁹ Bevin had discussed the Clay Cross position with Henderson at the 1932 party conference at Leicester, although both men

⁵³⁴ 'Mr. Henderson and Clay Cross – Possible Labour Candidate', *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 7 July 1933. It was noted that if Henderson were to contest the seat, the Samuelite Liberals were unlikely to challenge him in light of his work as President of the Disarmament Conference; this did prove the case; 'Mr. Arthur Henderson – Silence about Clay Cross Candidature', *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 10 July 1933.

⁵³⁵ J. E. Williams, *The Derbyshire Miners. A Study in Industrial and Social History* (London, 1961), p. 836.

⁵³⁶ 'Mr. Henderson to Contest Clay Cross', *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 31 July 1933. Henderson received 50 votes, Sales 16, Smith 14, and Barstow 7. As late as G. R. Shepherd's report to the party NEC on the by-election at their meeting of 26 July 1933, it appeared that Henderson had withdrawn the nomination made on his behalf. Labour Party NEC Minutes 1933.

⁵³⁷ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/11 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1933, FGPC meeting of 31 July 1933. Certainly he had tried to get other unions' support for Smith, including the NUDAW. See NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1933, report of 4 August 1933. TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1933, GEC meeting of 22 August 1933.

⁵³⁸ Labour Party NEC minutes 1933, NEC meeting of 6 September 1933.

⁵³⁹ Labour Party NEC minutes: NEC meetings of 6 September 1933, 29 September 1933, 25 October 1933, 20 December 1933, 1 March 1934, 28 March 1934. TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee: FGPC meetings of 13 September 1933, 28 September 1933, 3 November 1933, 29 December 1933, 8-9 February 1934, 26 April 1934; GEC meeting of 20 November 1933.

disputed what had been said; the TGWU had made its interest in the seat 'perfectly clear' to the NEC's elections sub-committee following this. The union particularly objected to the apparent preferential treatment given to Henderson, notably his being taken on a tour of the constituency by a divisional officer of the party prior to the selection conference, and the action taken by the then-party chairman, Joseph Compton, 'in asking an individual to work up the constituency for a particular candidate', i.e., Henderson.⁵⁴⁰ The report's recommendations, including consultation with the existing sponsoring organisation before the NEC took any action to nominate a candidate, were accepted by the union, and the outstanding fees – minus the contribution to the party by-election insurance fund due for the Clay Cross contest – were finally paid in April 1934.⁵⁴¹ Despite this, anger did not easily subside. The TGWU Area No. 6 Committee wrote to the union Executive in damning terms as late as May 1935, regretting that Henderson 'should have allowed himself to be elected as Member for the Clay Cross Division [...] thereby depriving the constituents of parliamentary representation' whilst he was chairing the Disarmament Conference, a protest the executive endorsed and forwarded to the party NEC.⁵⁴² It is difficult to imagine the Henderson of a few years prior being caught up in an organisational controversy in this way; he was now in poor health, and Dalton noted that he was 'losing his tactical sense, once so acute, pretty badly' and had to 'practically be pushed out' of the party secretaryship.⁵⁴³ Unsurprisingly, Henderson 'didn't like' the Clay Cross verdict,⁵⁴⁴ and the union had been particularly bellicose, reflecting the extent to which Bevin considered the selection a personal slight in the context of the Leicester conversation. When a similar situation arose over another seat in which the TGWU was interested, Doncaster, it is noteworthy that a much more restrained approach was taken by Arthur Deakin, acting general secretary during Bevin's leave of absence.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁰ 'Report Re Clay Cross Enquiry', Labour Party NEC Minutes 1934, NEC meeting of 27 March 1934.

⁵⁴¹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/12 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1934, FGPC meeting of 27 April 1934; Labour Party NEC Minutes, FGPC meeting of 14 May 1934. Perhaps wisely, the NEC decided not to pursue the outstanding by-election fund contribution, NEC meeting of 16 May 1934.

⁵⁴² MSS.126/TG/1186/A/13 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1935, GEC meeting of 29 May 1935.

⁵⁴³ Hugh Dalton, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986), entry dated '1934-5', p. 184.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Labour Party NEC Minutes 1938, NEC meeting of 28 September 1938. Dalton had already suggested that the party should prioritise finding a seat for the defeated TGWU candidate, George

Competition between unions over winnable seats could also cause conflict. The NUR, keenly aware of its parliamentary weakness following the 1931 election, moved quickly to place its candidates in promising constituencies; in December 1931 the union's political sub-committee identified a list of seven seats where 'our local branches, or the local Labour Party' had made inquiries about the possibility of an NUR candidature. Top of the list was Rotherham, which had been represented by Fred Lindley of the Woodworkers from 1923, until his narrow defeat by 762 votes in October 1931.⁵⁴⁶ The ASW had been providing a grant of £300 annually towards the salary of a full-time agent; the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act had sufficient impact on the union's political fund to force it to scale back its commitments after the 1929 general election: £100 was now the most it could make available for the Rotherham agent's salary. When the DLP declined to make up the difference, notice was given to the agent, G. E. Caine, who was replaced on a part-time basis by the DLP secretary, G. C. Ball of the NUR.⁵⁴⁷ It was almost certainly Ball who alerted his union's political sub-committee to the possibility of the Rotherham nomination; the first Lindley knew of a new selection conference was by a letter received from the ASW head office on 15 January 1932, the morning of the conference. It appeared that Ball had not notified the local ASW branch, with the result that, not having received any nominations, Lindley was barred from addressing the selection conference; William Dobbie, the NUR president, was selected, having already been safely nominated by three local branches of the union.⁵⁴⁸ The NUR, and Ball in particular, had been ruthless in their efforts to secure an attractive nomination for their man. The ASW complained to the party NEC of having been unfairly 'ousted [...] after spending thousands of pounds and doing the spade work' in the constituency, yet an NEC investigation found that

Dallas, who was also serving as party chairman. Labour Party NEC Minutes 1938, elections sub-committee, meeting of 5 January 1938.

⁵⁴⁶ MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931, minutes of December 1931 executive committee quarterly meeting: report of political sub-committee, 8 December 1931.

⁵⁴⁷ 'Rotherham Election Bombshell – How the New Labour Candidate was Selected – Mr F. W. Lindley Breaks his Long Silence', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 21 February 1933.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid. According to Lindley, he received notice of the conference on 15 January 1932, the day it was due to take place. The local NUR branches had nominated Dobbie at least a week earlier: MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932, minutes of special executive committee meeting, 7 January 1932. The ASW complained that Ball had given notice not to the local branch, but to an ASW member, Coghill, who was 'neither an official nor a local officer of the Society'. Instead, ASW head office had received a standard letter sent to all affiliated unions advertising the selection conference dated 12 January – itself hardly much time to organise a branch nomination. Labour Party NEC papers, meeting of organisation sub-committee, 17 February 1932. Local MFGB and ISTC members were also unhappy about the amount of notice given, 'Socialist Dispute – Selection of Rotherham Candidate', *Yorkshire Post*, 5 March 1932.

despite 'an absence of businesslike proceedings on both sides', there were insufficient grounds to block Dobbie's endorsement.⁵⁴⁹ In this way the NEC's organisation sub-committee, led by Lathan, effectively minimised the dispute rather than risking broader conflict with the NUR by refusing to endorse the candidacy of its president. Lindley was rapidly adopted for Leeds Central, and the ASW's complaints remained largely private. Only in the context of a by-election in Rotherham a year later, when Dobbie was all but assured of a large majority, did Lindley make public his side of the story in a press interview: public loyalty to the party was the typical trade union response.⁵⁵⁰

Union candidatures affected the DLPs involved in several ways beyond simply financial help in the shape of election expenses and grants. These constituencies were more likely to have a full-time agent: over the period 1931-39, of all Labour agents, an average of 45.6 per cent were employed in constituencies where the candidate had union sponsorship, whilst over the same period, only 28.7 per cent of those agents receiving grants-in-aid from the party nationally to top up their salaries, suggesting that where there was union sponsorship, agents were better paid.⁵⁵¹ As such, the withdrawal of union support after an election defeat, or its delay pending a new panel selection, could have an adverse impact on local political organisation. Some unions did take steps to mitigate this: NUDAW followed a policy of retaining the existing agent when it took over sponsorship for a new constituency.⁵⁵² There was often a considerable degree of supervision and investment from union executives. Detailed reports from agents were submitted to the NUDAW executive for approval on a monthly basis; agents for UTFWA-sponsored constituencies reported directly to the union's annual conference.⁵⁵³ It is not clear to what extent these reports were acted

⁵⁴⁹ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 27 January 1932; meeting of organisation sub-committee, 17 February 1932; NEC meeting of 23 March 1932; emergency meeting of organisation sub-committee, 23 March 1932; NEC meeting of 27 April 1932.

⁵⁵⁰ Lindley's comments to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph's* correspondent to the effect that he had been 'stabbed in the back' did cause the NEC some concern; Lindley was advised that the NEC found his version of events inaccurate and felt regret at the form of his intervention. Dobbie was concerned that no action should be taken about Lindley's interview until after the by-election was over. Notably the ASW offered no support to Lindley over his comments. Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 22 February 1933 and 22 March 1933. See also 'Rotherham Ex-MP Complains of Stab in Back – How Labour Dropped Mr. Lindley', *Sheffield Independent*, 21 February 1933, and letters from 'Rotherham Labourite' in the same publication, 11 February 1933 and 21 February 1933.

⁵⁵¹ These figures are calculated from the lists of agents in Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*; Co-operative party agents are excluded.

⁵⁵² NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1933, report of 29 September 1933.

⁵⁵³ NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, *passim*; see for example TU/3/2/4 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1935.

upon, but they did help union leaderships keep note of any relevant constituency developments. The AEU, by contrast, seems to have taken little interest in constituency affairs. In some cases unions were prepared to urge re-organisation of local party's if the existing machinery was found to be inadequate.⁵⁵⁴

The nature of Labour's appeal to the local electorate might also be affected by sponsorship. Jon Lawrence has suggested that Labour made use of a 'workerist' public language which allowed it to hold its own in industrial communities.⁵⁵⁵ Union candidates would logically be natural purveyors of such rhetoric. Certainly union candidates made direct appeals to workers in the industries their organisations represented, for example, UTFWA issuing a suggested paragraph for insertion into its candidates' election addresses dealing with cotton issues in 1935.⁵⁵⁶ NUDAW supplied its own 'Notes for Speakers' in both the 1931 and 1935 campaigns.⁵⁵⁷ The kind of anti-employer, communal vision of the 'public', referred to by Lawrence is evident in several union candidates' election addresses. The TGWU's Ben Smith stressed the 'anti-working class measures' supported by his Conservative opponent, and highlighting in some detail her shareholding in the sugar company Tate and Lyle, and criticising its large dividends: 'every time a worker puts a lump of sugar in his tea [...] providing a subsidy to people interested in sugar'.⁵⁵⁸

The workplace cultures of particular unions could influence the type of language candidates employed. Charles Jarman of the NUS offers one example, stressing the solidarity of workers in his own industry: 'our history is teeming with stories of sacrifice to save lives at sea. Is it too much to believe that shore workers have the same human feelings [...] I venture to say it is not'.⁵⁵⁹ The railway unions offer an interesting contrast. The 1931 election address of the RCA's Fred Watkins, for instance, makes

⁵⁵⁴ For example, the TGWU and the Lincoln constituency; George Deer was the union's candidate. MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937, GEC meeting of 2 December 1937.

⁵⁵⁵ J. Lawrence, 'Labour and the politics of class, 1900-1940' in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence (eds), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011), 237-260, pp. 240-241.

⁵⁵⁶ 'UTFWA – Suggested Par. For Insertion in Election Addresses', TU/3/4/10 UTFWA, Political Sub-Committee, correspondence etc., 1930-35

⁵⁵⁷ LP/ELEC/1931/2 General election material, 1931, box 2; LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935.

⁵⁵⁸ LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935. Ben Smith, election address (Bermondsey Rotherhithe).

⁵⁵⁹ LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935. Charles Jarman, election address (Birmingham Yardley). Jarman also attacked the Means Test as 'anti-British'.

its case largely through the inclusion of detailed statistics on the national income, extent of cuts, and the likely effects of tariff reform; whilst Watkins briefly noted that he was a 'convinced Socialist', much of his appeal is in more general terms and is largely shorn of the language of class: it emphasises the 'securities and satisfactions' a Labour government would provide, arguing that the National government's policy 'will be disastrous for the large majority' of his Hackney Central electorate. Such an appeal seems to be a product of the white-collar, clerical work culture of the RCA, focusing on detail whilst appealing in broad rather than class-based terms.⁵⁶⁰ This differs considerably from the kind of language used by NUR candidates: William Dobbie's address to the electors of Stalybridge and Hyde (Cheshire) at the same election is much more partisan in tone, repeatedly referring to the 'Tory Party' as opposed to the National government. His appeal is also more explicitly socialist and arguably catastrophist in content, noting that capitalism 'is in the process of decay', referring to the 'disease' afflicting the country: the language is that of atrophy. Dobbie concludes that the 'spectre of want and insecurity [...] haunts the working people of this country'.⁵⁶¹ This appears to reflect one aspect of the NUR's politics, as an industrial union seeking to appeal to all railway workers: there is little reference to the industry, but the broadly class-conscious language used conveys something closer to the spirit of the industrial NUR in contrast to the clerical RCA.

The MFGB candidates' election literature is also revealing.⁵⁶² It might be anticipated that MFGB candidates would be most likely to draw on their distinctive work culture in their language. Several of the union's candidates in 1931 did make explicit reference to mining or mines policy in their literature.⁵⁶³ This does not appear to be the case with the candidates of other unions to anything approaching the same extent. Yet many MFGB candidates made no reference to mining beyond the inclusion of mines on a

⁵⁶⁰ LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1, Fred Watkins, election address (Hackney Central).

⁵⁶¹ LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1, William Dobbie, election address (Stalybridge and Hyde). As a new candidate in the seat rather than an experienced MP, Dobbie has less to say about the constituency; this may also account for his arguments being couched in more general terms.

⁵⁶² The LHASA collection of general election addresses contains MFGB material for 1929 and 1931, but not for 1935. As such the discussion here focuses on the first two elections.

⁵⁶³ LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1, W. M. Watson, election address (Dunfermline Burghs); Joseph Sullivan, election address (Bothwell, Lanarkshire); 'George H. Jones' Special (Lichfield, Staffordshire).

list of industries that a Labour government would nationalise.⁵⁶⁴ In 1929, a special election edition of the *Miner* was issued in each coalfield, with photographs of the area union's candidates and an address focused on the particular coalfield's issues. The special also incorporated an MFGB manifesto, whilst the versions issued in certain areas, most notably Yorkshire, also included a separate manifesto from the area union.⁵⁶⁵ This effort to appeal specifically to the mining electorate was not repeated in 1931; perhaps in part due to the MFGB's leadership crisis, whilst in any case the regular version of the *Miner* had ceased publication in 1930. Arguably the MFGB's identity as a conspicuously loyal Labour supporting union influenced the decision of many of its 1931 candidates to focus on issues beyond mining in their appeals to the electorate.

Gender issues appear to have made a relatively limited impact on the appeals of trade union candidates. The MFGB's G. W. Shield (Wansbeck, Northumberland) was a notable exception, making an explicit appeal 'to the Woman Voter' in his election address; this may be reflective of the recognition of the role played by women in mining communities, for example during the 1926 lock-out.⁵⁶⁶ However, the local campaigns of Labour's political opponents might be specifically calculated to combat union-sponsored opponents by making use of gender: the choice of younger female candidates as Conservative candidates against prominent trade unionists in safe Labour seats in 1935 may have been in part an opportunity to portray the Conservatives as representatives of the 'public', as against the sectional, masculine world of organised labour; typically, however, these candidates were defeated.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1, For example, Gordon MacDonald, election address (Ince, Lancashire); William Whiteley, election address (Blaydon, Durham); Robert Richardson, election address (Houghton-le-Spring, Durham); Joshua Ritson, election address (Durham); Frank Lee, election address (North East Derbyshire); Wilfrid Paling, election address (Doncaster). None of the addresses of the SWMF MPs for 1931 have survived in the LHASC collection.

⁵⁶⁵ LP/ELEC/1929/1 General election material, 1929, the *Miner* election specials for Yorkshire, Durham, Scotland and Northumberland.

⁵⁶⁶ LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1, G. W. Shield (Wansbeck). For the role of women in 1926, see Sue Bruley, 'Women', in John McIlroy, Alan Campbell, and Keith Gildart, (eds.), *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout. The Struggle for Dignity* (Cardiff, 2009), pp. 229-248.

⁵⁶⁷ Ross McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: the Conservative Party and the 'Public' in Inter-war Britain', in his *The Ideologies of Class. Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1991), 259-293, p. 285 and *passim*. Among the prominent trade unionists opposed by Conservative women were Will Thorne (West Ham Plaistow), Jack Jones (West Ham Silvertown) and Aneurin Bevan (Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire): details of candidates from *The Times House of Commons 1935*.

Chapter 4

Parliamentary politics

They did not seek in any shape or form to say what the Party was to do, but they did ask that the primary purpose of the creation of the Party should not be forgotten. It was created by the Trade Union Movement *to do those things in Parliament which the Trade Union Movement found ineffectively performed by the two-Party system.*

Walter Citrine at meeting of TUC General Council and Labour Party NEC,
November 1931.⁵⁶⁸

Trade union Members of Parliament stand up in the British House of Commons and out of the wealth of their personal experience put the true picture of industrial life before the Nation's legislators. On all matters affecting workers' standards they bring to bear expert knowledge derived from years of factory and workshop experience. In legislation dealing with Factories, Coal Mines, Transport, Workmen's Compensation, Industrial Diseases, Juvenile and Woman labour, they render extremely valuable services, always pressing for greater protection and security.

Fred Marshall MP, Chairman's Address to NUGMW Biennial Delegate Congress,
June 1938.⁵⁶⁹

A phenomenon on the Labour side is the elderly trade unionist who has, in his youth, fought great battles for the cause. As a result he is retired by his union to Parliament, where he spends his declining years leading a comfortable life on a reasonable salary. His work is not arduous, life is

⁵⁶⁸ Comments of Citrine reported in MSS.292/20/16 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1931-32, Minutes of a Joint Meeting of the TUC GC and NEC of the Labour Party, 10 November 1931; emphasis added.

⁵⁶⁹ TU/GENERALB/1/A/14 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1938, Report of Biennial Delegate Conference 1938, p. 79.

friendly, pleasant and comfortable. Back home he has great standing as a Member of Parliament; his self-esteem is satisfied by the adulation he receives when he returns to his own constituency where he is regarded as a hero and a most important person. His only anxiety in this happy, lazy life is that a Parliamentary situation might lead to a General Election and then he might lose his seat in the House.

This kind of back-bencher is intensely loyal to the Party machine, but is not overly interested in its principles. This is quite reasonable as all the active years of his life have been spent in trade union work, where rigid loyalty and discipline are necessary, and he carries on the unquestioning attitude of mind. During those years his interest in the political side of the movement was secondary. He has a clear conscience, for he feels that being in the House is a reward for a lifetime of work in the union.

These Members are usually first-class people who have been worn out by a hard life of work and struggle. They find the atmosphere of Parliament utterly unlike their previous battlefields, and they are too old and exhausted to orientate themselves to a new outlook and a new career. They are intimidated by the lush atmosphere of social correctness imparted to the House by generations of Tories, and are afraid to speak in the House because their accents are 'common' and their vocabulary is homely and direct. Rather than risk making fools of themselves, in their own eyes, they spend most of their time in the smoking rooms, where they give one another a feeling of great importance by gossiping, often maliciously, about those Members of the Party who are taking an active part in the work of the House. They alternate between a nagging feeling of inferiority in the House, and the compensation of being the Big Man in their district every time they return home. They weaken the Labour Party, as there are many young, vigorous, unafraid members who would be far more useful in the House. It is a sad end to a brave active life.

Patricia Strauss in *Bevin and Co.*, 1941.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁷⁰ Patricia Strauss, *Bevin and Co. The Leaders of British Labour* (New York, 1941), pp. 82-83.

Whilst in one sense Walter Citrine's remarks quoted above during the post-mortem of the 1931 general election campaign constituted a lecture to the Labour leadership on what the TUC general secretary saw as the proper relationship between the party and the unions, in another they emphasized – from the mouth of one of the country's most powerful and prominent trade unionists – the centrality of parliamentary action and representation to the unions' political strategy. Despite the disappointment felt by many in the labour movement in the performance of the 1929-31 Labour government and the party's parliamentary weakness following its collapse, in general trade union parliamentarism remained undiminished. There was little pressure for a return to the tactics of the industrial 'direct action' popular in the years following the First World War, which had been undermined by the experience of the General Strike in 1926 and the period of retrenchment that followed.⁵⁷¹ The circumstances of economic slump, growing unemployment and declining union membership with its associated impact on union funds were hardly conducive to the resurrection of such an approach. At the other extreme, even the more sophisticated advocates of the corporatist approach embodied in the Mond-Turner discussions such as Walter Milne-Bailey and Citrine himself continued to envisage a primary role for parliamentary institutions.⁵⁷² This did not entail an uncritical approach to Parliament, and trade unionists took part in intra-party debates on the reform of parliamentary process. However, beyond the more corporatist approach of the TUC it is possible to distinguish a variety of union parliamentarisms.⁵⁷³ Crucial here is the role of the trade union-sponsored Labour MPs. The views of Marshall and Strauss quoted above offer two contrasting visions of the role and importance of such Members, and each was at play to some extent in what is discussed below. Typically in the interwar period, the smaller the Parliamentary Labour Party was, the greater the proportion of union sponsored MPs there were within it, as usually those areas with the most developed union organisation locally were more likely to return Labour MPs, although there were notable exceptions to this such as County Durham in October 1931.⁵⁷⁴ The period

⁵⁷¹ See Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Three. Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike. The Lost Internationalist World of A. A. Purcell* (London, 2013).

⁵⁷² See, e.g., Walter Milne-Bailey, *Trade Unions and the State* (London, 1934), pp. 334, 376-7.

⁵⁷³ As Richard Toye has argued different strands of parliamentarism were at work within the party more broadly See R. Toye, '“Perfectly Parliamentary”? The Labour Party and the House of Commons in the Inter-war Years', *Twentieth Century British History* 25:1 (2014), 1-29.

⁵⁷⁴ Hester Barron, 'Labour Identities of the Coalfield: the General Election of 1931 in County Durham', *History* 97:326 (2012), 204-229.

under study here is generally seen as one in which the basis of power in the movement shifted from the parliamentary party to the party's national organisation outside Parliament, and with it the unions; a study of union MPs can examine how far in the context of greater union strength within the PLP could be used to assert this presumed power. Writing in 1960, Martin Harrison noted that the relationship between sponsored MPs and their unions had 'never been adequately traced', yet in the half-century since, relatively few historians have sought to do so; the lack of consideration given to interwar sponsorship of MPs is particularly noticeable.⁵⁷⁵ Irving Richter's 1973 study of *Political Purpose in Trade Unions* closely details the development of the AEU's post-war relationship with its sponsored MPs, yet, as will be seen below, the AEU's approach was strikingly different before 1945.⁵⁷⁶ Harrison himself covers a number of unions in the period 1945-60.⁵⁷⁷ Lewis Minkin's account in *The Contentious Alliance* (1991) is much more nuanced, dealing with the (re)development of union machinery for liaison with sponsored MPs, notably in the NUR, as well as the financial context of sponsorship, but this study is also based firmly in the post-war period, and in particular developments from the 1960s onwards as union co-option of sitting MPs began to supersede earlier practices such as the selection or election of parliamentary panels, with a corresponding sense of crisis in direct union representation in the Commons.⁵⁷⁸ The only academic study dedicated solely to union MPs is William Muller's *The Kept Men?* (1977); Muller again deals primarily with the post-1945 period but aspects of his analysis are relevant to what follows below.⁵⁷⁹ A lack of sources may account for some of this apparent neglect: of those sources explicitly related to sponsored MP activity, only some 1920s minutes of the TGWU's parliamentary group and a small amount of correspondence between the Trade Union Group of MPs, to which all sponsored MPs were entitled membership, and the TUC survive. However, more conventional trade union sources – executive minutes,

⁵⁷⁵ Martin Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945* (London, 1960), p. 293.

⁵⁷⁶ Irving Richter, *Political Purpose in Trade Unions* (London, 1973), esp. pp. 29-69.

⁵⁷⁷ Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 262-306.

⁵⁷⁸ Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 241-278. See also Eric Shaw, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party. The politics of managerial control in the Labour party, 1951-87* (Manchester and New York, 1988).

⁵⁷⁹ William D. Muller, *The 'Kept Men'? The First Century of Trade Union Representation in the British House of Commons 1874-1975* (Hassocks, 1977); see also W. D. Muller, 'The Parliamentary activity of trade union MPs, 1959-1964', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Florida, 1966).

annual and conference reports, and journals – can be used to reconstruct something of the world of the 1930s trade union MP. What follows will attempt to establish something of the context in which union-sponsored MPs were operating in the period, followed by a closer examination of the role of the union MPs themselves, the nature of their liaison with their unions, and their role in the labour movement more broadly, suggesting that for the most part, unions allowed their MPs relative autonomy and exercised comparative restraint in their relationship with those members for whom they were financially responsible.

The Parliamentary Labour Party, 1931-1940

The position of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in the years of the National governments was a difficult one in several respects. Labour was to remain in opposition for nearly a decade, with little hope of implementing its policies, from August 1931 until the party's entry into the Churchill coalition in May 1940. The PLP elected in 1931 was the smallest in numbers since Labour's emergence as a serious contender for political power in the years following the First World War, and indeed, the smallest since December 1910, facing a huge National government majority. The near trebling in the size of the PLP after 1935 scarcely dented the continuing National hegemony, and for the remainder of the decade, the prospect of the party returning to government based on a majority of its own appeared remote. Subjecting the government to a parliamentary defeat was almost out of the question; Labour's representation in the House of Lords was also minimal.⁵⁸⁰ The problem of the small size of the PLP was compounded by the loss of much of its established leadership. The major Parliamentary leaders of the 1920s had either defected to National Labour or lost their seats in the electoral catastrophe of October 1931, although several prominent figures returned during the course of the decade, either at by-elections or in a more substantial group at the 1935 election. The distorting effect of the 1931 result produced a PLP heavily weighted towards comparatively safe constituencies, many of which were in mining areas in South Wales or the West Riding of Yorkshire. Given the

⁵⁸⁰ See Philip Williamson, 'The Labour Party and the House of Lords, 1918-1931', *Parliamentary History* 10 (1991), 317-41.

tendency for trade union sponsored candidates to stand in generally safer seats, this meant a large total of union sponsored MPs in general, and a disproportionate number of miners' MPs in particular when contrasted with the strength of the Miners' Federation in the movement at large. Although a PLP more diverse in sponsorship and geographical base was returned in 1935, these MPs remained a significant group; certainly before 1935, it was possible to argue that the PLP was unrepresentative of the Labour party at large. A further problem, however, and also one particularly notable during the 1931-5 parliament, was the perceived isolation of the PLP from the rest of the Labour movement, certainly relative to the late 1920s, when a majority of the party National Executive (NEC) was composed of Labour MPs. The party's extra-parliamentary institutions – the NEC and its policy subcommittees, the revived National Joint Council (NJC; from 1934, the National Council of Labour, NCL), and even the party conference, in which MPs, usually in attendance as *ex officio* delegates, had no voting rights – appeared to take a greater share of responsibility for the development of Labour policy and organisation.⁵⁸¹ The return to Parliament of several NEC members in 1935 redressed the balance to some extent, but much important work was done prior to this with relatively little PLP input.

These difficulties – size, leadership, unrepresentativeness, and perceived isolation from the wider Labour movement – made the PLP an object for pity, or worse, ridicule, for many contemporary observers. The Deputy Cabinet Secretary Thomas Jones found its leadership during 1931-5 'pitiable'.⁵⁸² Labour views could be particularly condescending. According to Beatrice Webb, the former Cabinet minister A. V. Alexander had 'a low opinion of the Parliamentary Labour Party as a whole, alike in character and intelligence'.⁵⁸³ For Hugh Dalton, another member of the 1929-31 Labour government, the party in parliament before 1935 was 'a poor little affair'; its members 'political cripples'.⁵⁸⁴ Both Alexander and Dalton would likely have assumed leadership roles within the PLP if they had succeeded in retaining their seats in 1931, and their comments must be seen in this context, despite Dalton's later claim to have

⁵⁸¹ The following chapter discusses the NJC/NCL.

⁵⁸² Thomas Jones, *A Diary with Letters 1931-50* (London, 1954), p. 156. This is notable given that Jones did have some moderate Labour sympathies; his daughter Eirene White would go on to be a long-serving Labour MP for East Flintshire (1950-1970), and member of the party NEC (1947-53; 1953-72), holding junior office under Harold Wilson's first government.

⁵⁸³ *Beatrice Webb Typescript Diary*, LSE Digital Library, entry for 15 September 1935.

⁵⁸⁴ Ben Pimlott, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-40, 1945-60* (London, 1986), entry for 8 October 1932; Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years* (London, 1957), p. 64.

been 'very little troubled by these hypothetical reflections'.⁵⁸⁵ However, non-parliamentarians were also critical. Harold Laski considered that, outside the leadership trio of George Lansbury, Clement Attlee and Sir Stafford Cripps, 'not a single member of the parliamentary party rises above the mediocrity'.⁵⁸⁶ Beatrice Webb's comments on Lord Ponsonby, then leading the party in the House of Lords, are particularly revealing. The aristocratic Ponsonby, she wrote, was an asset to the PLP 'on account of his moral refinement, culture, personal disinterestedness and undoubted charm of bearing and manner, reinforced by a long experience of human nature in politics': presumably the qualities she found lacking in the PLP's House of Commons membership.⁵⁸⁷ It is difficult not to see an element of class prejudice in these comments; Mrs Webb had previously grouped George Hall and Jack Lawson, both undersecretaries in the 1929-31 government who also sat in the 1931 parliament, amongst the 'poor lot' of manual workers represented in the administration.⁵⁸⁸ Other Labourites identified more positive aspects; Ernest Thurtle thought that the PLP 'was more a band of brothers in those days than it had ever been before or has been since', although he suggests that a 'great deal' of the responsibility for this lay with 'Lansbury's constant encouragement and the inspiration of his example'.⁵⁸⁹ Tom Williams recalled the period 1931-5 as 'the most exhilarating of my whole parliamentary life'.⁵⁹⁰ Clem Attlee singled out the miners' MPs George Hall, Tom Williams and David Grenfell as having done 'extraordinarily well' in the circumstances.⁵⁹¹ However, his judgment on the PLP generally in this period acknowledged its difficulties: many MPs were 'older members – holders of safe seats in the mining areas – who were not accustomed to speak frequently in the House and could not contribute much beyond their votes'.⁵⁹² The image of a small, weak PLP dominated by ageing trade unionists, and miners in particular, remains a powerful one. The return of a much larger and more diverse PLP in 1935 did not put an end to such criticisms; although these now often focussed more on Attlee's own leadership. G. D. H. Cole was troubled by the parliamentary party's

⁵⁸⁵ Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, p. 19.

⁵⁸⁶ *Beatrice Webb Typescript Diary*, entry for 18 June 1933.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, entry for 4 February 1935.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, entry for 27 July 1929.

⁵⁸⁹ Ernest Thurtle, *Time's Winged Chariot* (London, 1945), p. 119. It is, however, worth noting that Thurtle was married to Lansbury's daughter Dorothy.

⁵⁹⁰ Lord (Tom) Williams, *Digging for Britain* (London, 1965), p. 81.

⁵⁹¹ Attlee to his brother Tom, quoted in John Swift, *Labour in Crisis. Clement Attlee and the Labour Party in Opposition, 1931-40* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 80.

⁵⁹² C. R. Attlee, *As it Happened* (London, 1954), p. 75.

‘increasing leaderlessness’; the Webbs shared his views ‘about the incompetence of the PLP’.⁵⁹³

Historians, with some exceptions, have not studied the PLP and its membership and organisation in detail for any period, beyond its relevance to the careers of party leaders; that this should be the case for the 1930s is perhaps unsurprising given the difficulties faced by the party in the period and the views of contemporaries referred to above.⁵⁹⁴ One work purporting to take Labour’s parliamentarism as its main subject makes only the scantest of references to the parliamentary party in the chapter dealing with the 1931-5 period, and only then in reference to the PLP’s refusal to amend its standing orders to accommodate the ILP.⁵⁹⁵ Dedicated studies of the period do cover the PLP, but not in great detail. Pimlott’s *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* offers some important observations on the PLP’s relationship with the wider movement and on the 1935 leadership election, but includes no dedicated section on the parliamentary party, whilst, more recently, John Swift’s *Labour in Crisis*, despite its focus on Attlee’s leadership in the 1930s, deals only briefly and rather unsatisfactorily with the PLP itself.⁵⁹⁶ Biographies of Labour parliamentarians can offer an insight into the inner life of the PLP, but naturally consider it primarily in relation to their subjects.⁵⁹⁷ The comparative neglect of the 1930s PLP is arguably also a consequence of a gap in the sources: although minutes were taken at the plenary meetings of the PLP and the

⁵⁹³ *Beatrice Webb Typescript Diary*, entries for 20 July 1937 and 11 September 1937.

⁵⁹⁴ Exceptions include M. A. Haunton, ‘The Parliamentary Labour Party, 1918-23’ (University of Exeter, unpublished MA thesis, 1998); Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The Second Labour Government 1929-1931* (Manchester, 1999), esp. pp. 132-178; R. Taylor, ‘A ‘reef of granite’ or ‘damp cement’: conflicting loyalties inside the Parliamentary Labour Party, June 1929-September 1931’ in Jon Shepherd, J. Davis and C. Wrigley (eds), *Britain’s Second Labour Government, 1929-31. A Reappraisal* (Manchester, 2011) pp. 85-99.

⁵⁹⁵ Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, second edition (London, 1972), p. 195. Otherwise the PLP is referred to only in terms of party conference discussions on how a future Labour government’s relationship with Parliament would work, p. 206, 208. Miliband does suggest that after 1935, the Labour front bench was ‘much better staffed than in the previous years’, p. 235.

⁵⁹⁶ Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 18-19, 72-6; Swift, *Labour in Crisis*, pp. 26-7, 79-82 and 85-87. Swift does refer to Attlee’s parliamentary activity, and Labour policy in parliament throughout, but rarely, apart from the pages referred to, to the PLP’s members or organisation.

⁵⁹⁷ For example, Raymond Postgate, *The Life of George Lansbury* (London, 1951), Jon Shepherd, *George Lansbury. At the heart of old Labour* (Oxford, 2002), Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982), Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps. A Biography* (London, 1949), Bernard Donoughue and G. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison. Portrait of a Politician* (London, 2001 edn), Ben Pimlott, *Hugh Dalton* (London, 1985), K. Morgan and J. Morgan, *Portrait of a Progressive. The Political Career of Christopher, Viscount Addison* (Oxford, 1980), Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan, Volume 1: 1897-1945* (London, 1975), John Campbell, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987), Fenner Brockway, *Bermondsey Story. The Life of Alfred Salter* (London, 1949), Wayne David, *Remaining True. A Biography of Ness Edwards* (Caerphilly, 2006).

meetings of its Executive, those for the period from November 1937 to May 1941 did not survive the Blitz. However, the PLP's activities and development in this period can be reconstructed through those minutes which do survive, despite their brevity, used in conjunction with other sources including the reports of parliamentary activity in the party's Annual Reports. The remainder of this section will analyse the membership and organisation of the PLP during the period 1931-40, and offer some comment on its development, before the trade union MPs are considered in more detail later in the chapter.

Although much of what follows will consider developments across the period 1931-40 as a whole, it should be remembered that in effect two rather different Parliamentary Labour Parties are being dealt with: the rump PLP elected in October 1931, and the much larger group of Labour representatives returned in November 1935. Although they faced a similar challenge in terms of the continued parliamentary dominance of the National government, there were several important features of each Labour cohort which were distinctive; moreover, the party either chose or was forced to adapt both its internal organisation and parliamentary tactics to reflect the changing circumstances which emerged partly as a result of these features.

Perhaps the most obvious such feature is the size of the PLP and the geographical base from which its members were drawn. Just 46 Labour MPs were returned to the Commons in October 1931 (along with a further six unendorsed candidates largely backed by the ILP), a third of whom represented constituencies in South Wales, with several each from the West Riding of Yorkshire and East London, a handful from Lancashire, three from Scotland, and a smattering of others. By contrast, the PLP elected in 1935 numbered three times as many at 154 members and represented a far more varied group of constituencies, including some such as the Western Isles not previously won by Labour. Another marked difference was in parliamentary experience, particularly of the frontbench kind which was conspicuously lacking in 1931: although there were some important older heads, not least George Lansbury, two MPs were new to the House, five had less than a year's worth of Commons experience and a further seven had only sat in the House during the period of the second Labour government: these combined constituted nearly a third of the 1931

PLP.⁵⁹⁸ Moreover, some of the longstanding members such as Fred Hall (Normanton, W. Yorks.), despite their long service had in fact made only a limited contribution as parliamentary speakers. While by-elections did restore some more heavyweight figures to the PLP such as Arthur Greenwood, Arthur Henderson and Christopher Addison, the 1935 election brought back a swathe of former ministers including J. R. Clynes, Thomas Johnston, Herbert Morrison, A. V. Alexander, H. B. Lees-Smith and Hugh Dalton. In terms of age, there was not a great deal of difference between the two cohorts, with relatively elderly average ages of 55.8 years in 1931 and 55.1 years in 1935, although these figures mask distinctions between various sections of the PLP, as will be discussed below.⁵⁹⁹ Only thirteen of the whole 1935 PLP were under 45 years old. The gender dynamic of the parliamentary party also shifted slightly: the 1931 PLP were all male. The absence of any women Labour MPs may have resulted in less of the bawdy, sexist jokes that earlier women MPs such as Leah Manning had put up with; it likely also encouraged a drinking culture, one outlet of which was the Masonic lodge of which several Labour MPs and former MPs – including a number of trade unionists – were members.⁶⁰⁰ Ellen Wilkinson (Jarrow, Co. Durham) was the only Labour woman elected in 1935, although she was joined by several others over the following years.⁶⁰¹ Without significant women's representation, the PLP, in both its

⁵⁹⁸ The new MPs in October 1931 were Dave Adams (Poplar South) and Gabriel Price (Hemsworth, W. Yorks.); Stafford Cripps (Bristol East), D. L. Davies (Pontypridd, Glam.); George Hicks (Woolwich East), William Leonard (Glasgow St Rollox) and Ted Williams (Ogmore, Glam.) had all won by-elections during 1931; Aneurin Bevan (Ebbw Vale, Mon.), Charles Brown (Mansfield, Notts.), F. S. Cocks (Broxtowe, Notts.), George Daggan (Abertillery, Mon.), David Logan (Liverpool Scotland), Gordon MacDonald (Ince, Lancs.) and James Milner (Leeds South-East) had only been in the House since 1929.

⁵⁹⁹ Details on ages of MPs calculated from M. Stenton and S. Lees, *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (4 vols., Brighton, 1976-81).

⁶⁰⁰ See Leah Manning, *A Life for Education. An Autobiography* (London, 1970), pp. 89-90, for some of Ben Tillett's comments to Manning, Marion Phillips, and Susan Lawrence; Manning was still able to describe Tillett as 'lovable', while noting he was usually to be found in one of the Commons' bars. See John Hamill and Andrew Prescott, 'The Masons' candidate': New Welcome Lodge No. 5139 and the Parliamentary Labour Party', *Labour History Review* 71:1 (2006), 9-41 for the lodge. Notable members included Arthur Greenwood, Will Henderson, H. Scott Lindsey, James Milner, Joseph Kenworthy, and Cecil Malone. Trade union MPs who were, or had been, members included Charles Ammon (UPOW), Albert Bellamy (NUR), J. W. Bowen (UPOW), Joseph Compton (NUVB), William Dobbie (NUR), George Hicks (AUBTW), George Isaacs (NATSOPA), J. E. Mills (AEU), F. O. Roberts (TA), Alf Short (USBISS), C. H. Sitch (CMSA), Ben Tillett (TGWU), W. J. Tout (UTFWA), Robert Young (AEU). Other prominent trade unionists who were members included George Gibson (Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers' Union), W. R. Spence (NUS), and Herbert Tracey (TUC).

⁶⁰¹ Agnes Hardie (Glasgow Springburn), Jennie Adamson (Dartford, Kent) and Dr. Edith Summerskill (Fulham West) were all returned at by-elections during 1937-38. For more detail on Labour's women MPs in the period, see Mary Honeyball, *Parliamentary Pioneers. Labour Women MPs, 1918-1945* (Chatham, 2015) and Brian Harrison, 'Women in a men's House: the women M.P.s, 1919-1945', *Historical Journal* 29:3 (1986), 623-654.

outlook and image, was hardly likely to blaze a trail on such issues as equal pay, family allowances and maternal health, allowing the National government to look much more female-friendly. Class and occupational background also varied: the first group came largely from manual backgrounds, with notable exceptions such as Attlee, Cripps and Salter, whilst the second group included a larger group of former manual workers and a greater number of professionals. The basis of sponsorship was also much more variegated in the 1935 PLP: this issue will be discussed in more detail in a subsequent section, and it will suffice to note here that the majority of the 1931 group had trade union sponsorship, most prominently from the Miners' Federation which was responsible for funding the election campaigns of exactly half of the whole PLP; across the rest of the decade there was a slow shift towards divisional party sponsorship of MPs so that by May 1940, the unions and the DLPs had the same number of sponsored members.⁶⁰² In terms of links with the other major institutions of the Labour movement outside Parliament, the PLP was entitled throughout the period to three representatives on the National Joint Council/National Council of Labour. The later MacDonald years had seen a record number of MPs serving simultaneously on the party's National Executive – as many as eighteen in 1929-30 – yet by 1932, only Lansbury remained; although the total crept up it was not until 1935 that anything approaching the previous level of overlap was reached.⁶⁰³ Similarly, the 1931 PLP had fewer members who were also serving on the General Council of the TUC than in previous years, yet this was not reversed by 1935 in the context of a growing separation of industrial and political functions on the union side of the movement.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² The unions and the DLPs sponsored 79 MPs each at this point. See Labour Party *Annual Conference Report*, 1940.

⁶⁰³ The figures since 1914 are as follows: 1914-17: 7; 1918: 6; 1919-21: 8; 1921-22: 7; 1922-23: 7+1; 1923-24: 11; 1924-25: 10; 1925-26: 9; 1926-27: 11; 1927-28: 13; 1928-29: 12+5; 1929-30: 18; 1930-31: 17; 1931-32: 1 (Lansbury); 1932-33: 1+1 (Lansbury + Dobbie); 1933-34: 3 (Lansbury, Dobbie, Henderson); 1934-35: 4 (Lansbury, Dobbie, Henderson, Cripps); 1935-36: 2+ (Attlee and – briefly – Henderson +); 1936-37: 11; 1937-40: 14; 1940-41: 12-13; 1941-42: 14; 1942-43: 13. Source: Labour Party *Annual Conference Reports*, 1914-1942.

⁶⁰⁴ Five sitting MPs were elected to the TUC General Council in September 1931: John Bromley, George Hicks, Will Thorne, A. G. Walkden, and Arthur Hayday, of whom only Hicks and Thorne retained their seats at the general election. Thorne's retirement from the General Council in 1934 left Hicks as the only representative of the GC in the House. Walkden and Hayday returned at the 1935 election, but Walkden had retired from the Council within a year and Hayday by 1937, leaving just Hicks again until George Isaacs' arrival on the Labour benches in 1939. After Hicks' retirement from the GC in 1941, Isaacs continued as the only MP on the General Council until 1945. Throughout the 1920s there had typically been between four and six General Councillors in Parliament, with peaks of eight in 1923-4 (Harry Gosling, Hayday, Jack Jones, Robert Smillie, J. H. Thomas, Thorne, Ben Tillett and Ben

In this sense Muller's characterisation of this period as that of 'the passing of the General Secretaries' from the House is apt, although a number of serving union general secretaries continued to hold Commons seats even later in the decade and beyond.⁶⁰⁵

Of the PLP's leaders in this period, Arthur Henderson had the closest links to the trade unions, both through his broader role as party secretary and treasurer, and as a long-term nominee of his union, the Foundry Workers. This link was severed, however, after his Burnley constituency was lost in October 1931, with the septuagenarian Christian pacifist George Lansbury, the only member of the former Labour Cabinet to hold his seat, taking over unopposed as PLP chairman. Although receiving some unofficial sponsorship from the NUGMW, Lansbury had few formal links to the unions, despite his popularity in the Labour movement at large. With Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps, he formed a 'socialist triumvirate' at the head of the PLP;⁶⁰⁶ that the three men took on so much of the burden of parliamentary work between them is indicative of the weakness of the PLP during 1931-35. Lansbury was 'omnipresent' on the opposition frontbench, mentoring weaker Labour speakers.⁶⁰⁷ The PLP's organisation under his tenure consisted of a small Executive of seven, who were all re-elected each year. Four of the seven were union MPs, whilst with one exception, all of the five whip posts were filled by Miners.⁶⁰⁸ His leadership style, based on acting as Labour's spokesman rather than its leader, might have had much to commend it to trade unionists were it not for his occasional departures from agreed party policy, which arguably reflected a disregard for majority decisions where he had personal objections; indeed, this would ultimately cost him his job as leader in 1935.⁶⁰⁹ Away from the House for most of 1934 following a severe fall, on his return Lansbury's resistance to a policy of sanctions on Italy over the Abyssinia invasion found him out of step with much party and trade union

Turner), and seven in 1926-7 (Margaret Bondfield, Bromley, Hayday, A. A. Purcell, Smillie, Thomas and Thorne). Source: TUC *Annual Reports*, 1918-1945.

⁶⁰⁵ Muller, *The Kept Men*, pp. 28-31. These general secretaries were: Hicks (AUBTW), Arthur Hollins (NSPW), J. W. Banfield (Bakers), George Isaacs (NATSOPA) and W. A. Robinson (NUDAW).

⁶⁰⁶ John Shepherd, *George Lansbury. At the Heart of Old Labour* (Oxford, 2002), p. 287.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁶⁰⁸ The Executive consisted of Cripps, Dai Grenfell (MFGB), Tom Williams (MFGB), George Hicks (AUBTW), Willie Lunn (MFGB), Neil Maclean, and Morgan Jones. The whips were Charles Edwards (MFGB), Will John (MFGB), Duncan Graham (MFGB), Tom Groves, and Gordon MacDonald (MFGB). Another miner, Wilf Paling, took the latter's place when MacDonald joined the Chairman's panel. See Labour Party *Annual Report* 1932-35; PLP Minutes, 10 November 1931, 1 November 1932, 14 November 1933, 13 November 1934 and 4 December 1934.

⁶⁰⁹ For example, on the Means Test in 1931-32. Shepherd, *George Lansbury*, p. 300-302.

opinion, and it was in the wake of a damning attack on his prevarication over the issue by Ernest Bevin at the 1935 party conference that he resigned.⁶¹⁰

Attlee had deputised during Lansbury's absence and succeeded as leader, first temporarily prior to the 1935 general election, and then on a permanent basis after the leadership election that followed when the new PLP assembled. In the first ballot, Attlee took 58 votes, against 44 for Herbert Morrison and 32 for Arthur Greenwood, before defeating Morrison by 88 to 48 in the final ballot. Attlee's biographer suggests that due to 'Bevin's pressure, the trade unions were for Greenwood' and against Morrison, due in part to his position on the administration of nationalised industries; clearly the bulk of Greenwood's vote switched to Attlee in the second round.⁶¹¹ It seems likely, however, that the trade union vote split in three directions. Attlee's work in the previous Parliament helped garner the support of the MFGB MPs; he was nominated for the leadership by Tom Williams (Don Valley, W. Yorks.) and Dai Grenfell (Gower, Glam.).⁶¹² Support for Greenwood came from the general unions: Clynes, although at least initially for Morrison himself, had reported to Dalton that several NUGMW MPs backed Greenwood, whilst in addition to implied TGWU support, his proposers were Joseph Compton (Manchester Gorton) of the NUVB, and James Walker (Motherwell, Lanark.) of BISAFTA.⁶¹³ Yet there was also support from trade unionists for Morrison: George Lathan (Sheffield Park) secured six RCA votes for him, with the RCA MPs actually cancelling a meeting with railway managers in order to be present to vote; Ellen Wilkinson (Jarrow) of NUDAW also favoured him.⁶¹⁴ Morrison was nominated by T. E. Naylor (Southwark South East) of the LSC and David Adams – although it is unclear if this was David Adams (Consett, Co. Durham) of the AEU, or his TGWU namesake (Poplar South). If the former, then the craft union vote may have leaned towards Morrison; if the latter, then perhaps Bevin had less influence over his

⁶¹⁰ See John Shepherd, 'Labour and the Trade Unions: Lansbury, Ernest Bevin and the Leadership Crisis of 1935' in Chris Wrigley and John Shepherd (eds.), *On the Move. Essays in labour and transport history presented to Philip Bagwell* (London and Rio Grande, 1991), pp. 204-230.

⁶¹¹ Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982), p. 121. For other accounts which broadly reflect this view, see Nick Thomas-Symonds, *Attlee. A Life in Politics* (London and New York, 2012), pp. 76-77; John Bew, *Citizen Clem. A Biography of Attlee* (London, 2016), pp. 198-199.

⁶¹² Hugh Dalton, *The Fateful Years. Memoirs 1931-1945* (London, 1957), p. 81. The secretary of the mining group, Gordon MacDonald, was absent for the vote. See PLP Minutes, meeting of 26 November 1935.

⁶¹³ Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, pp. 79-81.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

sponsored MPs than is often supposed.⁶¹⁵ Attlee was at least been a sufficiently amenable figure to many trade union MPs. Although his formal links to the unions, beyond his membership of the NUCAW, were relatively limited, he had given some thought to problems of union structure and organisation, notably in an ILP pamphlet published shortly after he first entered Parliament.⁶¹⁶ *Socialism for Trade Unionists* supported 'one big all-embracing union' as the 'best solution' to organisational problems, whilst predicting that 'the craft union as an exclusive body has had its day', a position which members of the NUR and the general unions were likely to view with some sympathy.⁶¹⁷ Union MPs continued to play a significant part in the PLP's structures under Attlee's leadership, often in the whip positions. Although the return of several senior figures resulted in the loss of trade union posts on the Executive, a new, larger elected front bench was instituted from the 1937-38 session. Whilst indicative of a more collegiate style of leadership under Attlee, this also allowed more union MPs to take prominent positions in Labour's parliamentary work.⁶¹⁸

The 'Loyal Lump': trade union Members of Parliament⁶¹⁹

The 1929 general election was the first and only occasion in the interwar period when Labour MPs sponsored by divisional parties outnumbered those with trade union backing, with the proportion of the PLP sponsored by unions falling to just 39.9 per

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., p. 81. Naylor was also the current chair of the London Labour Party; for the TGWU's Adams, see the section on liaison below. Morrison's evasiveness over whether he would combine the party leadership with that of the London County Council appears to have damaged him: another union MP, Arthur Hollins of the NSPW, was the MP who raised this issue. On allegations on Masonic support for Greenwood and then Attlee, see Hamill and Prescott, 'The Masons' candidate', *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁶ For Attlee's NUCAW membership, see Bew, *Citizen Clem*, p. 62.

⁶¹⁷ C. R. Attlee, *Socialism for Trade Unionists* (London, n.d. [1922]), pp. 9-10. Problems of union organisation had been in Attlee's mind for some time. From his time in the Gallipoli campaign, he recalled 'a long discussion on industrial and craft unionism with my CSM [command sergeant major] of the NUR and a platoon sergeant of the NUVW. We agree very well'. Quoted in Michael Jago, *Clement Attlee. The Inevitable Prime Minister* (London, 2014), p. 49.

⁶¹⁸ Although Clynes returned, Hicks lost his Executive spot in 1935, Lunn in 1936. Lawson, George Hall, Rhys J. Davies, J. A. Parkinson, and F. O. Roberts were the five trade unionists elected to the new, enlarged front bench. Labour Party *Annual Reports* 1936-39; PLP Minutes, 26 November, 3 December and 17 December 1935; 3 & 11 November 1936; Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, p. 146.

⁶¹⁹ This phrase, characteristically, is Dalton's. See Ben Pimlott, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-40, 1945-60* (London, 1986), entries for 21 and 22 May 1930.

cent.⁶²⁰ The 1931 election result dramatically reversed this, with 69.9 per cent of the new PLP being union-sponsored.⁶²¹ This figure fell to 61.4 per cent by the 1935 dissolution, and of the PLP elected that year, just over half of Labour MPs had union sponsorship. Union MPs largely reflected the membership of their sponsors: in gender, with all but one sponsored MP being male – only NUDAW, which sponsored Ellen Wilkinson, had a substantial female membership; and in background and education: most had had only limited, if any, post-elementary education, usually through Ruskin College or the Central Labour College, although there were notable exceptions: Dai Grenfell was a qualified mine manager, G. H. Oliver (Ilkeston, Derbyshire from 1935) had trained as a solicitor, whilst the RCA group reflected that union's clerical membership base. Middle class MPs tended to be those backed by their local parties; as yet there was little sign of the co-option which marked later union sponsorship.

Generation could be a significant factor. Union MPs were generally older than their DLP counterparts: an average age of 57.4 years for all union MPs in 1931, compared with 55.8 for the PLP as a whole; the figures for 1935 are 57.9 years and 55.1 years respectively.⁶²² This was not uniform across the sponsoring unions: some union MPs, notably those of the NUGMW, were often older still, aged on average 66 years in 1931; the AEU members were 63.3 years old on average in 1935. By contrast a younger group of mining MPs, largely representing the Yorkshire area were returned to the House at by-elections from 1934-37, including Tom Smith (Normanton), Wilf Paling (Wentworth), George Griffiths (Hemsworth) and Frank Collindridge (Barnsley). Generational differences between MPs were perhaps most pronounced amongst the representatives of the MFGB. In his study of the Scottish miners, Alan Campbell suggests some 'ideal types' as a conceptual tool for understanding the development of mining union politics, an analysis that can also be helpful in explaining something of the politics of the MFGB MPs. He suggests that the work culture of the 'independent collier' was succeeded by that of the 'bureaucratic reformist' from the 1880s: this type of trade unionism was premised on federations of county unions, pursuing independent Labour rather than Liberal politics, and with the ultimate industrial goal of nationalisation of the mines. This 'type' was succeeded in the next generation by the

⁶²⁰ Prior to this the proportion had never fallen below fifty per cent.

⁶²¹ Although union MPs outnumbered DLP MPs once more by the time of the dissolution of Parliament.

⁶²² Although some union MPs, notably those of the NUGMW, were often older still, aged on average 66 years in 1931; the AEU members were 63.3 years old on average in 1935.

‘militant miner’, emerging just prior to the First World War, although none of these types were historically discrete.⁶²³ Some of the older MFGB MPs in the 1931 and 1935 parliaments such as Fred Hall (Normanton) arguably displayed some of the characteristics of the first two ‘types’, although this assessment is somewhat tentative: Hall had been a Lib-Lab MP from 1905. Arguably for some of his generation, the point of parliamentary effort was labour representation: with this achieved, such MPs might be content to stay, as Hall seems largely to have been, a less active backbencher. For those of the ‘militant miner’ generation, however, a more oppositional politics was characteristic. This might motivate a greater desire to use Parliamentary representation to secure change, which could propel such MPs into a more prominent parliamentary role: the likes of Tom Williams and Aneurin Bevan seem to fit this assessment. Alternatively, it could make them more receptive to a more radical socialist politics. Campbell notes that the politics of the CPGB was more compatible with this ‘type’, which may help to account for the stronger inclination of some of the younger MFGB MPs – again, Bevan is an example – to become involved in, for instance, united front activities. Certainly Bevan and others such as Ted Williams (Ogmore, Glam.), as well as the younger Yorkshire MPs, brought a spikier approach to their Labour politics than mining MPs of an older generation.

In both Parliaments the MFGB provided the largest group of sponsored MPs, with 23 in 1931 and 35 in 1935. A further nine union MPs joined the MFGB cohort in 1931, two each from the TGWU and NUGMW along with one each from five smaller unions.⁶²⁴ Another 45 sponsored MPs were elected alongside the Miners in 1935: seven from the TGWU, six each from the NUGMW and RCA, five from the NUDAW, four from the NUR, three from the AEU, two each from the Compositors and Woodworkers, and one each from ten other unions.⁶²⁵

⁶²³ Alan Campbell, *The Scottish Miners, 1874-1939. Volume Two: Trade Unions and Politics* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 4-7.

⁶²⁴ These five were David Williams (Swansea East) of the Boilermakers, George Hicks (Woolwich East) of the AUBTW, Rhys J. Davies (Westhoughton, Lancs.) of the NUDAW, Thomas Griffiths (Pontypool, Mon.) of the BISAFTA and Val McEntee (Walthamstow West) of the ASW.

⁶²⁵ These ten were J. W. Banfield (Kingswinford, Staffs.) of the Bakers, Alf Short (Doncaster) of the Boilermakers, Willie Brooke (Batley and Morley, W. Yorks.) of the Dyers, J. R. Leslie (Sedgefield, Co. Durham) of the NAUSAWC, Ellis Smith (Stoke-on-Trent, Stoke) of the UPA, Arthur Hollins (Stoke-on-Trent, Hanley) of the NSPW, F. O. Roberts (West Bromwich) of the TA, Joseph Compton (Manchester Gorton) of the NUVB, as well as the returning Williams and Hicks.

A 'Trade Union Group' of MPs had existed prior to 1931; it seems to have met fairly frequently, if on an erratic basis. After the 1931 election, its meetings stopped: with the trade unions MPs now making up the majority of the PLP, there was no need for a separate group. By 1937, however, the Group had been revived, with the NUDAW's Rhys J. Davies as secretary, F. C. Watkins of the RCA as treasurer, and the NUR's William Dobbie as chair.⁶²⁶ The Group arranged with the TUC to hold regular meetings following meetings of the General Council, so a report of business could be heard; it would also be supplied with all TUC circulars.⁶²⁷ Meetings often heard reports from trade union leaders on their positions on new legislation, or visiting speakers including the American Secretary of Labour, Frances Perkins.⁶²⁸ The Group was a forum for information and discussion, but does not seem to have any intention to pursue combined action on policy issues. Indeed, as the discussion of the 1935 leadership elected indicated, joint action by the trade union MPs as a bloc tended not to take place.⁶²⁹ The activity of the trade union MPs is considered below in case studies of two union groups.

Case study: the Mining Members

The Members of Parliament sponsored by the Miners' Federation require special attention here. The 23 MFGB MPs constituted exactly half of the PLP elected in October 1931, whilst after 1935, although divisional parties now provided the largest group of Labour MPs, the Federation remained by some distance the largest sponsor of union Members. The 'Mining Members', as Federation officials commonly referred to the group, had long been the subject of criticism, from Ramsay MacDonald's dismissal of the parliamentary talents of a 'party of checkweighers' in the early 1920s, through to the ranks of unimaginative loyalists who so dismayed the ILP's Jennie Lee

⁶²⁶ MSS.292/753/2 TUC file, 'Labour Party – Parliamentary TU Group correspondence etc, 1925-49', Rhys J. Davies to Walter Citrine, 21 January 1937.

⁶²⁷ TUC file, 'Labour Party – Parliamentary TU Group correspondence etc, 1925-49', TUC memorandum, 'Notes on Contacts with the Trade Union Group in the House of Commons', 13 April 1938. The operation of the Group now became far more professional than its pre-1931 version.

⁶²⁸ See the Group's Reports for the sessions 1937-38, 1938-39, and 1939-1940 in the same TUC file. Its Executive of eight included George Griffiths (MFGB), Sam Viant (ASW), Willie Brooke (Dyers), W. H. Mainwaring (MFGB), W. T. Kelly (TGWU), Arthur Jenkins (MFGB), Arthur Hayday (NUGMW), and F. B. Simpson (RCA), plus Ben Smith of the TGWU as vice-chair.

⁶²⁹ For the Trade Union Group in the post-war period, see Richter, *Political Purpose in Trade Unions*, pp. 129-164.

following her arrival in the Commons later in the decade.⁶³⁰ This image of the mining MP was a powerful one and arguably its potency, combined with the numerical strength of the MFGB MPs in the PLP after 1931, provided a frame for much of the criticism of the Parliamentary party at large during this period. Historians' assessments have not tended to diverge greatly from this analysis, if the presence of Aneurin Bevan amongst the group is usually noted as an exception.⁶³¹ Yet any detailed study of the PLP in the years after 1931, and the role of trade union MPs within it, necessitates a closer examination of the 'Mining Members'. How far did MFGB-sponsored Members conform to this stereotype? More importantly, what was the nature of their role within the PLP, and how far did they contribute to Labour's parliamentary efforts?

It should be noted that despite their apparent strength, as a proportion of the PLP, this was a weaker MFGB group of MPs than for some years previously. Although group organisation remained in place with regular meetings, and a fairly effective liaison between the group and the Federation nationally developed over the period, the Federation lost twenty seats in 1931, whilst of its two former Cabinet ministers, Willie Adamson was defeated and Vernon Hartshorn was dead.⁶³² Moreover, Ebby Edwards who had emerged through 1931 as the Mining group's key figure, was also out of Parliament.⁶³³ In terms of their contribution to Labour's efforts in the House, it could be argued that as a group the MFGB MPs did not pull their weight.

Although necessarily a somewhat imprecise measure, the number of Hansard columns in which each Member is recorded as speaking in during the 1931-5 Parliament can give some indication as to the relative contribution to debate of individual members and different sections of the PLP.⁶³⁴ Despite making up fifty per cent of the PLP in 1931, MFGB MPs were only responsible for 38.4 per cent of that session's Labour contributions. This increased to 44.6 per cent in the 1933-34 session

⁶³⁰ Jennie Lee, *This Great Journey. A Volume of Autobiography 1904-45* (London, 1963), p. 112.

⁶³¹ For a typical example, see Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump. The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (London and Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 73-75.

⁶³² For Adamson, see William Knox and John Saville, 'Adamson, William (1863-1936)' in W. Knox (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 58-61; for Hartshorn, see Joyce Bellamy and John Saville, 'Hartshorn, Vernon (1872-1931)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography I*, pp. 150-152.

⁶³³ Edwards is discussed in more detail in the section on liaison below.

⁶³⁴ This has been calculated by adding the total number of Hansard columns a member is recorded as speaking in, rather than for, which would have complicated calculations considerably; thus an MP who spoke in columns 9-14 is counted as having spoken for six columns rather than five. Following Hansard indexes, this system does not differentiate between written and oral questions and speeches, although it has been possible to establish which Members tended to make longer speeches.

when there were several major debates on unemployment insurance, but across the parliament still only averaged 39.2 per cent. This is lower than the corresponding figure for DLP Members, 40.6 per cent, although the DLP figure was only substantially higher than the MFGB one in the final year of the Parliament. Even some MFGB MPs who served for the whole term made relatively little contribution in speaking terms, for example, D. L. Davies (Pontypridd, Glam.), Thomas Grundy (Rother Valley, W. Yorks) and Sir William Jenkins (Neath, Glam.).⁶³⁵ Yet despite this, four MFGB MPs were amongst Labour's top ten contributors in terms of Hansard columns – Tom Williams (Don Valley), Dai Grenfell, Jack Lawson (Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham) and Joe Tinker (Leigh, Lancs.). Moreover, even the quieter mining MPs could speak with knowledge on conditions in their district and the industry more broadly, so fulfilling the sense of the trade union MP alluded to by Marshall above.⁶³⁶ Federation MPs also had a considerable role to play in the PLP's organisation. Williams and Grenfell held their places on the PLP Executive across the decade, with Willie Lunn (Rothwell, W. Yorks.) serving until 1936 and George Hall (Aberdare, Glam.) and Jack Lawson joining them in 1939, having served on the party's frontbench both before and after the switch to a fully elected frontbench in 1937.⁶³⁷ James Griffiths (Llanelli from 1936) was also elected to the frontbench in 1938, and returned in a much higher position the following year. Several of these figures would go on to serve in Cabinet, along with Aneurin Bevan who was unsuccessful in his attempts to be elected to PLP posts in this period. Until 1935, the MFGB MPs held a near monopoly on the Whip positions, with only Thomas Groves as a non-mining Whip from 1931-5, and the only non-sponsored Whip thereafter.⁶³⁸ However, PLP Executive elections also demonstrate the limits to which the MFGB MPs were prepared to act as a united group. They could have dominated the Executive in the 1931 Parliament, but with eleven Miners standing for the seven

⁶³⁵ For Grundy, see Robert G. Neville, 'Grundy, Thomas Walter (1864-1942)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography III*, pp. 89-90.

⁶³⁶ For example, Joseph Batey on the Coal Mines Bill in 1934. *HC Debs*, 5th series 28 March 1934 vol. 287 cc. 2030-2037.

⁶³⁷ For these MFGB MPs, see Joyce Bellamy, 'Lunn, William (Willie) (1872-1942)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 253-255; Joyce Bellamy and John Saville, 'Hall, George Henry (1st Viscount Hall of Cynon Valley) (1881-1965)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 145-148; Joyce Bellamy and David E. Martin, 'Lawson, John James (Lord Lawson of Beamish) (1881-1965)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 227-230.

⁶³⁸ As far as candidate figures are available, Groves was also the only non-sponsored candidate for a whip post in the period, excluding Ernest Thurtle's aborted candidature in 1935. For Groves, a former coachmaker and West Ham councillor, see Margaret 'Espinasse and Ann Holt, 'Groves, Thomas Edward (1882-1958)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography V*, pp.91-93.

positions, the split in their vote meant only three were elected. This also applied to the English Whip positions – three Miners stood for two posts, with the result that the non-miner, Tom Groves, topped the ballot.⁶³⁹ Personal ambitions and differences between MPs from the various coalfields likely had an effect here; the split over whether to vote against the Defence Estimates in 1937 also took the latter shape.⁶⁴⁰

Case study: the NUR MPs in action

William Dobbie's success in the Rotherham by-election in late February 1933 gave the NUR its first parliamentary representative since 1931. Dobbie, a former Lord Mayor of York and the serving NUR President, arguably represented a return to the forefront of Labour politics for the Railwaymen following the union's politically traumatic experience which began with its loss of representation on the party's NEC in 1930, on to the defection of Political General Secretary J. H. Thomas to National Labour in August 1931 and the defeat of all of its parliamentary candidates including its sitting MPs two months later. Dobbie had won a seat on Labour's NEC in October 1932 and entered the Commons five months later. Although three other NUR MPs would join him in 1935, Dobbie seems to have been the NUR's most effective parliamentarian in this period, capable of speaking on a breadth of topics beyond immediately industrial issues; moreover, his Parliamentary performance was sometimes reflective of an identifiable shift leftwards within the union in the later 1930s. His maiden speech dealt largely with unemployment and the means test, Dobbie expressing his amazement at what he perceived as the House of Commons' complacency in this regard.⁶⁴¹ The PLP often utilised him to move or second amendments on transport legislation, for example on the Road Traffic Bill in June 1934, whilst he became a regular questioner of government ministers of a number of issues, notably arms manufacture, pensions, Air Raid Precautions and the position of ex-servicemen.⁶⁴² He spoke frequently and often

⁶³⁹ Labour Party *Annual Report* 1932; PLP Minutes, 10 November 1931. A desire not to appear to dominate the party may also have been at play here.

⁶⁴⁰ The South Wales MFGB MPs wished to continue to vote against the Estimates; those from Lancashire, including Gordon MacDonald, and Durham, backed Dalton's argument for abstention. Dalton, *The Fateful Years*, pp. 136-137.

⁶⁴¹ *HC Debs*, 5th series, 2 March 1933, vol. 275 cc. 612-4.

⁶⁴² *HC Debs* 5th series, 28 June 1934, vol. 291 cc. 1361-4. See also his contributions on 13 Dec 1934, vol 296 cc 695-7 on rail issues relating to the Central Electricity Board and 14 May 1935, vol. 301 cc. 1595-7 on transport aspects of the Government of India Bill.

powerfully on foreign affairs during the Spanish Civil War, arguing in October 1936 that 'if the Spanish democracy goes down, this country and this Government will have been parties to the assassination of democratic Spain'; during the same debate he intervened to defend the Communist Willie Gallacher from insult, whilst Hansard records him as shouting 'hear, hear!' to the suggestion that the Popular Front in Spain represented a step towards the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁶⁴³ His passionate critique of the existing rate of services dependents' allowance as a 'bloody disgrace' saw him ejected from the chamber late in 1939, declaring 'I do not care a damn about order... In the name of these hungry people I cannot give any apology to anybody in this House or in this country... On behalf of these people I leave the House because to me the needs of these people are greater than the prestige of this House'.⁶⁴⁴ Dobbie's seniority, both within the union, and then as its longest continuously serving MP by 1935 made him effectively the leader of the small group of NUR MPs elected that year. Joseph Henderson (Manchester Ardwick), his successor as union President from 1934, Adam Hills (Pontefract, W. Yorks) and Harry Charleton (Leeds South) were unable to match his range or passion in the House. Henderson was far from a regular contributor to debates and his few major speeches tended to be confined to industrial issues within Lancashire;⁶⁴⁵ he left the House in no doubt that considered himself an NUR representative, declaring in his maiden speech 'I represent the railway operatives in what I have said'.⁶⁴⁶ Neither Hills nor Charleton proved particularly effective as NUR MPs, although for contrasting reasons. Hills' parliamentary career was blighted by illness: he spent several periods in hospital and was unable to make his maiden speech until July 1938.⁶⁴⁷ This proved his only major contribution in the Commons beyond occasional questions largely on local issues; he died in June 1941. Charleton,

⁶⁴³ *HC Debs* 5th series, 29 October 1936, vol. 316 cc. 110-2, 116 and 127.

⁶⁴⁴ *HC Debs* 5th series, 5 Dec 1939, vol. 355 cc. 421-5.

⁶⁴⁵ See, for example, *HC Debs* 5th series, 3 Feb 1937, vol. 319 cc. 1695-1701.

⁶⁴⁶ *HC Debs* 5th series, 13 Dec 1935, vol. 307 cc. 1322-5. This contrasts sharply with Dobbie, who seems not have referred specifically to his NUR background in such a way at all after his election. It is hard to imagine him describing himself during a debate as 'one who is prominent in the trade union world' as Henderson once did (see the reference to Hansard in the previous footnote).

⁶⁴⁷ *HC Debs* 5th series, 18 July 1938, vol. 338 cc. 1920-3 for the speech. The content suggested Hills was unfamiliar with parliamentary conventions here, which might be indicative of regular absence: he made none of the customary references to his constituency or the fact that this was his first speech, keeping to some general points about the Unemployment Assistance Board. Somewhat ironically, he was congratulated on his maiden effort by Frank Anderson, RCA-sponsored MP for Whitehaven, whom Hills had beaten to the final place on the NUR's parliamentary panel on the twenty-fourth count in 1933. MSS.127/NU/1/1/21 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1933, Decisions of the Executive Committee, Quarterly Meeting of March 1933.

a former London County Council alderman and Midland Railway engine driver, had sat for Leeds South from 1922-31. Although returned in November 1935, he was due to pass the NUR's parliamentary age limit, meaning that although entitled to NUR support for the duration of the parliament, his sponsorship would terminate at the next general election.⁶⁴⁸ Charleton had never been a frequent contributor to debates, but now his parliamentary interventions seem to have dwindled to a minimum.⁶⁴⁹ This may have been in part due to his election as a Labour Whip shortly after the election, but his resignation from the union's Parliamentary panel over an Executive decision to reduce the NUR MPs' parliamentary allowance in September 1937 was also likely a factor.⁶⁵⁰ Charleton reacted badly to his constituency party's failure to consider his continuation as their (unsponsored) parliamentary candidate, and may have done similarly here; certainly, he stopped signing the NUR group's quarterly reports. A young, middle-class candidate, Hugh Gaitskell, was selected by the Leeds South DLP in the meantime. Gaitskell's biographer alleges that Charleton 'boycotted the constituency altogether for four years', in protest.⁶⁵¹ Charleton's exit from the NUR panel seems to have given the DLP the opportunity of replacing him with a younger, more vigorous candidate. Charleton may have become estranged from his union, but liaison with their sponsored MPs could be a substantial part of a union's political work.

⁶⁴⁸ See MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1936, Decisions of the Executive Committee, Quarterly Meeting of March 1936 (Report of Political Sub-committee).

⁶⁴⁹ His first speech in the Parliament was in April 1937 in a debate on the London Passenger Transport Board, and delivered largely from the perspective of a London resident rather than the NUR MP for Leeds South. This was fairly anecdotal: 'I live about a mile to the west of Edgware Station close to the Metropolitan and I know from my friends and neighbours...', although it did contain a brief reference to the feelings of railway workers. HC Debs, 5th series, 26 April 1937, vol 323 col 135-6. His only other speech of any length was on the Charities (Fuel Allotment) Bill, *HC Debs* 5th series, 9 December 1938, vol 342 col 1545-6.

⁶⁵⁰ See below for more details. The relevant minutes are in MSS.127/NU/1/1/25 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1937, Decisions of the Executive Committee, Special Meeting of September 1937 (for the salary reduction) and MSS.127/NU/1/1/26 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1938, Decisions of the Executive Committee, Special Meeting of August 1938 (for Charleton's resignation).

⁶⁵¹ See Philip Williams, *Hugh Gaitskell* (Oxford, 1982), p. 78. Williams' suggestion of the union's 'furious' reaction is not borne out by the reports on the selection conference in its executive minutes, see NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1937, Decisions of the Executive Committee, Quarterly Meetings of September and December 1937; the NUR's own relationship with Charleton was likely somewhat strained at this point, and there is no sense in the minutes of any complaint over the NUR nominee Tom Proctor's defeat in the final vote.

Liaison

How far did those unions which sponsored MPs seek to make use of their parliamentary representatives? Although sponsorship generally entailed no formal obligations to the union involved on the part of a sponsored Member, the reliance upon financial support from a union in election campaigns and for constituency parties during the course of a parliamentary term, as well as a supplementary allowance for the Member in some instances, could potentially give a union some influence over its sponsored MPs. Plainly, as Harrison noted, any attempt at coercion on the part of the union would raise constitutional issues around the breach of parliamentary privilege, and besides, as will be shown, few union leaderships thought seriously in such terms. Whilst arguing that rules allowing unions to mandate their MPs were 'empty relics' by the post-war period, Harrison did suggest that 'old habits' by which some unions 'exerted considerable pressure on their Parliamentary groups' were at one (unspecified) stage 'not considered improper', citing the Miners as an example.⁶⁵² How far was this the case during the 1930s, as unions continued to move away from the earlier practice of permitting their top officials to sit in the House and the symbolic association of the industrial and the political such figures represented broken? A close examination of the ways in which the major sponsoring unions sought to liaise with their MPs can reveal much about the ways in which unions understood parliamentary representation, and the part it played in their broader industrial strategy. Perhaps understandably given the respective size and level of organisation of their parliamentary groups, unions adopted diverse approaches to liaison. The larger the group of MPs, the more difficult effective co-ordination became, and so even within a union, a variety of practices often overlapped, as will be seen in the study of the Miners' Federation below. Some unions exhibited a growing professionalism in their approach to parliamentary liaison, most significantly in the TGWU. Others, notably the Engineers, took a rather more *ad hoc* approach, and did not begin to develop a more professional basis for liaison until after 1945. Successful co-ordination typically relied on close networks of personal relationships between MPs and union figures, whether recognised in terms of official posts or responsibilities, or not. While it is apparent that

⁶⁵² Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 292-293.

several varieties of parliamentarism existed side-by-side even within unions, all were perhaps most strongly characterised by a kind of constitutional restraint: unions did not attempt to use their financial influence to obligate their MPs, but recognised their independence to act, and indeed in certain cases were prepared to defend it against the party leadership. Sponsored MPs in turn made differing uses of the link with their unions: often for information, or to access a level of authority in the eyes of the government which being a (Labour) Member of Parliament in the conditions of the 1930s did not give them, but being a representative of a responsible national industrial organisation did.

The MFGB

I think it can be honestly stated that since I have been General Secretary there has been less friction between the Miners' Federation and the MPs than at any previous time, and you know that in our industry we cannot merely deal with the industrial side and ignore the political side. The miner, every minute of his working hours, is under legislation.

Ebby Edwards to MFGB Annual Conference, July 1939.⁶⁵³

The industrial weakness of the MFGB following the 1926 lock-out and the intransigence of the mining employers nationally meant that the Federation was more inclined than some other unions to seek redress through legislation; clearly having a number of parliamentary representatives was an advantage. There were some complicating factors in establishing effective liaison, most notably the tension between the mineworkers' unions at district level and the national Federation, yet this was mitigated to some extent by the relative weight of the Miners' group in the PLP, and the strength of personal association derived from the fact that many of the Federation-sponsored MPs had previously served as district officials, or on their district or the Federation's executives. However, it remained unclear what a Miners' MP might perceive his industrial 'constituency' to be – should he answer to the MFGB or the SWMF, for instance? This was compounded by the payment of Federation parliamentary salaries, which came from MFGB funds but were administered through

⁶⁵³ D.845.18 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1939, Report of the Annual Conference, p. 164.

the districts. How districts were able to 'use' their MPs was never well clarified: certainly there were no formal rules that the MFGB attempted to enforce, although it is possible to draw some conclusions here based on how the Federation dealt with the issue of district-MP liaison in practice. Given all this it is perhaps unsurprising that the MFGB made use of a variety of methods in order to liaise effectively with its MPs. These MPs were seen very much as part of the Federation's industrial strategy, although the MFGB easily acknowledged that their parliamentary role was much broader than this. Although the Miners' group of MPs was smaller, even after 1935, than it had been in the 1920s, effective liaison was facilitated by the existence of a large enough number of Miners' MPs to act as a group, as well as the fact that two of the top national Federation officials, Ebby Edwards (general secretary from 1932) and Will Lawther (vice-president and then president), had served in Parliament themselves and as such, arguably could be more realistic in terms of their expectations of the group. Certainly their experience, and increasingly professionalised management of the MFGB gave the Federation of the 1930s an advantage when contrasted with the often shambolic leadership of the Cook-Smith period preceding it. Indeed, it was an advantage over most of the other major sponsoring unions: only the RCA and NUMGW had any serving top officials in this period who had prior parliamentary experience.⁶⁵⁴ The MFGB made use of its MPs in several ways, including proposing or seeking to amend legislation to benefit mineworkers' interests, to organise access to government on industrial questions, and to ask questions and get information from ministers, an aspect of the MPs' work which should not be underestimated given that the Federation had no research department or dedicated officer to do this work independently. In turn MPs sought information and guidance from the Federation officials; the relative informality of liaison, reinforced by the pragmatism of the Edwards-Jones-Lawther Federation leadership, appears to have been both mutually satisfactory for a time, and distinctive when contrasted with methods adopted by other unions.

At the July 1929 meeting of the MFGB Executive, the first held after the Labour party took office that June, the committee considered a letter from Charles Edwards,

⁶⁵⁴ And in both cases this was problematic, given that, unlike the MFGB, these unions had yet to establish rules prohibiting such officials from simultaneously serving in the House – see the discussion of RCA (Walkden and Lathan) and NUMGW (Thorne especially) in chapter three.

described as 'Secretary of the Mining Group of MPs', seeking to renew 'the periodical discussions between the Committee and the Miners' Members which had previously been decided upon'. The Executive agreed to inform Edwards that it was 'only too pleased' to do so, although a proposed meeting the same evening is not recorded in the following days' minutes.⁶⁵⁵ No minutes of the miners' group survive, whilst the MFGB's records make no further reference to Edwards in the capacity of Secretary during the lifetime of the Labour government – the Federation's decision to cease the payment of salaries to its sponsored MPs appointed to government positions affected Edwards following his appointment as a junior Lord of the Treasury, despite this being largely a sinecure as a government whip.⁶⁵⁶ This, as well as any increased parliamentary workload the position entailed, seems to have been sufficient to break his direct personal link with the Executive. At this stage there was no formal system for the activities of MFGB MPs to be reported regularly to the Executive, and occasional meetings between the Federation officials and the group of mining MPs seem to have been the preferred means for liaison.⁶⁵⁷ Possibly it was felt unnecessary to appoint a new group Secretary at this stage, given that the main national officials (A. J. Cook as General Secretary, Herbert Smith as President until his resignation in November 1929, and Thomas Richards first as vice-President and then President) and on occasion the full Executive were involved in direct negotiations with the Labour government over the Coal Mines Act and its application through much of 1930-1.⁶⁵⁸ Given this, during the progress of the Coal Mines Bill through Parliament the position of the MFGB MPs was largely one of loyalty to the government, despite criticism of their refusal to support amendments 'ostensibly designed to improve' the Bill by what the Federation referred to as 'certain irresponsible' Labour MPs,⁶⁵⁹ and as such more

⁶⁵⁵ D.845.62 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1929-30, MFGB Executive Minutes, 11 July 1929.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid for the decision on MPs' salaries; for Edwards' salary, *MFGB Reports and Proceedings 1929-30*: Parliamentary Fund Account for year ending 30 June 1930, MFGB Annual Conference 1930, p. 232. Government appointees were paid only for the first week of June 1929, a total of £5. The Account suggests some inconsistency with payments to Cabinet members, but this was not the case. Vernon Hartshorn's £198 covered the period before he joined the government as Lord Privy Seal in June 1930. Nor was Willie Adamson, appointed Secretary of State for Scotland, an exception, despite receiving £126 – this was a payment of arrears due. See MFGB Executive Minutes, 15 August 1929.

⁶⁵⁷ See, e.g., MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1929-30, MFGB Executive Minutes, 13 February 1930; MFGB, Proceedings and Reports 1931, MFGB Executive Minutes, 25 March 1931.

⁶⁵⁸ See Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999), pp. 62-69. Several MFGB MPs were part of the Federation's deputation to a Cabinet Sub-committee on mining questions in April 1931. MFGB Reports and Proceedings 1931, MFGB Executive Minutes, 17 April 1931.

⁶⁵⁹ MFGB Proceedings and Reports 1929-30, Executive Committee's Report, MFGB Annual Conference 1930, pp. 83-4. The Executive felt that attempts to force such amendments would allow

formal group liaison in order to put forward a separate MFGB position might have exposed the Federation's internal divisions over the Bill.

If the organisation of the Miners' group is difficult to reconstruct for this period, it is clear that by the final months of the Labour government, Ebby Edwards (MP for Morpeth) was emerging as its key figure: Edwards was now acting MFGB President having taken the place of the ailing Richards in July, and it was he who was chosen to follow the party leaders in the Commons debate on the Coal Mines Bill in July 1931: his 'sombre utterance with its moving passages' supporting a measure which was in many ways unsatisfactory to the Federation was an important contribution, Edwards making it clear he was speaking on behalf of the MFGB.⁶⁶⁰ In September, with Labour returned to opposition, he was elected in eighth place, ahead of several former ministers, to the PLP Executive: that he was the highest placed trade unionist was testament to his growing prestige. In one sense his defeat at Morpeth in October resolved a dilemma for Edwards, in that it allowed him to stand for and be elected to the Federation Secretaryship in March 1932 without resigning his seat, which MFGB rules would have obliged him to do. It is hard to say what Edwards would have done if he had held Morpeth in October 1931. Page Arnot suggests he had been in effect filling both the secretarial and presidential roles during the illnesses of Cook and Richards, so certainly he would have had a difficult decision to make. It is perhaps not going too far to speculate that had he remained in the House, he would have continued as the major figure in the Miners' group, and possibly on the Labour frontbench too.⁶⁶¹ As MFGB secretary, however, Edwards was to maintain a major influence over the Federation's parliamentary activities.

opposition parties to wreck the Bill, but that the Mining Members' refusal to support such amendments had resulted in 'some misconception among our members'.

⁶⁶⁰ See Robin Page Arnot, *The Miners in Crisis and War. A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain from 1930 onwards* (London, 1961). pp. 56-59.

⁶⁶¹ In the circumstances of 1931-2, neither the MFGB Secretaryship or a Labour seat in parliament were particularly attractive options, but the evidence suggests Edwards was likely to be committed to the Presidency, which would have allowed him to continue in the Commons: although there was no vacancy for general secretary when he stood as President in July 1931, he had overwhelming support from across the Federation with some 81 per cent of the vote – only Yorkshire declined to support him in favour of its own Herbert Smith, whose candidature was arguably something of a protest one against the seven and a half hours clause. A Smith victory would have been problematic for both Federation and government given the delicate state of negotiations over the Bill, and so whilst Edwards was in a sense a unity candidate, his victory was an emphatic one. See *ibid.*, pp. 82-83 for the results; also MFGB Proceedings Reports and 1931, MFGB Annual Conference 1931.

It might have been expected that one of the three Miners' MPs on the PLP executive – Dai Grenfell, Tom Williams, or Willie Lunn – might have now become the central figure in the Miners' group, but this was not what occurred in practice, although Grenfell in particular remained close to the Federation Executive, for example in discussions over the provisions of a Minimum Wage Bill he was drafting early in 1933.⁶⁶² Neither Williams nor Lunn seem to have had much to do with the Federation nationally, and in any case all three had daily PLP business to prioritise. Tom Cape (MP for Workington, Cumberland) and Gordon MacDonald (MP for Ince, Lancashire) now emerged as the two key figures in liaison on the parliamentary side and remained so for much of the decade, Cape as chair of the group and MacDonald as its secretary.⁶⁶³ Cape was one of the MFGB's most experienced parliamentarians having sat continuously since 1918; his role as an official of the Cumberland district meant he was a prominent figure at Federation conferences – arguably the most prominent of its MPs during the 1930s at such events. As the sole representative of a smaller mining district he may have been seen as an effective means of circumventing the differences between larger districts which had emerged during the Labour government's legislative difficulties over the industry, not least between South Wales and Yorkshire who now provided the bulk of the MFGB MPs between them. Cape also had the most experience of serving on the Federation Executive – a body he returned to for a brief period in 1937, and then again in 1938-9 – of the Miners' MPs, which was undoubtedly an asset in facilitating liaison between the two.⁶⁶⁴ That he and Ebby Edwards were two of the three MFGB MPs who opposed the Liberal amendment which established the May Committee in 1931 suggest their political instincts were attuned.⁶⁶⁵ Gordon MacDonald had only served for a year on the Federation Executive from July 1920, but seems to have been close to Edwards – correspondence between the Executive

⁶⁶²MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1933, MFGB Executive Minutes, 5 January 1933; on his appointment as Minister of Mines in May 1940 he was sure to attend an Executive meeting at his own request at the earliest opportunity – see D.845.19 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1940, MFGB Executive Minutes, 24 May 1940.

⁶⁶³ For Cape, see Keith Gildart, 'The Miners' Lockout in 1926 in the Cumberland Coalfield', *Northern History* 44:2 (2007), 169-192 and Joyce Bellamy and John Saville, 'Cape, Thomas (1868-1947)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography III*, pp. 31-32; for MacDonald, see Peter Ackers, 'MacDonald, Lord Gordon of Gwaensygor (1888-1966)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography X*, pp. 127-131.

⁶⁶⁴ He had served on the MFGB Executive in 1915-16, 1918-19, 1922-23, 1924-25 and 1926-27; he was a substitute for the deceased J. R. Barker for four months in 1937 and also served 1938-39 and 1940-41. See D.845.16 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1937, MFGB Executive Minutes 24 March 1937; Page Arnot, *The Miners in Crisis and War*, appendix. Federation Executive membership ran from July to June of the year in question.

⁶⁶⁵ Page Arnot, *The Miners in Crisis and War*, pp. 70-71.

and Miners' group went through him,⁶⁶⁶ and it is plausible that he may have found much in common with Edwards as the only new mining MPs from their respective districts in 1929.⁶⁶⁷ He was not a regular at MFGB conferences, although his few contributions here give the impression of pragmatism and reliable loyalty to the leadership.⁶⁶⁸ He was able to command sufficient authority in Parliament to become a PLP whip at the first opportunity in 1931 and be invited to join the speaker's panel in 1934. Early in his period in office, Edwards stressed to Federation delegates that he was in 'constant consultation' with Cape and MacDonald on political issues, and this remained the case in the following years.⁶⁶⁹ The pair sometimes attended Executive meetings to consider tactics over industrial legislation, usually for a broad discussion of strategy rather than tactical detail which was left to the discretion of the group.⁶⁷⁰ Edwards corresponded closely with MacDonald on various issues including mining recruitment, limited by a 1926 Act, and the release of the Harworth prisoners.⁶⁷¹ Annual conference resolutions on political subjects were forwarded directly to MacDonald as well as the party, TUC and Mining Association.⁶⁷² It is only possible to trace the correspondence recorded in the Federation's minutes, but it is likely it was rather more voluminous than the examples given here. Meetings of the officials with the whole group of MPs were still held from time to time, for example on the coal-selling scheme in 1938 and cost-of-living in relation to levels of workmen's compensation in 1940, but these in general seem to have declined over the period.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁶ Note the discussion over a letter from Cape on oil from coal to the Executive at the June 1933 Special Conference: this confused Jones, who assumed it was on behalf of the Miners' group; Cape explained it was in a personal capacity and Edwards clarified – correspondence from the group came through MacDonald. D.845.13 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1933, Report of the Special Conference, p.13.

⁶⁶⁷ This is necessarily somewhat speculative, but several of the other Lancashire mining MPs elected in 1929 were not only more established in the House, but also much older than MacDonald – almost a generation so in the case of J. A. Parkinson, so it seems plausible that he may have been inclined to socialise more with other new younger MPs, including Edwards, who was only four years MacDonald's senior.

⁶⁶⁸ See, for example, his contributions at the 1933 Annual Conference and 1937 Special Conference in favour of flexibility through the vague wording of resolutions.

⁶⁶⁹ MFGB, Report of the Annual Conference 1932, p. 33.

⁶⁷⁰ See, e.g., MFGB Executive Minutes, 23 November 1933 on wages – on this occasion it was agreed 'to leave the ways and means of presenting our case to the Miners' group in the House, they being supplied with all the available data'.

⁶⁷¹ See MFGB Executive Minutes 15 August 1935; 14 April 1938 and MFGB Annual Conference Report 1938, pp. 524-5.

⁶⁷² MFGB Executive Minutes 17 August 1939.

⁶⁷³ MFGB Executive Minutes, 10 February 1932; 24 January 1940.

MPs regularly used the Federation as a source of information: sometimes this involved deferring to the Federation's view on a particular coalfield issue, for example George Hall writing for clarification of the MFGB's view before advising in a constituency case on recruitment.⁶⁷⁴ Certainly MPs were concerned not to inadvertently contradict Federation policy, which could be complicated on matters where the Federation had yet to reach a decision, for example on what line to take over the taxation of oil derived from coal in 1933. Tom Cape had written seeking advice urgently on this issue ahead of a parliamentary debate, but it was decided to leave it to a forthcoming conference to decide, with the result that the MFGB MPs played little part in the debate with the exception of Grenfell, summing up for the party.⁶⁷⁵ MPs used the January 1937 Special Conference on the Harworth situation as an opportunity to get detailed information to use in the House, with Batey reminding delegates that the MPs could force a debate as well as just ask questions.⁶⁷⁶ MPs were often among the delegates to Federation conferences and as such, as will be seen in the following section, delegates had the opportunity to question or challenge them directly, although typically at such meetings if the role of MFGB MPs was referred to, it was in congratulation for their efforts. Possibly their presence was the result of the limit funds available to many districts to send delegates, particularly if conferences were called at short notice. Special conferences were usually held in London, so MPs were on hand and could help fill out a district's delegation cheaply if it was short of funds.⁶⁷⁷

The proper relation of districts with their MPs could prove problematic, and it is here where a rough line seems to have been drawn between industrial and political questions. The Lancashire district tried to use their MPs to arrange a meeting with the Secretary of Mines on overtime issues in 1933, resulting in a reprimand from Edwards in the form of reminder to all districts that 'it is not in the best interest of the national miners' organisation for district officials or Miners' Members of Parliament to take matters to any government departments that could be raised by the Federation centrally'.⁶⁷⁸ This response reflected MFGB sensitivity to potentially divisive industrial issues between the district related to pay and hours; on, for example, industrial

⁶⁷⁴ MFGB Executive Minutes, 17 December 1937.

⁶⁷⁵ MFGB Executive Minutes 31 May 1933; 20 July 1933; MFGB June SCR 1933.

⁶⁷⁶ MFGB Special Conference Report 1937, pp. 12 onwards – see the contributions of Tinker, Mainwaring and MacDonald.

⁶⁷⁷ For example, there were no Scottish delegates at some Special Conferences.

⁶⁷⁸ MFGB Executive Minutes 11 November 1933.

diseases they were more flexible – James Griffiths faced no criticism for arranging a meeting with the Home Secretary on silicosis in 1934.⁶⁷⁹ On more explicitly political issues districts were permitted much greater autonomy: in August 1934 Lancashire were told that ‘it is up to our district organisations to use the Labour Members of Parliament and especially our Miners’ Members...in political propaganda’, in this case the withdrawal of the Incitement to Disaffection Bill.⁶⁸⁰ ‘Parliamentary salaries’ could also cause problems between the districts and their MPs. The name is slightly misleading: introduced before MPs received official salaries from 1911, these were payments from the MFGB to cover Members’ expenses. They did not preclude mining MPs from receiving their genuine parliamentary salary of £360; that the name was retained seems instead to hint at the survival of an older, archaic culture of political representation in the Federation. Such ‘salaries’ were paid out of the MFGB’s central political fund and administered by the districts on the basis of the number of levy payers per district: every 10,000 levy-payers would entitle a district to one parliamentary salary. For much of this period, the South Wales Area had more Miners’ MPs than MFGB salaries would support, so in practice these were pooled, although the district still had to provide the MFGB with a list of those MPs for whom salaries would be paid. Will John (Rhondda West) was surprised when he received a cheque in December 1935 for a parliamentary salary in the post from the MFGB and returned it to the SWMF, who explained the pooling arrangements and that his name had been forwarded now that South Wales was entitled to a further MP’s salary.⁶⁸¹ The issue of salaries could be used to pressure districts into increasing their number of levy-payers – South Wales salaries were cut off for a time in 1933-4 – but pooling arrangements such as that practiced by the SWMF minimised disruption for MPs.⁶⁸²

The language used in MFGB resolutions relating to parliamentary activity is indicative of how relations were envisaged, with the emphasis often on empowerment rather than instruction, for example in a report by Jones in 1937 on recommendations on the

⁶⁷⁹ MFGB Annual Conference Report 1934, pp. 27-8. Awareness of silicosis was more pronounced in South Wales than some other districts at this stage.

⁶⁸⁰ MFGB Executive Minutes, 16 August 1934.

⁶⁸¹ MNA/NUM/3/3/58, SWMF Political Correspondence: W. John to O. Harris, 12 December 1935; Harris to John 12 December 1935. For John, see John Saville, ‘John, William (1878-1955)’, *Dictionary of Labour Biography I*, p. 195.

⁶⁸² See comment on Parliamentary ‘salaries’ above.

action to be taken on a number of Bills.⁶⁸³ This gave the sense of the MPs being imbued to speak with the authority of the Federation, rather than simply following its orders, which could have important implications for the way they were received. Certainly the MPs themselves felt this gave them additional prestige, as Joe Tinker argued at a February 1935 special conference: 'Many times we have been asked, when we have put questions down, as to whether the Miners' Federation was behind us. Having the Miners' Federation behind us we shall be treated with greater respect than what we otherwise would be.'⁶⁸⁴ This empowerment extended to allowing MPs to take the initiative on a range of issues in the Commons: Tinker's work on nystagmus cases began as a private endeavour which in time allowed him to feed information back to the Federation, as did that of Duncan Graham on conditions of entry into the industry;⁶⁸⁵ William Whiteley's Coal Mines (Employment of Boys) Bill had been introduced in the House before the Federation Executive decided to declare its support;⁶⁸⁶ whilst Joe Batey's correspondence with government officials over the loss of pensions by the long-term unemployed seems to have been initiated by Batey himself and then referred to the Federation, to give a few examples.⁶⁸⁷ In this spirit the Federation was prepared to defer to its MPs on political issues: in April 1936, the Executive decided to consult its MPs 'in order to ascertain if there was any particular subject on which they would like the Federation to submit a resolution' to that year's party conference.⁶⁸⁸ Moreover, it was prepared to support them against the party leadership if necessary: Lawther and Jim Bowman were able to convince party officials to reconsider forcing Aneurin Bevan to sign a special undertaking in order to gain re-

⁶⁸³ MFGB Executive Minutes, 15 October 1937: on three Bills, MPs were 'instructed' once but 'empowered' twice; this was not uncommon (include some other examples).

⁶⁸⁴ Tinker at MFGB Special Conference, February 1935, Special Conference Report, p. 27. For Tinker, see Stephen Catterall, 'Tinker, John Joseph (Joe) (1875-1957)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XII*, pp. 269-275.

⁶⁸⁵ MFGB Executive Minutes, July 1934 and Annual Conference Report 1934.

⁶⁸⁶ MFGB Executive Minutes, 30 December 1936. Notably MPs were given discretion on how to act on the Bill – see Executive Minutes, 20 April 1937.

⁶⁸⁷ MFGB Executive Minutes, 11 May 1933 – the unusual phrasing of the minute, that it was Batey 'through whom the matter had been raised by the Federation' as well as Edwards' admission that this was in response to a request from the Durham area, seems to imply that this was an instance of an MP taking the initiative and then being 'empowered' by Federation support. For Graham, see R. Page Arnot and Joyce Bellamy, 'Graham, Duncan MacGregor (1867-1942)' in W. Knox, (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 127-128; for Whiteley, Bryan Sadler and John Saville, 'Whiteley, William (1881-1955)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography III*, pp. 203-205; and for Batey, Anthony Mason and Barbara Nield, 'Batey, Joseph (1867-1949)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography II*, pp. 31-33.

⁶⁸⁸ MFGB Executive Minutes, 29 April 1936.

admittance to the party after his expulsion in 1939, in the Federation's view such an undertaking was unnecessary, and its officials were prepared to take this further 'in the event of the Labour party's reply being unsatisfactory', requesting a meeting with the full party NEC if the situation was not resolved.⁶⁸⁹

The personal basis of much of the MFGB's liaison, as well as its flexibility and the relative freedom given to MPs, seems to have largely worked effectively, but the 'usual method' was vulnerable to slips in communication. The Executive, for reasons not entirely clear but possibly to do with the supply of draft Bills, had grown dissatisfied by the summer of 1939 and sought to formalise the basis for liaison, drawing up proposals for a 'liaison officer' to be appointed to establish closer links with the Miners' MPs, on a salary drawn from the political fund. This came as a surprise to MacDonald, and the MPs' secretary wrote expressing the group's opinion that no such appointment was necessary.⁶⁹⁰ Cape put the MPs' views at that July's conference, but a decision was held over pending broader Federation reorganisation. Certainly there was recognition of the need for a more professional basis of operation: E. Moore, speaking for Durham, urged the need for a research officer to complement the group's work, whilst Edwards argued that 'a mass of information is lying there that is not even being tabulated for the Executive Committee'.⁶⁹¹ This seems to have been a problem of professionalization of union functions rather than any major fault on the part of Cape and MacDonald, although MacDonald's failure to supply copies of a number of Bills that autumn can hardly have reassured the Executive.⁶⁹² For the time being, however, a more formalised, professional approach would have to wait.

The TGWU

Such an approach was slowly developing elsewhere; most significantly in the TGWU, which pioneered a professional research department to liaise with its MPs in the late 1930s. From the amalgamation of fourteen unions into the TGWU in 1922, the union's sponsored MPs were considered representatives not of the union at large, or its Executive Council, but of its Political and International Department. The new General

⁶⁸⁹ MFGB Executive Minutes, 26 October 1939; 9 November 1939.

⁶⁹⁰ MFGB Executive Minutes, 10 and 11 May 1939 and 3 July 1939.

⁶⁹¹ MFGB Annual Conference Report 1939, pp. 150 and 163.

⁶⁹² MFGB Executive Minutes, 14 September and 13 October 1939.

Executive Council, which met for the first time in August 1922, and not on a regular basis until 1923, was hardly in a position at this early stage to oversee the activities of the union's sponsored MPs.⁶⁹³ Responsibility therefore lay with the Political and International Department, by the union's own admission, 'rather a new feature in the Trade Union Movement'. The Department was 'conducted' by its secretary, the veteran dockers' leader and MP for Salford North, Ben Tillett.⁶⁹⁴ This position seems to have been given to Tillett to placate his supporters among the dockers given his lack of a larger role in the new union and give him something important-sounding to do away from TGWU headquarters: as his biographer admits, Tillett was now very much in the 'twilight period of his career'.⁶⁹⁵ Even so, the Secretaryship of the Department was a potentially significant role. Until his defeat in 1924 Tillett also acted as president of the group of MPs, with Frank Stillwell, also secretary of the TGWU Legal Department, becoming the group's secretary. The Department would be responsible for the production and supply of daily bulletins 'bringing up points of interest', and in the preparation of parliamentary questions. Group members were to 'send in any suggestions and branches to be asked to submit particulars': interaction with the union's membership, then, was envisaged.⁶⁹⁶ Although weekly meetings were often mooted,⁶⁹⁷ they remained irregular and infrequent during the period for which minutes survive, with the exception of the duration of the 1924 Labour government, at least until the summer recess, when meetings were held approximately fortnightly. With Tillett heading the department, liaison was not particularly effective and Bevin took the opportunity offered by Tillett's retirement in 1929 under the age limit for officials to reorganise the basis of the TGWU's parliamentary liaison. That the union's group of MPs had been expanded by the addition of the former Workers' Union MPs also helped drive this change. Bevin was adamant that he now wanted the parliamentary group 'straightened out'; by autumn, the Political and Statistical

⁶⁹³ Ken Coates and Tony Topham, *The Making of the Labour Movement. The Formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union 1870-1922* (Nottingham, 1991), p. 841. MSS.126/TG/1186/A/2 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1923-24, TGWU GEC Minutes, 11 February 1923.

⁶⁹⁴ MSS.126/TG/1154/1 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1922, p. xvi.

⁶⁹⁵ Tillett had effectively been pushed into retirement following the amalgamation. J. Schneer, *Ben Tillett. Portrait of a Labour Leader* (London, 1982), pp. 216-8.

⁶⁹⁶ MSS.126/TG/754/1/1, TGWU, 'Minutes of meetings of Members of Parliament who are members of and representatives of the Political and International Department of the Transport and General Workers' Union', 1922-27, Minutes, 29 November 1922.

⁶⁹⁷ For example, TGWU Parliamentary Group Minutes, 29 November 1922; 10 March 1923.

Departments had been reorganised under the control of Joe Taylor, secretary of the union's convalescent home and an old Bristol ally of Bevin's, and May Forcey.⁶⁹⁸ Forcey had provided secretarial support to Bevin for several years, most notably in the preparation of his case at the Shaw Inquiry in 1920 when she had been dubbed 'the woman behind the Dockers' KC' by the *Daily Mail*.⁶⁹⁹ These were two trusted confidants, and although there was some trouble in enforcing Tillett's retirement, by early 1930 Bevin could report that the new arrangements were 'bearing splendid fruit'.⁷⁰⁰

From early in 1931 a parliamentary group report was presented by Bevin himself to the quarterly meetings of the GEC, implying a more proprietorial approach on his part, particularly over transport legislation; the death of Harry Gosling, union president and Whitechapel MP may have been a factor in this development.⁷⁰¹ The reduction in TGWU parliamentary representation from thirteen to just two following the 1931 general election was a major set-back in further progress within the union on the political front, and much of the department's work was now taken up with issues around candidate selection and providing new roles for those defeated.⁷⁰² Neither of the two remaining MPs provided a particularly agreeable means of putting a TGWU case in the House. Charles Duncan (Clay Cross), the former general secretary of the Workers' Union was already seriously ill. Bevin had convinced him to retire six months early from his new role in the WU section of the TGWU, and he spent as much time in hospital as in the Commons in the following years, dying in July 1933. Dave Adams (Poplar South) was a new MP at the 1931 election; Bevin had been opposed to his selection as Sam March's successor as the Labour candidate, preferring either of the other two TGWU officials in the running, J. H. Hall and J. E. Corrin. TGWU official

⁶⁹⁸ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/7 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1929. TGWU GEC Minutes, August 1929 and November 1929.

⁶⁹⁹ *Daily Mail*, 11 February 1920.

⁷⁰⁰ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/8 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1930, TGWU GEC Minutes, February 1930. Tillett had appealed against his enforced retirement and as a result was maintained until November 1930, when he applied to have his appeal heard by the next union Congress. He was finally retired during 1931, although throughout this period he seems to have had little or no involvement in the work of the department.

⁷⁰¹ See, e.g., MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931, TGWU GEC Minutes May and June 1931 – Bevin went straight to MacDonald over the head of the responsible minister, Morrison, on provisions for labour representation on the LPTB; contrast his more relaxed approach on Education Bill, TGWU GEC Minutes November 1930.

⁷⁰² See previous chapter; MSS.126/TG/1186/A/10 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1932, TGWU GEC Minutes February 1932.

opposition was withdrawn following a meeting with Adams and local party officials, but the union made it clear they were only providing sponsorship 'for the specific purpose of this candidature', i.e., Adams could not be sure of future sponsorship after a further general election.⁷⁰³ Bevin's hostility to Adams seems to have stemmed from an unofficial dock strike in 1923, when Adams, the local TGWU official, allowed the unofficial strike committee from the breakaway stevedores' union to use his office as a committee room, 'a situation which he seems to have accepted; certainly he remained on the premises himself'.⁷⁰⁴ Bevin is likely to have seen this as a betrayal – collusion in an attempt to undermine the TGWU. Adams was also one of the Poplar councillors imprisoned during the rates rebellion and was close to Lansbury, which was also unlikely to help his cause in the eyes of his General Secretary.

Bevin came increasingly to turn to MPs who were TGWU members, but unsponsored, to push the union's case in the House. Following Duncan's retirement Bevin had begun a reconciliation with Neil Maclean, who became a TGWU member in early 1933. Maclean, variously an ILP and Workers' Union sponsored MP for Glasgow Govan since 1918, had been expelled from the WU in 1927 for 'issuing unauthorised circulars attacking members of the executive over alleged misuse of union funds', although his own profligacy with union expenses had seen him lose his own seat on the WU executive. Consequently he was forced to stand without Labour endorsement at the 1929 election, although he did not face Labour opposition. At the time of the WU's amalgamation with the TGWU, he owed the union considerable legal costs dating from the controversy surrounding his expulsion. His unpopularity amongst erstwhile WU colleagues, as well as his radical socialist reputation, in other circumstances might have prevented a reconciliation, but in the post-1931 context, Bevin appreciated the usefulness of parliamentary allies; perhaps crucially in Maclean's case, his past activities had not offended Bevin personally, in contrast to those of Adams.⁷⁰⁵ Arthur Greenwood became another congenial link to the PLP following his return for

⁷⁰³ TGWU GEC Minutes, August 1930 and February 1931.

⁷⁰⁴ Noreen Branson, *Poplarism 1919-1925. George Lansbury and the Councillors' Revolt* (London, 1979), p. 187.

⁷⁰⁵ TGWU GEC Minutes, February 1933. This reconciliation was not universally accepted – see TGWU GEC Minutes, May 1933. See William Knox, 'Maclean, Neil Malcolm (1875-1953)' in W. Knox, (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 192-194. It was also significant that Duncan, the former general secretary of the WU, was now largely side-lined from TGWU affairs following his retirement and illness. For the WU expenses controversy, see Richard Hyman, *The Workers' Union* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 138-141.

Wakefield. By the summer of 1934 Bevin could claim that the Political Department was operating 'more effectively than ever', as well as being appreciated by Labour MPs for whom it was supplying amendments and the information to support them with on the committee stage of Bills; this it was claimed, had secured 'such satisfactory results in connection with the legislation with which we have been concerned'.⁷⁰⁶ Taylor's role was expanded, allowing him to take over the presentation of the group report to the GEC from September 1934; although how far Forcey remained involved is unclear, although given her record and Bevin's satisfaction with the results of the reorganisation it seems likely she was.⁷⁰⁷ A Joint Parliamentary Committee for Shipping and Waterside Industries was also set up under Taylor in collaboration with the National Union of Seamen, with Greenwood and Maclean among its members.⁷⁰⁸ By 1935, then, the TGWU had developed an increasingly professional means of parliamentary liaison based on detailed research and collaboration beyond its single sponsored MP, allowing it achieve satisfactory results in terms of industrial legislation.

The 1935 general election resulted in a group of seven TGWU sponsored MPs being returned to the House, with three other non-sponsored MPs, Alfred Short (Doncaster – a national TGWU official but unsponsored), John Parker (Romford, Essex) and Robert Richards (Wrexham) joining the union's parliamentary group alongside Greenwood and Maclean.⁷⁰⁹ Ben Smith was appointed group chair. The GEC now appeared to be in far more confident mood politically, passing resolutions at its first 1936 meeting on various political issues, including government arms and education policy, something of a departure from normal practice, although there seems to have been little attempt to follow these up with the MPs.⁷¹⁰ The new conditions did present some difficulties: Taylor had for some time been combining his political role with that of secretary of the TGWU convalescent home, as well as being a Parliamentary candidate himself for Bristol Central. The GEC had hoped to have Smith present when the quarterly political report was under discussion, but in Taylor's remaining period in

⁷⁰⁶ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/12 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1934, TGWU GEC Minutes June 1934.

⁷⁰⁷ TGWU GEC Minutes September 1934.

⁷⁰⁸ TGWU GEC Minutes November 1934.

⁷⁰⁹ For Short, see David E. Martin, 'Short, Alfred (1882–1938)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography IX*, pp. 255–258; for Parker, John Parker, *Father of the House. Fifty Years in Politics* (London, 1982); and for Richards, Keith Gildart, 'Richards, Robert 'Bob' (1884–1954)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XII*, pp. 249–257.

⁷¹⁰ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/14 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1936, TGWU GEC Minutes March 1936.

charge of the department, he failed to do so. Smith's presence at the Executive would certainly have been helpful in terms of tightening liaison, and possibly the overlap of Taylor's various roles was a handicap in terms of putting pressure on Smith to do so. Taylor's departure in February 1937 for a post at the Workers' Travel Association provided Bevin with another opportunity to make 'certain adjustments' in political liaison.⁷¹¹

Taylor's replacement, appointed in June, was John Price, a former Newport docker and multilingual Ruskin scholar, with several years' experience at the LSI in Geneva behind him. Price was to be head of a newly combined Political, Research, Education and International Department, with responsibility for drawing up the union's first education scheme for its officers.⁷¹² It is evident that Bevin considered the appointment of Price as something of a coup; Topham argues he was specifically 'head-hunted' by Bevin.⁷¹³ Price seems to have been a quick success in terms of carrying through the departmental reorganisation; at his first appearance at the GEC he presented an apparently lengthy circular, which does not survive, 'inviting the full use of the Parliamentary group on all matters which could be usefully dealt with through the medium of Parliament' and seems to have soon mastered the details of the situation in constituencies with TGWU candidates.⁷¹⁴ This was an impressive start, and by the next GEC meeting, Smith finally began to put in quarterly appearances before the Council. Bevin's quarterly reports to the GEC were full of praise for the department, although he was 'gravely concerned' in December 1937 by the parliamentary group's lack of 'a single member of the group who acts as a kind of magnet to attract our members to the political work': the union might now have the best department for research and liaison in the movement, but it lacked the parliamentarians to drive home this advantage and impress this success onto the membership.⁷¹⁵ Certainly Bevin was thinking here in terms of using the union's MPs and their activity as a means of increasing political fund contributions; a piece in the following month's *TGWU Record* made this point rather bluntly, stressing how recent work by each of the union's MPs

⁷¹¹ MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937, TGWU GEC Minutes February 1937.

⁷¹² See J. Fisher, *Bread on the Waters. A History of TGWU Education 1922-2000* (London, 2005), pp. 16-64 for Price's role here.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50. See *TGWU Record*, August 1937 for a profile of Price which reflects this.

⁷¹⁴ TGWU GEC Minutes, August 1937.

⁷¹⁵ TGWU GEC Minutes, December 1937.

had benefitted the membership and urging a push to recruit new levy-payers.⁷¹⁶ By May, however, Bevin was heartened by the 'more active' group, and that summer there was an attempt to give the department greater responsibility, by ensuring that sponsored MPs who wanted to address union meetings arranged to do so through the department, although this was resisted by the MPs themselves.⁷¹⁷ Price remained in post until 1943 before returning to Geneva.

The experience of the TGWU in this period demonstrated the most innovative move towards a professional research department to liaise with MPs, in considerable contrast to, say, the MFGB as well as the union's own Tillett phase of the 1920s. The TGWU, then, was taking parliamentary representation increasingly seriously, developing a professional department to support its MPs' work; moreover, it did not limit this support to those MPs to whom it had made financial commitments, implying that its leadership considered parliamentary representation as both too important a component in its industrial strategy to be left to a limited number of sponsored MPs alone, as well as an opportunity to contribute to the improved presentation of Labour's case in Parliament. It was a more bureaucratic approach than that followed by the Miners' leadership, but produced results, pointing the way towards the much more professionalised research and political departments of trade unions in the post-war years.

Other unions

In no other union was parliamentary liaison as multi-faceted as that of the MFGB, or as professionalised as the TGWU; in some instances, practice was very different. Although no AEU MPs were elected in 1931, the union resumed responsibility for David Kirkwood's candidature early in 1932 when acceptance of PLP standing orders was made a condition of sponsorship,⁷¹⁸ although there seems to have been little attempt to influence his behaviour in parliament, or indeed much of a sense of relation to him at all beyond issue of finance: an ongoing dispute over who was responsible

⁷¹⁶ Alf Short, 'The Union's Parliamentary Team. The Service You Get in Return for the Political Levy', *TGWU Record*, January 1938.

⁷¹⁷ TGWU GEC Minutes, May and August 1938.

⁷¹⁸ MSS.259/AEU/1/1/46 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1932, meetings of 14 and 30 March 1932.

for the election expenses he incurred in 1931 was settled early in 1934, whilst the union covered his travel expenses.⁷¹⁹ An exception was his report of the activity of the TGWU-NUS-PLP committee on shipping late in 1934; he does not seem to have given regular reports, nor the executive council asked for them. David Adams (Consett, Co. Durham) and Robert Young (Newton-le-Willows, Lancs.) seem to have also had predominantly financial relationships with their executive council after their return in 1935. Kirkwood was called on to give an explanation of some 'bombastic' comments on apprentices' strikes during 1939, and told that he had 'no authority in or outside the House of Commons to speak on matters relating to the policy of the AEU', implying that the union was largely prepared to leave its MPs to their own devices in parliamentary terms, provided they were not in conflict with – or, if the above statement was intended literally, permitted to refer to – AEU policy.⁷²⁰ The low level of contracting-into the political levy may have been a factor here; certainly the union did not seek to make much use of its MPs, suggesting its interest in retaining them might lie more in the realm of prestige than policy. NUDAW's parliamentary liaison was conducted through its political general secretary, W. A. Robinson. Robinson's monthly reports to his executive suggest that his focus was much more on constituency organisation in those seats in which the union was sponsoring a candidate, rather than what its MPs did in Parliament, although, as will be seen below, Robinson did not always provide the strongest political lead.⁷²¹ The NUMGW had a 'House of Commons Committee' during the period of the second Labour government, Arthur Hayday noted at the union's 1930 Congress, although it was unable to make much use of the large number of non-sponsored NUGMW MPs on this committee as 'they were not cognisant of the Union's policy on industrial matters'. In the same speech Hayday advanced the notion of 'better control' over union MPs as a justification for expanding the union's panel of candidates, although the NUMGW's leadership showed relatively little interest in influencing the behaviour of their parliamentary representatives in the decade which followed.⁷²² In contrast to the TGWU, the NUGMW was unable to

⁷¹⁹ See MSS.259/AEU/1/1/50 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1933, meeting of 14 February 1933; MSS.259/AEU/1/1/54 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1934, p. 120 for the dispute; for expenses, MSS.259/AEU/1/1/51 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1933, p. 275 and 303.

⁷²⁰ MSS.259/AEU/1/1/75 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1939, pp. 238-9; MSS.259/AEU/1/1/76 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1939, p. 129.

⁷²¹ For Robinson and NUDAW, see below.

⁷²² For Hayday's speech, TU/GENERALB/1/A/6 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1930, Biennial Delegate Conference Report 1930, p. 49.

effectively incorporate non-sponsored MPs into its parliamentary activity, despite having four by 1935 and six thereafter, in addition to its official MPs, possibly through being disinclined to try given Hayday's comments. With only Thorne and Jones in the Commons during the 1931 parliament there was no attempt to resurrect the Committee, and pressure from the union's lay general council to make use of the MPs in specific instances was largely resisted,⁷²³ although Thorne did make occasional reports to the Council on recent parliamentary activity.⁷²⁴ After Thorne's retirement as general secretary there was no attempt to reintroduce or regularise reports such as this, so liaison probably relied on informal discussions between Charles Dukes, Thorne's successor, and those MPs who were regularly in attendance at Head Office, notably Jones, Clynes and later Marshall.⁷²⁵

The NUR was rather more successful at formalising parliamentary liaison. William Dobbie's election as MP for Rotherham in February 1933 put the union's President in the Commons, and liaison was facilitated in his early months in the House by his membership of the union's standing political sub-committee. On his impending retirement as President, it was decided that some scheme was necessary whereby he could be kept in close touch with head office and the executive, to 'so ensure that every possible advantage of his position as MP will be utilised for the benefit of the NUR'.⁷²⁶ The resulting scheme involved the unions' MPs – at this stage still only Dobbie – to send a jointly written report to each quarterly meeting of the Executive, whilst Head Office would assist 'in preparing briefs etc'.⁷²⁷ It is not clear how far the unions four MPs after 1935 made use of any such briefs in the years that followed – it would appear fairly little on the contributions outlined above, but a regular report from the parliamentary group was sent in to the Executive every quarter. There was rarely much discussion of its contents, but it did at least mean that the union's leadership

⁷²³ TU/GENERALB/1/A/8 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1932, NUGMW GC 3 June 1932 – see Bullock's contribution: issue referred to TUC Social Insurance Department rather than MPs.

⁷²⁴ TU/GENERALB/1/A/9 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1933, NUGMW GC 19 May 1933. The union's 1930 Report makes brief reference to a political department, but gives no substantive information about its activities or staffing; the following year's report does not mention such a department.

⁷²⁵ See below for more on their respective roles.

⁷²⁶ MSS.127/NU/1/1/21 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1933, Executive Committee meeting, Third Quarter, 1933, decision 928.

⁷²⁷ MSS.127/NU/1/1/22 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1934 Executive Committee meeting, Fourth Quarter 1933, decision 1200.

was kept abreast of its MPs' activities, although making little attempt to influence them.⁷²⁸

Union MPs in the wider Labour movement

Sponsored MPs also had a role to play in the wider labour movement outside Parliament: most importantly, within their own unions. The relationship between union memberships and their sponsored Members of Parliament requires some comment. Where political liaison with a sponsored Member was attempted, as has been seen, such activity might be co-ordinated on the union side either under the auspices of a dedicated political department or officer, or through direct or indirect contact with the union's executive body. This alone can give us little indication of how sponsored MPs were perceived amongst the general membership of their unions, or indeed how far memberships at large were aware of the parliamentary activity their political levy payments helped to support. Certainly lay members of union executives would be able to impart some sense of the nature of this activity when they returned to their branches, although this would likely be in an unofficial capacity given their status as elected representatives on executives rather than delegates, whilst in any case industrial rather than political business took precedence at most meetings of union executives. Nor would the national and local press necessarily be of great help to the ordinary trade unionist seeking information about what their union's sponsored Members had been doing: the former might give little sense of a sponsored Member's usefulness to his or her union, and local press reports of, say, Walter Windsor's speeches in the House, would hardly be of use to the majority of members of the NUGMW who lived neither in nor near enough to his Hull Central constituency to access them easily. Other more direct means of communication were available, and it is to these that we will now turn. If it is impossible to tell exactly how far union memberships were aware of their sponsored MPs' activities, an examination of the role of MPs at union delegate

⁷²⁸ The NUR would go on to professionalise its Parliamentary liaison in the 1970s, appointing a full time officer, Keith Hill. Minkin suggests this was 'unprecedented'; the case of John Price suggests otherwise. The TGWU's organisation seems to have fallen into disuse in the post-war period, however, until the 1979 appointment of Jenny Pardington as liaison officer. See Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, pp. 254-255; Sidney Weighall, *On the Rails* (London, 1983), pp. 130-131.

conferences, and coverage of their activities in union journals can at least give us some indication of how far these activities were publicised and the engagement of memberships at large with them. Moreover, they can be revealing as to the meaning of parliamentary representation within a union's own political culture.

Union delegate meetings

Most sponsoring unions held delegate meetings either annually or every two years. These theoretically at least provided an opportunity for elected delegates to ask questions or challenge their executive's annual or biennial report, which usually included a brief section on political activities during the preceding period; moreover, it was also a rare opportunity for delegates to see their sponsored MPs in the flesh if the latter were present. Such meetings constituted the sovereign authority within the union: in formal terms executive committees merely carried out their instructions. Naturally much of the proceedings were given over to exclusively industrial business although all found some time for discussion of political issues. This section will deal briefly with sponsored MPs presence at and participation in delegate meetings. As will be seen, although approaches varied between unions, on the whole the participation of MPs in these meetings was generally limited unless they also held an industrial role, although there were some exceptions to this; in all cases practice here is indicative of a political culture which recognised the primacy of Parliament and allowed MPs considerable freedom from any pressure to account for their political activities to the membership at large: any attempt to mandate MPs' behaviour would be resisted, although typically such an issue did not arise.

Labour MPs were a rare sight indeed at the Transport and General Workers' Biennial Delegate Conferences during the period. In the 1920s, there had usually been some Parliamentary presence owing to several national officials also being sitting MPs: Harry Gosling and James Sexton were present in their capacity as union President and National Docks Official respectively in 1925 and 1927. 1929 marked a high point with five MPs present, three of whom were merely 'in attendance' and thus without the right to speak or vote. By the 1931 Conference, Gosling was dead; whilst Sexton and Tillett, both shortly to lose their seats, became the last sitting Members of Parliament to attend a TGWU Delegate Conference until Ernest Bevin's own appearance ten

years later, addressing the delegates as Minister of Labour.⁷²⁹ A 'B. Smith (Docks)' attended throughout the 'thirties as a delegate of the London Area,⁷³⁰ but it is not clear if this was the Member for Bermondsey Rotherhithe.⁷³¹ This seems a striking absence, and may have been the result of variety of factors given that there seems to have been no explicit attempt to exclude the union's MPs: firstly, the fact that much of the agenda was necessarily taken up by industrial business given the breadth of industries in which the TGWU had an interest, leaving limited time for political resolutions; secondly the timing of the union's conferences in July just before the summer Parliamentary recess, when MPs might have been less inclined to lose a week at Westminster to sit through these largely industrial discussions which might have little bearing on their own work, and thirdly, compounding the previous factor, the distance from London at which the Conferences were often held during the period: Douglas on the Isle of Man in 1935, Torquay in 1937 and Bridlington in 1939.⁷³² In any case, the absence of the TGWU MPs certainly adds weight to the argument that Bevin's union was more interested in a corporatist industrial strategy for pursuing its goals during this period, although it is possible to perceive a move back towards the BDC engaging more closely with TGWU parliamentarians following Price's arrival in 1937: he attended the 1939 and following conferences, whereas Joe Taylor had not been present in earlier years; the 1939 BDC also exchanged fraternal greetings with MPs for the first time, sending its good wishes to the sick W. T. Kelly and receiving a message of encouragement from Arthur Greenwood.⁷³³ Certainly there was no attempt to hold MPs to account for their activities in the House.

The exclusion of its sponsored Members from the AEU's annual National Committee meetings is perhaps less noteworthy but still indicative of the more relaxed nature of

⁷²⁹ MP numbers at each BDC were as follows – 1925: three (Gosling and Sexton in their official capacities, J. H. Palin providing the a civic welcome to the delegates in his role as Lord Mayor of Bradford); 1927: two (Gosling and Sexton); 1929: five (Gosling and Tillett in official capacities as President and Secretary of the International and Political Department; the recently retired Sexton, alongside Palin and Alf Smith 'in attendance'); 1931: two (Sexton and Tillett 'in attendance'; Charles Duncan sent his apologies); 1933, 1935, 1937 and 1939: none; 1941: one (albeit briefly: Bevin as Minister of Labour). Sexton and Tillett were both usually present after they left the Commons. See TGWU BDC Reports 1925-41.

⁷³⁰ London was TGWU Area No. 1.

⁷³¹ If anything it seems unlikely: given the usual conventions of the TGWU's Conference reports, if this was indeed the leader of the union's Parliamentary group from 1935, he might at least have expected to find 'M.P.' after his name in the list of delegates.

⁷³² The 1933 BDC held at Cambridge is excluded here as the union had only a single MP at this point.

⁷³³ TGWU BDC Report 1939.

the Engineers' political engagement in the period. Far from the hundreds of delegates at the TGWU's conferences, attendance at AEU NC meetings was much more strictly controlled by rule, with just forty representatives of the union's twenty districts present.⁷³⁴ If the NC could only accommodate three of the union's seven-strong Executive Council, it was hardly likely to encourage its MPs to attend. The Annual General Meeting of the NUR similarly excluded MPs due to the strict basis of representation: eighty delegates were elected on the single transferable vote system by geographically grouped NUR branches, along with a handful of Executive representatives. On just three occasions during the period was a sitting Labour MP in attendance: William Dobbie in 1933, and Joseph Henderson at both the Annual and Special General Meetings in 1936 were both in the final year of their service as NUR President, and thus heavily involved in the proceedings from the chair.⁷³⁵ The convention of delivering a presidential address allowed some scope for making reference to their work in the House, but Dobbie alluded only briefly to his status as an MP in his 1933 address, suggesting that watching the 'serried rows of the representatives of Capitalism' from the opposition benches he could see 'very little difference between the principles of Fascism and those of our own Governing classes'; three years later Henderson simply did not mention it, although both made broad reference to international politics.⁷³⁶ In Henderson's case, at least, this was not an area in which he was a regular parliamentary contributor, or indeed, much of a contributor at all save a speech on the arms estimates in 1940, which arguably lends some credence to Strauss' notion quoted above of the union MP, quiet in the House but the 'Big Man' when back in his own 'constituency'.⁷³⁷

In both the RCA and the NUGMW, MPs were regularly present at delegate meetings owing to their holding of official posts rather than their status as the unions' parliamentary representatives. The RCA's Annual Delegate Conference was one of the movement's largest with direct representation of over 500 branches, as well as the full executive and secretariat. No delegate list survives for the 1938 ADC, but following the return of six RCA MPs at the 1935 general election, all of those Members still on

⁷³⁴ Two delegates from each district; if anything the NC was getting smaller: until 1930, representation had been on the basis of two delegates for each of 26 districts: a total of fifty two.

⁷³⁵ This excludes J. H. Thomas' appearance at the November 1931 SGM – see previous chapter.

⁷³⁶ NUR AGM Reports, 1933 and 1936.

⁷³⁷ *HC Debs*, 12 March 1940 vol. 358, cc. 1077-80.

active union service were typically present, with the sole exception of George Mathers who held no official union role.⁷³⁸ A lack of verbatim reports for most years makes it difficult to assess their participation, although it is clear that Lathan was usually called upon to reply to political resolutions on behalf of the leadership. There seems to have been some dissatisfaction within the union about both the level of political discussion at the ADC, and the accountability of the MPs to it. A resolution moved at the 1937 Conference demanded 'a report on the efforts and accomplishments of the RCA Members of Parliament' be circulated in advance of future ADCs, and that 'reasonable time' be allotted for the discussion of political questions: the first part of the resolution implied the existing information for members was inadequate, and may have been directed in part at Walkden, now retired from RCA service but an MP and recipient of union sponsorship. The resolution was defeated, despite only one speaker opposing it: Stott, the new General Secretary – significantly not an MP and thus not appearing to be defending his own activity or lack of it – whose conciliatory line and promise of better information in future was probably enough to appease a conference which had already defeated the platform over the union's parliamentary panel.⁷³⁹ Certainly there was not much room for political debate on the agenda, and some delegates must have been frustrated at having their parliamentary representatives before them but being unable to question them about the nature of the parliamentary work.

That most of the NUGMW's MPs also held key national or district union posts for much of the period meant that only in exceptional circumstances were they absent from the union's Biennial Delegate Congresses. Of the six who were MPs at the time of the 1930 Congress, only Clynes and Bondfield were absent due to government business, whilst illness kept Arthur Hayday (Midlands District Secretary) away in 1936. Only Walter Windsor lacked an official post, but was always included in the London District's Congress delegation.⁷⁴⁰ Apart from their duties in the chair (Hayday in Clynes'

⁷³⁸ These were: Walkden as General Secretary (1936), Lathan as Chief Assistant Secretary (1936-7), Simpson as President (1936-7) and later Chief Assistant Secretary (1939), Watkins as Treasurer (1936-7) and later President (1939), Frank Anderson as an Executive member (1936-9), Ridley as Assistant Secretary (1937-9). See MSS.55/1/CON/64a-68b, RCA ADM Reports 1936-1939. For Anderson, see David E. Martin, 'Anderson, Frank (1889-1959)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography I*, pp. 24-26; for Mathers, see William Knox, 'Mathers, George (First Baron Mathers of Newton St Boswells, 1886-1965)' in W Knox, (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 1984), pp. 199-201.

⁷³⁹ RCA ADM Report 1937 and verbatim notes, pp. 92-6. For the platform's earlier defeat over Longbottom's candidature at Halifax, see chapter on candidates.

⁷⁴⁰ NUGMW BDC Reports 1930-8 (the 1940 BDC was postponed due to the war). Thorne was General Secretary until 1934 and a guest thereafter; Jones a national official until 1940; Clynes President,

absence in 1930, Clynes in 1936, Marshall in 1938), MPs' activities at BDCs was limited to moving or seconding one of the two or three explicitly political resolutions on the agenda: for example, a motion moved by Clynes on the League of Nations at the 1936 Congress was seconded by Windsor, who also seconded a resolution moved by Marshall on the same theme in 1938.⁷⁴¹ Neither Clynes in 1936 nor Marshall in 1938 made much reference to their own parliamentary role or the work of the union's MPs in their chairman's addresses, and again, there seems to have been no attempt to make MPs accountable to, or at least responsible for reporting on their activity to, the Congress, beyond the brief details included in the General Secretary's report.⁷⁴² Any frustration amongst the membership about union officials holding dual roles, which had contributed to Thorne's resignation as General Secretary, was unable to find an outlet at the union's BDCs.

The broadest scope for participation by sponsored MPs was afforded by the Annual Delegate Meetings of the NUDAW. Although no lists of ADM delegates' names survive in the union's printed records, its MPs spoke regularly at the annual meetings on a number of issues. Only Wilfrid Burke does not seem to have done so in the years 1935-40, and there is no way of definitely verifying his presence or otherwise, although given that many of the NUDAW parliamentary panel, including its official candidates as well as Members, were usually in attendance, it is probable he did attend if not speak. Verbatim minutes of proceedings only survive for the years from 1935, so it is difficult to assess the period when Rhys J. Davies was the sole NUDAW MP, but from then on Davies, Ellen Wilkinson, W. A. Robinson and John Jagger were all active in ADMs. Certainly more time was allowed for political subjects, despite the ADM being shorter than many other delegate meetings at three days. As Political General Secretary, Robinson had a major role, replying in to most debates which touched on political issues, usually in a rather bruising and loyalist style. He was not always the most convincing of speakers but on occasion could be forceful and effective.⁷⁴³ Robinson appears to have had problems with alcohol: Hugh Dalton noted in 1933 that

then a guest from 1938; Hayday a district secretary attending until 1936; Marshall a district official until 1936 and chair from 1938.

⁷⁴¹ NUGMW BDC Report 1936, pp. 118-128; BDC Report 1938, pp. 158-161.

⁷⁴² Although Marshall did comment on trade union MPs more generally in his 1938 address, p. 79, as quoted above. He also served as chair of the standing orders committee in 1936.

⁷⁴³ For a weaker performance see his reply to the debate on Communist affiliation, NUDAW ADM Minutes 1936 pp. 40-1; his contribution on the same topic in NUDAW ADM Minutes 1937 p. 29 or that on the Public Order Bill *ibid.* p. 45 for Robinson in more forceful mode.

he was often 'half tight' at party NEC meetings and 'delayed and disturbed the proceedings'; Dalton's diary contains several anecdotes to this effect.⁷⁴⁴ Robinson certainly could be a difficult colleague. His rather relaxed approach to his work in the Commons, which would ultimately lead to his removal from the union's parliamentary panel in 1944, had been noted by 1939 when a delegate drew attention to the scant information about his political activities in the Annual Report for 1938 compared with the rest of the NUDAW MPs. Robinson, the delegate suggested, was not pulling his weight. Robinson's silence at this point in the proceedings is telling, although later he claimed that modesty had prevented him going into more detail.⁷⁴⁵ The issue was forgotten by the next ADM, but the meeting had no real means of getting a satisfactory explanation from the Political General Secretary.

Jagger as General President chaired the proceedings, and often alluded to parliamentary developments in his opening presidential address: in 1936 he praised the efforts of Davies, who had 'right worthily acquitted himself during that very difficult time' from 1931-5 when 'the whole burden of the union's political work inside the House of Commons fell upon the shoulders [of Davies]'; NUDAW could now 'congratulate itself on having a good solid block of representatives' in the Commons.⁷⁴⁶ Wilkinson regularly intervened in debates on a variety of subjects from relations with Russian unions, to legal aid and the united front.⁷⁴⁷ Davies was the leading spokesman of the pacifist left within the union and spoke at length in debates on international affairs, describing himself as 'aghast' at the change in the PLP's approach to the service estimates. His status as an MP did not protect him from criticism: he was derided from the platform as 'wholly inconsistent and quite irresponsibly admits it' on this occasion.⁷⁴⁸ He was often in a minority on industrial issues, remaining a firm opponent

⁷⁴⁴ Hugh Dalton, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986), entry for 29 September to 6 October 1933; Dalton refers to Robinson rather unpleasantly as 'Footwipe'. See in particular Dalton, *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986), entry for 28 February 1944 for several anecdotal examples of Robinson making incoherent speeches and causing a 'great nuisance...even at afternoon [meetings]', while under the influence, it is strongly implied, of drink. He was also suspected of leaking private meetings to the press.

⁷⁴⁵ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1939, pp. 8 and 10. See NUDAW Annual Report 1938 p. 18 – the disparity is striking: each of the other MPs were recorded at some length as taking part in debates, amending legislation, serving on committees or chairing groups, whereas 'Ald. Robinson continues to take his part in the work of the PLP'. Robinson would either have written or approved this section of the Annual Report, which is perhaps more telling still.

⁷⁴⁶ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1936, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁷ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1936, p. 22; 1937, p. 3; 1938, pp. 42-3.

⁷⁴⁸ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1939, p. 9.

of the proposed amalgamation with the Shop Assistants' Union. His stance here – he was the only speaker against amalgamation – earned him some fairly vitriolic criticism from a delegate who accused him of giving 'a demonstration of how to be more conservative than anyone that ever sat on the other side of him in the House'.⁷⁴⁹ Yet such attacks were not linked to his performance as an MP: a Manchester delegate argued in 1940 that Davies formed part of 'a jolly good political team', noting his reputation as an expert on industrial legislation.⁷⁵⁰ Davies may have cut a fairly idiosyncratic figure within the union, but his right to do so was never challenged.⁷⁵¹ Martin Harrison noted of USDAW in the 1950s that 'no union meeting has a wider variety of opinion'; this was 'one of the few union conferences which is erratic enough to be interesting'.⁷⁵² Arguably the same was true of its predecessor in the 1930s: some of its political breadth is exemplified in the contrast between Davies and Robinson, whilst this was one of the few delegate meetings where, if they were heard at all, MPs could not be certain of a deferential hearing. Even so, and despite occasional exceptions such as the complaint about Robinson in 1939, even in the case of NUDAW, union conferences were rarely a forum in which MPs were required to explain any aspect of their parliamentary activity to members, suggesting that not only were they given a considerable degree of freedom in this regard, but that this was generally accepted by their memberships.

Union journals

MPs' presence or otherwise in union journals can also give some indication both of how far memberships were kept informed of parliamentary activity, and of the meaning of parliamentary representation in particular unions.⁷⁵³ Will Thorne's parliamentary notes in the NUGMW's *Monthly Journal* typically took the form of a simple report of recent and forthcoming parliamentary business, alongside some coverage of Thorne's own activity and opinions. Little of the role of the union's MPs more broadly was

⁷⁴⁹ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1937, pp. 19-22.

⁷⁵⁰ NUDAW ADM Minutes 1940, p. 10. The delegate, Porter, claimed that each of the five MPs had a special area of expertise, although he did not list one for Robinson.

⁷⁵¹ Keith Gildart, 'Davies, Rhys John (1877-1954)', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XII*, pp. 64-72; see also Davies' *Seneddwr ar Dramp* (Liverpool, 1934).

⁷⁵² Harrison, *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 155, 153.

⁷⁵³ The MFGB did not have a national journal in this period, the *Miner* having ceased publication in 1930.

conveyed here, even after the return of Clynes and others in 1935, arguably giving the impression that the column had more to do with the privileges afforded a former general secretary rather than a serious attempt to engage the membership in the union's political activity; this seems in keeping with the points on the NUGMW made above. Before his defeat in 1931, Harry Charleton of the NUR had written a regular parliamentary column in the union's weekly *Railway Review*.⁷⁵⁴ Understandably this lapsed during the period after 1931 when the NUR had no parliamentary representatives, but beyond reports of speeches outside parliament and the occasional attentions of the *Review's* cartoonist, such an approach was not revived, even after 1935: for the NUR, with a relatively buoyant political fund, weekly proof of the utility of paying into such a fund through the medium of parliamentary coverage in the *Railway Review* was perhaps considered unnecessary.⁷⁵⁵ By contrast the TGWU's *Record*, as suggested above, was used explicitly for this purpose. MPs contributed regular columns on a range of political issues,⁷⁵⁶ whilst Alfred Short – not himself a sponsored MP – contributed a regular parliamentary report until his death in 1938. The AEU again offers an interesting contrast. Its *Monthly Journal's* political column, 'Beneath Big Ben' was published regularly when the House was in session, authored by the pseudonymous 'Tubal Cain MP', a name presumably chosen in reference to a biblical metalworker, supposedly the first of his craft, but possibly also due to its Masonic connotations.⁷⁵⁷ It seems likely given this that Cain was in fact Herbert Tracey of the TUC Press Department. Pseudonyms were used commonly in the AEU *Journal*, whilst Tracey provided regular profiles of movement personalities under his own name for the publication. Few of Cain's parliamentary reports make any reference to the AEU MPs specifically, and this is perhaps indicative of the union's approach more generally to parliamentary representation at this stage. AEU Annual Reports regularly lamented the impoverished state of its political fund and its disproportionately small presence in the PLP and contribution to the politics of the wider movement,⁷⁵⁸ yet the choice of a column like Cain's as the main means of parliamentary communication with the membership, which missed a clear opportunity to put the activities of the AEU MPs before the *Journal's* readers every month, seems hardly likely to have been the

⁷⁵⁴ See *Railway Review*, issues until October 1931.

⁷⁵⁵ See chapter two for political fund details.

⁷⁵⁶ Arthur Creech Jones contributed articles on colonial issues, for instance.

⁷⁵⁷ A tubalcain being a form of Masonic handshake.

⁷⁵⁸ See TU/ENG/1/A/37-44, AEU, Bound Reports, for various examples between 1933 and 1940.

most effective means of encouraging a greater proportion of that membership to contract in to the political fund. A series of specially commissioned articles by the MPs in 1939 sought to rectify this somewhat, but it is difficult to avoid the sense of an opportunity missed by the AEU in this regard.⁷⁵⁹

Party conference delegations

A union's presence at party conference was a key feature of how its political identity was projected within the party more broadly, and as such, the role of sponsored MPs here also needs consideration. MPs were entitled to attend as ex officio members of the conference, without voting rights. In practice many DLPs appointed their MPs or candidates as their conference delegates: how far was this the case for the sponsoring unions? The presence of MPs within union delegations depended largely on the method by which the delegation was assembled, and unsurprisingly a variety of approaches were used to do so. AEU MPs were never among the union's delegation in this period, which was elected on a branch vote with branches grouped into ten areas, to produce a delegation of ten plus the national officials and two Executive Council representatives. Often the well-known delegates were elected several years in a row, and no special provision for MPs was made, which is likely to have increased the sense of the Engineers as being relatively isolated within the party in political terms.⁷⁶⁰ The Miners' Federation traditionally sent the largest delegation, although this had been affected by the 1928 party rule change which limited the number of permitted delegates. The MFGB elected a delegation of fifteen at its annual conference the previous year, so there was some flexibility given the fourteen month delay: even so, MPs were rarely included here. Each district also assembled its own delegation, and it was here prior to 1929 that most sponsored MPs were included. Given the decline in political membership in the districts in the late 1920s, by the time the new rule became effective, delegation sizes were often shrunk dramatically. From forty plus

⁷⁵⁹ David Adams MP, 'The Need for Political Action', *AEU Monthly Journal* March 1939; Robert Young MP, 'Your Political Party', *AEU Monthly Journal* April 1939. See also C. R. Attlee MP, 'An Urgent Appeal to Trade Unionists', *AEU Monthly Journal* December 1938. The BISAKTA MP David Mort (Eccles, Lancs., 1929-1931; Swansea East 1940-1963) also wrote regularly for his union's journal, *Man and Metal*. See Keith Gildart, 'Mort, David Llewellyn (1888-1963)' *Dictionary of Labour Biography* XIII, pp. 266-279.

⁷⁶⁰ TU/ENG/4/A/14 AEU, Rule Books, 1920-1957, and Labour Party *Annual Reports*, 1929-40.

delegates in some years, by 1930 the SWMF only sent eight delegates; no delegation in 1931 (Scarborough) and as few as seven in 1932. There was little scope for MPs to be included here: in 1934, the South Wales officials excluded themselves in order to allow a full cohort from the SWMF areas to attend.⁷⁶¹ Where mining MPs were present, it was ex officio or DLP representatives. The NUGMW made no special provision for MPs, but there was flexibility in practice: its system of allowing district officials to appoint delegates did not preclude the inclusion of MPs, for example, Walter Windsor in the London district's delegation in 1937. Exceptions could also be made: Fred Marshall attended whilst 'shadowing' Clynes as chairman-elect in 1937; Clynes himself despite otherwise being ineligible due to retirement was allowed to attend in 1939.⁷⁶²

Of those unions who elected a delegation which included MPs, the TGWU had the most complex system, providing for area and trade representation: its scheme, updated in 1931, allowed for three representatives of the Political Department, positions usually filled by MPs after 1935. G. H. Oliver was sometimes present as a fourth MP, probably due to his regular candidature for the Conference Arrangements Committee. Even so, these three or four delegates were only a small fraction of a full delegation of 40 or more, arguably enforcing that the TGWU viewed political activity as only part of its work – and a fairly minor one in contrast to its industrial efforts.⁷⁶³ The NUR held a ballot of its branches, grouped into six areas, by single transferable vote to elect six delegates, as well as sending a further six or seven from head office. Later in the decade Henderson was usually present, probably as an ex-President. Dobbie appeared in this capacity in 1934-5 and 1940, although in other years as a DLP delegate or ex officio. Cecil Poole, a non-sponsored MP succeeded in the ballot in 1940. Charleton was included in 1933-4, possibly largely to give a sense of continuity given the absence of older experienced figures on the political side following the death of Cramp.⁷⁶⁴ NUDAW always included all of its MPs, alongside an elected delegation of nine from 1934: its MPs were very much seen as being its main political

⁷⁶¹ Labour Party *Annual Reports*; MFGB Annual Conference Reports; D.845.70-77, SWMF Executive Minutes, *passim*.

⁷⁶² Although in the event he was ill and not present: see TU/GENERALB/1/A/13 and TU/GENERALB/1/A/15 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1937 and 1939, Reports of the Biennial Delegate Conference, and Labour Party *Annual Reports*.

⁷⁶³ See MSS.126/TG/1887/4/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1931, for rules here; Labour Party *Annual Reports*.

⁷⁶⁴ Labour Party *Annual Reports* and NUR Annual General Meeting Reports.

representatives.⁷⁶⁵ The RCA elected a delegation of ten at its Annual Delegate Meeting by branch card vote: this system favoured well-known members and in practice it was easy for MPs to get on: only Anderson did not do so during 1936-9, probably only because he declined to stand. An attempt to reserve all ten places for rank-and-file members was defeated at the 1931 ADM; moreover, there were no rules barring retired officials from standing, so that both Walkden and Lathan continued to be elected after their retirement from their union posts, although their vote declined considerably.⁷⁶⁶ Here again there seems to have been a sense that the MPs were the most appropriate people to be delegates, as well as providing a level of stability to the delegations. Sponsored MPs were rarely conference speakers unless they were also serving officials: this suggests a desire to include them, but to allow the industrial side to take precedence in putting a union's case before the party.

Sponsored MPs, then, were used by their unions for a variety of purposes. They often struggled to act as a coherent group, even within their own unions. Unions were prepared to organise liaison, and to step in when it was felt necessary, but never to dominate or control their MPs – this was key to their parliamentarism, which for all of the variations detailed above, was on the whole characterised by democratic restraint and a respect for the political role of their parliamentary representatives.

⁷⁶⁵ NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1929-1940.

⁷⁶⁶ MSS.55/1/CON/56a-69 RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conferences.

Party strategy: two studies

The aftermath of the 1931 crisis placed the Labour party in a strategic dilemma. Much of its politics during the preceding decade had been predicated on a gradualist understanding of socialist change, and its appeal to the public drew on this in order to establish the broadest possible basis of support. Not only did gradualism appear to have been fatally undermined by 1931, but the leadership which had advocated it had largely moved from the stage, either into the National government, as in the case of MacDonald, or out of Parliament altogether, as had Henderson. This created a vacuum, leaving the party with a much weakened political leadership short on confidence.

Three main strategic options seemed to present themselves. The first was a continuation of the gradualist politics represented in the party's 1929 programme *Labour and the Nation*, although jettisoned in favour of a more 'maximalist' socialist platform in the 1931 general election. Henderson was the leading advocate for this approach, but he cut an increasingly isolated figure, with much of his time being taken up by his presidency of the World Disarmament Conference from 1932. He received an atypically hostile reception at that year's party conference when he urged caution in the debate on a motion requiring the next Labour government to commit to promulgating a 'definite socialist programme'. The limited appeal of the 'continuity gradualism' approach was emphasised by the support of moderate trade union leaders such as C. T. Cramp of the NUR for the resolution.⁷⁶⁷ Henderson resigned the leadership the following week.

The second possibility was a more radically socialist programme. The financial crisis and ongoing economic problems during the depression lent legitimacy to such an approach. Capitalism, it seemed, was in crisis; only a rapid transition to socialism would maintain working class living standards and even political democracy itself. The

⁷⁶⁷ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1932, pp. 204-205.

main supporters of this position within the party in the early 1930s were grouped in the Socialist League, a body established following the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932, giving a new political home to those ILPers who wished to stay within Labour. The economic recovery which began to materialise towards the end of 1933 contributed to the undermining of this option, although there were other important factors in its failure, as will be seen below. The sense of crisis prompted many supporters of this position to back calls for working class unity, especially after the Communist International abandoned its 'class against class' perspective from 1933 in favour of co-operation with social democratic parties. The later part of the decade would find many who held this view favouring the adoption of united or popular fronts to combat capitalism and fascism; this often involved support for affiliation of the Communist Party of Great Britain to Labour.

The third option involved a recognition of the shortcomings of Labour's politics in the 1920s in the field of policy. Whilst the party might favour nationalisation, for instance, it had few concrete plans as to how this would work in practice in particular industries. This position entailed a detailed working-out of economic policy so that a future Labour government would have a prepared programme on the basis of which to govern. This approach did not abandon gradualism entirely: it still sought to appeal to as wide a part of the electorate as possible. The NEC's policy committee, established after the 1931 defeat and including Dalton, Morrison and Lathan was to provide the policy basis to support this approach: this 'moderate' perspective came to dominate Labour's policy by the mid-1930s.⁷⁶⁸

The success of this 'social democratic perspective' owed much to union involvement.⁷⁶⁹ Foremost here was the revival of the National Joint Council, from 1934 the National Council of Labour. This body had been established in 1921 to encourage greater co-ordination between the Labour NEC and the TUC General Council, although it had not always proved successful during the tensions of the 1920s between the two wings of the movement and had largely fallen into disuse during the second

⁷⁶⁸ For the development of policy, see Richard Toye, *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy 1931-1951* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY, 2003), and Elizabeth Durbin, *New Jerusalems. The Labour Party and the Economics of Democratic Socialism* (London, 1985).

⁷⁶⁹ David Howell, *British Social Democracy. A Study in Development and Decay* (London, 1980), pp. 47-106 for this process.

Labour government, although 1930 did see some changes in its composition: it included seven representatives of the TUC GC, including a joint chairman, and three each from the NEC and PLP, with one of the NEC representatives as a second joint chairman. On the initiative of members of the General Council, the NJC was revitalised, with meetings held on a monthly basis. Previously Henderson had acted as secretary: the secretaries of the TUC, Citrine, and the PLP, Scott Lindsay, now became joint-secretaries alongside him. Citrine quickly established himself as the body's key official.⁷⁷⁰ The NJC in the 1930s became 'an effective co-ordinating body, when and as its component parts so chose to use it': it could speak as one authoritative voice for the movement, although it had no powers of compulsion over its constituent bodies.⁷⁷¹ It became an important voice for the movement in its dealings with government as well as co-ordinating joint activities; it also helped the party and the TUC work more closely on policy, in particular international affairs.⁷⁷² The NJC/NCL facilitated a common approach to policy issues: in practice, this helped shore up labour movement support the policy developments undertaken by the party's policy committee.

Beyond policy and co-ordination around a moderate, social-democratic perspective, trade unions also helped shape Labour strategy in regard to both the far right, and those within Labour who contemplated an alliance with the far left. Henderson had described Labour as 'the only effective bulwark against reaction and revolution',⁷⁷³ in the 1930s, as will be demonstrated below, Labour, under the influence of the unions, played a part in marginalising both. In so doing, it not only demonstrated its own constitutionalism, but also made an active contribution to the maintenance of liberal democracy in Britain in the period.

⁷⁷⁰ See Neil Riddell, 'Walter Citrine and the British Labour movement, 1925-1935', *History* 85 (2000), 285-306.

⁷⁷¹ Jerry H. Brookshire, 'The National Council of Labour, 1921-1946', *Albion* 18:1 (1986), 43-69, p. 56. Brookshire provides a detailed assessment of the NJC/NCL's career.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

⁷⁷³ See Andrew Thorpe, 'The Only Effective Bulwark against Reaction and Revolution': Labour and the Frustration of the Extreme Left' in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 11-28; and for Labour opposition to Communism in the following years, Thorpe, 'Locking out the Communists: the Labour party and the Communist party, 1939-46', *Twentieth Century British History* 25:2 (2014), 221-250.

Exposing British fascism

The growth of fascism in the context of world economic depression in the early 1930s threatened democracies across Europe. Mussolini's National Fascist Party had seized power in Italy in 1922; now fascist and similar authoritarian regimes of the political right came to prominence and power in Germany in 1933, Austria in 1934, and following Franco's rebellion and the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War, Spain. Although fascist regimes overturned democratic institutions and established single-party states, they posed a specific challenge to labour movements, which often found themselves among the first organisations to be targeted by fascists: in Germany, for example, following Hitler's rise to the Chancellorship, union leaders were interned in concentration camps, and their functions and resources seized by the Nazi German Labour Front. Core elements of fascist politics included extreme nationalism, the rejection of class conflict in favour of corporatist solutions, as well as a 'stress on elite or charismatic leadership, an emphasis on youth, a militaristic and authoritarian ethos, and a predilection for political violence'.⁷⁷⁴

Britain was not immune to such developments. Small fascist organisations had been established in the early 1920s, including the British Fascisti and Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League, and fascists were involved in strike-breaking activities during the General Strike under the aegis of the Organisation for Maintenance of Supplies.⁷⁷⁵ However, the economic crisis of 1929-31 provided a new impetus: the most significant British fascist organisation of the period, the British Union of Fascists [BUF], was founded by Sir Oswald Mosley in October 1932.

The identity of its leader had significant implications for Labour's response: Mosley had been a Labour MP and Cabinet minister. Mosley had begun his political career as the Conservative MP for Harrow (Middlesex) in 1918; after a period as an Independent he switched to Labour during 1924, although he was narrowly defeated at the General Election that October, having abandoned Harrow to challenge Neville Chamberlain in

⁷⁷⁴ Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939. Parties, Ideologies and Culture* (Manchester, 2000), p. 5.

⁷⁷⁵ Richard Charles Maguire, 'The Fascists...are...to be depended upon.' The British Government, Fascists and Strike-breaking during 1925 and 1926', in Nigel Copsey and David Renton, (eds.), *British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 6-26.

Birmingham Ladywood. Returned to the Commons at a by-election in 1926 as Labour MP for Smethwick, Mosley was an intriguing character in the Labour party of the late 1920s. He used his personal wealth to give 'extensive' financial support to the party in Birmingham, and was seen in some quarters as having film star glamour: Ellen Wilkinson, Labour MP for Middlesbrough East, noted other MPs discussing just how this 'Valentino in real life...managed that twirl to his hat brim', whilst another observer suggested he had 'the gait of a Douglas Fairbanks'.⁷⁷⁶ He was elected three times to the party's national executive, although his relationship with the trade union wing of the movement was tenuous at best. Hugh Dalton, also from a privileged background but more attuned to the sensitivities of trade unionists in the party described 'Lord Oswald' as stinking 'of money and insincerity'.⁷⁷⁷ Appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the 1929 Labour government, Mosley was one of the ministers tasked with finding solutions to the problem of unemployment. Frustrated with the government's inertia over the issue and the Cabinet's failure to adopt the proposals he outlined in a February 1930 memorandum – a 'mixture of Keynesian-Lloyd Georgian ideas, ILP Socialism, and protectionist-imperialist views' – Mosley became the first minister to resign from a Labour government in May 1930.⁷⁷⁸ He maintained considerable support in the wider party: he was elected to the NEC at the October 1930 party conference and a motion urging the NEC to reconsider his memorandum was only narrowly defeated by some 205,000 votes.⁷⁷⁹ Whilst there was support in the party and unions for a more assertive approach to unemployment, more open disloyalty was frowned upon: the 'Mosley Manifesto' published that December, arguing for a protectionist policy overseen by a small Cabinet of five, only attracted the support of 17 Labour MPs.⁷⁸⁰ Mosley 'chafed at the role of Labour critic'; instead, he formed a

⁷⁷⁶ Ellen Wilkinson, *Peeps at Politicians* (London, 1930), pp. 38-40; Egon Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour Party* (London & New York, 1929), p. viii; David Howell, 'The Sheik...A Valentino in Real Life: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Labour Party, 1924-1931', *Contemporary British History* 23:4 (2009), 425-443; David Howell, *Mosley and British Politics 1918-32: Oswald's Odyssey* (Basingstoke, 2015).

⁷⁷⁷ Hugh Dalton, *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60*, ed. Ben Pimlott (London, 1986), entry for 1-5 October 1928.

⁷⁷⁸ Martin Pugh, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts! Fascists and Fascism in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2006), p. 117; Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump. The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (London and Basingstoke, 1994 [1967]), pp. 167-189.

⁷⁷⁹ Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999), p. 118. The vote was 1,251,000 to 1,046,000.

⁷⁸⁰ These were Mosley himself, his wife Lady Cynthia Mosley, Oliver Baldwin, Joe Batey, Aneurin Bevan, W. J. Brown, William Cove, Robert Forgan, Frank Horrabin, James Lovat-Fraser, John McGovern, J. J. McShane, Frank Markham, H. T. Muggeridge, Morgan Phillips Price, C. J. Simmons, and John Strachey; the MFGB secretary, A. J. Cook, was also a signatory. Batey and Bevan were

'New Party' in February 1931, and was promptly expelled from the Labour party by the NEC.⁷⁸¹ The New Party represented a 'political hybrid': its members' interpretations of its purpose differed, whilst over time it 'transformed from the party that originated on the left and aimed at a consensual political centre, to one that appealed primarily to the right but found expression at the political extreme'.⁷⁸² New Party intervention in the Ashton-under-Lyne by-election in April contributed to the narrow defeat of Labour's NUR-sponsored candidate, J. W. Gordon by his Conservative rival, but all of the New Party's candidates were defeated at the general election in October. Matthew Worley has suggested that the New Party, in its populist nationalism and espousal of the corporate state, had always been surrounded by a 'whiff of fascism'; by October 1932 Mosley was the leader of his own explicitly fascist organisation, the BUF.⁷⁸³

The BUF enjoyed some initial success. Better resourced than earlier British fascist organisations, and with a charismatic leader in Mosley, its recruitment took in both urban and rural areas; women as well as men. A paramilitary Fascist Defence Force was established, its members, like other members of the BUF commonly referred to as Blackshirts. Early in 1934 Mosley secured the support of the press magnate Lord Rothermere, proprietor of the *Daily Mail*. The increased publicity contributed to a growing membership of some 40,000 later that year. Yet its public meetings were often marked by violence, and the BUF rapidly lost support following public outcry over the brutal treatment of hecklers by Blackshirt stewards at a rally at Olympia, West London that June. As the BUF haemorrhaged members after Olympia, increasingly its politics took on a strongly anti-Semitic aspect. A provocative Blackshirt march in London's East End was famously halted by anti-fascist demonstrators in the 'Battle of Cable Street', in October 1936. The Public Order Act 1936, passed in December, extended

both sponsored by the MFGB, whilst Brown was the general secretary of the CSCA, and Cove a prominent member of the NUT and former miner.

⁷⁸¹ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London and Basingstoke, 1975), p. 242. For the expulsion see Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 10 March 1931. Just three other Labour MPs followed him: Cynthia Mosley, Robert Forgan and John Strachey. Oliver Baldwin and W. J. Brown resigned from Labour to join the New Party, but then sat as Independents; the Conservative W. E. D. Allen also joined.

⁷⁸² Matthew Worley, 'What was the New Party? Sir Oswald Mosley and associated responses to the 'crisis', 1931-1932', *History* 92:305 (2007), 39-63.

⁷⁸³ On the New Party, see Matthew Worley, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010); and for its transformation into the BUF, Matthew Worley, 'Why Fascism? Sir Oswald Mosley and the Conception of the British Union of Fascists', *History* 96:321 (2011), 69-83. The CPGB had immediately argued that the New Party was fascist: see Andrew Thorpe, 'The Communist Party and the New Party', *Contemporary British History* 23:4 (2009), 477-491, and Worley, 'What was the New Party? Sir Oswald Mosley and associated responses to the 'crisis', 1931-1932', p. 42.

police powers to deal with disruption and banned the wearing of political uniforms. The BUF continued to campaign in the later 1930s, including a peace drive in 1939. In 1940, however, in the context of fears about fifth columnists in a possible German invasion, the organisation was banned and its leaders, including Mosley, interned.⁷⁸⁴

The BUF largely failed to have a major impact on British politics in the 1930s. Historians have identified a variety of factors in this failure, from the BUF's misconception of the nature of crisis in the 1930s, to its attempt to import traditions alien to British political culture, its own internal weaknesses, and opposition from both the state and its political opponents.⁷⁸⁵ The Olympia controversy is often seen as a turning point in the BUF's fortunes. Jon Lawrence's work has illustrated a significant shift in British political culture in the years immediately following the First World War: in the Edwardian period, disorder had been a 'staple feature' of British electoral and public politics; in the context of wider concerns about brutalisation, whilst they remained 'routine' features of popular politics, 'political sensibilities had hardened against disruption and disorder' since 1918, something Mosley and the BUF failed to recognise, as demonstrated by reactions to the violence at Olympia.⁷⁸⁶ As will be seen below, the issues raised by the Olympia debate had an important effect on Labour and trade union responses to British fascism. Whilst there is a substantial and growing body of work on the role played by anti-fascist activity in the BUF's failure, Labour's

⁷⁸⁴ In addition to more conventional studies of the BUF, there is an expanding field investigating the role of gender and locality in its politics. See Colin Cross, *The Fascists in Britain* (London, 1961); Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London, 1972); Kenneth Lunn and Richard C. Thurlow (eds.), *British fascism: essays on the radical right in inter-war Britain* (New York, 1980); Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in modern Britain* (Stroud, 2000); Julie V. Gottlieb *Feminine fascism: women in Britain's fascist movement, 1923-1945* (London, 2000); Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939. Parties, Ideologies and Culture* (Manchester, 2000); Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas Linehan (eds.), *The Culture of Fascism: visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London and New York, 2004); Stephen M. Cullen, 'The Fasces and the Saltire: The Failure of the British Union of Fascists in Scotland, 1932-1940', *Scottish Historical Review* 87:2 (2008), 306-31. Julie V. Gottlieb, 'Body Fascism in Britain: Building the Blackshirt in the Inter-War Period', *Contemporary European History* 20:2 (2011), 111-136; Thomas Linehan, 'Space Matters: Spatialising British Fascism', *Socialist History* 41 (2012), 1-21; Craig Morgan 'Crisis, patriotism and the growth of fascism. The British Union of Fascists in the Midlands, 1932-1934', *Socialist History* 41 (2012), 60-76.

⁷⁸⁵ For a broad summary, see Richard Thurlow, 'The Failure of British Fascism' in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 67-84.

⁷⁸⁶ Jon Lawrence, 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', *Historical Research* 76:192 (2003), 238-267, and Lawrence, 'Why Olympia mattered', *Historical Research* 78:200 (2005), 263-272. For analysis of the shift in attitudes since 1918, see Lawrence's articles 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain' *Journal of Modern History* 75:3 (2003), 557-589, and 'The transformation of British public politics after the First World War', *Past and Present* 190 (2006), 185-216.

response is often characterised as weak and passive, as against the supposedly more robust approach of the CPGB.⁷⁸⁷ Labour historians have often focused, understandably given the European political context of the period, more on the development of Labour's response to fascism abroad.⁷⁸⁸ A handful of writers have addressed Labour's anti-fascism directly. Michael Newman has suggested that the party was handicapped in opposing domestic fascism by its constitutionalism which in his view 'merely helped capital at the expense of the working class'. Primarily concerned with the left's theoretical understanding of fascism, he suggests that any contribution Labour did make could not have been decisive, as potential for unrest had been contained within the existing political system.⁷⁸⁹ Unfortunately this limits his analysis of the practical side of Labour's anti-fascist efforts, and arguably precludes the possibility that Labour may have, through its response, contributed to the maintenance of that political system. Keith Hodgson highlights Labour's use of its MPs to attack fascism and press ministers into action, noting that the movement's extra-parliamentary efforts 'reflected the moderate stance of the organisers', and included discouraging party members from taking part in anti-fascist activity co-ordinated by other bodies such as the CPGB; Labour representatives in local government could deny the BUF access to municipal facilities for meetings, although party figures continued to argue that fascists should be permitted the right of free speech.⁷⁹⁰ Nigel Copsey analyses Labour involvement in popular anti-fascism, suggesting that the 'passive' nature of the party's official response, including calls to avoid direct anti-

⁷⁸⁷ For the response of the political right, see Bruce Coleman, 'The Conservative Party and the Frustration of the Extreme Right', in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-War Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 49–66, and Philip Williamson, 'The Conservative Party, Fascism and Anti-Fascism 1918–1939' in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds.), *Varieties of anti-fascism: Britain in the inter-war period* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp. 73–98. Writers sympathetic to the CPGB, unsurprisingly, have criticised Labour efforts. There has been a tendency on parts of the left to overemphasise more physical or even violent opposition to fascism: see, for example, Dave Hann, *Physical Resistance: A Hundred Years of Anti-Fascism* (London, 2013). One result of this has been that opposition to fascism which appears less obviously 'heroic' is ignored or belittled.

⁷⁸⁸ For Labour responses to continental fascism, see Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge, 1991); Hywel Francis, *Miners against Fascism. Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1984); Paul Corthorn, *In the Shadow of the Dictators. The British Left in the 1930s* (London, 2006); Lewis Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (London, 2007); Lewis H. Mates, 'Practical anti-fascism? The 'Aid Spain' campaigns in north east England, 1936–1939', in Nigel Copsey and David Renton (eds.), *British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 118–40.

⁷⁸⁹ Michael Newman, 'Democracy versus Dictatorship: Labour's role in the struggle against British Fascism, 1933–1936', *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978), 66–88.

⁷⁹⁰ Keith Hodgson, *Fighting Fascism. The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919–39* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 139–142.

fascist agitation, effectively failed as ‘thousands of grassroots members and supporters went against the Labour establishment’. However, he does note that ‘in rejecting left-wing extremism and in remaining committed to parliamentary government and moderation, Labour’s variety of anti-fascism contributed to a socio-political order that denied domestic fascism political space’.⁷⁹¹

This study aims to push this analysis further, by addressing several aspects of Labour and trade union anti-fascism at the national level which have been underappreciated in existing studies. Charles Dukes, the general secretary of the NUGMW, speaking in a debate on fascism at the 1934 Labour party conference, argued that ‘this movement, and this movement alone, is the movement that will have to defend political democracy’. Dukes was expressing more than just the views of his union’s conference delegation. For many in the Labour movement, Labour was the party of democracy. In recognising fascism as an anti-democratic force in Britain, Labour certainly took it seriously, even if it was occasionally forced to respond in ways it may not otherwise have done. Fascism in Britain was not, in Dukes’ words ‘something which we can afford to ignore’.⁷⁹² Labour’s practical response to the BUF took shape in three main arenas. The first was in Parliament, where Labour MPs brought cases of fascist violence to attention and voted in favour of legislation such as the Public Order Act, 1936, which were aimed at curbing such violence. The second was through the gathering of detailed information of constituency level fascist activity. Thirdly, fascism was attacked through the legal system, most notably in a High Court slander case which pitted the NUR general secretary John Marchbank against Sir Oswald Mosley. Labour’s strategy – based upon the careful gathering of detailed empirical evidence on fascist activity and aimed at exposing fascists to public scrutiny, was both more systematic, and more effective, than often supposed; closer analysis of Labour’s approach to British fascism can also reveal significant broader aspects of the movement’s political culture in the period.

⁷⁹¹ Nigel Copsey, “Every time they made a Communist, they made a Fascist”: The Labour Party and Popular Anti-Fascism in the 1930s’ in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds.), *Varieties of anti-fascism: Britain in the inter-war period* (Basingstoke, 2010), 52-72. Copsey suggests that this failure was far from total, however: whilst Labour passivity allowed the CPGB to present itself as the ‘true’ anti-fascist party, there was no mass exodus from Labour members or supporters to the Communists in response.

⁷⁹² Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1934*, pp. 142-143

Labour chose to largely ignore the small fascist groups which developed in the 1920s, considering them as merely 'little more than a vocal adjunct of conservatism'; whilst opposition to the New Party, particularly following the Ashton by-election, was driven 'first and foremost by feelings of betrayal and not anti-fascism'.⁷⁹³ The NUR perhaps had the most to complain about: Ashton had been held by an NUR MP, the late Albert Bellamy, and the union's J. W. Gordon had been defeated in part thanks to the intervention of the New Party's Allen Young, yet the union's weekly was circumspect about Mosley, acknowledging 'the smart he has inflicted upon us' before dedicating columns in successive editions to a discussion of his political ideas; perhaps a reflection of the popularity of the Mosley memorandum in the movement.⁷⁹⁴ There was no public pronouncement on the formation of the BUF in October 1932, with Mosley by this point just one of a number of those, MacDonald included, who had 'betrayed' the party. By early 1933 the position began to change. The plight of socialists, communists and trade unionists in Germany following Hitler's rise to the Chancellorship in January, combined with overtures from the Communist party in relation to the formation of a 'united front' prompted the movement into action. The Communist party had reached agreement with the ILP on the policy of a united front in March. Labour had tightened party discipline in order to exclude communists and others who represented parties opposed to Labour in the late 1920s, and was not prepared to countenance such an alliance.⁷⁹⁵ The National Joint Council issued a manifesto, 'Democracy v. Dictatorship', affirming this position on 21 March 1933. The document reaffirmed Labour's belief in democracy and socialism, and suggested that 'reaction' of either left or right bred 'reaction' in the other, in effect equating communism and fascism as different varieties of dictatorship. It stressed the importance of strengthening the unions, the co-operative movement and the party as the best way for 'British workers to secure their own rights against the ambitious designs of any

⁷⁹³ Although there was some concern within the ILP as to where the British Fascists would draw the line in the extent of their anti-communism. Hodgson, *Fighting Fascism. The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-39*, pp. 102-104. There were also trade union concerns about the nature of fascism in Italy; see references to 'fascismo' in *TGWU Record* as early as January 1923. On the New Party, Nigel Copsey, 'Opposition to the New Party: an Incipient Anti-Fascism or a Defence against 'Mosleyitis'?', *Contemporary British History* 23:4 (2009), 461-475, (quotation from p. 469); Hodgson, *Fighting Fascism. The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-39*, pp. 104-107.

⁷⁹⁴ Tom Kirk, 'The New Fourth Party – Sir Oswald Unfurls his Banner at Ashton – What Will he Achieve?', *Railway Review*, 8 May 1931, and Tom Kirk, 'Sir Oswald Mosley and the 'Crisis' – Has he got a Case?', *Railway Review*, 15 May 1931.

⁷⁹⁵ See Eric Shaw, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party. The politics of managerial control in the Labour party, 1951-87* (Manchester and New York, 1988), pp. 1-15.

would-be dictators there may be here at home'.⁷⁹⁶ Labour's response to fascism at this stage, then, was coloured by its position in relation to communism and dictatorship in general. Its propaganda literature broadly reflected this, although through spring and summer 1933 this tended to focus more on fascism: the TUC published a pamphlet entitled 'Down with Fascism' in May, whilst Labour's monthly notes for speakers dealt with such issues as 'threats to democracy', 'help the German workers' and 'fascism and the trade union movement'.⁷⁹⁷

The TUC General Council submitted a substantial report on 'Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement' to the September 1933 Congress.⁷⁹⁸ The report set the tone for the labour movement's strategy regarding fascism in Britain.

British institutions should prove more stable than those where dictatorship has been established. Nevertheless, where opponents of democracy praise dictatorial methods, and when economic conditions are so chaotic, it would be wise not to neglect any symptoms of such a movement. The danger should neither be exaggerated nor minimised. If unmeasured statements about the imminent possibilities of a violent outbreak are made the dangers of such an outbreak may be increased [...] until finally such a clash becomes inevitable. We should avoid creating such feeling [...] while at the same time remaining alert to detect and counteract any tendencies that seem to be developing in that direction.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ Labour Party *Annual Conference Report* 1933, p. 277.

⁷⁹⁷ See the appendix in G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948), for an extensive list of party and TUC pamphlet literature in the period.

⁷⁹⁸ The report had been in preparation since late April, with Citrine instructed to prepare a statement on 'Dictatorship' following a meeting with the German ambassador. Although complete by the end of May, discussion of the report was postponed until a special meeting of the GC in July, convened specifically to consider it. Discussion was exhaustive, with the 2.30pm meeting extended well into the evening. No verbatim report is available, but contributors included George Hicks (AUBTW), John Bromley (ASLEF), George Gibson (MHIWU), Arthur Hayday (NUGMW), Ernest Bevin (TGWU), Andrew Conley (NUTGW), Joseph Hallsworth (NUDAW), William Holmes (NUAW), Will Thorne (NUGMW), Alonso Swales (AEU) and John Hill (USBISS), as well as Citrine. The version eventually presented to Congress was amended in light of this discussion, and approved at the GC's meeting in August. John Beard (TGWU), who had been absent through illness at the July meeting, attempted to remove Mosley's name from the report; his proposal was defeated 11-7. Deleting Mosley's name may have represented an attempt to play down the significance of his role, whilst also trying to foster greater objectivity in the debate which would follow at Congress. MSS.292/20/17 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1932-33, minutes of GC meetings of 26 April 1933, 24 May 1933, 25 July 1933 and 31 August 1933.

⁷⁹⁹ TUC *Congress Report*, 1933, Appendix C: 'Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement', p. 425.

Much of the report's contents concerned developments in Germany, whilst in keeping with earlier pronouncements, it argued that trade unionists should 'oppose equally all dictatorships whether of the Right or the Left'.⁸⁰⁰ It dealt specifically with the threat posed by British fascists: whilst for now the strength of the BUF and similar groups was 'insignificant', it had been 'displaying considerable activity', including attempts to popularise itself among the unemployed and rural workers. It questioned how the BUF, a 'foreign importation', was financed, and urged that the 'true character of fascism as an undemocratic movement [...] must be ruthlessly exposed'.⁸⁰¹ The report repeatedly underlined the democratic nature of trade unionism; its critique of fascism was focused on the threat it posed to democratic institutions. The report echoed the approach of much of the left-wing press at this stage, advocating a measured response to deny the BUF 'free advertising'; this had to be squared against the need, recognised by the majority of TUC opinion, to expose fascists to public scrutiny as far as possible.⁸⁰² As well as adopting the report, the Congress unanimously carried a motion moved by ASLEF's John Bromley advocating unity of action by the trade unions, Labour party and Co-operative movement to 'take all possible steps [...] to combat this menace'. An ASLEF delegate moved a similar motion at the following month's Labour party conference, urging support for an anti-fascist campaign, whilst also expressing concern over giving the fascists 'too much of an advertisement'.⁸⁰³

A degree of hesitancy about anti-fascist action, shaped by concerns about giving the BUF publicity, was apparent in the discussions of 1933, but during the following spring events had prompted more urgent action. The suppression of Austrian socialists in February 1934, as well as the greater prominence of the BUF, now enjoying increased publicity through the Rothermere press, led the General Council to prepare a further

⁸⁰⁰ The bulk of criticism of the report during the TUC Congress was levelled at this assertion of equivalence between Communism and Fascism. See *TUC Congress Report*, 1933, pp. 325-334 for the contributions of T. Mycock (NUTGW), E. J. Evans (MFGB) and John Jagger (NUDAW) on these lines.

⁸⁰¹ *TUC Congress Report*, 1933, Appendix C: 'Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement', pp. 425-435, esp. pp. 432-435.

⁸⁰² Lawrence, 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', p. 245. The reference back of the report was lost by an 'overwhelming majority'; for the full debate, *TUC Congress Report*, 1933, pp. 318-340. Lawrence also notes 'ridiculing the pretensions of its maverick leader' as an aspect of left-wing reaction to the BUF. This was echoed in the Congress discussion, with John Bromley referring to his time as a parliamentary colleague of Mosley: 'I am not concerned about Mosley [...] Mosley was good enough to come to him [Bromley] on many occasions for advice, and if he had taken it he would have been a harpist now, and not a Fascist. He was dangerous because he was wealthy'. *TUC Congress Report*, 1933, pp. 341-342.

⁸⁰³ *TUC Congress Report*, 1933, pp. 340-345. *Labour Party Annual Conference Report* 1933, p. 224.

report, whilst plans were made for a detailed survey of fascist activity throughout the country. Such a proposal had been included in the motion carried at the 1933 party conference, and as a result the National Joint Council had determined in December 1933 to conduct an enquiry into fascist organisation 'in various parts of the country'; initially it was envisaged that this would be done by sending personal letters to 'selected' Labour party agents. No action was taken for several months, until Arthur Pugh [ISTC] revived the idea at the General Council in May 1934: enquiries were to be made in the 'most suitable constituencies' as to fascist activity, to assess the possibility of developing 'open-air Labour propaganda both in reply to fascist activity and to promote general Labour policy'.⁸⁰⁴ However, the violence at Olympia on 7 June prompted a drastic expansion in the scope of the survey: on 12 June 1934, every constituency Labour party was circularised with a questionnaire on local fascist activity.⁸⁰⁵

No comparable national survey of local Labour parties was carried out in the period. This was an attempt to assess, as systematically as possible, the state of fascist organisation across the country. Replies were sought rapidly, by 21 June; by late July, when a report was prepared on the results of the survey, some 380 constituencies had responded, representing some 42% of the total. The results provided a snapshot of the extent of fascist activity across Britain during the six weeks after Olympia. The level of detail in responses varied considerably, but five main categories were identified: first, 177 constituencies reporting no local branch but the occasional meeting; secondly, 126 reporting the existence of a local fascist branch but no substantial activity; third, 28 reporting no evidence of a branch existing but meriting attention for other reasons; fourthly, fourteen of those with a small membership but with the involvement of a prominent local figure and finally sixteen meriting 'special attention'.⁸⁰⁶ The questions posed reflected Labour concerns about the BUF (see figure 5.1). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the prime concern was over public meetings.

⁸⁰⁴ MSS.292/32/2 National Joint Council, Minutes, 1930-34, minutes of NJC meeting of 19 December 1933; the NJC had also discussed reports on the development of fascism throughout the country on 23 January 1934. MSS.292/20/18 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1933-34, minutes of GC meeting of 23 May 1934.

⁸⁰⁵ LP FAS 34.1

⁸⁰⁶ LP FAS 34.2-26 for those requiring special attention; also LP FAS 34.27-49 and 34.472-491

Figure 5.1 Labour Party fascism questionnaire, June 1934

1. Have there been any large Public Demonstrations held under Fascist auspices?
2. Is there a branch of the Fascist movement in the constituency?
3. If so, do you have any particulars of its membership?
4. Are there regular Local Meetings held under Fascist auspices
 - a). outdoor or
 - b). indoor?
5. Is Fascist literature on sale or distributed gratis in your district? (If any local Fascist literature is available, please send copies).
6. To what extent does the local Press report local Fascist activities?
7. Is the local Fascist movement utilising the correspondence columns of the local Press?
8. If so, are its contributions being answered either by
 - a). members of the Local Labour Movement or
 - b). persons representing other political sections or by individuals?
9. Is there any evidence of local Fascist Movements being organised in connection with
 - a). Women or
 - b). Youth?
10. Are you aware of any attempts by local Fascists to influence the Trade Union Branches in your area? (Where available, particulars would be very helpful).
11. To what extent have prominent local politicians, or other local personalities, associated with the Fascists at their public meetings, or otherwise?

Source: LP FAS 34.1 Labour Party fascism questionnaire.

Bolton DLP reported a 'large open air meeting with the usual processions, searchlights. Spectacular platform arrangements, Sir Oswald himself, with Blackshirts imported from the surrounding districts'; the 'Big Black Chief' also addressed a meeting in Stoke, also with a large number of Blackshirts bussed in.⁸⁰⁷ Labour parties in Leeds, Durham, Bristol and Plymouth also reported Mosley meetings, although the extent of disorder varied: at Plymouth, the meeting remained 'orderly' despite Mosley's efforts 'during the whole of his speech to incite the audience', whilst at Carlisle, although described as 'a fiasco', a large meeting was 'very quiet'; by contrast, two 'packed' meetings in Bristol were 'both very rowdy'. During a meeting at Gateshead addressed by the fascist and former Labour MP for the division, John Beckett, 'a very ugly situation' resulted in three arrests, while at the Coventry Corn Exchange a Blackshirt who assaulted a by-stander was rescued from police custody by his comrades in an incident which caused 'a good deal of comment in working-class circles' in the city.⁸⁰⁸ A common theme emerging in regard to disruption was the activity of communists: the secretary of Plymouth Borough Labour Party reported 'several clashes' between the two groups, whilst in Leeds, there were regular 'clashes and fisticuffs' between fascists and communist selling rival literature in Briggate; the DLP secretary regretted that CPGB members were giving the BUF 'free publicity' in this way.⁸⁰⁹ In terms of fascist membership, the largest group of replies reported that no branch had been formed; many others gave membership estimates. These varied from the highly specific – 43 men and 18 women in Bolton – to the fanciful: for example, 1,500 fascists in coastal Worthing (Sussex) alone. In six cases, membership of over 500 was reported. Some respondents tried to give a sense of the social composition of the local BUF: in Portsmouth, the twenty active members were 'very youthful and of the clerical class apparently'; whilst in Harrogate (North Yorkshire) most fascist recruits were described as being 'the boisterous kind of young bloods' who enjoyed golf and rugby.⁸¹⁰ Several replies indicated that sport had been an effective means of attracting

⁸⁰⁷ LP FAS 34.7 Bolton DLP; LP FAS 34.16 Stoke Central DLP. Many of the responses discussed here referred to Blackshirts being brought in from the surrounding areas, rather than being natives.

⁸⁰⁸ LP FAS 34.20 Leeds Borough LP; LP FAS 34.32 Durham DLP; LP FAS 32.5 and 32.6 Bristol Borough and Bristol East Labour Parties; LP FAS 34.4 Plymouth Sutton DLP; LP FAS 34.97 Carlisle DLP; LP FAS 34.31 Gateshead DLP; LP FAS 34.46 Coventry DLP and letter from G. Hodgkinson to J. S. Middleton, 14 June 1934: a knuckle-duster was found following this last incident.

⁸⁰⁹ LP FAS 34.99 Plymouth BLP; LP FAS 34.83 Leeds North East DLP.

⁸¹⁰ LP FAS 34.7 Bolton DLP; LP FAS 34.19 Horsham and Worthing DLP; LP FAS 34.36 Portsmouth BLP; LP FAS 34.23 Harrogate and District TC. Membership of over 500 was reported from Plymouth, Paddington South, Worthing, Ealing, Stoke-on-Trent, and Bristol.

youth to the BUF, and the youthful nature of many members was often noted.⁸¹¹ The participation of women was also a recurring feature, from a group of women selling the *Blackshirt* in Bolton to a Women's Fascist Defence Force being set up in Plymouth. In the latter city, three-quarters of the membership were alleged to be 'young men and women of independent means (sons and daughters of the military)'.⁸¹² Where details of the social background of fascists were given, respondents tended to emphasise the middle-class or wealthy origins of BUF members, making it clear that these were not 'Labour people'; reports of fascists being 'imported' from elsewhere also indicated that they were outsiders, arguably reflecting the sense that fascism itself was a foreign import.

In terms of the sale and distribution of fascist literature, replies indicated that this mostly involved sale of the *Blackshirt*, and the free distribution of a pamphlet, 'Ten Points of Fascism', although some more targeted publications were also in circulation, including 'Fascism and Agriculture' and an enrolment form aimed at dockers and seamen.⁸¹³ Several DLPs complained of a lack of decent anti-fascist literature to use in response. Labour members in Worthing were 'waiting for something *really good* from our Head Office to sell in opposition', whilst the East Grinstead (Sussex) DLP secretary felt an opportunity was being missed: anti-fascist propaganda could easily be delivered at the same time as the local party's regular circulation of 'Victory for Socialism' leaflets.⁸¹⁴ The party does seem to have taken notice of this complaint: a number of new anti-fascist pamphlets were soon made available, most notably 'Fascism – the Enemy of the People!', which used extensive quotations from fascist publications to expose the BUF's aims and ideas.⁸¹⁵ In inquiring as to whether fascists and their opponents were making use of the correspondence columns of the local press, the party was effectively suggesting that Labour members should be doing just that in order to subject fascists to scrutiny, although concerns about giving fascists too much publicity could surface here too: the secretary of Wakefield DLP noted a desire

⁸¹¹ For boxing, LP FAS 34.73 Newcastle West DLP; and cycling LP FAS 34.67 Caerphilly DLP. A League of Youth was reported as being in the process of formation at Portsmouth, LP FAS 34.36.

⁸¹² LP FAS 34.7 Bolton DLP; LP FAS 34.4 Plymouth Sutton DLP.

⁸¹³ See LP FAS 34.1 for an overview of the fascist literature reported.

⁸¹⁴ LP FAS 34.19 Horsham and Worthing DLP, emphasis in original; LP FAS 34.17-18 East Grinstead DLP.

⁸¹⁵ LP FAS 33.7 'Fascism – the Enemy of the People!'; LP FAS 33.3 for a report to the NJC/NCL dated 25 June 1934 compiling the quotations used in the pamphlet. Other titles included 'The Fruits of Fascism', 'The Spotlight on the Blackshirts', and 'What is this Fascism?'; all of these were published by the NCL.

locally 'not to advertise fascism', asking 'if correspondence does appear, is it wise to bother with it?'⁸¹⁶

Another major concern was fascist activity within the trade unions themselves. The BUF had established a Fascist Union of British Workers [FUBW] in an attempt to recruit trade unionists and the unemployed; the organisation had its own 'leadership structure, membership cards and insignia' and was intended to appropriate the functions of the unions in a future fascist state.⁸¹⁷ FUBW literature portrayed union officials as 'cowardly placemen, interested only in lining their own pockets [...] who put politics and the interests of 'foreigners' before British workers'.⁸¹⁸ Attacks on NUR leaders reported by Winchester (Hampshire) DLP were very likely along these lines, as was a leaflet sent by Bermondsey West DLP. At Paddington South, such criticisms were the 'main points' of most local fascist speeches.⁸¹⁹ The FUBW sought to take advantage of industrial disputes for recruitment purposes; Westbury (Wiltshire) DLP reported activity by fascist speakers during a strike at Melksham.⁸²⁰ Efforts seem to have been particularly concentrated among transport workers. Newcastle North DLP reported that attempts had been made by fascists to form a rival organisation to the TGWU for transport workers; it was rumoured to have fifty members including 'many corporation busmen'. Birmingham Sparkbrook DLP also reported a fascist busman, whilst the Gateshead DLP secretary had heard of fascist efforts, since stopped by union officials, to recruit amongst a TGWU branch in nearby Chester-Le-Street (Durham). At Stoke-on-Trent, the former DLP vice-president and NUR guard H. Sutton was apparently one of the 'chief officers' of the local BUF.⁸²¹ The Bristol East DLP secretary reported being told in person by a local fascist that some 150 members of a

⁸¹⁶ LP FAS 34.48-49 Wakefield DLP.

⁸¹⁷ For the FUBW, see Philip M. Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: the Case of the British Union of Fascists', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:1 (2002), 38-61. See also a condensed version of the same article, Philip M. Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice', in Copsey and Renton (eds.), *British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State*, pp. 95-117.

⁸¹⁸ Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: the Case of the British Union of Fascists', p. 44. This characterisation was used widely by fascists: see the discussion of the AEU legal action against John Beckett discussed below.

⁸¹⁹ LP FAS 34.58-59 Winchester DLP; LP FAS 34.62-63 Bermondsey West DLP; LP FAS 34.11-12, Paddington South DLP.

⁸²⁰ LP FAS 34.79-80. See also Ernest Bevin, 'The Spirit of our Membership', *TGWU Record*, June 1934 for comments on fascists seeking to provoke industrial unrest.

⁸²¹ LP FAS 34.43 Newcastle North DLP; LP FAS 34.45 Birmingham Sparkbrook DLP; LP FAS 34.31 Gateshead DLP; LP FAS 34.16 Stoke-on-Trent Central DLP. This evidence supports Coupland's account in relation to transport union organisation. Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: the Case of the British Union of Fascists', pp. 47-48; Sparkbrook is one of the areas he discusses.

local printing union branch, although this was likely an exaggeration⁸²². It could be difficult for trade unions to take action against fascist members: whilst the TUC's 'Black Circular' would soon aid unions in barring communists from official posts, their own rules often forbade expulsions on political grounds.⁸²³ Some Coventry trade unionists seem to have taken matters into their own hands: when a local member of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union joined the BUF in 1933, his colleagues came out on strike against him on the grounds that fascism 'is anti-trade union'.⁸²⁴ The survey seems to have caught the last gasp of the FUBW's efforts: it was wound up in June 1934, as a result of a shift in power within the BUF away from those keen to win over Labour and trade union, and support towards the organisation's more reactionary, conservative wing.⁸²⁵ Most DLPs reported no fascist activity in local union branches. In many rural areas, there was often insufficient union organisation for fascists to concern themselves with infiltrating, although campaigning on issues such as tithes was noted.⁸²⁶ A considerable number of respondents replied with a variant of 'not that I am aware of' in response to the question about activity in trade union branches. Given that replies were wanted quickly, this could simply mean that they had no opportunity to make enquiries, although it could also be indicative of rather distant relations between local parties and trade union branches; again, this was most pronounced in rural areas: the secretary of Devizes (Wiltshire) DLP reported that local unions did not 'function, politically, as a rule and most of my communications to them are ignored'.⁸²⁷

In such cases, the survey could produce responses that had rather depressing implications for the state of party-union relationships at the local level. On the whole, however, the exercise was a success, representing a serious and systematic attempt to collect a large amount of detailed evidence on fascist activity which could be used in campaigns and party literature. The survey was used to inform an NCL report, 'Fascism at Home and Abroad', adopted by both the TUC Congress and Labour party

⁸²² The fascist admitted he did not know the extent of membership, although it was growing, as not all fascists wore a black shirt. LP FAS 34.6 Bristol East DLP.

⁸²³ For an example, see MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937, minutes of GEC meeting of 3 December 1937, for the union's inability to expel an allegedly fascist member, Bro. A. Judge, on the grounds of his politics.

⁸²⁴ LP FAS 34.46-47 Coventry DLP.

⁸²⁵ Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: the Case of the British Union of Fascists', pp. 51-60.

⁸²⁶ See, for example, LP FAS 34.76 Eye (Suffolk) DLP.

⁸²⁷ LP FAS 34.78 Devizes DLP.

conference in the autumn: while emphasising Labour's efforts, it implied the reaction to Olympia had contributed to the movement's strategy: for 'the first time, the methods of British Fascism stood out clearly revealed to the public'.⁸²⁸

Parliament remained an important arena for Labour anti-fascism. Two of the five Labour speakers who participated in the Olympia debate in the House of Commons were trade unionists.⁸²⁹ Will Thorne of the NUGMW struck a similar note to the previous year's 'Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement' report, arguing that 'the Communists are out for a proletariat dictatorship and Sir Oswald Mosley is out for a Fascist dictatorship, and I am against both'; he highlighted the threat to democracy if fascism succeeded, 'not only all our democratic institutions and local authorities, but every trade union in the country will be dissolved'.⁸³⁰ Lawrence has noted 'a generational aspect to disagreements about the significance of the violence at Olympia', inasmuch as Conservative MPs who were veterans of an Edwardian political culture where 'rowdyism' was prevalent tended to have greater sympathy with the BUF's response to disruption, whilst there were also 'champions of the old-style rough-and-tumble politics' amongst Labour MPs.⁸³¹ Thorne too was a veteran of that earlier political culture, and had been no stranger to a more physical politics early in his career, yet here he expressed outrage at the violence and condemned all disruption at meetings, objecting in no uncertain terms to the methods adopted by Mosley and his supporters. Thorne, unlike some fellow pre-1910 MPs, appeared to have changed his views, arguably maturing into the role of an 'elder statesman', in doing so providing a more complex picture of the trade union MP than is sometimes allowed.⁸³² Rhys J. Davies of NUDAW also elided the threats of communism and fascism, urging action to stop the BUF proceeding 'further on militarist lines'.⁸³³ Such militarism became an

⁸²⁸ TUC, *Congress Report* 1934, Appendix C, NCL Statement on 'Fascism at Home and Abroad', pp. 435-450 for the report. For the debate at Congress on this document, see *ibid.*, pp. 249-266; for the party conference debate, Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1934, pp. 142-143.

⁸²⁹ For the full debate, see *HC Debs*, 5th series, 14 June 1934, vol. 290 cc. 1913-2041. The other three who made significant speeches were Clement Attlee, Fielding West, and David Logan, as did James Maxton of the ILP.

⁸³⁰ *HC Debs*, 5th series, 14 June 1934, vol. 290, cc. 1945-1951 for Thorne's speech.

⁸³¹ Lawrence, 'Why Olympia mattered', p. 263.

⁸³² Lawrence cites Thorne in a 1908 debate on the Public Meetings Bill, 'It was for those who organised the meetings to make proper provision' for stopping disruption, although he does not explore the contrast with Thorne's views in 1934. Lawrence, 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', p. 241.

⁸³³ *HC Debs*, 5th series, 14 June 1934, vol. 290, cc. 1973-1980 for Davies' speech.

increasingly prominent aspect of Labour's critique of British fascism.⁸³⁴ In a further display of Labour's constitutionalism, a deputation from the NCL pressed the Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour to take action against disorder of the kind seen at Olympia. The deputation supplied Gilmour with 'documents illustrating the activities and aims' of the BUF; presumably these drew on the replies to the June survey.⁸³⁵

Labour opposition to fascism through the courts would probably have seemed highly unlikely until the summer of 1934. With trade union membership substantially reduced by the economic slump, money was tight both in the party and in the unions themselves, and costly legal proceedings would have presented a considerable challenge. It seemed similarly unlikely that John Marchbank would be at the centre of this legal opposition. Marchbank had been elected as General Secretary of the NUR only in December 1933, although he had been acting in that capacity since the sudden death of his predecessor C. T. Cramp in July 1933. Marchbank had established a reputation within the union as an effective advocate of Railwaymen's interests in negotiations with the National Wages Board in 1932. Despite having served as Assistant General Secretary since 1925, he was far less widely known in the movement than Cramp. His election to succeed Cramp appears to have been almost an inevitability, however. A man of 'dynamic energy and determination', Marchbank was supposedly 'debonair and a great favourite with the ladies'; he was also a 'consistent supporter of the moderate element' in the Labour party, and best known within the union for his meticulous use of detailed briefs.⁸³⁶ He does seem to have been particularly concerned with the growth of fascism: it was as a result of a letter of inquiry from Marchbank that the Labour party announced that the BUF had been added to its proscribed list of organisations, members of which were ineligible for

⁸³⁴ See, for instance, the report of a speech by the TUC GC chairman Andrew Conley, 'Fascist Drill Must Stop – TUC Chairman Warns Home Secretary – 'If it is Legal Two Can Play That Game'', *Daily Herald*, 22 June 1934. Notably, the reply of Leeds City Labour Party to the June survey had referred to the regular drilling of fifty to sixty fascists at a large hall defended by barbed wire. LP FAS 34.20 Leeds City LP.

⁸³⁵ 'Sir J. Gilmour Warns Blackshirts – Will Not Allow Disorder – Assurance Given to Labour Party and TUC', *Daily Herald*, 27 June 1934 for the deputation; MSS.292/20/18 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1933-34, minutes of GC meeting of 26 June 1934. The deputation included Citrine and Andrew Conley for the TUC, and W. R. Smith and Joe Toole for the Labour NEC. TUC, *Congress Report* 1934, Appendix C, NCL Statement on 'Fascism at Home and Abroad', p. 450. Not all of the replies would have been collated by this point; it may be that the 21 June deadline was set so that the deputation would have the results at its disposal.

⁸³⁶ Philip Bagwell, *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London, 1963), pp. 540-541.

membership of the party, in June 1934.⁸³⁷ Marchbank was the main speaker at a TUC-organised meeting in Newcastle on 15 July 1934, at which he was alleged to have said that he had evidence of 'secret instructions issued by Sir Oswald Mosley', that fascists were active among the armed forces, that certain weapons were recommended for use to fascists, including corrugated rubber clubs, knuckle-dusters, knives, potatoes containing razor blades and cardboard breastplates studded with drawing pins. He was also alleged to have said 'we strongly object to any particular party assembling in the guise of a military machine with the object of overthrowing by force the constitutional government of the country.' After a report of the speech appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, Mosley's solicitors informed Marchbank that he was being sued for slander. This was likely one aspect of Mosley's efforts to improve the BUF's reputation in the aftermath of Olympia: Lawrence has highlighted a shift in stewarding tactics and a renewed emphasis on electoral politics within the BUF in this period.⁸³⁸ Marchbank decided to fight the allegations, and agreed with his own solicitors that his defence would be based on three points: that he did not say the words alleged in relation to Mosley personally, that the meeting was a privileged occasion, and finally that the words he did say were true.⁸³⁹

Through the autumn and winter Marchbank supplied his solicitors with a large number of pamphlets, newspaper cuttings and other evidence to support his case. At this stage the prospects looked rather bleak. In November Mosley was in court, suing Daily News Ltd for a libellous article published in the *Star* newspaper the previous year. Mosley, according to his biographer, was able to call on 'a galaxy of legal talent' and had 'sparkled' in the witness box.⁸⁴⁰ Moreover, the defamatory words involved were very similar to those in Marchbank's case in their implication that the BUF was planning to

⁸³⁷ Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 27 June 1934.

⁸³⁸ Lawrence, 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', p. 257.

⁸³⁹ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, 1934, memorandum 'Mosley and Yourself – Grounds for Defence'. For an account of Marchbank's speech, see *Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1934. In his documentary essay on the papers relating to the case held in the NUR's archive, 'Blackshirts, Knuckle-Dusters and Lawyers: Documentary Essay on the Mosley versus Marchbanks Papers', *Labour History Review* 65:1 (2000), 41-58, John Hope comments rightly that the papers 'are an especially valuable documentary source for historians working on the labour movement and the way in which its responses to domestic fascism were shaped, offering 'a rare insight that is not readily available elsewhere'. Unfortunately he stops short of exploring this point further, instead highlighting the contribution of the case papers to the debate over the British Union of Fascists' responsibility or otherwise for political violence. Hope refers to the NUR general secretary as *Marchbanks*; the addition of an 's' to his surname seems to have been a common contemporary mistake.

⁸⁴⁰ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London and Basingstoke, 1975), p. 322.

overthrow the government by force, in this case by the use of machine guns. In summing up, the counsel for the defence, Norman Birkett argued that 'if the question of damages arose in the case, the situation should be met by an award of the smallest coin in the realm', but Mosley was awarded £5,000.⁸⁴¹ Marchbank was helped in his collection of evidence by an ex-fascist turned Methodist preacher, Charles Dolan, who, as well as having supplied information about the secret instructions Marchbank referred to in his 15 July speech, travelled the country to collect statements on the use of weaponry, and the nature of Mosley's instructions from other ex-fascists.⁸⁴² Marchbank was dealt a substantial blow in December when fifteen of the 21 particulars of evidence he had submitted were struck out by the master of the rolls.⁸⁴³ Mosley, fresh from another legal victory, this time being cleared of assault at Worthing, had engaged new solicitors, who now wrote accusing Marchbank of seeking to delay his submission of evidence in order to have time to gather statements, for which they alleged he was paying, from ex-BUF men.⁸⁴⁴ Mosley's solicitors' letter implied, rather bizarrely, that those who had given Marchbank statements were in fact fascist plants, being used to test Marchbank's malice towards the plaintiff. Marchbank and his solicitors categorically denied this, although they had been prepared to pay out of pocket expenses for witnesses to get to Unity House, the NUR's headquarters, to give statements.⁸⁴⁵ In February 1935 Marchbank's appeal against the striking out of his evidence was dismissed. His solicitors suspected that Mosley would seek to repeat the success of the *Star* case by forcing Marchbank to justify his comments on the overthrow of the government by force.⁸⁴⁶ Marchbank and Dolan continued to seek statements, from ex-fascists as well as victims of and witnesses to Blackshirt violence at meetings. In June Dolan was approached by a former BUF acquaintance who offered him £100 to emigrate to Canada, whilst John Griffin, secretary of Eccles

⁸⁴¹ See *Times*, 6 and 7 November 1934 for the *Star* libel action.

⁸⁴² For typical reports, see MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A, NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Dolan to Marchbank, 8 and 9 November 1934; MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5B NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Dolan to Marchbank, 1 February 1935. Dolan had published a pamphlet, *Mosley Exposed: the Blackshirt Racket* (London, n.d) based on similar evidence.

⁸⁴³ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material Pattinson & Brewer to Marchbank, 20 December 1934; Marchbank to Pattinson & Brewer, 21 December 1934.

⁸⁴⁴ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Pattinson & Brewer to Marchbank, 20 December 1934; J. D. Langton and Passmore to Pattinson & Brewer, 19 December 1934.

⁸⁴⁵ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Marchbank to Pattinson & Brewer, 22 December 1934.

⁸⁴⁶ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5B NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Pattinson & Brewer to Marchbank, 4 February 1935.

Labour party, wrote to ascertain whether the letter he had received from Marchbank's solicitors in relation to evidence he had given was genuine 'in view of the fact that Mosley's tactics are as freakish as his policy'.⁸⁴⁷ In November 1935, as Marchbank's defence team were waiting for the date of the trial to be confirmed, Unity House received a telephone message explaining that a journalist had visited Dolan at his church in West Yorkshire hoping to publish his life story. This also caused a certain amount of panic, although ultimately the article did not appear in the *Daily Express* until after the trial.⁸⁴⁸

The trial took place in the first week of February 1936, with Denis Pritt KC, the Labour MP for North Hammersmith leading for Marchbank, and Sir Patrick Hastings KC, former Labour MP and Attorney-General for Mosley.⁸⁴⁹ Mosley's responses to cross-examination were generally humorous and seem to have been well received, whilst Marchbank's were much more guarded. He denied that he was speaking on behalf of the Union, but in a personal capacity. His repeated insistence that he did not know that Mosley was the BUF leader were unlikely to have sounded very convincing. Various witnesses for the defence spoke of injuries they had seen or sustained at fascist meetings, whilst several BUF headquarters staff denied that the organisation encouraged the use of any weaponry. On February 7 the jury found in Mosley's favour, but, perhaps in reference to Birkett's reference to the 'smallest coin' in the Mosley-*Star* case, awarded him only a farthing in damages, effectively suggesting that whilst the slander was accepted as having occurred, what Marchbank had said was so close to fair comment that the case should never have been brought to court.⁸⁵⁰

Despite this symbolic victory, Marchbank's costs totalled some £5,518. The NUR's rules prevented any use of the union's funds to assist him, so a testimonial fund was

⁸⁴⁷ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5C NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, note dated 7 June 1935, and signed statement by Dolan on the same date, for the offer to Dolan; MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5D NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, J. Griffin to Marchbank, 10 September 1935.

⁸⁴⁸ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5D NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Copy of telephone message to Jones (Marchbank's secretary), 13 November 1935; MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5E NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, 'Preacher Who Lived Dangerously', *Daily Express* 15 February 1936, cutting.

⁸⁴⁹ Marchbank had tried to secure the services of Sir Stafford Cripps, but he was otherwise engaged, apparently on a case to do with roof problems with the Austin Sunshine. MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5B NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Pattinson & Brewer to Marchbank, 1 February 1935.

⁸⁵⁰ MSS.127/1990/18 Mosley v. Marchbank, bound court transcript contains the full proceedings verbatim. See also 'Mosley v. Marchbank', *Times*, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 February 1936.

established in April 1936 to appeal for donations.⁸⁵¹ Of Marchbank, the call for donations stated:

From the inception of the Fascist movement in this country he has been unflinching in his opposition to its pretensions and its policy. He has sought consistently to warn the members of his own and other organisations against participation in its propaganda and the dangers that will arise from its development. No one has been at greater pains to secure first-hand information regarding Fascism and its methods. It will be recalled that a considerable amount of verified evidence in this regard was presented in the recent law case.⁸⁵²

The testimonial fund committee included a number of Labour heavyweights; the NUR president Joseph Henderson acted as chair, with Jim Middleton as secretary and Arthur Greenwood as treasurer; other members included Walter Citrine, Clement Attlee, Hugh Dalton, A. V. Alexander, George Lansbury, Ernest Bevin, J. R. Clynes and Herbert Morrison, a testament to the significance which was placed on the result of the case.⁸⁵³ Marchbank's own prestige within the movement was enhanced. He gave the main address to the TUC's annual pre-Congress demonstration in Plymouth that September; his theme was the 'struggle to maintain and develop the institutions of democracy', now in 'its most grim and deadly phase', with fascism 'out to destroy [democracy] root and branch'.⁸⁵⁴ The testimonial appeal was very successful: Marchbank was able to settle his debts by April 1937, with the balance left in the fund to be used to form the 'nucleus of a defence fund' for similar cases.⁸⁵⁵

Such cases were already taking place. In the autumn of 1936, the president and Executive Council of the AEU successfully sued another fascist and former Labour MP, John Beckett, for libel. Beckett had alleged in an article published in July 1935 both in *Fascist Quarterly* and in pamphlet form as 'Fascism and Trade Unionism', that

⁸⁵¹ Marchbank had already re-mortgaged his house to meet his solicitors' costs. See MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5D NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Marchbank to W. Gavigan, 10 December 1935; Pattinson & Brewer to Marchbank, 11 and 19 December 1935; Marchbank to Pattinson & Brewer, 20 December 1935.

⁸⁵² 'Labour and Fascism – Mr. Marchbank's Costs', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 April 1936.

⁸⁵³ 'Testimonial for Mr. Marchbank', *Daily Herald*, 24 April 1936.

⁸⁵⁴ 'Maintenance of Democracy – Labour Leader on Threat of Fascism', *Times*, 7 September 1936.

⁸⁵⁵ MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5E NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Marchbank to Arthur Greenwood, 8 April 1937.

the not only did the seven members of the EC draw 'salaries several times as high' as working engineers, but that 'provided they scratch each other's' backs, there is no reasonable limit to the comfort they may enjoy or the expenses they may incur'; he also suggested that corruption made it almost impossible to unseat an EC member by election, as the other members would 'all be stumping the country and pulling strings in his favour [...] Need I add that the wages and salaries of the [AEU's] staff have increased during the past few years?'.⁸⁵⁶ This represented a 'scandalous attack' on the integrity of the AEU's leaders, and the general secretary Fred Smith used his editorial in the September 1935 issue of the *AEU Monthly Journal* to refute Beckett's allegations point-by-point; they were, he insisted, a 'wilful and deliberate misrepresentation'.⁸⁵⁷ The AEU's response would likely have stopped here, as Smith's comments suggested the union 'would not stoop to reply to this pamphlet; indeed, we should have taken no notice of it' but for having received recent figures revealing the exploitation of workers under fascist regimes abroad.⁸⁵⁸ At this stage the AEU EC did not appear inclined to pursue any court action. Instead, it seems probable that the Marchbank case may have emboldened them to do so later in 1936, well over a year after the offending article had been published. The union would not have attempted to sue without some expectation of success; Marchbank's experience demonstrated that this was possible.⁸⁵⁹ The judge found in the AEU's favour, noting that while the right to criticise the 'administration and affairs' of an organisation such as the AEU with some 270,000 members was 'essential in the public interest', Beckett's comments were not only untrue but were 'calculated to do them [the Executive Council] serious harm with their members and others'; he awarded a total of £600 in damages.⁸⁶⁰ That the AEU president, Jack Little went on to collaborate with Marchbank on a 1937 pamphlet *Fascism: Fight it Now* seems more than a coincidence.⁸⁶¹ It is noteworthy that the journals of the two unions, the *Railway Review* and the *AEU Monthly Journal*, gave relatively little space to the outcome of either case: even in the context of success against fascism, trade unions remained concerned about overly publicising their

⁸⁵⁶ Quoted in 'Little and Others v. Beckett and Others', *Times*, 5 November 1936.

⁸⁵⁷ 'Fascist Attacks on Trade Unionism', *AEU Monthly Journal*, September 1935.

⁸⁵⁸ 'The Worker under Fascism', *AEU Monthly Journal*, September 1935.

⁸⁵⁹ The success of the testimonial fund for Marchbank's costs may have had some influence too.

⁸⁶⁰ 'Little and Others v. Beckett and Others', *Times*, 10 November 1936.

⁸⁶¹ Jack Little and John Marchbank, *Fascism: Fight it Now* (London, 1937). The cover image depicted a worker in overalls, weighed down by a swastika chained between his wrists.

efforts, although the AEU did permit itself to claim success in this 'necessary battle' as 'a victory for the whole movement'.⁸⁶²

There is no real consensus between historians of British fascism on the movement's record in court cases. Robert Benewick sees the *Star* case as the BUF's only success in this line, whilst Colin Cross suggests Mosley's experience was more mixed.⁸⁶³ However, arguably they overlook the implications of the chronology of these cases, and herein lies part of the significance of the Mosley-Marchbank case. By the end of 1934, Mosley had won £5,000 from Daily News Ltd and charges against him at Worthing for assault and riotous assembly had been dropped. Beckett had won £1,000 in slander damages from an antifascist group.⁸⁶⁴ Further legal successes followed.⁸⁶⁵ Yet within a week of the embarrassment of the one farthing he received from Marchbank, Mosley had dropped another slander suit he had been bringing against the *Daily Telegraph*. Marchbank's symbolic victory dented the BUF's record of legal success, and probably Mosley's reputation, and demonstrated that it was possible to challenge and expose fascism effectively in this way, as confirmed by the AEU's success later in the year. Further legal defeats followed for the BUF, notably another libel case against Beckett, which awarded damages totalling £20,000 to Lord Camrose and the *Daily Telegraph*.⁸⁶⁶

Initial Labour responses to fascism in Britain were influenced by the party's position on communism and resulted in a critique of dictatorship in general. However, during 1933 there was a concerted move towards a policy of exposing fascists to public scrutiny wherever possible, demonstrating their anti-democratic politics. This was a strategy based on the collection of detailed empirical evidence, of which the 1934

⁸⁶² See 'The Union Vindicated' and 'The Allegations and the Reply', *AEU Monthly Journal*, December 1936: the editorial did not take the opportunity to condemn fascism more broadly, but stressed that in taking the action, its EC and officers were 'as deeply concerned for the honour of the union and the good name of trade unionism, as they were their own reputation and position in public life. It was not a vindictive action [...] they might reasonably have expected to be spared the anxiety, worry and annoyance of such proceedings'. 'Mosley v. Marchbank – Slander Suit' was tucked away on the ninth page of the first issue of *Railway Review* following the judgment, *Railway Review*, 14 February 1936, although publicity might have been more difficult given that Mosley technically 'won'. For the full AEU-Beckett court hearings, see *Times* 4, 5, 6 and 10 November 1936. The affair is mentioned only briefly in Francis Beckett, *The Rebel Who Lost His Cause. The Tragedy of John Beckett, MP* (London, 1999), p. 133.

⁸⁶³ Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain*, pp. 266-272.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267. The group had dissolved before he could collect the damages.

⁸⁶⁵ See 'Mosley v. Workers' Press and Others', *Times* 25 June 1936, 4 July 1936 for a successful injunction, for example.

⁸⁶⁶ Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain*, pp. 270-272.

fascism questionnaire is perhaps the most prominent example, both systematic in its approach and national in its scope. The example of the Mosley v. Marchbank case demonstrated that such a strategy could be effective given the right circumstances. It was, however, tempered by the fear of giving fascists a platform, which at points arguably precluded a clearer policy. The case had implications in terms of Labour political culture in the period more broadly. As well as emboldening the AEU, it helped consolidate Mosley's status as a folk villain in Labour demonology. David Howell has noted the memory of Mosley being used to undermine opponents within the party in this way into the 1980s.⁸⁶⁷ The case was also a timely reminder of the danger of charismatic, wealthy newcomers to the party, as will be seen below.

'Intellectuals', trade unions, and the Socialist League

The TUC general secretary Walter Citrine recorded an encounter between himself and Beatrice Webb during a stay at the Webbs' house in 1927.

I had scarcely got downstairs before Mrs Webb tackled me. She said, 'You know, Mr Citrine, you are the first intellectual who has held such a responsible position in the trade union movement.' 'I have not a very high opinion of the intellectuals', I said, 'so it is not much of a compliment to me.' 'Oh, I don't mean it in that sense', she said.⁸⁶⁸

This exchange reveals something of the contested language of the Labour movement, and specifically the problem posed by the word 'intellectual'. From Citrine's perspective, there existed a definite group who could be described as 'the intellectuals'; moreover, to be called an 'intellectual' was effectively an insult. The response of Webb – by any account, an intellectual herself – indicated that, at least once prompted, she too was aware of this meaning of the word. There was certainly space in the Labour party for those from the 'intellectual' world – the Webbs themselves, along with G. D. H. Cole, Harold Laski and R. H. Tawney being perhaps

⁸⁶⁷ Howell, 'The Sheik...A Valentino in Real Life: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Labour Party, 1924-1931', pp. 425-426. For a 1950s comparison made by Dalton between Bevan and Mosley, see John Campbell, *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987), p. 245.

⁸⁶⁸ Lord (Walter M.) Citrine, *Men and Work. The Autobiography of Lord Citrine* (London, 1964), p. 270.

the foremost examples in this period. Yet many writers have noted examples of 'intellectual' being used as a term of abuse within the labour movement, particularly by trade unionists, with Ernest Bevin one of the most frequently cited: according to Alan Bullock, Bevin employed the word 'in a comprehensive and idiosyncratic way. It had little to do with Left or Right or even with a university education'.⁸⁶⁹ The use of 'intellectual' in this way seems to have a particular currency in the 1930s, when it was bound up closely with the fortunes of the Socialist League. It provided a powerful rhetorical resource which opponents of the League and its efforts to commit Labour to a more radical interpretation of socialism could draw upon to delegitimise the League's claims. This made an important contribution to the League's ultimate defeat, which in turn helped ensure the success of a more moderate social democratic politics which would define Labour's approach well into the post-war period.

Several writers have commented on the apparent anti-intellectualism of the British labour movement. The use of the term 'intellectual' as typically understood in the interwar years and since dates to the late nineteenth century. T. W. Heyck has argued that as a result of the professionalization of science and university teaching, alongside the development of cultural criticism, a 'whole new vocabulary' of 'intellectuals' and 'intellectual life', referring to 'a particular kind of people and their functions', came into use during the 1870s and 1880s, describing a 'separate and learned class'.⁸⁷⁰ This separateness contributed to the encouragement of an 'anti-intellectualism' in British society; Labour, it has been suggested, 'has never shaken off its roots' in such 'Victorian philistinism'.⁸⁷¹ For Radhika Desai, 'unintellectualism' has been 'the most distinctive feature of modern English society' and a hallmark of Labour's politics.⁸⁷² David Stack contends that Labour has 'rarely displayed any real enthusiasm for the questioning, ideas and debate that characterise intellectual life'; an approach of 'openness [...] and debate has never gained more than a fleeting acceptance' in the

⁸⁶⁹ Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume 1. Trade Union Leader 1881-1940* (London, 1960), p. 531. Bullock includes Ramsay MacDonald, Oswald Mosley, George Lansbury, James Maxton, Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, both the ILP and the Socialist League, as well as 'more obvious candidates like Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole' amongst those grouped as 'intellectuals' by Bevin at one stage or another.

⁸⁷⁰ T. W. Heyck, 'From Men of Letters to Intellectuals: The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 20:1 (1980), 158-183.

⁸⁷¹ David Stack, 'Labour and the Intellectuals' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), p. 114.

⁸⁷² Radhika Desai, *Intellectuals and Socialism. 'Social Democrats' and the British Labour Party* (London, 1994), p. 34.

party.⁸⁷³ He illustrates this through an examination of the ILP's political education efforts both before and after the First World War: by the 1920s, the wide-ranging Socialist Library book series, conceived to 'increase the attractiveness of the party to the intellectual class and introduce intellectual discussion to ILP members' had been superseded by the rather narrower and more rigid, as well as more explicitly 'practical', ILP Study Course series.⁸⁷⁴

Intellectual pursuits with a firmly 'practical' element were largely acceptable in the movement. Jonathan Rose has suggested that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 'working-class culture was saturated by the spirit of mutual education'.⁸⁷⁵ There was a strong tradition of working-class autodidacticism, of which many trade unionists and Labour politicians were products. The MFGB-sponsored Labour frontbencher Jack Lawson claimed to have 'read like a glutton' from childhood; during his teenage years, Lawson's fellow MFGB MP Aneurin Bevan 'was reading everything I could lay my hands on', taking in history, literature and economics.⁸⁷⁶ Bevan later commented that 'the self-educating cling to what they learn with more tenacity than the university product [...] the abstract ideas which ignite his mind are those to which his own experience provides a reference'; Lawson, writing of his later Ruskin College experience, noted that 'most of us had plugged our way through a very hard, matter-of-fact world, and were so familiar with the facts of the thing that we were not inclined to yield easily to theories about it'.⁸⁷⁷ In both cases, the importance of practical experience loomed large. For Lawson and Bevan, and doubtless many others, early reading was facilitated by the institutions of the labour movement: in the former's case, the library of the Boldon Miners' Institute; in the latter's, Tredegar Workingmen's Library. Trade unions played an active part in the provision of working-class education. From its early days, students at Ruskin College, Oxford, were supported through scholarships made possible by trade union contributions; prominent trade unionists including Richard Bell and David Shackleton served on the College's board. The NUR and SWMF played a major role in the financing and

⁸⁷³ Stack, 'Labour and the Intellectuals', pp. 114, 130.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 116-129.

⁸⁷⁵ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, second edition (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 83.

⁸⁷⁶ Jack Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London, 1944), pp. 48-51; Aneurin Bevan, *In Place of Fear* (1978 [original 1952]), p. 38. For Miners' libraries in South Wales, see Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, pp. 237-255.

⁸⁷⁷ Bevan, *In Place of Fear*, pp. 38-39; Lawson, *A Man's Life*, p. 101.

management of the Central Labour College, founded following the Ruskin students' strike of 1909; they also provided scholarships to members.⁸⁷⁸ Central Labour College courses included Advanced Economics, taught by the future MFGB MP for Rhondda East W. H. Mainwaring; 'Trade Union Law and the Law of Industrial Accidents', taught by the solicitor W. H. Thompson; others included the History of Socialism, Economic Geography, the Co-operative Movement, Local Government and 'Some Aspects of Labour Party Work'.⁸⁷⁹ The emphasis was predominantly, if not exclusively, on subjects of practical use to the trade unionist. One legacy of labour movement attitudes to education, the prioritisation of 'practical' intellectual work likely served to encourage Labour's 'Victorian suspicion of any form of knowledge that could not demonstrate its 'usefulness'' noted by Stack.⁸⁸⁰

Such suspicion was cemented by cultural change within the party since the First World War. A substantial number of former Liberals, often from the professions, now transferred their political allegiance to Labour, with many joining the ILP: a shift facilitated by wartime membership of pacifist and other bodies such as the Union of Democratic Control [UDC]. Prominent amongst these new recruits were Charles Trevelyan, Viscount Haldane and Christopher Addison – former Liberal Cabinet ministers – as well as Sydney Arnold, Charles Roden Buxton, Noel Buxton, Hastings Lees-Smith, Arthur Ponsonby, Morgan Phillips Price and Josiah Wedgwood; they were joined later in the 1920s by the likes of William Wedgwood Benn, William Jowitt and Joseph Kenworthy, and all became Labour parliamentarians.⁸⁸¹ As David Howell notes, many of these new recruits 'found office relatively accessible' in the Labour

⁸⁷⁸ W. W. Craik, *Central Labour College 1909-29. A Chapter in the History of Adult Working-class Education* (London, 1964). SWMF MPs who were CLC scholars included Bevan, George Daggan (Abertillery, Mon.), Ness Edwards (Caerphilly), Jim Griffiths (Llanelli), Arthur Jenkins (Pontypool, Mon.) and Ted Williams (Ogmore, Glam.); Will Lawther had also attended the CLC. See *ibid.*, pp. 172-186 for a list of prominent CLC graduates. On Ruskin College and the Workers' Educational Association, see Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, pp. 256-297.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170: this was the 1922 syllabus. For the Marxist aspect of working-class education, see Jonathan Rée, *Proletarian Philosophers. Problems in socialist culture in Britain, 1900-1940* (Oxford, 1984); on Marxism in working-class culture more broadly, Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science. Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* (Cambridge, 1980).

⁸⁸⁰ Stack, 'Labour and the Intellectuals', pp. 114.

⁸⁸¹ See David Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 309-317. Catherine Ann Cline, *Recruits to Labour. The British Labour Party 1914-1931* (New York, 1963) details many of these new recruits from Liberalism. For Conservatives who joined Labour, see Martin Pugh, 'Class traitors': Conservative recruits to Labour, 1900-30', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), 38-64. For a contemporary critique, see G. T. Garrett, *The Mugwumps and the Labour Party* (London, 1932).

governments of 1924 and 1929. Not only did they possess the 'communication skills and self-confidence that so many Labour backbenchers seemingly lacked', but they could also help demonstrate Labour's broad appeal and counter notions that the party was 'introverted, trade union-dominated, class-based'.⁸⁸² The sense that such figures had achieved office so rapidly, without a history of service to the labour movement could arouse trade unionists' resentment. The NUR MP Harry Charleton complained in the union's weekly that

The Labour party was founded by the trade unions. As we have progressed we have acquired intellectuals. My view is that they have not enriched us very much. We could have very well managed without them. Not many of them have won their spurs. They come into the movement and appear to think that they are entitled to the front seats straight away. Too many of them have had front seats. Few have justified their position.⁸⁸³

Such resentment was often compounded by the social distance of such middle-class figures from the mainstream of the movement. A German observer, Egon Wertheimer, suggested in 1929 that middle-class intellectuals in Britain found it easier to enter the Labour party compared to their counterparts on the continent; joining Labour did not require the same social sacrifice as entering the German SPD, to the extent that intellectuals in the British labour movement were free to keep their usual social circles without having to absorb themselves in the associational life of the party.⁸⁸⁴

The political commitment of such recruits might also be questioned. Some of the ex-Liberals had been drawn to Labour as they considered the party a more amenable vehicle for their progressive ambitions after 1918; this did not necessarily entail a wholesale acceptance of Labour's policies or party culture. Some new recruits did not stay long: Labour's Attorney-General in 1924, Patrick Hastings, left the party and parliament in 1926 to concentrate on his legal career. Such incidents could give rise to a sense that 'intellectuals' were merely playing at politics, rather than the serious commitment the achievement of the socialist commonwealth would require. These concerns reached their height in 1931, initially with the exit from Labour of Mosley and his associates. Several of these figures, including Mosley himself, could be

⁸⁸² Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931*, p. 317.

⁸⁸³ H.C. Charleton, 'Parliamentary – The Intellectuals', *Railway Review*, 17 July 1931.

⁸⁸⁴ Egon Wertheimer, *Portrait of the Labour Party* (London & New York, 1929), pp. 123-150.

characterised as wealthy interlopers promoted without first doing their service to the movement. Perhaps more significantly, the group who departed with MacDonald to form National Labour could also been viewed as 'intellectuals' in this regard: as Howell notes, only two of the eleven MPs (excluding Snowden, Thomas, and MacDonald's son Malcolm) who joined MacDonald had been PLP members prior to June 1929; five had been Liberal MPs or candidates, two active Conservatives. Only A. G. Church had any connection to the unions, although 'even for him the culture of trade unionism as centred around diverse experiences of industrial work remained a mystery'; without strong roots in the movement, for these MPs Labour was 'an instrument for progressive politics and in a crisis could be relinquished'.⁸⁸⁵ MacDonald and Snowden could also be castigated as 'intellectuals': neither came from a manual background, whilst both were well-known as having been engaged in intellectual work in the form of their earlier writing. Yet more crucial to such a characterisation were their distance from the movement, and political unreliability as expressed in their membership of the National government. Such unreliability was echoed in Labour's recent experience with the ILP: ILP opposition on several issues had embarrassed the Labour government, and disloyalty was an easy charge to level at the smaller organisation. Continuing the dispute over standing orders could appear indulgent in the context of Labour's difficult position after the 1931 election.

By 1932 the factors outlined had coalesced into a powerful image of the 'intellectual': wealthy, lacking roots in the movement, socially distant from most Labour members and trade unionists, impractical, irresponsible, and unreliable even to the point of disloyalty. It was in such a context that the Socialist League emerged: its short career was to be closely intertwined with the problem of 'intellectuals'. That it ended in failure in 1937 has not precluded interest in the League from historians. Michael Bor's somewhat sprawling account concludes that the League's 'cavalier approach to the party traditions (and official responsibilities) and public style of agitation were refreshing'. Paul Corthorn's more circumspect account analyses the League's relationship with the ILP and other organisations of the non-Communist left,

⁸⁸⁵ Howell, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931*, pp. 327-328. The eleven included four lawyers (William Jowitt, Craigie Aitchison, James Lovat Fraser, Holford Knight), two bankers (R. D. Denman, G. M. Gillett), two from literary backgrounds (S. F. Markham and Derwent Hall Caine), and two with backgrounds in education and the military (A. G. Church, E. N. Bennett). The other was a farmer (S. T. Rosbotham). See David Howell, 'Special Note: The Making of National Labour', *Dictionary of Labour Biography XIII*, pp. 116-136.

contending that conflicting views of the Soviet Union were at the centre of the left's inability to advance a coherent political position. David Blaazer considers the League in the context of a progressive tradition in British politics of which campaigns in the 1930s for united and popular fronts against fascism were a manifestation.⁸⁸⁶ Some older works' analyses of the Socialist League's failure remain instructive. Ben Pimlott, first in an article on the League, and later in his *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, suggested that the League isolated itself from mainstream Labour opinion, whilst its leaders 'showed a disastrous insensitivity to the realities of power and influence within the Labour movement'.⁸⁸⁷ In spite of this, Pimlott's understanding of the party as purely an 'electoral machine' is rather a narrow one, arguably precluding a full appreciation of the role of the industrial side of the movement in the League's failure. Patrick Seyd's account suggests that the lack of a 'working-class, trade union leadership' held the League back.⁸⁸⁸ What follows below seeks to push this analysis further through an examination of how concern about the role of 'intellectuals' influenced trade union responses to the League, and the ways in which exploitation of the image of the 'intellectual' contributed to its downfall.

The Socialist League was formed in October 1932, just prior to that year's Labour party conference, from an amalgamation of two groups: the Society for Socialist Inquiry and Propaganda [SSIP] and the ILP National Affiliation Committee. The SSIP had developed from a series of informal conferences held during the winter of 1930-31 before its formal launch in June 1931. A 'purely propagandist' body of 'Loyal Grouser', its members hoped to work towards a more constructive socialist programme whilst supporting the Labour government. Its leading personality was the Oxford academic G. D. H. Cole; it aimed to disseminate the policy work of another Cole-influenced body, the New Fabian Research Bureau [NFRB].⁸⁸⁹ Both SSIP – 'its initials being intended

⁸⁸⁶ Michael Bor, *The Socialist League in the 1930s* (London, 2005); Paul Corthorn, *In the Shadow of the Dictators. The British Left in the 1930s* (London & New York, 2006); David Blaazer, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition. Socialists, Liberals, and the Quest for Unity, 1884-1939* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁸⁸⁷ Ben Pimlott, 'The Socialist League: Intellectuals and the Labour Left in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History* 6:3 (1971), 12-38; and *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 41-58, 89-108.

⁸⁸⁸ Patrick Seyd, 'Factionalism Within the Labour Party: the Socialist League 1932-37', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 204-231.

⁸⁸⁹ For Cole's influence in the Labour movement more broadly, see Neil Riddell, 'The age of Cole'? G. D. H. Cole and the British Labour movement 1929-1933', *Historical Journal* 38:4 (1995), 933-957.

to carry a suggestion about its methods', i.e., zip – and the NFRB were conceived of as 'independent auxiliaries', free to discuss policy without becoming embroiled in parliamentary or conference politics: there was 'no question of quarrelling' with the party as the ILP had done.⁸⁹⁰ Cole was perhaps the most sensitive of Labour intellectuals to the sensibilities of trade unionists, including concerns about 'intellectuals', and endeavoured to secure union support for the venture.⁸⁹¹ Ernest Bevin of the TGWU and Arthur Pugh of the ISTC were early recruits, both keen for a more constructive Labour policy in the context of their disillusion with the government: Bevin agreed to the chair the new organisation, with Pugh and Cole himself as deputies. Provincial branches were established, with a total membership of around 500; a monthly bulletin went into circulation, and six policy pamphlets were published over the next year. The National Affiliation Committee, by contrast, was a product of the ILP's decision to disaffiliate from Labour in August 1932. A substantial section of ILP opinion disapproved of the split, and the Committee was established in late August with a view to reversing disaffiliation.⁸⁹² These hopes were soon dashed when leading pro-affiliation figures such as Patrick Dollan of Glasgow were expelled from the ILP; others including Frank Wise resigned. This prompted 'loyalists' to find a 'new organisational focus'.⁸⁹³ Rather than engaging in rivalry and organisational duplication – ILP affiliationists were also spread across the country – negotiations were opened in September for a merger with SSIP.

The discussions were to have significant implications for trade union support, in particular that of Bevin. Although an 'uncompromisingly proletarian figure', Bevin was

⁸⁹⁰ Margaret Cole, 'The Society for Socialist Propaganda and Inquiry' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 194-196; Margaret Cole, *The Life of G. D. H. Cole* (London, 1971), pp. 175-178; G. D. H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948), pp. 282-283.

⁸⁹¹ Robert Dare suggests that the very establishment of SSIP and the NFRB were symptoms 'of the declining impress of [...] independent intellectuals on the formation of party policy'. Robert Dare, 'Instinct and organization: intellectuals and British Labour after 1931', *Historical Journal* 26:3 (1983), 677-697, p. 695.

⁸⁹² The vote to disaffiliate, taken at the ILP's Bradford conference in August 1931, was 241-142; six of nine divisional conferences held earlier in the year had backed continued affiliation. The largest division, Scotland, expressed most opposition to disaffiliation; several Scottish ILP figures were to play a significant role in the Affiliation Committee. Gidon Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), pp. 15-28. Cohen suggests that the majority of ILP members would have preferred to stay within the Labour party.

⁸⁹³ Keith Laybourn, 'The disaffiliation crisis of 1932: the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the opinion of ILP members', in K. Laybourn and J. Shepherd (eds.), *Labour and Working Class Lives. Essays to celebrate the life and work of Chris Wrigley* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 127-130; Pimlott, 'The Socialist League: Intellectuals and the Labour Left in the 1930s', p.12.

no stranger to 'intellectual' work: he had made a significant contribution to the proceedings of the Macmillan Committee on Finance and Industry during 1930-31, and was receptive to unorthodox economic ideas; he had also served on the Labour government's Economic Advisory Committee.⁸⁹⁴ Restless and creative, often his energies were expended on more 'practical' problems of organisation, as noted in reference to the reform of the TGWU's political department in the previous chapter, and indeed, in the construction of the TGWU itself.⁸⁹⁵ He had been the 'star' of the initial SSIP conference, 'showing a grasp of economic and financial essentials which some of the younger intellectuals had scarcely thought to find in a trade union official'.⁸⁹⁶ If anything, however, his experience of SSIP had confirmed his existing suspicion of 'intellectuals'. A SSIP meeting in April 1932, at which Bevin was not present, had discussed the party's relations with the trade unions. Cole had raised the issue of giving 'the individual as compared with the Union representatives more say in Party policy', to which Hugh Dalton had responded 'we should make the most of what we have got and let sleeping dogs lie', referring to the party's 'unbalanced budget of four figures [...] it cannot do without Trade Union help'.⁸⁹⁷ On receiving the minutes, Bevin complained to Cole:

I must confess to being a little bit sick of this patronising air [...] from Dalton's observations, it would appear that we are only a useful adjunct because there is an unbalanced budget [...] Dalton went north to fight a seat which had been built up by Trade Union effort, and this kind of attitude towards us makes one wonder [...] it does give me the feeling that there is little difference in the attitude expressed therein and that of Herbert Samuel and the others.⁸⁹⁸

Here, for Bevin, Dalton was the 'intellectual': a latecomer taking advantage of trade union hard work and sharing political opinions with Liberals. Arguably Bevin could tolerate such figures provided they kept to their areas of expertise and stayed out of

⁸⁹⁴ Peter Clarke, *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making, 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1988), p. 123, and passim for Bevin's role and relationship with J. M. Keynes.

⁸⁹⁵ Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume 1. Trade Union Leader 1881-1940*, pp. 535 for this aspect of Bevin's character.

⁸⁹⁶ Cole, 'The Society for Socialist Propaganda and Inquiry', p. 196; Cole, *The Life of G. D. H. Cole*, p. 176. In both accounts Cole also, rather more patronisingly, refers to Bevin as the 'prize exhibit'.

⁸⁹⁷ MSS.126/EB/SS/1/4 Ernest Bevin papers, SSIP file, 'Notes on Easton Lodge Week-end', 16-17 April 1932, p. 5.

⁸⁹⁸ MSS.126/EB/SS/1/6 Ernest Bevin papers, SSIP file, Bevin to Cole, 12 May 1932.

politics.⁸⁹⁹ Despite his frustrations with the attitudes displayed in SSIP, he initially welcomed the amalgamation talks, although, in conversation with G. D. H. and Margaret Cole at the TUC Congress in Newcastle, 'his face showed plainly that he did not like the idea' of the former ILPers pushing the SSIP towards a more explicitly political approach; Cole too had reservations on this point.⁹⁰⁰ Perhaps seeking to counter-balance the ILP affiliationists, Bevin attempted to draw the Social Democratic Federation into the talks. The SDF was an organisation in serious decline, a far cry from its Victorian incarnation under H. M. Hyndman, yet it retained the loyalty of a number of prominent trade union figures including Will Thorne and Jack Jones of the NUGMW and George Hicks of the AUBTW. Its secretary Tom Kennedy, a former Labour chief whip, was hopeful that the 'new circumstances' since the ILP's exit would help revive its fortunes.⁹⁰¹ Cole raised the issue in negotiations, but given that the affiliationists, led by Frank Wise, were determined to push through the amalgamation in time for the party conference at Leicester, 'there was obviously no time to force them to start negotiating with the SDF before then'; the issue seems to have dropped thereafter.⁹⁰² Wise's group were insistent that the new organisation – the Socialist League – affiliate to the Labour party; they were also adamant that Bevin should not keep the chairmanship. Cole, outvoted, did at least manage to get his second preference for chairman, Arthur Pugh, to agree to serve on the new body's executive.⁹⁰³ Angered by these developments, Bevin now refused the vice-chairmanship of the NFRB; he effectively gave up on participation in groups apart from the party itself. In a letter to Kennedy in September he had emphasised the importance of such bodies in keeping socialist ideas before the public; by November he was writing, privately, that he had 'ventured from the path of rectitude in helping to establish the SSIP' in the first place.⁹⁰⁴ A crucial link between the 'intellectuals' of the new

⁸⁹⁹ See, for example, friendly correspondence with William Jowitt, who had followed MacDonald in 1931 but in his capacity as a barrister later acted for Bevin in a successful libel case against the *Daily Worker*: MSS.126/EB/X/12/95-96 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence 1930-36, Bevin to Jowitt, 6 June 1934, and Jowitt to Bevin, 6 June 1934.

⁹⁰⁰ Cole, 'The Society for Socialist Propaganda and Inquiry', p. 199-200.

⁹⁰¹ MSS.126/EB/X/12/158-161 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence 1930-36, Kennedy to Bevin, 15 September 1932; Bevin to Kennedy 17 September 1932.

⁹⁰² MSS.126/EB/X/12/167 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence 1930-36, Cole to Bevin, 20 September 1932.

⁹⁰³ MSS.126/EB/X/12/170-171 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence 1930-36, Cole to Bevin, 24 September 1932. Wise became chairman instead.

⁹⁰⁴ MSS.126/EB/X/12/160-161 and 172-175 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence 1930-36, Bevin to Kennedy, 17 September 1932; Bevin to Cole, 29 September 1932; Cole to Bevin, 2 October 1932; Bevin to Cole, 7 October 1932; Bevin to H. A. Franklin, 2 November 1932.

League and the unions had been broken. Pugh soon resigned, although the TGWU's Harold Clay continued to be involved for slightly longer, helping develop League policy on workers' control of industry.⁹⁰⁵ Pimlott suggests that Bevin's behaviour at this point was 'hardly that of a man nurturing a deep resentment' at losing the chairmanship; he helped secure the League a free column in the *New Clarion* almost immediately, for instance.⁹⁰⁶ However, it is arguable that Bevin's experience of working with party 'intellectuals' over a longer period had hardened his distrust of such figures to the point that he abandoned their organisations altogether; the loss of the Socialist League's chairmanship was simply the culmination of a longer process. As Pimlott further contends, the League's leaders 'showed a disastrous insensitivity to the realities of political power and influence' within the movement: in the alienation of trade union opinion as represented by Bevin, they got off to a bad start.⁹⁰⁷

The infant Socialist League appeared to score some policy successes at the Leicester party conference: an amendment to the NEC's resolution on banking and finance, moved by Wise, was carried on a card vote, committing Labour to the nationalisation of the joint stock banks; a further resolution moved by Charles Trevelyan was also agreed to – against the wishes of the NEC, despite Henderson's frequently interrupted efforts – calling for the immediate introduction of definite socialist legislation when Labour next took office.⁹⁰⁸ In the spring of 1933 the League ran a successful lecture series, the content of which was to make up much of the policy programme it adopted at its own conference that May. Stafford Cripps succeeded Wise as chairman in June, whilst the League began building up its organisation, claiming a membership of 2,000 by September.⁹⁰⁹ There was more apparent success at the 1933 Hastings conference with the NEC accepting for further consideration a proposal moved by Cripps urging that the 'means to be adopted by the next Labour government for a rapid and complete conversion of the Capitalist into the Socialist system' be specified; the NEC also

⁹⁰⁵ See Christopher Addison et al, *Problems of a Socialist Government* (London, 1933), pp. 209-228 for Clay's contribution to a lecture series on the subject.

⁹⁰⁶ Pimlott, 'The Socialist League: Intellectuals and the Labour Left in the 1930s', pp. 19-20.

⁹⁰⁷ Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, p. 6.

⁹⁰⁸ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1932*, pp. 188-194 for the debate on joint stock banks, and pp. 204-206 for 'definite socialist legislation'. As Pimlott notes, this was to be the height of the left's influence on party policy in the 1930s; the platform would not be so roundly 'trounced' at a party conference until the debate over unilateral nuclear disarmament in 1960. Pimlott, 'The Socialist League: Intellectuals and the Labour Left in the 1930s', p. 26.

⁹⁰⁹ On the League's organisation, see Seyd, 'Factionalism within the Labour Party: the Socialist League 1932-37', pp. 207-210.

accepted resolutions from Wise and Trevelyan, in the former case on the functions of a National Investment Board, and in the latter, pledging the movement to consult on the steps to be taken to resist a possible war, including a general strike.⁹¹⁰ The League's tactics now began to shift: its commitment to research was largely neglected, and it focused instead on converting the labour movement to its 'own brand of socialism'.⁹¹¹ By 1934, the policy committee of the NEC had been at work for some time in several areas of party policy: the result was the document *For Socialism and Peace*, presented to that year's party conference at Southport. A long series of amendments moved by the League were heavily defeated.⁹¹² In response to this disappointment, the League began to concentrate less on policy-making and more on agitation, launching a major recruitment drive in 1935-36 and focusing increasingly on foreign policy issues and resistance to war. Following Labour's defeat in the 1935 general election, the League took an increasingly independent line, with its national council coming out in favour of Communist affiliation to the Labour party in February 1936.⁹¹³ The Edinburgh party conference that October decisively rejected affiliation, and after League representatives, along with those of the ILP and CPGB, put their signatures to a Unity Manifesto in January 1937, the NEC determined that membership of the Socialist League was no longer compatible with membership of the Labour party.⁹¹⁴ In May, the League voted to dissolve itself rather than risk the expulsion of its members from the party. Its influence on the party's direction had proved largely insignificant, although as Seyd notes, it did 'provide a centre of opposition and of political activity for a significant number of activists who might otherwise have stayed in the wilderness'.⁹¹⁵

As will be seen below, the League's failure owed much to the fact that its ideas and policies were unable to gain much traction in the wider labour movement. The

⁹¹⁰ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, pp. 158-166 for Cripps' resolution on 'Labour's Goal – Socialism'; pp. 174-175 for Wise's 'Banking and Finance' amendment; pp. 185-188 on for the debate on Trevelyan's 'War and Peace' resolution. The League had submitted a total of twelve amendments to the policy document 'Socialism and the Condition of the People'; only those moved by Wise and Cripps were called. Seyd, 'Factionalism within the Labour Party: the Socialist League 1932-37', p. 214.

⁹¹¹ Pimlott, 'The Socialist League: Intellectuals and the Labour Left in the 1930s', p. 26.

⁹¹² See, for example Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1934, pp. 158-165, 175-178, and 191-199.

⁹¹³ Seyd, 'Factionalism within the Labour Party: the Socialist League 1932-37', p. 219.

⁹¹⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1936, pp. 207-211 for the debate on CPGB affiliation; Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of NEC meeting of 27 January 1937 for the League's disaffiliation.

⁹¹⁵ Seyd, 'Factionalism within the Labour Party: the Socialist League 1932-37', p. 224.

language of anti-intellectualism was a contributing factor in this failure. Frequently employed against the League and its leading personalities, the League did not help itself: much of its behaviour seemed to fit all too easily with the powerful image of the 'intellectual'.

The League's declared objective was to secure 'the adoption by the working-class movement of an advanced programme and a socialist outlook'. Doing so implied converting the Labour party to the League's line, which would necessitate the adoption of its policies by the party conference; this in turn relied on securing a sufficient number of votes for a conference majority. The largest votes at conference were the block votes of the major trade unions. In the period of the League's existence the number of trade union votes, based on the number of members each union affiliated to the party, never fell below 1,915,000, whilst the maximum number of votes of the constituency parties never exceeded 432,000; by contrast, the Socialist League itself never affiliated more than 3,000 members to Labour. Critics sometimes suggested that this implies that the views of left wing constituency parties were effectively steamrollered by the undemocratic block vote of right wing trade unions. Such a viewpoint does tend to introduce something of a false distinction and obscure the fact that not all unions voted the same way, just as not all constituency parties voted the same way. However, as the figures mentioned make clear, constituency party votes alone could not secure victory. Success relied upon gaining the block votes of enough sufficiently large unions to get a majority. In 1934, for instance, during the debates on *For Socialism and Peace*, the six largest union votes, in order of decreasing size, belonged to the MFGB (400,000 votes), TGWU (254,000), NUGMW (242,000), NUR (219,233), UTFWA (171,508), and NUDAW (100,256). At least three of these unions would need to be on side to have a chance of carrying the conference.

Gaining seats on the NEC provided another route to an influence on the party's direction. The party's policy committees were drawn from this body, which was elected annually in four sections: twelve members elected by and representing the trade unions, one member representing the socialist societies affiliated to the party, five members representing the constituency parties, and five women members, in addition to the Secretary, Treasurer, and the leader of the Parliamentary party. Crucially, during the whole period of the Socialist League's existence, the socialist societies, constituency and women's sections were all elected by the whole party conference:

this too required sufficient support from trade union votes. Of the figures associated with the Socialist League, just two were successful in its lifetime: Trevelyan in 1933, and Cripps in 1934. Voting for the NEC was not always ideological; inertia could be a powerful factor in election: many unions and DLPs would simply continue to support the candidates they had backed in previous years.⁹¹⁶ Even so, it is notable that both Trevelyan and Cripps received the lowest votes for a successful candidate in any NEC section.⁹¹⁷ Although the system was altered to give greater power to the constituency parties in 1937, this did not necessarily improve the left's position, with only three ostensibly left candidates out of seven being elected in this section in 1937.⁹¹⁸

Trade union block votes were not simply determined on a whim, or even during the course of a conference debate. As Bevin commented in the debate on changes to the composition of the NEC in 1937, 'there is no such thing in this Conference as a unanimous Trade Union opinion. In my own Union we are [...] pretty evenly divided and our votes are not decided'.⁹¹⁹ Each union sent a delegation to the party conference, almost always containing some of its national officials, as well as ordinary members. The size of these delegations could vary enormously: the Miners, for instance, typically sent around forty delegates, the Railwaymen just ten, smaller unions might not even send a delegate. Equally, the delegations' instructions could vary. Sometimes a union's own conference would have given its delegation a mandate if the party conference was discussing a similar issue, although given that union conferences tended to take place through the spring and early summer, whereas the party held its annual meeting in the autumn, often delegations had no specific mandate. In such a circumstance the usual course of action would be to try to follow as closely as possible the union's existing policy and vote accordingly. Alternatively, the delegation might meet the evening before the conference to decide how to vote: this seems to have been common practice in the NUR, for example. If the delegates

⁹¹⁶ Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference. A study in the politics of intra-party democracy* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 243-258, for a detailed discussion of the politics of NEC elections.

⁹¹⁷ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1933, p. 216, and *Annual Conference Report* 1934, p. 190. Trevelyan was the only successful candidate to receive less than a million votes in 1933; Cripps managed 1,187,000 in 1934.

⁹¹⁸ These were Harold Laski, Cripps, and D. N. Pritt. Whilst Cripps, who was placed fifth, received a larger vote than the long-serving George Dallas, Pritt scraped into the seventh spot with over 100,000 fewer votes than his fellow KC. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1937, pp. 180-181.

⁹¹⁹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1937, pp. 145-146.

was split on an issue, the union's vote would be cast, with very rare exceptions, for the majority view.⁹²⁰

The Socialist League's failure needs to be seen in this context, and so too do its apparent early successes. Wise's amendment calling for the nationalisation of the joint stock banks at the 1932 party conference was carried narrowly, by a majority of 157,000. This was a particularly tight margin for a conference card vote, with some 1,141,000 votes for, and 984,000 against.⁹²¹ A resolution calling for the public ownership of the entire banking system had been carried at the 1931 conference, with support from Ernest Bevin as well as George Lathan of the RCA; Wise withdrew an amendment to specifically include joint stock banks as he felt sufficiently assured from the platform that this was included within the meaning of the resolution.⁹²² Union delegations voting for Wise's amendment in 1932 might well have considered this to be simply a continuation of their previous policy as agreed only a year earlier. Many of the League's 1934 defeats were carried on a show of hands, but in cases where card votes were taken, large minority votes in favour of policies backed by the League have more complex explanations. The largest of these votes was the 592,000 cast in favour of CPGB affiliation to Labour at the 1936 Edinburgh conference. 400,000 of these were the block vote of the MFGB, and the Federation's position here needs to be understood in terms of its own internal politics, and the particular attitudes of its area unions to Communist involvement: the MFGB annual conference had voted in favour of affiliation by 283 to 238, with South Wales – where the SWMF president, Arthur Horner, was probably the country's best-known Communist trade unionist – and Durham in the majority.⁹²³ A further 70,000 votes likely came from the AEU, another union with a sizeable Communist faction: the AEU National Committee had amended a resolution calling specifically for CPGB affiliation into a rather more ambiguous

⁹²⁰ The ASW regularly split its vote proportionally according to its delegation's views. Lewis Minkin, *The Blair Supremacy. A study in the politics of Labour's party management* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 16-17.

⁹²¹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1932, pp. 188-194.

⁹²² Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1931, pp. 187-195; see also *Annual Conference Report* 1932, pp. 216-217.

⁹²³ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1936, pp. 207-211. Speaking for the MFGB, Will Lawther argued that the union's main problem in the coalfields had been Spencerism rather than Communism. For the debate in the MFGB, see D.845.15 MFGB, *Proceedings and Reports, 1936*, MFGB Annual Conference Report, pp. 58-72: assurances were given by Horner that the CPGB would accept and conform to the Labour party's constitution; these were regarded as worth little by opponents of affiliation such as John McGurk of Lancashire.

commitment to unifying all 'political bodies engaged in working-class propaganda', which might still be interpreted by delegates as including the CPGB.⁹²⁴

Such organisational constraints affected the Socialist League's ability to influence the party's direction. Its dearth of links with the industrial side of the movement was a key factor in this difficulty. As noted above, the loss of Bevin as chair was an ill-omen for the League's future; its only other links with significant trade union figures – Pugh and Clay – were brief and largely insubstantial. The image of the 'intellectual', into which League leaders – in particular Cripps, its most prominent personality from 1933 – often, if unconsciously, played, further compounded this problem.

Cripps came from a background of inherited wealth; he was the son of the former Conservative politician and later Labour peer and Cabinet minister Lord Parmoor, as well as being the nephew of Beatrice Webb. A barrister by profession, he had become Britain's youngest KC in 1926. Cripps joined Labour in 1929; by October 1930 he was in the government, having been chosen to succeed Sir James Melville as Solicitor-General. If his politics were those of a 'tame Government lawyer' before the crisis, the events of 1931 caused a rapid radicalisation of his perspective, and as one of the handful of former members of the government to keep his seat, Bristol East, he quickly became one of Labour's leading figures in the 1931 parliament alongside Lansbury and Attlee. Cripps had considerable wealth as a result of his legal career, which he continued alongside serving as an MP; aspects of his personality – including a 'messianic arrogance' – could grate with colleagues, whilst his political judgment was often questionable as he 'flitted from one attractive panacea to another'. As the League's leading personality from 1933 he became an 'uncompromising rebel'.⁹²⁵ In many ways Cripps appeared to fit the image of the 'intellectual' perfectly, with his shallow roots in the movement, wealth, changeable political views and a manner which could be contemptuous or patronising. His public statements also caused controversy and embarrassment for the party, such as his insinuation that a future Labour government would meet with opposition from Buckingham Palace; he certainly seems

⁹²⁴ TU/ENG/3/A/4 AEU, National Conference and Committee Reports, 1934-1937, AEU National Committee Report 1936, pp. 186-187.

⁹²⁵ Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, pp. 30-35 for Cripps' background; for longer studies see Eric Estorick, *Stafford Cripps. A Biography* (London, 1949); Colin Cooke, *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London, 1957); Chris Bryant, *Stafford Cripps. The First Modern Chancellor* (London, 1997); Peter Clarke, *The Cripps Version. The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps* (London, 2003).

to have given the Conservatives considerable ammunition.⁹²⁶ Cripps resigned from the NEC in October 1935 over the issue of sanctions on Italy over its invasion of Abyssinia, although he returned two years later in the now expanded constituency parties section. An advocate for a Popular Front after the Munich crisis, Cripps submitted a memorandum to the NEC arguing for a national campaign on these lines; from this perspective a united opposition was the only means of securing electoral victory over the National government. Cripps only obtained the support of two NEC colleagues, Pritt and Ellen Wilkinson, and his memorandum was not adopted. However, he now went over the heads of the NEC and circularised all DLPs with the memorandum; this act of blatant disloyalty led to his expulsion from the party, after he refused to reaffirm his allegiance to the party and withdraw his memorandum; the party conference in May affirmed this decision by a large majority.⁹²⁷

Union figures made effective use of the image of the 'intellectual' to attack Cripps and his allies. Responsibility was something intellectuals were presented as lacking. Union leaders constantly emphasised the fact that they had to act responsibly. The comments of Bevin, John Marchbank, and Charles Dukes of the NUGMW during the debate on the Italian invasion of Abyssinia at the 1935 Brighton party conference are indicative of this. Dukes contrasted responsible trade union leadership with that of Cripps and William Mellor of the Socialist League: 'I do not mind a Bevin or a Marchbank, or anybody else who can really say to this movement 'I tomorrow will lead my men', but I resent people who have no idea as to what these people think — people who have no authority, no responsibility, no influence', the suggestion being that the Socialist Leaguers were speaking on behalf of no-one but themselves. Marchbank argued that trade union representatives 'have to take decisions which are unpopular. It is one thing to be in a position of responsibility, and to have to give a decision, and another thing to make speeches without responsibility'. Bevin, criticising Cripps, asked 'who am I to let my personality protrude as compared to this great movement? Who is any man on that platform?', before recounting Cripps' recent resignation from the NEC; not only, for Bevin, had this left the rest of the Executive with added responsibility, but

⁹²⁶ See LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935, Conservative Central Office, *General Election 1935. Notes for Speakers and Workers* (London, 1935), for numerous quotations from Cripps.

⁹²⁷ For the relevant NEC decisions, Labour Party NEC papers, minutes of meetings of NEC, 13 January 1939, 18 January 1939, 25 January 1939. Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1939*, pp. 219-220, 226-236.

that Cripps had effectively stabbed the rest of the Executive in the back. This offence against the ethos of the movement was clear: 'I ask any trade unionist: have you ever found it in your own union? Have we ever treated one another like that?'⁹²⁸

Being politically unreliable, potentially to the point of disloyalty, was another aspect of this image; Bevin's characterisation of the exit of MacDonald and his National Labour associates in 1931 as the 'betrayal of the intellectuals' reflects this. In the 1937 party conference debate on the Unity Campaign, the MFGB's John McGurk expressed this bluntly:

If Sir Stafford Cripps, Professor Laski and all the other fellows desire to have a United Front, why cannot they form a Party of their own, or else join the Party for which they have done so much good, namely, the Tory Party [...] Sir Stafford Cripps is a rich man with rich friends, and they are the biggest danger to the Labour Party in this country. You will find those chaps where Mosley is before longer. I am expressing an opinion that is shared by many people in this Conference. Mosley did exactly the same.⁹²⁹

The mention of Laski adds to the sense that 'intellectuals' were the problem; the reference to Mosley was calculated to be as damning as possible. Although McGurk was very much a figure on the MFGB's right, at other times there was support within the union for Cripps and the positions he took: Ebby Edwards and Will Lawther shared a platform with him on the day of his expulsion in 1939.⁹³⁰ Cripps' work for the MFGB, free of charge, as their legal counsel during the inquiry into the Gresford colliery disaster had helped build goodwill. However, the distinction between the political and the industrial which was part of the movement's culture limited the extent to which Cripps' industrial/professional identity was a political aid: when G. R. Strauss tried to defend Cripps against McGurk's attack by referring to his work on the Gresford inquiry, Morrison, speaking next, dismissed this as inappropriate: 'That sort of thing ought not to be exploited'.⁹³¹ Other prominent League members could be accused of political

⁹²⁸ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1935, pp. 158-60 (Marchbank), 172-173 (Dukes), 177-180 (Bevin).

⁹²⁹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1937, p. 160.

⁹³⁰ Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, p. 173.

⁹³¹ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report* 1937, pp. 160-161.

unreliability: J. T. Murphy, its secretary from 1934, had been a long-standing member of the CPGB until as recently as 1932.⁹³²

A further way in which intellectuals could offend the party ethos related to the ordering of political priorities, and particularly time-wasting on issues not of immediate importance. Citrine claimed to have wound up a meeting with members of the League stating that he did not propose to waste further time discussing 'ultimate socialist objectives of a theoretical character' having come expecting 'practical politics'.⁹³³ The TGWU's George Brown's dismay that the party had wasted crucial time 'arguing the toss' over Cripps' fate in 1939 arguably represents another use of this aspect of the image.⁹³⁴

Between 1932 and 1937, the Socialist League repeatedly challenged the policy of the Labour party but was unable achieve any lasting success. One dimension of its failure was linked to the structure of power within the Labour party's organisation. The League was unable to gain the necessary support from enough major trade unions to carry its resolutions at the party conference, which severely limited its ability to have an influence on the direction of the party in the period after the crises of 1931. This failure was compounded by the way in which the League appeared to regularly offend against the prevailing ethos of the party, and trade union leaders were able to undermine the League through the use of image of the 'intellectual', representing the antithesis of central Labour's assumptions about responsibility, reliability, and loyalty. Such loyalty could matter more than the principles involved: Cripps' notorious comments about the influence on Buckingham Palace in January 1934 are illustrative. Although forced to clarify his words publicly, he remained a member of the NEC's policy subcommittee on constitutional affairs. Labour's prevailing ethos, as implied by Drucker, then, was in important ways an exclusive one, and it is not implausible to suggest that this was likely to repel more independently-minded left-wingers who might otherwise have become supporters.⁹³⁵ If Cripps and the Socialist League helped give shape to the

⁹³² See Ralph Darlington, *The Political Trajectory of J. T. Murphy* (Liverpool, 1998).

⁹³³ Citrine, *Men and Work. The Autobiography of Lord Citrine*, pp. 293-301 for a discussion of 'the intellectuals'.

⁹³⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report 1939*, pp. 235-236; George Brown, *In My Way. The Political Memoirs of Lord George-Brown* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 37-38.

⁹³⁵ H. M. Drucker, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (London, 1979). Hugh Ross Williamson's critique in his *Who is for Liberty?* (London, 1939) is one reflection of this; George Orwell's charge that the party's reliance on the trade unions made it 'hopelessly parochial' is another.

image of the 'intellectual' when it was at its most potent in the 1930s, it was less effective against the left during the next period of major readjustment in the party in the 1950s. Although his resignations, first from the Labour government and later from the shadow cabinet, could result in the charge that Aneurin Bevan was acting irresponsibly, the image of the 'intellectual' did not stick to the Bevanites as it had to the League: there was little chance of them working with the Communists, for instance. If anything the Labour left of the 1950s became more adept at deploying the image against the Gaitskellite right in the language of 'desiccated calculating machines', 'Jaywalkers' and the 'Hampstead Set'.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁶ Interestingly Gaitskell himself had been a member of SSIP; he left the organisation on the formation of the Socialist League.

Conclusions

This thesis has argued that the trade unions played a crucial role in the recovery of the British Labour party in the decade after 1931. The party had been rocked by a series of interlinked crises. The inertia of the Labour government of 1929 in the face of mass unemployment and financial crisis had undermined the party's confidence in an inevitable, gradual transition from capitalism to socialism and exposed the often flimsy basis of its policies: in R. H. Tawney's phrase, 'less programmes than miscellanies – a glittering forest of Christmas trees, with presents for everyone'.⁹³⁷ Defections by leading Labour politicians – most prominently MacDonald, Snowden and Thomas in August 1931, but also that of Mosley earlier in the year, followed by the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932 – also shook the party. The catastrophic election result in October wiped out swathes of Labour's parliamentary forces, including key leadership figures such as Henderson who were effectively removed from the political stage; the defeat also brutally dented the notion of Labour's 'forward march'. In the context of these calamities the unions provided vital stability, in spite of their unease about the direction of the Labour government, and the economic depression which constrained their resources, often severely. Their solidity in this dark period gave the party an essential base from which its recovery could be built.

Through the political levy collected from the 'contracting-in' membership, unions provided Labour with indispensable financial support. On several occasions they came to the party's aid – as in 1931 and 1939 – when bankruptcy appeared to be looming. Their affiliation fees gave party headquarters its more substantial regular source of income, allowing it to continue its routine functions. Political funds were often under intense pressure in the context of the depression, but unions continued to make generous contributions to Labour's general election and campaign appeals. This allowed Labour to compete with the Conservatives and Liberals at both the national

⁹³⁷ R. H. Tawney, 'The Choice before the Labour Party', *Political Quarterly* 3:3 (1932), 323-345.

and constituency level. Those unions which sponsored parliamentary candidates gave significant support to divisional Labour parties, providing regular annual grants as well as election expenses; this meant that these DLPs were more likely to be able to afford to pay for the services of an agent and develop their organisation; the potential for success of these DLPs would have been the lesser without this support. At local level, union affiliation to DLPs also provided regular finance, as well as members. Much of the voluntary effort on which the party depended came from union activists. Few alternative sources of funding were available: although there remained some individual exceptions, Labour was never able to rely on private wealth as its main political rivals could, and what money there was had to be pushed as far as possible.

Whilst there were instances where resources were used inefficiently – most notably in the concentration of union money in ‘safe’ seats – unions also engaged closely in organisational reforms designed to put the party on a more sustainable basis.⁹³⁸ Union figures such as George Lathan made an important contribution to stabilising the party’s financial practices. Union backing made possible the establishment of superannuation schemes for party staff and agents, a significant step in the professionalisation of Labour’s organisation. Also of great importance was the development, led by prominent trade unionists like Bevin and Cramp, of the Hastings Agreement for the regulation of constituency finance. Another step towards a more professional party, this provided greater standardisation and reduced competition between sponsoring organisations. Although far from the kind of pooling arrangements envisaged by some, the system encouraged DLPs to take a greater share of the responsibility for their own funding and represented a key move towards the modernisation of constituency finance.

If securing ‘labour’ representation in the House of Commons had been the motivation behind the original foundation of the Labour Representation Committee, trade union sponsorship of parliamentary candidates ensured that it continued. Whilst the early 1930s saw the party develop a more explicitly socialist politics in both its rhetoric and policy agenda, through such sponsorship the unions ensured that the still significant goal of direct labour representation in Parliament was not lost sight of. Sponsorship was increasingly concentrated in the larger unions, most notably the MFGB, but small

⁹³⁸ Arguably even ‘safe’ seats were of great importance given the scale of the 1931 loss.

and medium sized bodies such as the Bakers and the Pottery Workers continued to contribute too. Different selection systems, involving varying degrees of membership participation were used; in some unions such as the NUR these became increasingly professionalised, making use of examinations and interviews to ensure potential candidates would be of sufficient calibre to make effective Labour representatives in the Commons. Such systems did continue to work to the advantage of those already well-known within a union, and to the exclusion particularly of women, but also of younger candidates in general. Another area where professionalisation took place was in the gradual separation of political and industrial spheres. An older generation of trade union leaders, for example, the likes of Will Thorne and J. H. Thomas, had straddled both, but leading officials were increasingly excluded, with growing recognition that both industrial leadership and political representation were full time roles. This was often a slow and halting process, as in the RCA, but it was largely irreversible by the end of the decade. There were notable exceptions at moments of crisis, Bevin's candidacy at Gateshead in October 1931 being perhaps the most notable, although these often relied on personal influence, in particular that of Henderson, to achieve. Unions' sense of propriety over particular constituencies could lead to conflict, as with the TGWU at Clay Cross in 1933. If there was a tendency for union candidates to be concentrated in safer seats, this could obscure the interplay of local and national factors which influenced electoral geography. Several nationally important union figures such as Arthur Hayday also maintained a strong local political identity. The language of Labour's appeal to the local electorate was also shaped by union experiences.

Trade union MPs continued to provide an important tranche of the Parliamentary Labour Party's personnel. Some union MPs lived up to the stereotype of elderly figures from the industrial side of the movement being effectively 'retired' into an ineffectual parliamentary career, but this generalisation masked greater complexity. Union MPs provided a direct, organic link to Labour's working class supporters; they were also able to speak with authority on industrial issues. Figures such as Tom Williams, George Hall and Dai Grenfell made important contributions to the depleted PLP in the 1931 parliament, sharing the burden of mounting an effective parliamentary opposition in the face of an enormous National government majority. Whilst often struggling to work effectively as a group, several trade union MPs played significant roles in the

structures of the PLP, both on its executive and as party whips. The development and modernisation of liaison between sponsored MPs and their unions during the 1930s was significant, improving the effectiveness of union and PLP efforts in the House of Commons. Such liaison might be informal, as in the MFGB's use of a loose group of 'Mining Members' in which Tom Cape and Gordon MacDonald played important roles; alternatively, it might be more structured, as in the increasingly professionalised TGWU political department headed from 1937 by John Price. This approach also involved the co-option of unsponsored MPs who were union members to increase the efficacy of liaison. Sponsored MPs had an important role to play in the wider labour movement, providing a link between the membership and parliament: this might be done through their presence at union conferences, members of party conference delegations, or through union journals such as the NUR's *Railway Review* or the *TGWU Record*. The effectiveness of communication varied, but unions did not seek to tightly control their MPs, recognising the primacy of their parliamentary work and their status as representatives rather than delegates.

Unions made an important contribution to Labour strategy. On their initiative, the National Joint Council was revived in 1932, improving co-operation between the TUC and the party, helping the labour movement co-ordinate its approach and speak with one voice to both the government and the public. In terms of policy-making, unions exercised a general influence on the direction of Labour policy towards more detailed, constructive solutions than promulgated in the 1920s. Labour's commitment to pluralist democratic politics was also shaped by the unions, notably in its rejection of political extremism.

The party's response to domestic fascism offers one example. Its strategy, developed through the NJC and TUC, sought to marginalise the political extremism of the far right through the exposure of fascists to public scrutiny. This entailed the systematic and detailed gathering of information, most notably in the party's 1934 questionnaire on local fascist activity, to build up an accurate picture of the fascist movement and facilitate responses. Union MPs contributed to parliamentary criticism of the British Union of Fascists after the violence at Olympia in June 1934, in so doing emphasising Labour's democratic credentials and its abhorrence of dictatorships of the political right or left. Trade unionists also contributed to the failure of British fascism through legal cases, most especially in John Marchbank's slander battle with Mosley himself.

The success of the moderate mainstream of the party in the 1930s in fending off attempts to secure the adoption of more radical policies and alliances with other parties also owed much to the role of the unions, both in organisational and political-cultural terms. Union suspicion of 'intellectuals' was a contributing factor in the failure of the Socialist League and its attempts to alter party policy and later pursue a 'united front' involving the Communist party. In contrast to the League's 'intellectuals', prominent trade unionists emphasised the value of responsibility and shaped the party's dominant ethos. This could cause frustration and hostility on parts of the Labour and broader left, but it helped Labour's claim to be a responsible potential government and contributed to the development of a party culture of solidarity and constitutionalism.

These developments were of considerable significance for Britain's political culture in the 1930s. In these various ways, trade unions ensured Labour's survival as a viable party of government, and as the major alternative to the National government: in this way, the unions contributed to the maintenance of liberal parliamentary democracy in 1930s Britain. This was a significant achievement. Despite the attractions of corporatism, unions remained party-political, committed to democratic pluralism. They not only provided the Labour party with moral and material resources, but ensured the continuation of direct representation of the industrial working class in British politics, helping to safeguard investment in the democratic system. Other parties may have attracted working class voters, but at this stage they did not make them their candidates. Labour's doing so, thanks in no small part to trade union involvement, helped it demonstrate its credentials of being for the 'people', something which was to contribute to its 1940s success. The party's recovery after 1931 was not inevitable; indeed, it still appeared to be far from national office in 1939, when another general election would likely have been lost. If the unions' work in rebuilding the party in the 1930s did not lead inevitably to Labour's return to government in 1940 or its electoral success in 1945, it did at least help to make those developments possible: it is hard to see how later successes could have been achieved without the unions' contribution after 1931.

These developments had longer-term implications for the party. If the greater respect in which unions were held during the 1940s owed much to their wartime role, then arguably their engagement with Labour in this earlier period also contributed. It was

more difficult for Conservatives to appeal to the 'conventional wisdom' of the 1920s, when they had – with a considerable degree of success – been able to portray unionised workers as sectional and selfish; at least until the greater industrial unrest of the 1960s and 1970s.⁹³⁹ The unions' role in this period in the constituencies also had a lasting effect. In those divisions where sponsorship occurred, Labour's electoral strength was consolidated to the extent that many such seats continued to regularly return Labour MPs until the end of the twentieth century and even beyond, often in an unbroken pattern. For example, the election of the RCA-sponsored Frank Anderson at Whitehaven (Cumberland) in 1935 began a string of Labour victories in the constituency (and under its later nomenclature of Copeland) which lasted until 2017.⁹⁴⁰

Several of the organisational reforms of the 1930s also had considerable longevity. The Hastings Agreement, although occasionally modified to take account of the changing value of money, remained in place until the 1990s when unions were often perceived as a liability to the party, as did the practice of direct sponsorship itself. In response to Labour's 1945 success, the Conservatives modernised much of their own finance and organisation; by the mid-1950s, the Labour reforms of the 1930s had become rather dated, particularly in comparison with those of their opponents. The Wilson Report of 1955 damned labour's organisation as being 'at the penny-farthing stage in a jet-propelled era'. This was arguably one aspect of the party's well-documented difficulties in an age of affluence: the electoral machine on which its greatest success in 1945 had been built was itself constructed in an age of poverty in the 1930s.⁹⁴¹ Limited resources had arguably forced more creative solutions to financial difficulties, but success could breed complacency about further reform.

The role of trade union candidates and MPs underwent considerable change in the post-war period. In the more corporatist post-war industrial context, unions were in much more direct consultation with government departments; consequently, their MPs' utility was reduced in this regard. Organisation for liaison, such as the system

⁹³⁹ Ross McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: the Conservative Party and the 'Public' in Inter-war Britain', in McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class. Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1991), 259-293.

⁹⁴⁰ The seat was lost to the Conservatives at a by-election in February 2017 and held by them at the general election four months later.

⁹⁴¹ For the party in the 'affluent' 1950s, see Lawrence Black, *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64. Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke, 2003), and Black's *Redefining British Politics. Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke, 2010).

developed by the TGWU in the 1930s, often fell in neglect as a result; it was only following the difficulties in the Labour government's relations with the unions at the time of *In Place of Strife* in 1969 that unions began to rebuild their organisation for liaison with their MPs all over again.⁹⁴² Bevin had argued in 1931 that

[...] just as in the last few years we have had to move away from the old 'election by ballot' for Trade Union officials, and have had to make an examination as to ability, we must do the same with candidates for public office, in order to find the necessary equipment for political representation [...] we shall endeavour to equip our people much better and more scientifically.⁹⁴³

Moves towards greater professionalisation took place in the 1930s; yet arguably the logic of such a development was recruitment from the professional classes, which marked a change in union candidatures after 1945. Several unions co-opted middle class MPs onto their parliamentary panels; Hugh Gaitskell, for instance, was an NUGMW MP. Correspondingly, the direct representation of working class interests in Parliament by working class MPs was reduced. The problem of effective labour representation has remained a live issue; after a similar expansion of Labour MPs from the professions in the 1990s and 2000s, several unions took steps to improve their parliamentary representation.⁹⁴⁴

The developments discussed in this thesis indicate several areas into which future research might inquire: its focus has been both national, and primarily on larger unions. There is considerable scope to explore, for instance, the unions' role in party finance further, in this period and others, through more locally-oriented studies; an examination of the problems faced by smaller unions engaging in politics might also be revealing in this regard. Political finance in Britain in general has been an under-researched area. This study has argued for the importance of the unions' role in the Labour party's recovery after 1931; there is still opportunity and necessity to continue exploration of their importance in modern British political history.

⁹⁴² See Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991); Sidney Weighall, *On the Rails* (London, 1983).

⁹⁴³ Ernest Bevin, 'Straight on Through the Wilderness', *Labour Magazine*, December 1931.

⁹⁴⁴ Unite, successor to the TGWU, introduced a 'future candidates programme' to this end; see www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/unitepolitics/future-candidates-programme [Accessed 12 January 2018].

Appendix: union membership and political finance

Tables

- a. AEU membership
- b. AEU central political fund
- c. MFGB membership
- d. MFGB central political fund
- e. MFGB area political funds: South Wales and Durham
- f. NUDAW membership
- g. NUDAW central political fund
- h. NUGMW membership
- i. NUGMW central political fund
- j. NUR membership
- k. NUR central political fund
- l. NUR political fund: branches, aggregate
- m. RCA membership
- n. RCA central political fund
- o. TGWU membership
- p. TGWU central political fund

a. AEU membership

Year	Total			TUC		Labour Party			Political membership estimated from contributions						
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Labour Aff'n	as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Income (£)	Pol. m'ship	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour aff'n as % of pol. m'ship
1931	183,777	-8,568	-4.5%	154,000	83.8	77,721	42.3	50.5	3,520	70,400			38.3	45.7	110.4
1932	171,165	-12,612	-6.9%	146,263	85.5	70,022	40.9	47.9	3,273	65,460	-4,940	-7.0%	38.2	44.8	107.0
1933	169,265	-1,900	-1.1%	130,048	76.8	70,004	41.4	53.8	3,255	65,100	-360	-0.5%	38.5	50.1	107.5
1934	182,233	12,968	7.7%	135,482	74.3	70,006	38.4	51.7	3,303	66,060	960	1.5%	36.3	48.8	106.0
1935	203,270	21,037	11.5%	145,951	71.8	70,009	34.4	48.0	3,325	66,500	440	0.7%	32.7	45.6	105.3
1936	248,209	44,939	22.1%	163,061	65.7	70,021	28.2	42.9	2,435	48,700	-17,800	-26.8%	19.6	29.9	143.8
1937	299,284	51,075	20.6%	248,209	82.9	70,021	23.4	28.2	3,244	64,880	16,180	33.2%	21.7	26.1	107.9
1938	333,619	34,335	11.5%	299,284	89.7	72,043	21.6	24.1	3,243	64,860	-20	0.0%	19.4	21.7	111.1
1939	376,401	42,782	12.8%	333,619	88.6	73,558	19.5	22.0	3,312	66,240	1,380	2.1%	17.6	19.9	111.0
1940	454,126	77,725	20.6%	376,401	82.9	74,080	16.3	19.7	3,322	66,440	200	0.3%	14.6	17.7	111.5

Sources: AEU Annual Financial Reports and AEU Executive Council's Reports to Annual National Committee, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports.

b. AEU political fund

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income (£)	Expenditure									Balance e/y (£)
			Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		Constituency organisation		Grants to District Committees		Elections		
				exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1931	10,522	3,782	6,459	972	15.0	595	9.2	707	10.9	3,224	49.9	7,845
1932	7,845	3,490	3,029	1,167	38.5	305	10.1	666	22.0			8,307
1933	8,307	3,355	4,260	1,805	42.4	476	11.2	613	14.4			7,403
1934	7,403	3,368	4,384	1,983	45.2	816	18.6	693	15.8	228	5.2	6,387
1935	6,387	3,420	6,219	1,242	20.0	800	12.9	692	11.1	2,514	40.4	3,588
1936	3,588	2,506	3,942	1,287	32.6	440	11.2	691	17.5			2,152
1937	2,152	3,266	4,317	1,942	45.0	671	15.5	800	18.5	50	1.2	1,101
1938	1,101	3,260	3,573	1,470	41.1	754	21.1	738	20.7			788
1939	788	3,325	3,149	1,379	43.8	600	19.1	437	13.9			964
1940	964	3,336	1,930	400	20.7	600	31.1	540	28.0	50	2.6	2,370

Sources: Calculated from AEU Annual Financial Reports and AEU Executive Council's Reports to Annual National Committee.

c. **MFGB membership**

Year	Total			TUC		Political					Labour Party			
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Pol. m'ship	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour Aff'n	as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	as % of pol. m'ship
1928	561,359			725,000	129.2	426,833			76.0					
1929	521,345	-40,014	-7.1%	600,000	115.1	359,808	-67,025	-15.7%	69.0	60.0	400,000			
1930	529,958	8,613	1.7%	600,000	113.2	356,647	-3,161	-0.9%	67.3	59.4	400,000			
1931	526,502	-3,456	-0.7%	600,000	114.0	354,631	-2,016	-0.6%	67.4	59.1	400,000	76.0	66.7	112.8
1932	498,487	-28,015	-5.3%	600,000	120.4	348,019	-6,612	-1.9%	69.8	58.0	400,000	80.2	66.7	114.9
1933	496,799	-1,688	-0.3%	500,000	100.6	368,236	20,217	5.8%	74.1	73.6	400,000	80.5	80.0	108.6
1934	499,269	2,470	0.5%	500,000	100.1	383,273	15,037	4.1%	76.8	76.7	400,000	80.1	80.0	104.4
1935	501,711	2,442	0.5%	500,000	99.7	392,456	9,183	2.4%	78.2	78.5	400,000	79.7	80.0	101.9
1936	531,059	29,348	5.8%	500,000	94.2	419,599	27,143	6.9%	79.0	83.9	400,000	75.3	80.0	95.3
1937	546,240	15,181	2.9%	518,423	94.9	404,860	-14,739	-3.5%	74.1	78.1	400,000	73.2	77.2	98.8
1938	587,125	40,885	7.5%	538,468	91.7	437,636	32,776	8.1%	74.5	81.3	442,875	75.4	82.2	101.2
1939	588,321	1,196	0.2%	584,442	99.3	424,905	-12,731	-2.9%	72.2	72.7	439,122	74.6	75.1	103.3
1940	588,402	81	0.0%	588,888	100.1						428,079	72.8	72.7	

Sources: MFGB Annual Statements of Accounts in MFGB Annual Proceedings & Reports, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports; Page Arnot, The Miners in Crisis and War.

d. MFGB political fund

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income		Expenditure							Balance e/y (£)
		from districts (£)	retained by MFGB (£)	Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		"Parliamentary salaries"		Elections		
					exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1929-30	38,408	38,149	20,703	21,645	12,038	55.6	6,706	31.0			37,466
1930-31	37,466	35,740	20,888	14,414	5,371	37.3	6,115	42.4	700	4.9	43,940
1931	43,940	20,517	10,985	23,367	1,891	8.1	2,733	11.7	17,046	72.9	31,557
1932	31,557	36,633	18,736	14,259	6,957	48.8	3,780	26.5			34,988
1933	34,988	39,272	20,026	12,550	7,122	56.7	3,749	29.9	85	0.7	33,476
1934	33,476	38,775	20,062	13,049	7,017	53.8	3,758	28.8	49	0.4	40,489
1935	40,489	39,855	20,536	26,931	7,069	26.2	3,972	14.7	13,663	50.7	34,095
1936	34,095	42,475	21,776	15,416	7,133	46.3	5,985	38.8			40,454
1937	40,454	42,450	21,952	16,562	7,964	48.1	6,157	37.2			45,818
1938	45,818	44,051	22,823	14,339	7,400	51.6	4,573	31.9	50	0.3	54,172
1939	54,172	42,907	22,375	21,681	14,483	66.8	4,642	21.4	150	0.7	55,104
1940	55,104	42,877	22,518	16,501	8,270	50.1	4,425	26.8			61,071

Source: Calculated from MFGB Annual Statements of Accounts in MFGB Annual Proceedings & Reports

e. **MFGB area political funds: South Wales and Durham**

Year	South Wales Miners' Federation							Durham Miners' Association		
	Balance s/y (£)	Total income (£)	Expenditure (£)				Balance e/y (£)	Total exp. (£)	Balance e/y	
			Political Levy to MFGB	To SWMF districts	General election	DLP affil. fees				Total exp.
1929								17,238	21,304	
1930	1,778	4,677	1,521	2,092			3,613	2,842	12,370	23,662
1931	2,842	7,585	3,769	1,646	2,585		9,145	1,283	16,195	28,892
1932	1,283	3,747	2,000	1,902			3,902	1,128	11,585	32,577
1933	1,128	3,851	3,000	1,304			4,554	425	11,387	35,712
1934	425	6,105	2,625	1,691			4,531	1,998	12,563	38,249
1935	1,998	10,878	3,000	2,213	3,883	617	9,713	3,164	17,086	38,919
1936	3,164	7,166	3,500	1,855		1,381	7,144	3,186	12,646	41,514
1937	3,186	9,159	3,500	1,976		1,521	6,997	5,348	15,162	41,912
1938	5,348	9,072	4,625	2,356		1,783	8,764	5,655	17,958	39,292
1939	5,655	10,485	4,500	2,248		2,101	9,168	6,972	14,142	39,811

Sources: SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/1 SWMF Balance Sheets, 1918-39; Garside, The Durham Miners 1919-1960.

f. NUDAW membership

Year	Total			TUC		Political					Labour Party		
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Political m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour Aff'n	as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship
1929	111,847			108,766	97.2	85,590			76.5	78.7	70,000		
1930	116,208	4,361	3.9%	114,703	98.7	90,076	4,486	5.2%	77.5	78.5	85,590	73.7	74.6
1931	119,623	3,415	2.9%	119,089	99.6	93,339	3,263	3.6%	78.0	78.4	90,076	75.3	75.6
1932	123,206	3,583	3.0%	120,961	98.2	96,993	3,654	3.9%	78.7	80.2	93,339	75.8	77.2
1933	127,611	4,405	3.6%	126,571	99.2	102,116	5,123	5.3%	80.0	80.7	100,256	78.6	79.2
1934	134,021	6,410	5.0%	131,025	97.8	109,478	7,362	7.2%	81.7	83.6	106,937	79.8	81.6
1935	144,675	10,654	7.9%	134,021	92.6	120,518	11,040	10.1%	83.3	89.9	116,000	80.2	86.6
1936	158,103	13,428	9.3%	144,675	91.5	135,621	15,103	12.5%	85.8	93.7	125,000	79.1	86.4
1937	171,789	13,686	8.7%	158,103	92.0	148,586	12,965	9.6%	86.5	94.0	137,000	79.7	86.7
1938	182,633	10,844	6.3%	171,789	94.1	159,169	10,583	7.1%	87.2	92.7	150,000	82.1	87.3
1939	193,906	11,273	6.2%	182,633	94.2	169,281	10,112	6.4%	87.3	92.7	160,000	82.5	87.6
1940	223,487	29,581	15.3%	193,906	86.8	194,802	25,521	15.1%	87.2	100.5	170,000	76.1	87.7

Sources: NUDAW Annual Reports, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports

g. NUDAW central political fund

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income (£)	Expenditure									Balance end year (£)
			Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		Constituency organisation		Local political funds		Elections		
				exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1929	7,374	6,315	8,121	1,084	13.3%	2,540	31.3%	632	7.8%	2,999	36.9%	5,568
1930	5,568	8,327	6,381	1,420	22.3%	2,134	33.4%	844	13.2%	798	12.5%	7,514
1931	5,393	9,274	9,782	2,478	25.3%	2,420	24.7%	1,455	14.9%	2,432	24.9%	7,006
1932	3,241	9,580	6,322	1,868	29.5%	1,517	24.0%	1,791	28.3%			10,265
1933	5,098	10,040	7,482	1,895	25.3%	2,410	32.2%	1,928	25.8%	175	2.3%	12,823
1934	6,238	10,741	8,771	2,490	28.4%	2,716	31.0%	2,477	28.2%			14,791
1935	7,147	12,168	15,655	2,190	14.0%	2,791	17.8%	3,942	25.2%	4,969	31.7%	11,306
1936	3,748	14,211	9,777	2,505	25.6%	1,953	20.0%	2,726	27.9%			15,740
1937	6,578	15,690	10,743	2,988	27.8%	1,683	15.7%	3,755	35.0%			20,688
1938	10,489	16,982	11,481	3,512	30.6%	1,891	16.5%	3,677	32.0%	141	1.2%	26,189
1939	14,509	17,493	11,919	4,394	36.9%	1,918	16.1%	3,065	25.7%			31,763
1940	17,841	17,433	10,653	3,581	33.6%	1,918	18.0%	2,712	25.5%			38,543

Source: Calculated from NUDAW Annual Reports

h. NUGMW Membership

Year	Total			TUC		Labour Party			Political membership calculated from contributions						
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Labour Aff'n	as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Income (£)	Pol. m'ship	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of Labour aff'n	Labour aff'n as % of pol. m'ship
1928	283,906					289,393	101.9		14,448	216,720			76.3	74.9	133.5
1929	290,877	6,971	2.5%	258,371	88.8	250,000	85.9	96.8	15,839	237,585	20,865	9.6%	81.7	95.0	105.2
1930	282,903	-7,974	-2.7%	261,023	92.3	250,000	88.4	95.8	16,588	248,820	11,235	4.7%	88.0	99.5	100.5
1931	267,734	-15,169	-5.4%	257,523	96.2	250,000	93.4	97.1	15,600	234,000	-14,820	-6.0%	87.4	93.6	106.8
1932	241,998	-25,736	-9.6%	240,139	99.2	250,000	103.3	104.	13,934	209,010	-24,990	-10.7%	86.4	83.6	119.6
1933	241,447	-551	-0.2%	220,398	91.3	242,000	100.2	10.8	12,997	194,955	-14,055	-6.7%	80.7	80.6	124.1
1934	269,357	27,910	11.6%	229,934	85.4	242,000	89.8	05.2	13,779	206,685	11,730	6.0%	76.7	85.4	117.1
1935	300,145	30,788	11.4%	252,422	84.1	242,000	80.6	95.9	14,966	224,490	17,805	8.6%	74.8	92.8	107.8
1936	366,467	66,322	22.1%	260,130	71.0	242,000	66.0	93.0	16,526	247,890	23,400	10.4%	67.6	102.4	97.6
1937	439,287	72,820	19.9%	339,821	77.4	242,000	55.1	71.2	18,463	276,945	29,055	11.7%	63.0	114.4	87.4
1938	452,367	13,080	3.0%	405,359	89.6	242,000	53.5	59.7	18,876	283,140	6,195	2.2%	62.6	117.0	85.5
1939	467,060	14,693	3.2%	417,131	89.3	242,000	51.8	58.0	18,855	282,825	-315	-0.1%	60.6	147.6	67.8
1940	479,318	12,258	2.6%	430,354	89.8	242,000	50.5	56.2	19,230	288,450	5,625	2.0%	60.2	124.8	80.1

Sources: NUGMW Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheets, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports.

i. NUGMW central political fund

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income (£)	Expenditure									Balance end year (£)
			Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		Constituency organisation		Local political funds		Elections		
				exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1929	7,374	6,315	8,121	1,084	13.3	2,540	31.3	632	7.8	2,999	36.9	5,568
1930	5,568	8,327	6,381	1,420	22.3	2,134	33.4	844	13.2	798	12.5	7,514
1931	5,393	9,274	9,782	2,478	25.3	2,420	24.7	1,455	14.9	2,432	24.9	7,006
1932	3,241	9,580	6,322	1,868	29.5	1,517	24.0	1,791	28.3			10,265
1933	5,098	10,040	7,482	1,895	25.3	2,410	32.2	1,928	25.8	175	2.3	12,823
1934	6,238	10,741	8,771	2,490	28.4	2,716	31.0	2,477	28.2			14,791
1935	7,147	12,168	15,655	2,190	14.0	2,791	17.8	3,942	25.2	4,969	31.7	11,306
1936	3,748	14,211	9,777	2,505	25.6	1,953	20.0	2,726	27.9			15,740
1937	6,578	15,690	10,743	2,988	27.8	1,683	15.7	3,755	35.0			20,688
1938	10,489	16,982	11,481	3,512	30.6	1,891	16.5	3,677	32.0	141	1.2	26,189
1939	14,509	17,493	11,919	4,394	36.9	1,918	16.1	3,065	25.7			31,763
1940	17,841	17,433	10,653	3,581	33.6	1,918	18.0	2,712	25.5			38,543

Source: Calculated from NUGMW Half-Yearly Report and Balance Sheets.

j. **NUR membership**

Year	Total			TUC		Political					Labour Party					
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Political m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour Aff'n	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	as % of pol. m'ship
1929	312,879			312,878	100.0						255,993					
1930	334,835	21,956	7.0%	310,330	92.7						241,170			72.0	77.7	
1931	295,268	-39,567	-11.8%	320,862	108.7	237,379			80.4	74.0	253,442	12,272	5.1%	85.8	79.0	106.8
1932	289,925	-5,343	-1.8%	309,668	106.8	228,345	-9,034	-3.8%	78.8	73.7	234,729	-18,713	-7.4%	81.0	75.8	102.8
1933	275,706	-14,219	-4.9%	284,842	103.3	216,493	-11,852	-5.2%	78.5	76.0	219,233	-15,496	-6.6%	79.5	77.0	101.3
1934	290,723	15,017	5.4%	272,316	93.7	219,061	2,568	1.2%	75.4	80.4	207,465	-11,768	-5.4%	71.4	76.2	94.7
1935	305,972	15,249	5.2%	290,723	95.0	222,347	3,286	1.5%	72.7	76.5	208,124	659	0.3%	68.0	71.6	93.6
1936	337,848	31,876	10.4%	305,972	90.6	233,808	11,461	5.2%	69.2	76.4	216,613	8,489	4.1%	64.1	70.8	92.6
1937	364,356	26,508	7.8%	337,848	92.7	245,183	11,375	4.9%	67.3	72.6	214,919	-1,694	-0.8%	59.0	63.6	87.7
1938	366,659	2,303	0.6%	364,356	99.4	244,368	-815	-0.3%	66.6	67.1	224,809	9,890	4.6%	61.3	61.7	92.0
1939	349,542	-17,117	-4.7%	366,658	104.9	229,789	-14,579	-6.0%	65.7	62.7	232,067	7,258	3.2%	66.4	63.3	101.0
1940	361,750	12,208	3.5%	349,542	96.6	226,883	-2,906	-1.3%	62.7	64.9	220,359	-11,708	-5.0%	60.9	63.0	97.1

Sources: NUR Annual Reports & Financial Statements and Annual Statements of Membership & Branch Grouping; NUR Political Subcommittee Minute Book; TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports.

k. **NUR central political fund**

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income (£)	Expenditure							Balance end year (£)
			Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		Constituency organisation		Elections		
				exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1929	76,388	13,063	20,439	3,637	17.8	4,463	21.8	9,637	47.2	72,904
1930	72,904	13,728	12,448	5,034	40.4	4,503	36.2			77,926
1931	77,926	12,715	24,772	5,862	23.7	3,573	14.4	8,417	34.0	69,777
1932	69,777	11,875	9,681	4,251	43.9	1,667	17.2			75,684
1933	75,684	11,238	12,352	4,687	37.9	3,037	24.6			78,173
1934	78,173	11,273	10,608	3,981	37.5	2,850	26.9			82,573
1935	82,573	11,733	26,558	7,929	29.9	2,935	11.1	9,819	37.0	71,892
1936	71,892	11,641	10,550	5,065	48.0	1,592	15.1			74,801
1937	74,801	12,177	17,234	9,538	55.3	1,786	10.4			71,614
1938	71,614	12,570	12,624	4,376	34.7	1,896	15.0			73,399
1939	73,399	11,936	16,618	5,814	35.0	2,156	13.0			70,506
1940	70,506	11,421	10,736	4,636	43.2	2,113	19.7			72,786

Source: Calculated from NUR Annual Reports & Financial Statements.

I. NUR political fund: branches, aggregate

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Expenditure (£)				Balance e/y (£)
		Affil. fees	Printing, goods	Other	Total	
1929	37,413	3,218	509	19,732	23,458	28,388
1930	28,388	3,255	365	6,542	10,162	33,137
1931	33,137	3,212	448	15,702	19,362	27,243
1932	27,543	2,926	550	6,692	10,169	30,201
1933	30,201	2,840	467	6,949	10,255	31,991
1934	31,991	2,702	527	8,143	11,372	32,967
1935	32,966	2,813	405	15,216	18,434	26,551
1936	26,541	2,617	579	6,587	9,783	29,117
1937	29,116	2,795	485	8,004	11,284	30,757
1938	30,756	2,811	511	7,047	10,392	33,684
1939	33,684	2,691	498	4,714	7,904	38,520
1940	38,520	2,616	526	3,585	6,627	44,210

Source: NUR Annual Reports & Financial Statements.

m. RCA membership

Year	Total			TUC		Political			Labour Party			
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	% m'ship paying levy	Approx. pol. m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour Aff'n	as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	as % of pol. m'ship
1929	54,347			52,500	96.6				43,500			
1930	59,473	5,126	9.4%	54,250	91.2				47,000	79.0	86.6	
1931	59,158	-315	-0.5%	58,500	98.9				48,000	81.1	82.1	
1932	58,964	-194	-0.3%	59,580	101.0	80.0	47,171	79.2	48,000	81.4	80.6	101.8
1933	57,968	-996	-1.7%	58,972	101.7				48,000	82.8	81.4	
1934	58,677	709	1.2%	58,700	100.0				48,000	81.8	81.8	
1935	60,059	1,382	2.4%	58,677	97.7	81.94	49,212	83.9	48,000	79.9	81.8	97.5
1936	60,931	872	1.5%	60,059	98.6	82.45	50,238	83.6	49,000	80.4	81.6	97.5
1937	62,365	1,434	2.4%	60,931	97.7	83.05	51,794	85.0	49,000	78.6	80.4	94.6
1938	64,106	1,741	2.8%	62,365	97.3	83.83	53,740	86.2	49,000	76.4	78.6	91.2
1939	64,389	283	0.4%	64,106	99.6	84.68	54,525	85.1	50,000	77.7	78.0	91.7
1940	69,877	5,488	8.5%	64,389	92.1				50,000	71.6	77.7	

Sources: RCA Annual Reports, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports.

n. **RCA central political fund**

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Total Income (£)	Total Expenditure (£)	Balance e/y (£)
1928	9,793	7,135	5,288	11,641
1929	11,641	7,552	12,743	6,449
1930	6,449	8,361	5,792	9,018
1931	9,018	8,403	12,091	5,330
1932	5,330	7,940	5,615	7,654
1933	7,654	7,684	6,465	8,874
1934	8,874	7,760	6,152	10,481
1935	10,481	8,061	14,660	3,883
1936	3,883	8,670	6,773	5,779
1937	5,779	9,074	7,773	7,081
1938	7,081	9,648	6,874	9,855
1939	9,855	9,394	5,339	13,911
1940	13,911	9,136	5,031	18,015

Source: RCA Annual Reports.

o. TGWU membership

Year	Total			TUC		Political					Labour Party					
	Total m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		TUC m'ship	as % of total m'ship	Political m'ship (e/y figure)	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	Labour Aff'n	Annual change		as % of total m'ship	as % of TUC m'ship	as % of pol. m'ship
1929	422,836			285,636	67.6	234,080			55.4	82.0	180,000			42.6	63.0	76.9
1930	422,048	-788	-0.2%	388,932	92.2	255,100	21,020	9.0%	60.4	65.6	235,000	55,000	30.6%	55.7	60.4	92.1
1931	408,734	-13,314	-3.2%	384,000	93.9	276,300	21,200	8.3%	67.6	72.0	250,000	15,000	6.4%	61.2	65.1	90.5
1932	372,000	-36,734	-9.0%	390,000	104.8	273,800	-2,500	-0.9%	73.6	70.2	254,500	4,500	1.8%	68.4	65.3	93.0
1933	378,869	6,869	1.8%	390,000	102.9	273,400	-400	-0.1%	72.2	70.1	171,508	-82,992	-32.6%	45.3	44.0	62.7
1934	433,816	54,947	14.5%	368,000	84.8	308,186	34,786	12.7 %	71.0	83.7	225,000	53,492	31.2%	51.9	61.1	73.0
1935	493,266	59,450	13.7%	402,084	81.5	334,926	26,740	8.7%	67.9	83.3	247,715	22,715	10.1%	50.2	61.6	74.0
1936	561,908	68,642	13.9%	459,738	81.8	338,790	3,864	1.2%	60.3	73.7	274,454	26,739	10.8%	48.8	59.7	81.0
1937	654,510	92,602	16.5%	523,300	80.0	361,040	22,250	6.6%	55.2	69.0	301,000	26,546	9.7%	46.0	57.5	83.4
1938	679,360	24,850	3.8%	611,000	89.9	393,559	32,519	9.0%	57.9	64.4	337,000	36,000	12.0%	49.6	55.2	85.6
1939	694,474	15,114	2.2%	635,000	91.4	402,380	8,821	2.2%	57.9	63.4	380,000	43,000	12.8%	54.7	59.8	94.4
1940	743,349	48,875	7.0%	648,000	87.2	428,364	25,984	6.5%	57.6	66.1	373,177	-6,823	-1.8%	50.2	57.6	87.1

Sources: TGWU Annual Reports, TUC Annual Reports, Labour Party Annual Reports, Annual Returns to Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies.

p. TGWU central political fund

Year	Balance s/y (£)	Income (£)	Expenditure									Balance end year (£)
			Total expenditure (£)	Labour party affiliation fees, grants etc		Constituency organisation		Remitted to TGWU Areas		Elections		
				exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	exp. (£)	as % of total exp.	
1930	15,059	12,776	10,192	3,917	38.4	2,430	23.8			3,193	31.3	17,643
1931	17,643	12,872	21,508	4,104	19.1	2,158	10.0	6,705	31.2	3,634	16.9	9,006
1932	9,006	11,623	9,432	4,172	44.2	1,113	11.8			3,308	35.1	11,197
1933	11,197	11,473	7,628	2,187	28.7	1,218	16.0			3,219	42.2	15,042
1934	15,042	12,625	11,895	5,871	49.4	1,432	12.0			3,464	29.1	15,772
1935	15,772	13,846	17,128	4,195	24.5	1,300	7.6	6,796	39.7	3,828	22.3	12,489
1936	12,489	15,308	11,031	4,704	42.6	1,388	12.6			4,167	37.8	16,766
1937	16,766	17,871	14,552	5,784	39.7	2,125	14.6			4,763	32.7	20,086
1938	20,086	20,270	14,588	6,459	44.3	2,308	15.8			5,343	36.6	25,768
1939	25,768	19,381	15,987	7,265	45.4	2,312	14.5			5,301	33.2	29,179
1940	29,179	17,988	14,981	7,137	47.6	2,150	14.4			4,746	31.7	32,169

Source: Calculated from TGWU Annual Reports

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Archival material

Gwent Archives, Ebbw Vale

Miners' Federation of Great Britain

- D.845.13 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1933.
- D.845.14 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1935.
- D.845.15 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1936.
- D.845.16 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1937.
- D.845.17 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1938.
- D.845.18 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1939.
- D.845.19 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1940.
- D.845.62 MFGB, Proceedings and Reports, 1929-30.

South Wales Miners' Federation

- D.845.70 SWMF, Minutes, 1930.
- D.845.71 SWMF, Minutes, 1931.
- D.845.72 SWMF, Minutes, 1932.
- D.845.73 SWMF, Minutes, 1933.
- D.845.74 SWMF, Minutes, 1934.
- D.845.75 SWMF, Minutes, 1935.
- D.845.76 SWMF, Minutes, 1937.
- D.845.77 SWMF, Minutes, 1938.

Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People's History Museum, Manchester

Labour Party Archive

Labour Party, National Executive Committee Minutes, 1931-1941.

Labour Party, Pamphlets Collection.

LP/ELEC/1929/1 General election material, 1929.

LP/ELEC/1931/1 General election material, 1931, box 1.

LP/ELEC/1931/2 General election material, 1931, box 2.

LP/ELEC/1935/1 General election material, 1935.

LP/FAS/33 Subject file, 'Fascism'.

LP/FAS/34/1-491 Report on fascist activity questionnaire.

Parliamentary Labour Party, Minutes of PLP Executive, 1928-37, 1941.

Parliamentary Labour Party, Minutes of PLP Meetings, 1928-37, 1940-41.

James and Lucy Middleton Collection

MID 57-63 Middleton correspondence etc, 1936-1940.

Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

Amalgamated Engineering Union

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/42 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1931.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/43 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1931.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/44 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1931.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/45 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1931.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/46 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1932.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/47 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1932.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/48 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1932.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/49 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1932.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/50 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1933.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/51 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1933.

MSS.259/AEU/1/1/52 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1933.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/53 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1933.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/54 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1934.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/55 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1934.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/56 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1934.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/57 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1934.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/58 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1935.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/59 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1935.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/60 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1935.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/61 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1935.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/62 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1936.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/63 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1936.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/64 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1936.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/65 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1936.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/66 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1937.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/67 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1937.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/68 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1937.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/69 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1937.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/70 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1938.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/71 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1938.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/72 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1938.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/73 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1938.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/74 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1939.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/75 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1939.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/76 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1939.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/77 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1939.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/78 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jan.-Mar. 1940.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/79 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Apr.-Jun. 1940.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/80 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Jul.-Sep. 1940.
MSS.259/AEU/1/1/81 AEU, Executive Council Minutes, Oct.-Dec. 1940.

MSS.259/AEU/4/1/10 AEU, Reports and Proceedings, 1931.

MSS.259/AEU/4/1/11 AEU, Reports and Proceedings, 1932.

Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers

MSS.78/AU/1/1/11 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, Jul. 1927-Jan. 1929.

MSS.78/AU/1/1/12 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, Jan. 1931-Sep. 1932.

MSS.78/AU/1/1/13 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, Oct. 1932-Jun. 1934.

MSS.78/AU/1/1/14 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, Jun. 1934-Jan. 1936.

MSS.78/AU/1/1/15 AUBTW, Executive Council Minutes, Apr. 1936-Aug. 1937.

Iron and Steel Trades' Confederation

MSS.36/ISTC/4/2 ISTC and BISAFTA, Reports, 1929-34.

MSS.36/ISTC/4/3 ISTC and BISAFTA, Reports, 1935-40.

National Union of General and Municipal Workers

MSS.192/GMW/D/1/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934.

MSS.192/GMW/F/1/1 NUGMW, Quarterly balance sheets, 1924-25.

MSS.192/GMW/F/1/2 NUGMW, Quarterly balance sheets, 1926-27.

MSS.192/GMW/F/1/3 NUGMW, Quarterly balance sheets, 1928-29.

MSS.192/GMW/F/1/4 NUGMW, Quarterly balance sheets, 1930-31.

National Union of Railwaymen

MSS.127/NU/1/1/1 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1913.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/10 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1922.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/11 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1923.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/12 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1924.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/13 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1925.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/14 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1926.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/15 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1927.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/16 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1928.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/17 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1929.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/18 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1930.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/19 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1931.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/20 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1932.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/21 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1933.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/22 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1934.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/23 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1935.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/24 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1936.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/25 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1937.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/26 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1938.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/27 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1939.

MSS.127/NU/1/1/28 NUR, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1940.

MSS.127/NU/1/4/1B NUR, AGM 1914, discussion on dual positions, political fund and political action.

MSS.127/NU/1/4/2C NUR, AGM 1915, election of Parliamentary candidates, discussions.

MSS.127/NU/1/8/1A-B NUR, Political Sub-committee minute-book & misc.

MSS.127/NU/4/3/4 NUR, Partial Alteration of Rules, 1925.

MSS.127/NU/4/3/5 NUR, Rules, 1935.

MSS.127/NU/4/5/17i-ii NUR, Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1938.

MSS.127/NU/12/4 NUR, Photographs of NUR official Party candidates.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/2 NUR, miscellany re: J. H. Thomas.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/2 NUR, file re: resignation of J. H. Thomas.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5A NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, 1934.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5B NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Jan.-May 1935.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5C NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Jun.-Aug. 1935.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5D NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, Nov.-Dec. 1935.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/5E NUR, Mosley v. Marchbank material, 1936-38.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/24 NUR, file of biographical details of officials.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/25 NUR, file of biographical details of officials.

MSS.127/NU/GS/3/26 NUR, Silver Jubilee material, 1938.

MSS.127/NU/PO/1/2 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1925-31.
MSS.127/NU/PO/1/3 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1931-32.
MSS.127/NU/PO/1/4 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1933-34.
MSS.127/NU/PO/1/5 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1935-37.
MSS.127/NU/PO/1/6 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1938-39.
MSS.127/NU/PO/1/7 NUR, Political Department Minute Book, 1940-41.
MSS.127/1990/18 Mosley v. Marchbank, bound court transcript.

National Union of Seamen

MSS.175/1/1/7 NUS, Minute Books, 1929-34.
MSS.175/1/1/8 NUS, Minute Books, 1934-39.
MSS.175/1/1/9 NUS, Minute Books, 1939-44.
MSS.175/6/Jar/1-4 Charles Jarman Papers.

Railway Clerks' Association

MSS.55/1/CON/56a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1931.
MSS.55/1/CON/56b RCA, Annual Delegate Conference agendas etc, 1931.
MSS.55/1/CON/57a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1932.
MSS.55/1/CON/57b RCA, Annual Delegate Conference agendas etc, 1932.
MSS.55/1/CON/58a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1933.
MSS.55/1/CON/58b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1933, Vol. I.
MSS.55/1/CON/59 RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1933, Vol. II.
MSS.55/1/CON/60a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1934.
MSS.55/1/CON/60b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1934, Vol. I.
MSS.55/1/CON/61 RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1934, Vol. II.
MSS.55/1/CON/62a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1935.
MSS.55/1/CON/62b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1935, Vol. I.
MSS.55/1/CON/63 RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1935, Vol. II.
MSS.55/1/CON/64a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1936.
MSS.55/1/CON/64b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1936.

MSS.55/1/CON/65a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1937.

MSS.55/1/CON/65b RCA, Report of Annual Delegate Conference, 1937.

MSS.55/1/CON/66a RCA, Minutes of Special Delegate Conference, 1938.

MSS.55/1/CON/66b RCA, Special Delegate Conference agendas etc, 1938.

MSS.55/1/CON/67/1 RCA, Annual Delegate Conference, shorthand notes, agendas etc, 1938.

MSS.55/1/CON/68a RCA, Minutes of Annual Delegate Conference, 1939.

MSS.55/1/CON/68b RCA, Annual Delegate Conference, agendas etc, 1939.

MSS.55/1/CON/69/1 RCA, Annual Delegate Conference, shorthand notes, agendas etc, 1940.

MSS.55/1/EC/15 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Jun. 1931-Nov. 1932.

MSS.55/1/EC/16 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Dec. 1932-Feb. 1934.

MSS.55/1/EC/17 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Mar. 1934-Mar. 1935.

MSS.55/1/EC/18 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Apr. 1935-Sep. 1936.

MSS.55/1/EC/19 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Oct. 1936-Mar. 1938.

MSS.55/1/EC/20 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Apr. 1938-Apr. 1939.

MSS.55/1/EC/21 RCA, Executive Committee Minutes, Apr. 1939- May 1940.

MSS.55/4/AR/9 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1926-30.

MSS.55/4/AR/10 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1931-35.

MSS.55/4/AR/11 RCA, Annual Reports with accounts and balance sheets, 1936-40.

MSS.55/4/HIS/1-6 RCA historical miscellany.

MSS.55/4/POL/2-24 RCA policy statements, 1914-63.

MSS.55/7/2/1-7 RCA, historical miscellany.

MSS.55B/1/FI/4 RCA, Finance Committee Minutes, Apr. 1928-Nov. 1931.

MSS.55B/1/FI/5 RCA, Finance Committee Minutes, Nov. 1931-Apr. 1935.

MSS.55B/1/FI/6 RCA, Finance Committee Minutes, Apr. 1935-Dec. 1938.

MSS.55B/1/FI/7 RCA, Finance Committee Minutes, Jan. 1939-Jul. 1942.

MSS.55B/7/1 RCA, framed scrutineers' report on Labour party affiliation, 1909.

MSS.55B/7/2 RCA, framed political fund ballot result, 1913.

Trades Union Congress

MSS.292/20/14 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1929-30.
 MSS.292/20/15 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1930-31.
 MSS.292/20/16 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1931-32.
 MSS.292/20/17 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1932-33.
 MSS.292/20/18 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1933-34.
 MSS.292/20/19 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1934-35.
 MSS.292/20/20 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1935-36.
 MSS.292/20/21 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1936-37.
 MSS.292/20/22 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1937-38.
 MSS.292/20/23 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1938-39.
 MSS.292/20/24 TUC General Council, Minutes, 1939-40.
 MSS.292/32/2 National Joint Council, Minutes, 1930-34.
 MSS.292/32/3 National Council of Labour, Minutes, 1934-37.
 MSS.292/32/4 National Council of Labour, Minutes, Oct. 1937-May 1939.
 MSS.292/32/5 National Council of Labour, Minutes, Jun. 1939-May 1941.
 MSS.292/32.1/1 National Council of Labour, correspondence, agendas etc.
 MSS.292/32.1/2 National Council of Labour, documents.
 MSS.292/32.3/1 National Council of Labour, Reports, Feb. 1932-Jul. 1934.
 MSS.292/32.3/2 National Council of Labour, Reports, Oct. 1934-Jul. 1937.
 MSS.292/32.3/3 National Council of Labour, Reports, Oct. 1937-Apr. 1940.
 MSS.292/32.3/4 National Council of Labour, Reports, Jun. 1940-Mar. 1943.
 MSS.292/33/2 TUC and Labour Party Joint Executives, Minutes, 1925-31.
 MSS.292/33/2 TUC and Labour Party Joint Executive Meetings, Minutes, 1938-45.
 MSS.292/43.2/1 TUC 'Trade Union Political Fund. Contracting Out' file, 1927-1934.
 MSS.292/560.1/1 TUC Economic Committee, Minutes, Apr. 1929-Jul. 1937.
 MSS.292/560.1/2 TUC Economic Committee, Minutes, Oct. 1937- Jul. 1939.
 MSS.292/560.1/3 TUC Economic Committee, Minutes, Nov. 1940-Sep. 1944.
 MSS.292/715.11/4 General Election 1931 file.
 MSS.292/715.11/5 General Election 1935 file.
 MSS.292/750.1/10 Labour Government 1924-29 file.

MSS.292/752/1 Labour Party correspondence, 1923-33.
MSS.292/752/2 Labour Party correspondence, 1936-60.
MSS.292/753/1 Parliamentary Labour Party correspondence etc, 1924-59.
MSS.292/753/2 Labour Party – Parliamentary TU Group correspondence etc, 1925-49.
MSS.292/756.1/3 New Fabian Research Bureau, SSIP and Socialist League file.

Transport and General Workers' Union

MSS.126/TG/754/1/1, TGWU, 'Minutes of meetings of Members of Parliament who are members of and representatives of the Political and International Department of the Transport and General Workers' Union', 1922-27.
MSS.126/TG/867/F/1 TGWU Financial Statements, 1935-37.
MSS.126/TG/867/F/2 TGWU Financial Statements, 1938-46.
MSS.126/TG/1154/1 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1922.
MSS.126/TG/1154/2 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1923.
MSS.126/TG/1154/3 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1924.
MSS.126/TG/1154/4 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1925.
MSS.126/TG/1154/5 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1926.
MSS.126/TG/1154/6 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1927.
MSS.126/TG/1154/7 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1928.
MSS.126/TG/1154/8/1 TGWU, Report and Balance Sheet, Jan.-Aug. 1929.
MSS.126/TG/1154/8/2 TGWU, Report and Balance Sheet, Aug.-Dec. 1929.
MSS.126/TG/1154/9 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1930.
MSS.126/TG/1154/10 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1931.
MSS.126/TG/1154/11 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1932.
MSS.126/TG/1154/12 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1933.
MSS.126/TG/1154/13 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1934.
MSS.126/TG/1154/14 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1935.
MSS.126/TG/1154/15 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1936.
MSS.126/TG/1154/16 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1937.
MSS.126/TG/1154/17 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1938.

MSS.126/TG/1154/18 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1939.

MSS.126/TG/1154/19 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1940.

MSS.126/TG/1154/20 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1941.

MSS.126/TG/1154/21 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1942.

MSS.126/TG/1154/22 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1943.

MSS.126/TG/1154/23 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1944.

MSS.126/TG/1154/24 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1945.

MSS.126/TG/1154/25 TGWU, Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1946.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/2 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1923-24.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/3 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1925.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/4 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1926.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/5 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1927.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/6 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1928.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/7 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1929.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/8 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1930.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/9 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1931.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/10 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and Emergency Committee, 1932.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/11 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1933.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/12 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1934.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/13 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1935.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/14 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1936.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/15 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1937.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/16 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1938.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/17 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1939.

MSS.126/TG/1186/A/18 TGWU, Minutes and reports of General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1940.

MSS.126/TG/1186/R/3 TGWU, Reports of All-Ireland Delegate Conferences, 1930-38.

MSS.126/TG/1186/R/4 TGWU, General Executive Council, reports of sub-committees and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 1931-40.

MSS.126/TG/1186/R/4 TGWU, General Executive Council, memoranda submitted to Council, 1931-40.

MSS.126/TG/1232/D/1 TGWU, Reports of the Financial Secretary and Financial Statements, 1923-30.

MSS.126/TG/1232/D/2 TGWU, Reports of the Financial Secretary and Financial Statements, 1938-45.

MSS.126/TG/1887/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1925.

MSS.126/TG/1887/2 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1927.

MSS.126/TG/1887/3/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1929.

MSS.126/TG/1887/3/2 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, final agenda, 1929.

MSS.126/TG/1887/4/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1931.

MSS.126/TG/1887/4/2 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, souvenir and programme, 1931.

MSS.126/TG/1887/4/3 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, record of decisions, 1931.

MSS.126/TG/1887/5/ TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1933.

MSS.126/TG/1887/6/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1935.

MSS.126/TG/1887/6/2 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, record of decisions, 1935.

MSS.126/TG/1887/7 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1937.

MSS.126/TG/1887/8/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1939.

MSS.126/TG/1887/4/2 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, souvenir, 1939.

MSS.126/TG/1887/9/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1941.

MSS.126/TG/1887/9/2-4 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, agenda, circulars and speeches, 1941.

MSS.126/TG/1887/10/1 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, Minutes and record, 1943.

MSS.126/Z/132 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, final agenda, 1931.

MSS.126/Z/133 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, souvenir and programme, 1933.

MSS.126/Z/134 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, final agenda, 1933.

MSS.126/Z/135 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, agenda, 1935.

MSS.126/Z/136 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, agenda, 1937.

MSS.126/Z/137 TGWU, Biennial Delegate Conference, resolutions etc, 1937.

TGWU Ernest Bevin papers

MSS.126/EB/SS/1/1-16 Ernest Bevin papers, SSIP file.

MSS.126/EB/X/12 Ernest Bevin papers, correspondence, 1930-36.

MSS.126/EB/X/23 Ernest Bevin papers, notes of discussions, 1936-40.

United Patternmakers' Association

MSS.101/P/1/10 UPA, Minute Book, 1930-31.

MSS.101/P/1/11 UPA, Minute Book, 1932-33.

MSS.101/P/1/12 UPA, Minute Book, 1934.

MSS.101/P/1/13 UPA, Minute Book, 1935.

MSS.101/P/1/14 UPA, Minute Book, 1936.

MSS.101/P/1/15 UPA, Minute Book, 1937.

MSS.101/P/1/16 UPA, Minute Book, 1938.

MSS.101/P/1/17 UPA, Minute Book, 1939.
MSS.101/P/1/18 UPA, Minute Book, 1940.
MSS.101/P/4/1/11 UPA, Annual Reports, 1929-34.
MSS.101/P/4/1/12 UPA, Annual Reports, 1935-40.

Workers' Union

MSS.126/WU/4/1/17 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1922.
MSS.126/WU/4/1/18 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1923.
MSS.126/WU/4/1/19 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1924.
MSS.126/WU/4/1/20 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1925.
MSS.126/WU/4/1/21 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1926.
MSS.126/WU/4/1/22 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1928.
MSS.126/WU/X/1 WU-TGWU, proposed amalgamation scheme.
MSS.126/WU/X/2-6 WU, Rule Books, 1899-1929.
MSS.126/WU/X/9 WU, Annual Report and statement of accounts, 1927.
MSS.126/WU/X/10 WU, Seven months' report and statement of accounts, 1929.

The National Archives, Kew

Chief Registrar for Friendly Societies

FS 12 Annual Returns to the Chief Registrar.
FS 32 Annual Reports of the Chief Registrar.

Oldham Local Studies & Archives, Oldham

United Textile Factory Workers' Association

TU/3/1/3 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1929-30.
TU/3/1/4 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1930-32.
TU/3/1/5 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1932.
TU/3/1/6 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1933.

TU/3/1/7 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1934.

TU/3/1/8 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1935.

TU/3/1/9 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1936-37.

TU/3/1/10 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1938.

TU/3/1/11 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1939.

TU/3/1/12 UTFWA, Legislative Council, Minutes 1940.

TU/3/2/1 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1928.

TU/3/2/2 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1932.

TU/3/2/3 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1933.

TU/3/2/4 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1935.

TU/3/2/5 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1936.

TU/3/2/6 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1937.

TU/3/2/7 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1938.

TU/3/2/9 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1940.

TU/3/2/10 UTFWA, Report of Proceedings at the Annual Conference, 1941.

TU/3/2/13 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1926.

TU/3/2/14 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, Jun.-Dec.1928.

TU/3/2/15 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1930.

TU/3/2/16 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1932.

TU/3/2/17 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1933.

TU/3/2/18 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1934.

TU/3/2/19 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1936.

TU/3/2/20 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1937.

TU/3/2/21 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1938.

TU/3/2/22 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1939.

TU/3/2/23 UTFWA, Report and Balance Sheet, 1940.

TU/3/4/10 UTFWA, Political Sub-Committee, correspondence etc., 1930-35.

TU/3/4/10 UTFWA, Financial arrangements with Constituency Labour Parties, correspondence etc., 1931-39.

Miners' Federation of Great Britain

SWCC.MNA/NUM/1/1/29 MFGB Proceedings and Reports, 1931

SWCC.MNA/NUM/1/1/30 MFGB Proceedings and Reports, 1932

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/10/16 MFGB 'Report on Organisation', 1932

South Wales Miners' Federation

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/1 SWMF Balance Sheets, 1918-39

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/2/31 SWMF Political Levy Account 1942-46

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/3/10 SWMF Correspondence, 1933-41

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/3/58 SWMF Political Correspondence

SWCC.MNA/NUM/3/3/60 SWMF Correspondence re: international affairs

Usdaw Central Office, Manchester

National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers

NUDAW and NAUSA, Documents re: Proposed Amalgamation, 1937 and 1946.

NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1921-35.

NUDAW, Annual Reports, 1936-46.

NUDAW, Annual Delegate Meeting Agendas and Minutes, 1929-33.

NUDAW, Annual Delegate Meeting Agendas and Minutes, 1934-40.

NUDAW, Annual Delegate Meeting Printed Reports, 1935-46.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1929.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1930.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1931.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1932.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1933.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1934.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1935.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1936.

NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1937.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1938.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1939.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1940.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1941.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1942.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1943.
NUDAW, Executive Council Minutes, 1944.
NUDAW, Leaflet Collection, 1921-46.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1924.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1925.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1926.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1927.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1928.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1929.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1930.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1931.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1932.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1933.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1934.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1935.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1936.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1937.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1938.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1939.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1940.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1941.
NUDAW, Political Secretary's Reports to Executive Council, 1942.
NUDAW, Rule Books, 1930-1940.

Amalgamated Engineering Union

TU/ENG/1/A/37, AEU, Bound Reports, 1933.
TU/ENG/1/A/38, AEU, Bound Reports, 1934.
TU/ENG/1/A/39, AEU, Bound Reports, 1935.
TU/ENG/1/A/40, AEU, Bound Reports, 1936.
TU/ENG/1/A/41, AEU, Bound Reports, 1937.
TU/ENG/1/A/42, AEU, Bound Reports, 1938.
TU/ENG/1/A/43, AEU, Bound Reports, 1939.
TU/ENG/1/A/44, AEU, Bound Reports, 1940.
TU/ENG/3/A/3 AEU, National Conference and Committee Reports, 1927-1933.
TU/ENG/3/A/4 AEU, National Conference and Committee Reports, 1934-1937.
TU/ENG/4/A/14 AEU, Rule Books, 1920-1957.
TU/ENG/5/2, AEU, Final Appeals Court, Reports, 1925-1931.
TU/ENG/5/3, AEU, Final Appeals Court, Report, 1932.

Miners' Federation of Great Britain

TU/MINE/1/37 MFGB, Annual Proceedings and Reports, 1934.

National Union of General and Municipal Workers

TU/GENERALB/1/A/5 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1929.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/6 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1930.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/7 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1931.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/8 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1932.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/9 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1933.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/10 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1934.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/11 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1935.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/12 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1936.
TU/GENERALB/1/A/13 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1937.

TU/GENERALB/1/A/14 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1938.

TU/GENERALB/1/A/15 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1939.

TU/GENERALB/1/A/16 NUGMW, Reports and Minutes, 1940.

2. Public records, printed and Parliamentary sources

House of Commons Debates, 5th series.

Labour Party, *Annual Conference Reports*.

Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of May, 1929, PP. 114, 1929-30.

Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of October, 1931, PP. 109, 1931-32.

Return of the Expenses of each Candidate at the General Election of November, 1935, PP. 150, 1935-36.

Trades Union Congress, *Annual Reports*.

3. Newspapers and journals

AEU Monthly Journal

Daily Express

Daily Herald

Daily Mail

Daily Mirror

Daily Telegraph

Daily Worker

Derby Evening Telegraph

Edinburgh Evening News

General and Municipal Workers' Journal (NUGMW to 1938)

Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail

Hull Daily Mail

The Labour Bulletin (Labour Research Department, 1925-33)

The Labour Bulletin (Daily Herald Labour Movement Relations Department, 1936-50)

The Labour Candidate (Society of Labour Candidates)

Labour League of Youth Monthly Bulletin (1929-32)

Labour League of Youth Organisation Bulletin (1938-42)

Labour Magazine/Labour

Labour Organiser
The Labour Woman
Leeds Mercury
The New Dawn (NUDAW)
The New Nation (Labour League of Youth, 1933-36)
New Statesman and Nation
Nottingham Evening Post
NUGMW Journal (from 1938)
Railway Review (NUR)
The Record (TGWU)
Sheffield Daily Telegraph
Sheffield Independent
Shields Daily News
The Times
The Workers' Union Record
Yorkshire Post and Yorkshire Evening Post

4. **Contemporary and earlier works**

Addison, C., Attlee, C. R., Brailsford, H. N., Clay, H. R., Cole, G. D. H., Cripps, Sir S., Horrabin, J. F., Mellor, W., Trevelyan, Sir C. and Wise, E. F., *Problems of a Socialist Government* (London, 1933).
 Alcock, G. W., *Fifty Years of Railway Trade Unionism* (London, 1922).
 Attlee, C. R., *The Labour Party in Perspective* (London, 1937).
 _____ *Socialism for Trade Unionists* (London, n.d. [1922]).
 Bracher, S. V., *The Herald Book of Labour Members* (London, 1924).
 Brockway, F., *Workers' Front* (London, 1938).
 Carr-Saunders, A. M., Florence, P. S., and Peers, R., *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain. An Examination of the Co-operative Movement*, revised edition (London, 1942 [original 1938]).
 Cole, G. D. H., *British Trade Unionism To-day. A Survey* (London, 1939).
 _____ *The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy* (London, 1929).

- _____ *The People's Front* (London, 1937).
- _____ *The World of Labour. A Discussion of the Present and Future of Trade Unionism* (London, 1913).
- Cole, G. D. H., and Cole, M. I., *The Condition of Britain* (London, 1937).
- _____ *A Guide to Modern Politics* (London, 1934).
- Cole, G. D. H., and Page Arnot, R., *Trade Unionism on the Railways. Its History and Problems* (London, 1917).
- Dalton, H., *Practical Socialism for Britain* (London, 1935).
- Drake, B., *Women in Trade Unions* (London, 1984 [original 1920]).
- Garrett, G. T., *The Mugwumps and the Labour Party* (London, 1932).
- 'Gracchus', *Your MP* (London, 1944).
- Hamilton, M. A., *The Labour Party Today* (London, n.d. [1939]).
- Hannington, W., *Ten Lean Years. An Examination of the Record of the National Government in the Field of Unemployment* (London, 1940).
- Haxey, S., *Tory M.P.* (London, 1939).
- Higenbottam, S., *Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. Our Society's History* (Manchester, 1939).
- Hilton, J., Mallon, J. J., Mavor, S., Seebohm Rowntree, B., Salter, Sir A. and Stuart, F. D., (eds.), *Are Trade Unions Obstructive? An Impartial Inquiry* (London, 1935).
- Hutt, A., *British Trade Unionism. An Outline History*, second edition (London, 1942).
- _____ *The Post-War History of the British Working Class* (London, 1937).
- 'Iconoclast' [Mary Agnes Hamilton], *Margaret Bondfield* (London, 1924).
- Johnston, J., *A Hundred Commoners* (London, 1931).
- Labour Research Department, *Fascism – Fight it Now* (London, 1937).
- Laski, H. J., *Liberty in the Modern State* (London, 1937).
- Lawson, J., *Peter Lee* (London, 1936).
- Lees-Smith, H. B., *The Encyclopaedia of the Labour Movement*, 3 vols. (London, 1928).
- Lynch, J., *Business Methods and Accountancy in Trade Unions* (London, 1922).
- McHenry, D. E., *The Labour Party in Transition 1931-1938* (London, 1938).
- MacNeill Weir, L., *The Tragedy of Ramsay MacDonald. A Political Biography* (London, n.d. [1938]).

- Michels, R., *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. E. and C Paul (New York, 1915).
- Milne-Bailey, W., (ed), *Trade Union Documents* (London, 1929).
- _____ *Trade Unions and the State* (London, 1934).
- Mitchison, G., R., *The First Workers' Government, or, New Times for Henry Dubb* (London, 1934).
- Morrison, H., *Socialisation and Transport* (London, 1933).
- Murphy, J. T., *Modern Trade Unionism. A Study of the present tendencies and the future of Trade Unions in Britain* (London, 1935).
- National Union of General and Municipal Workers, *Souvenir History of the NUGMW. Forty Years 1889-1929* (London, 1929).
- _____ *Fifty Years of the NUGMW* (London, 1939).
- Ostrogorski, M., *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, trans. F. Clarke, 2 vols. (New York, 1902-1908).
- Petch, A. W., *National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers. A Manual of Branch Administration* (Manchester, 1930).
- Pollock, J. K., *Money and Politics Abroad* (New York, 1932).
- Price, J., *Organised Labour in the War* (Harmondsworth, 1940).
- Scanlon, J., *Decline and Fall of the Labour Party* (London, n.d. [1932]).
- Strachey, J., *The Coming Struggle for Power* (London, 1932).
- _____ *A Programme for Progress* (London, 1940).
- _____ *What Are We to Do?* (London, 1938).
- Strauss, P., *Bevin and Co. The Leaders of British Labour* (New York, 1941).
- Tracey, H. (ed.), *The Book of the Labour Party*, 3 vols. (London, 1925).
- _____ (ed.), *Seventy Years of Trade Unionism 1868-1938* (London, 1938).
- _____ *Trade Unions Fight – For What?* (London, 1940).
- Trades Union Congress General Council, *The Book of the Martyrs of Tolpuddle, 1834-1934. The story of the Dorsetshire Labourers who were convicted and sentenced to seven years' transportation for forming a Trade Union* (London, 1934).
- Webb, S., *The Story of the Durham Miners, 1662-1921* (London, 1921).
- Webb, S., and Webb, B., *The History of Trade Unionism*, second edition (London, 1920).
- Wertheimer, E., *Portrait of the Labour Party* (London & New York, 1929).

Wilkinson, E., *Peeps at Politicians* (London, 1930).

_____ *The Town That Was Murdered. The Life-Story of Jarrow* (London, 1939).

Williamson, H. R., *Who is for Liberty?* (London, 1939).

Yates, M. L., *Wages and Conditions in British Engineering* (London, 1937).

5. **Diaries**

Dalton, H., *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40, 1945-60*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986).

_____ *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1940-45*, ed. B. Pimlott (London, 1986).

Ede, J. C., *Labour and the Wartime Coalition: From the Diary of James Chuter Ede, 1941-1945*, ed. K. Jeffreys (London, 1987).

Gordon Walker, P., *Political Diaries 1932-1971*, ed. R. Pearce (London, 1991).

Jones, T., *A Diary with Letters 1931-50* (London, 1954).

Webb, B., *Beatrice Webb's Diaries 1924-1932*, ed. M. Cole (London, 1956).

_____ *Beatrice Webb Typescript Diary*, LSE Digital Library.

6. **Memoirs**

Andrews, E., *A Woman's Work is Never Done* (Dinas Powys, 2006 [original 1957]).

Attlee, C. R., *As it Happened* (London, 1954).

Bartlett, V., *And Now, Tomorrow* (London, 1960).

Bevan, A., *In Place of Fear* (1978 [original 1952]).

Bondfield, M., *A Life's Work* (London, n.d. [1948]).

Brockway, F., *Inside the Left. Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament* (London, 1942).

Brown, G., *In My Way. The Political Memoirs of Lord George-Brown* (Harmondsworth, 1972).

Citrine, Lord (W. M.), *Men and Work. The Autobiography of Lord Citrine* (London, 1964).

_____ *Two Careers. A Second Volume of Autobiography* (London, 1967).

Clynes, J. R., *Memoirs 1869-1924* (London, 1937).

_____ *Memoirs 1924-1937* (London, 1937).

Dalton, H., *Call Back Yesterday. Memoirs 1887-1931* (London, 1953).

_____ *The Fateful Years. Memoirs 1931-1945* (London, 1957).

Davies, R., J., *Seneddwr ar Dramp* (Liverpool, 1934).

Foley, A., *A Bolton Childhood* (Manchester, 1973).

Griffiths, J., *Pages from Memory* (London, 1969).

Gosling, H., *Up and Down Stream* (London, 1927).

Hamilton, M. A., *Remembering My Good Friends* (London, 1944).

Horner, A., *Incorrigible Rebel* (London, 1960).

Jones, J., *My Lively Life* (London, 1928).

Jones, J., *Union Man. The Autobiography of Jack Jones* (Abersychan, 2008 [original 1986]).

Kirkwood, D., *My Life of Revolt* (London, 1935).

Lawson, J., *A Man's Life* (London, 1944).

Lee, J., *This Great Journey. A Volume of Autobiography 1904-45* (London, 1963).

_____ *My Life with Nye* (Harmondsworth, 1981).

MacEwen, M., *The Greening of a Red* (London, 1991).

Manning, L., *A Life for Education. An Autobiography* (London, 1970).

Morrison, Lord (Herbert), *Herbert Morrison. An Autobiography* (London, 1960).

Parker, J., *Father of the House. Fifty Years in Politics* (London, 1982).

Paynter, W., *My Generation* (London, 1972).

Pethick-Lawrence, F. W., *Fate Has Been Kind* (London????)

Prothero, C., *Recount* (Ormskirk, 1982).

Sexton, J., *Agitator. The Life of the Dockers' MP. An Autobiography* (London, 1936).

Shepherd, Lord (G. R.), *Labour's Early Days* (Tillicoultry, 1950).

Shinwell, E., *Conflict without Malice* (London, 1955)

_____ *I've Lived Through it All* (Littlehampton, 1973).

_____ *Lead with the Left* (Littlehampton, 1973).

Snell, Lord (Harry), *Men, Movements, and Myself* (London, 1936).

Summerskill, E., *A Woman's World. Her Memoirs* (London, 1967).

Thomas, J. H., *My Story* (London, 1937).

Thorne, W., *My Life's Battles* (London, 1989 [original 1925]).

Thurtle, E., *Time's Winged Chariot* (London, 1945).

Tillett, B., *Memories and Reflections* (London, 1931).

Weighall, S., *On the Rails* (London, 1983).

Williams, Lord (Tom), *Digging for Britain* (London, 1965).

SECONDARY SOURCES

1. Reference works, guides etc.

Bellamy, J., Saville, J., Gildart, K., Howell, D., Kirk, N., (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (13 vols., London and Basingstoke, 1972-2010).

Craig, F. W. S., *British Electoral Facts, 1832-1987* (London, 1987).

_____, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-49* (London, 1969).

Davies, S., and Morley, B., *County Borough Elections in England and Wales, 1919-1938: A Comparative Analysis* (4 vols., Aldershot, 1999-).

Department of Employment, *British Labour Statistics, Historical Abstract, 1886-1968* (London, 1971).

Knox, W., (ed.), *Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939* (Edinburgh, 1984).

Mitchell, B. R., and Deane, P., *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1971).

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, digital edition.

Rosen, G., (ed.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography* (London, 2001).

Stenton, M., and Lees, S., *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* (4 vols., Brighton, 1976-81).

The Times House of Commons 1929 (London, 1929).

The Times House of Commons 1931 (London, 1931).

The Times House of Commons 1935 (London, 1935).

2. Biographies

Beckett, F., *The Rebel Who Lost His Cause. The Tragedy of John Beckett, MP* (London, 1999).

Beers, L., *Red Ellen. The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge MA and London, 2016).

Bew, J., *Citizen Clem. A Biography of Attlee* (London, 2016).

Blackburn, F., *George Tomlinson* (London, 1954).

- Blaxland, G., *J. H. Thomas. A Life for Unity* (London, 1964).
- Brown, G., *Maxton* (Edinburgh, 1986).
- Bryant, C., *Stafford Cripps. The First Modern Chancellor* (London, 1997).
- Bullock, A., *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume 1. Trade Union Leader 1881-1940* (London, 1960).
- _____, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin. Volume 2. Minister of Labour 1940-1945* (London, 1967).
- Campbell, J., *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism* (London, 1987).
- Clarke, P., *The Cripps Version. The Life of Sir Stafford Cripps* (London, 2003).
- Cole, M., *The Life of G. D. H. Cole* (London, 1971).
- Cooke, C., *The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps* (London, 1957).
- Darlington, R., *The Political Trajectory of J. T. Murphy* (Liverpool, 1998).
- David, W., *Remaining True. A Biography of Ness Edwards* (Caerphilly, 2006).
- Davies, P., *A. J. Cook* (Manchester, 1987).
- Donoughue, B., and Jones, G. W., *Herbert Morrison. Portrait of a Politician* (London, 2001).
- Estorick, E., *Stafford Cripps. A Biography* (London, 1949).
- Evans, T., *Bevin* (London, 1946).
- Fishman, N., *Arthur Horner. A Political Biography. Volume I: 1894-1944* (London, 2010).
- _____, *Arthur Horner. A Political Biography. Volume II: 1944-1968* (London, 2010).
- Foot, M., *Aneurin Bevan. Volume 1: 1897-1945* (London, 1975 [1962]).
- Goodman, G., *The Awkward Warrior. Frank Cousins: His Life and Times* (London, 1979).
- Goronwy-Roberts, M., *A Woman of Vision. A Life of Marion Phillips, MP* (Wrexham, 2000).
- Griffiths, R., *S. O. Davies. A Socialist Faith* (Llandysul, 1983).
- Harris, K., *Attlee* (London, 1982).
- Hollis, P., *Jennie Lee. A Life* (Oxford, 1997).
- Jago, M., *Clement Attlee. The Inevitable Prime Minister* (London, 2014).
- Judge, T., *J. R. Clynes. A Political Life* (London, 2015).
- Leventhal, F. M., *Arthur Henderson* (Manchester, 1989).

- Marquand, D., *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1977).
- Morgan, A., *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester, 1987).
- Morgan, K. O., and Morgan, J., *Portrait of a Progressive. The Political Career of Christopher, Viscount Addison* (Oxford, 1980).
- Mulvey, P., *The Political Life of Josiah C. Wedgwood. Land, Liberty and Empire, 1872-1943* (Woodbridge, 2010).
- Perry, M., *'Red' Ellen Wilkinson. Her Ideas, Movements and World* (Manchester, 2014).
- Pimlott, B., *Hugh Dalton* (London and Basingstoke, 1986).
- Radice, E. A., and Radice, G. H., *Will Thorne: Constructive Militant* (London, 1974).
- Reeves, R., and Carr, R., *Alice in Westminster. The Political Life of Alice Bacon* (London & New York, 2017).
- Schneer, J., *Ben Tillett. Portrait of a Labour Leader* (London, 1982).
- Shepherd, J., *George Lansbury. At the Heart of Old Labour* (Oxford, 2002).
- Skidelsky, R., *Oswald Mosley* (London and Basingstoke, 1975).
- Stewart, M., *Frank Cousins. A Study* (London, 1968).
- Thomas-Symonds, N., *Attlee. A Life in Politics* (London and New York, 2012).
- _____, *Nye. The Political Life of Aneurin Bevan* (London and New York, 2016).
- Tilley, J., *Churchill's Favourite Socialist. A Life of A. V. Alexander* (Manchester, 1995).
- Vernon, B., *Ellen Wilkinson* (London, 1982).
- Wedgwood, C. V., *The Last of the Radicals. Josiah Wedgwood MP* (London, 1951)
- Williams, F., *Ernest Bevin. Portrait of a Great Englishman* (London, 1952).
- Williams, P. M., *Hugh Gaitskell* (Oxford, 1982).
- Wrigley, C., *Arthur Henderson* (Cardiff, 1990).

3. Other books

- Ackers, P., and Reid, A. J. (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016).
- Addison, P., *The Road to 1945* (London, 1977).
- Aldcroft, D., *The Inter-war Economy: Britain, 1919-1939* (London, 1973).
- _____, *Studies in British Transport History 1870-1970* (Newton Abbot, 1974).
- Aldcroft, D., and Richardson, H. W., *The British Economy 1870-1939* (London, 1969).

- Allen, V. L., *Power in Trade Unions. A Study of their Organization in Great Britain* (London, 1954).
- _____. *Trade Unions and the Government* (London, 1960).
- _____. *Trade Union Leadership. Based on a Study of Arthur Deakin* (London, 1957).
- Bagwell, P., *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London, 1963).
- Bain, G. S., and Price, R., *Profiles of Union Growth. A Comparative Statistical Portrait of Eight Countries* (Oxford, 1980).
- Ball, S., *Portrait of a Party. The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945* (Oxford, 2013).
- Bassett, R., *Nineteen Thirty-One. Political Crisis* (London, 1958).
- Beers, L., *Your Britain. Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2010).
- Beers, L., and Thomas, G., (eds.), *Brave New World. Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2011).
- Berger, S., *The British Labour Party and the German Social Democrats, 1900-1931* (Oxford, 1994).
- Beynon, H., and Austrin, T., *Masters and Servants. Class and Patronage in the Making of a Labour Organisation. The Durham Miners and the English Political Tradition* (London, 1994).
- Biagini, E. F., and Reid, A. J. (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism. Popular radicalism, organised labour and party politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).
- Birchall, J., *Co-op: the People's Business* (Manchester and New York, 1994).
- Blaazer, D., *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition. Socialists, Liberals, and the Quest for Unity, 1884-1939* (Cambridge, 1992).
- Black, L., *The Political Culture of the Left in Affluent Britain, 1951-64. Old Labour, New Britain?* (Basingstoke, 2003).
- _____. *Redefining British Politics. Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954-70* (Basingstoke, 2010).
- Black, L., and Robertson, N., (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009).
- Bor, M., *The Socialist League in the 1930s* (London, 2005).
- Boston, S., *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, updated edition (London, 1987).
- Bradley, S., *The Railways. Nation, Network, and People* (London, 2016).
- Branson, N., *Poplarism 1919-1925. George Lansbury and the Councillors' Revolt* (London, 1979).

- Briggs, A., and Saville, J. (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. 1886-1923* (London, 1971).
- Briggs, A., and Saville, J. (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977).
- Brooke, S., *Labour's War. The Labour Party during the Second World War* (Oxford, 1992).
- Brown, K. D. (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History. Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London and Basingstoke, 1974).
- Buchanan, T., *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge, 1991).
- Bullen, A., and Fowler, A., *The Cardroom Workers Union. A Centenary History of the Amalgamated Association of Card and Blowing Room Operatives* (Manchester, 1986).
- Bullock, I., *Under Siege. The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (Edmonton, Alberta, 2017).
- Calhoun, D. F., *The United Front. The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928* (Cambridge, 1976).
- Callaghan, J., Fielding, S., and Ludlam, S. (eds.), *Interpreting the Labour Party. Approaches to Labour politics and history* (Manchester and New York, 2003).
- Callow, J., *GMB @ Work – The Story Behind the Union 1889-2012* (London, 2012).
- Campbell, A., *The Scottish Miners, 1874-1939. Volume Two: Trade Unions and Politics* (Aldershot, 2000).
- Campbell, A., Fishman, N., and Howell, D., (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996).
- Campbell, A., Fishman, N., and McIlroy, J., (eds.), *The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1945-64* (Monmouth, 2007 [1999]).
- Campbell, A., Fishman, N., and McIlroy, J., (eds.), *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79* (Monmouth, 2007 [1999]).
- Carbery, T. F., *Consumers in Politics. A History and General Review of the Co-operative Party* (Manchester, 1969).
- Catterall, P., *Labour and the Free Churches, 1918-39. Radicalism, Righteousness and Religion* (London, 2016).
- Clark, D., *The Labour Movement in Westmorland* (Kendal, 2012).
- _____, *Voices from Labour's Past. Ordinary People Extraordinary Lives* (Kendal, 2015).
- Clarke, P., *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making, 1924-1936* (Oxford, 1988).

- Clegg, H. A., *General Union. A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers* (Oxford, 1954).
- _____. *General Union in a Changing Society. A Short History of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, 1889-1964* (Oxford, 1964).
- _____. *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Volume II: 1911-1933* (Oxford, 1985).
- _____. *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Volume III: 1933-1951* (Oxford, 1994).
- Clegg, H. A., Killick, A. J., and Adams, R., *Trade Union Officers. A Study of Full-Time Officers, Branch Secretaries and Shop Stewards in British Trade Unions* (Cambridge, MA, 1961).
- Cline, C. A., *Recruits to Labour. The British Labour Party 1914-1931* (New York, 1963).
- Clinton, A., *Post Office Workers. A Trade Union and Social History* (London, 1984).
- _____. *The Trade Union Rank-and-File. Trades Councils in Britain, 1900-40* (Manchester, 1977).
- Coates, K. and Topham, T., *The Making of the Labour Movement. The Formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union 1870-1922* (Nottingham, 1994).
- Cohen, G., *The Failure of a Dream. The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007).
- Cole, G. D. H., *A Century of Co-operation* (London, 1944).
- _____. *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London, 1948).
- Connelly, T. J., *The Woodworkers 1860-1960* (London, 1960).
- Corthorn, P., *In the Shadow of the Dictators. The British Left in the 1930s* (London & New York, 2006).
- Craik, W. W., *Central Labour College 1909-29. A Chapter in the History of Adult Working-class Education* (London, 1964).
- Crick, M., *Scargill and the Miners* (Harmondsworth, 1985).
- Cronin, J. E., *Labour and Society in Britain 1918-1979* (London, 1984).
- Croucher, R., *Engineers at War* (London, 1982).
- _____. *We Refuse to Starve in Silence. A History of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1920-46* (London, 1987).
- Currie, R., *Industrial Politics* (Oxford, 1979).
- Curtis, B., *The South Wales Miners 1964-1985* (Cardiff, 2013).

- Dale, G., *God's Politicians. The Christian Contribution to 100 Years of Labour* (London, 2000).
- Davies, S., *Liverpool Labour. Social and Political influences on the development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (Keele, 1996).
- Davis, M., *Comrade or Brother? The History of the British Labour Movement 1789-1951* (London, 1993).
- Desai, R., *Intellectuals and Socialism. 'Social Democrats' and the British Labour Party* (London, 1994).
- Dix, B. and Williams, S., *Serving the Public – Building the Union. The History of the National Union of Public Employees. Volume One: The Forerunners 1889-1928* (London, 1987).
- Donnachie, I., Harvie, C., and Wood, I. S. (eds.), *Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland, 1888-1988* (Edinburgh, 1989).
- Dowse, R. E., *Left in the Centre. The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London, 1966).
- Drucker, H. M., *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (London, 1979).
- Edgerton, D., *England and the Aeroplane. Militarism, Modernity, and Machines* (London, 2013).
- Fisher, J., *Bread on the Waters. A History of TGWU Education 1922-2000* (London, 2005).
- Fishman, N., *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions 1933-45* (Aldershot, 1995).
- Flanders, A., and Clegg, H. A., *The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain. Its History, Law and Institutions* (Oxford, 1963).
- Francis, H., *Miners against Fascism. Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1984).
- Francis, H., and Smith, D., *The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1980).
- Frow, E. and Frow, R., *Engineering Struggles. Episodes in the struggle of the shop stewards' movement* (Manchester, 1982).
- Fowler, A., *Lancashire Cotton Operatives and Work, 1900-1950. A Social History of Lancashire Cotton Operatives in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 2003).
- Fowler, A., and Wyke, T. (eds.), *The Barefoot Aristocrats. A History of the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners* (Littleborough, 1987).
- Fox, A., *A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. 1874-1957* (Oxford, 1958).
- Fuller, K., *Radical Aristocrats. London Busworkers from the 1880s to the 1980s* (London, 1985).

- Gaffin, J., and Thoms, D., *Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Women's Co-operative Guild* (Manchester, 1983).
- Gardiner, J., *The Thirties. An Intimate History* (London, 2011).
- Garside, W. R., *British Unemployment, 1919-1939. A study in public policy* (Cambridge, 1990).
- _____, *The Durham Miners 1919-1960* (London, 1971).
- Gildart, K., *North Wales Miners. A fragile unity, 1945-1996* (Cardiff, 2001)
- Glucksmann, M., *Women Assemble. Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-war Britain* (London and New York, 1990).
- Goldstein, J., *The Government of British Trade Unions. A Study of Apathy and the Democratic Process in the Transport and General Workers Union* (London, 1952).
- Gordon, A., *Unity is Strength. The National Union of Railwaymen – 100 Years of Industrial Unionism* (London, 2013).
- Gorman, J., *Banner Bright. An Illustrated History of the Banners of the British Trade Union Movement* (Harmondsworth, 1976).
- Gottlieb, J. V., and Toye, R., (eds.), *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918-1945* (Basingstoke, 2013).
- Graves, P., *Labour Women. Women in British Working-Class Politics 1918-1939* (Cambridge, 1994).
- Gregory, R., *The Miners and British Politics 1906-1914* (London, 1968).
- Griffin, A. R., *The Miners of Nottinghamshire 1914-1944. A History of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Unions* (London, 1962).
- Griffiths, C. V. J., *Labour and the Countryside. The Politics of Rural Britain, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2007).
- Groves, R., *Sharpen the Sickle! The History of the Farm Workers' Union* (London, 1948).
- Gurney, P., *Co-operative Culture and the Politics of Consumption in England, 1870–1930* (Manchester, 1996).
- Hall, D., *A Pleasant Change from Politics. Music and the British Labour Movement between the Wars* (Cheltenham, 2001).
- Harris, J. (ed.), *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (Oxford, 2005).
- Harrison, M., *Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945* (London, 1960).
- Harvey, C., and Turner, J. (eds.), *Labour and Business in Modern Britain* (London, 1989).

- Hattersley, R., *Borrowed Time. The Story of Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009).
- Hill, S., *The Dockers. Class and Tradition in London* (London, 1976).
- Hinton, J., *The First Shop Stewards' Movement* (London, 1973).
- Hobsbawm, E. J., *The Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London, 1995).
- _____, *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1968).
- _____, *Worlds of Labour. Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1984).
- Hodgson, K., *Fighting Fascism. The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-39* (Manchester, 2010).
- Hoffman, P. C., *They Also Serve. The Story of the Shop Worker* (London, n.d. [1949]).
- Honeyball, M., *Parliamentary Pioneers. Labour Women MPs, 1918-1945* (Chatham, 2015).
- Hopwood, E., *A History of the Lancashire Cotton Industry and the Amalgamated Weavers' Association. The Lancashire Weavers' Story* (Manchester, 1969).
- Howe, E., and Waite, H. E., *The London Society of Compositors. A Centenary History* (London, 1948).
- Howell, C., *Trade Unions and the State. The Construction of Industrial Relations Institutions in Britain, 1890-2000* (Princeton, 2005).
- Howell, D., *British Social Democracy. A Study in Development and Decay* (London, 1980).
- _____, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906* (Manchester, 1983).
- _____, *MacDonald's Party. Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford, 2002).
- _____, *Mosley and British Politics 1918-32: Oswald's Odyssey* (Basingstoke, 2015).
- _____, *The Politics of The NUM. A Lancashire View* (Manchester and New York, 1989).
- _____, *Respectable Radicals. Studies in the politics of railway trade unionism* (Aldershot, 1999).
- Howson, S., and Winch, D., *The Economic Advisory Council 1930-1939. A study in economic advice during depression and recovery* (Cambridge, 1977).
- Hunt, C., *The National Federation of Women Workers, 1906-1921* (Basingstoke, 2014).
- Hyman, R., *The Workers' Union* (Oxford, 1971).
- Jefferys, J. B., *The Story of the Engineers. 1800-1945* (London, 1945).

- Jefferys, K. (ed.), *Leading Labour. From Keir Hardie to Tony Blair* (London and New York, 1999).
- Jenkins, H., *Rank and File* (London, 1980).
- Jenkins, M., *Bevanism. Labour's High Tide. The Cold War and the Democratic Mass Movement* (Nottingham, 1979).
- Johnson, P., *Saving and Spending. The Working-class Economy in Britain 1870-1939* (Oxford, 1985).
- Jones, R. M., *The North Wales Quarrymen, 1874-1922* (Cardiff, 2015).
- Jones, S. G., *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London and New York, 1987).
- *Workers at Play. A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939* (London, 1986).
- Jupp, J., *The Radical Left in Britain 1931-1941* (London, 1982).
- Kinnear, M., *The British Voter. An Atlas and Survey since 1885* (London, 1981).
- Koss, S., *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics* (London and Sydney, 1975).
- Kozmetsky, G., *Financial Reports of Labor Unions* (Boston, MA, 1950).
- Lawrence, J., *Electing Our Masters. The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford, 2009).
- *Speaking for the People. Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998).
- LeMahieu, D. L., *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain between the Wars* (Oxford, 1988).
- Lewenhak, S., *Women and Trade Unions. An Outline History of Women in the British Trade Union Movement* (London and Tonbridge, 1977).
- Lloyd, J., *Light and Liberty. The History of the EETPU* (London, 1990).
- Lockwood, D., *The Blackcoated Worker. A Study in Class-Consciousness* (London, 1958).
- Long, V., *The Rise and Fall of the Healthy Factory. The Politics of Industrial Health in Britain, 1914-60* (Basingstoke, 2011).
- Lowe, R., *Adjusting to Democracy. The Role of the Ministry of Labour in British Politics 1916-1939* (Oxford, 1986).
- MacDonald, L., *Leadership Dynamics and the Trade-Union Leader* (New York, 1959).
- Macintyre, S., *A Proletarian Science. Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* (Cambridge, 1980).
- Macnicol, J., *The Politics of Retirement in Britain, 1878-1948* (Cambridge, 1998).

- McHugh, D., *Labour in the City. The Development of the Labour party in Manchester, 1918-31* (Manchester, 2006).
- McIlroy, J., Campbell, A. and Gildart, K., (eds), *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout. The Struggle for Dignity* (Cardiff, 2009).
- McKenzie, R. T. *British Political Parties. The Distribution of Power within the Conservative and Labour Parties* (London, 1964).
- McKenzie, R., and Silver, A., *Angels in Marble. Working Class Conservatives in Urban England* (London, 1968).
- McKibbin, R., *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998).
- _____ *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924* (Oxford, 1974).
- _____ *The Ideologies of Class. Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950* (Oxford, 1991).
- _____ *Parties and People. England 1914-1951* (Oxford, 2010).
- McKillop, N., *The Lighted Flame. A History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen* (Edinburgh and London, 1950).
- McKinlay, A., and Morris, R. J. (eds.), *The ILP on Clydeside. 1893-1932: from foundation to disintegration* (Manchester, 1991).
- Marriot, J., *The Culture of Labourism. The East End Between the Wars* (Edinburgh, 1991).
- Martin, R., *Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924-1933. A study of the National Minority Movement* (Oxford, 1969).
- Martin, R. M., *TUC: The Growth of a Pressure Group 1868-1976* (Oxford, 1980).
- Middlemas, R. K., *The Clydesiders. A left wing struggle for parliamentary power* (London, 1965).
- _____ *Politics in Industrial Society. The experience of the British system since 1911* (London, 1979).
- _____ *Power, Competition and the State. Volume 1: Britain in Search of Balance, 1940-61* (Basingstoke and London, 1986).
- Miliband, R., *Parliamentary Socialism. A Study in the Politics of Labour*, second edition (London, 1972).
- Millward, R., and Singleton, J. (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 1995).
- Minkin, L., *The Blair Supremacy. A study in the politics of Labour's party management* (Manchester, 2014).
- _____ *The Contentious Alliance. Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh, 1991).

- _____. *The Labour Party Conference. A study in the politics of intra-party democracy* (Manchester, 1980).
- Moran, J., NATSOPA. *Seventy-Five Years. The National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants. 1889-1964* (London, 1964).
- Morgan, K., *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part One. Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006).
- _____. *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Two. The Webbs and Soviet Communism* (London, 2006).
- _____. *Bolshevism and the British Left. Part Three. Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike. The Lost Internationalist World of A. A. Purcell* (London, 2013).
- Morgan, K. O., *Labour People. Leaders and Lieutenants: Hardie to Kinnock* (Oxford, 1987).
- _____. *Rebirth of a Nation. Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1982).
- Mortimer, J. E., *History of the Boilermakers' Society. Volume 2: 1906-1939* (London, 1982).
- Mowat, C. L., *Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940* (London, 1968).
- Muller, W. D., *The 'Kept Men'? The First Century of Trade Union Representation in the British House of Commons 1874-1975* (Hassocks, 1977).
- Murray, A., *The T&G Story. A History of the Transport and General Workers' Union 1922-2007* (London, 2008).
- Musson, A. E., *The Typographical Association. Origins and History up to 1949* (London, 1954).
- Page Arnot, R., *The Miners. A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain 1889-1910* (London, 1949).
- _____. *The Miners: Years of Struggle. A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain from 1910 onwards* (London, 1953).
- _____. *The Miners in Crisis and War. A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain from 1930 onwards* (London, 1961).
- _____. *The Miners: One Union, One Industry. A History of the National Union of Mineworkers 1939-46* (London, 1979).
- _____. *South Wales Miners. Glowyr De Cymru. A History of the South Wales Miners' Federation 1898-1914* (London, 1967).
- Pelling, H., *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondsworth, 1963).
- _____. *A Short History of the Labour Party*, tenth edition (Basingstoke, 1993).
- _____. *Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910* (London, 1967).
- Pimlott, B., *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977).

- Pimlott, B., and Cook, C., (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991).
- Pinto-Duschinsky, M., *British Political Finance 1830-1980* (Washington and London, 1981).
- Pollard, S., *The Development of the British Economy, 1914-1967*, second edition (London, 1969).
- Prochaska, A., *History of the General Federation of Trade Unions, 1899-1980* (London, 1982).
- Pugh, A., *Men of Steel. A Chronicle of Eighty-Eight Years of Trade Unionism in the British Iron and Steel Industry* (London, 1951).
- Pugh, M., *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London, 2011).
- _____, *We Danced All Night. A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London, 2009).
- Ramsden, J., *A History of the Conservative Party. Volume 3: The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940* (London, 1978).
- Ranney, A., *Pathways to Parliament. Candidate Selection in Britain* (London, 1965).
- Rée, J., *Proletarian Philosophers. Problems in socialist culture in Britain, 1900-1940* (Oxford, 1984).
- Reid, A. J., *The Tide of Democracy. Shipyard Workers and Social Relations in Britain, 1870-1950* (Manchester and New York, 2010).
- _____, *United We Stand. A History of Britain's Trade Unions* (London, 2004).
- Reynolds, J., and Laybourn, K., *Labour Heartland. The history of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire during the inter-war years 1918-1939* (Bradford, 1987).
- Rhodes, G. W., *Co-operative – Labour Relations 1900-1962* (Loughborough, 1962).
- Richardson, W., *A Union of Many Trades. The History of USDAW* (Manchester, n.d. [1979]).
- Richter, I., *Political Purpose in Trade Unions* (London, 1973).
- Riddell, N., *Labour in Crisis. The second Labour government, 1929-31* (Manchester and New York, 1999).
- Rix, K., *Parties, Agents and Electoral Culture in England, 1880-1910* (Woodbridge, 2016).
- Roberts, B. C., *Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain* (London, 1956).

- _____. *Trade Unions in a Free Society. Studies in the Organisation of Labour in Britain and the USA*, second edition (London, 1962).
- Robertson, N., *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914-1960. Minding their Own Business* (Abingdon, 2010).
- Rose, J., *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, second edition (New Haven and London, 2010).
- Rose, R., *The Problem of Party Government* (London and Basingstoke, 1974).
- Ross, J. F. S., *Parliamentary Representation*, second edition (London, 1948).
- Rush, M., *The Selection of Parliamentary Candidates* (London, 1969).
- Russell, M., *Building New Labour. The Politics of Party Organisation* (Basingstoke, 2005).
- Sassoon, D., *One Hundred Years of Socialism. The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1997).
- Savage, M., *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics. The Labour Movement in Preston 1880-1940* (Cambridge, 1987).
- Scott, G., *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London, 1998).
- Shaw, E., *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party. The politics of managerial control in the Labour party, 1951-87* (Manchester and New York, 1988).
- Shepherd, J., Davis, J., and Wrigley, C., (eds.), *Britain's Second Labour Government, 1929-32. A Reappraisal* (Manchester and New York, 2011).
- Simpson, B., *Labour: The Unions and the Party. A Study of the Trade Unions and the British Labour Movement* (London, 1973).
- Skidelsky, R., *Politicians and the Slump. The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (London and Basingstoke, 1994 [1967]).
- Smart, N., *The National Government, 1931-40* (Basingstoke, 1999).
- Smith, B., and Ostergaard, G., *Constitutional Relations between the Labour and Co-operative Parties: An Historical Review* (London, n.d. [c. 1960]).
- Smith, D., *Aneurin Bevan and the World of South Wales* (Cardiff, 1993).
- Stannage, T., *Baldwin Thwarts the Opposition. The British General Election of 1935* (London, 1980).
- Stevenson, J., and Cook, C., *The Slump. Society and Politics during the Depression* (London, 1979).
- Sturmthal, A., *The Tragedy of European Labour 1918-1939* (London, 1944).

- Swift, J., *Labour in Crisis. Clement Attlee and the Labour Party in Opposition, 1931-1940* (Basingstoke, 2001).
- Tanner, D., *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990).
- Tanner, D., Thane, P., and Tiratsoo, N., (eds.), *Labour's First Century* (Cambridge, 2000).
- Tanner, D., Williams, C., and Hopkin, D. (eds.), *The Labour Party in Wales 1900-2000* (Cardiff, 2000).
- Taplin, E., *The Dockers' Union. A study of the National Union of Dock Labourers, 1889-1922* (Leicester, 1985).
- Taylor, A., *The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners* (London, 1984).
- _____, *Trade Unions and Politics. A Comparative Introduction* (London and Basingstoke, 1989).
- Taylor, A. J. P., *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1976).
- Taylor, R., *The Fifth Estate. Britain's Unions in the Modern World* (London, 1980).
- _____, *The TUC. From the General Strike to New Unionism* (Basingstoke, 2000).
- Thorpe, A., *The British General Election of 1931* (Oxford, 1991).
- _____, (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989).
- _____, *A History of the British Labour Party*, second edition (Basingstoke, 2001).
- _____, *Parties at War. Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford, 2009).
- Todd, S., *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010* (London, 2014).
- _____, *Young Women, Work, and Family in England, 1918-1950* (Oxford, 2005).
- Todman, D., *Britain's War. Into Battle, 1937-1941* (London, 2017).
- Tolliday, S., and Zeitlin, J. (eds.), *The Power to Manage? Employers and industrial relations in comparative-historical perspective* (London and New York, 1991).
- _____, (eds.), *Shop-floor Bargaining and the State. Historical and comparative perspectives* (Cambridge, 1989).
- Toye, R., *The Labour Party and the Planned Economy 1931-1951* (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY, 2003).
- Tuckett, A., *The Blacksmiths' History. What Smithy Workers Gave Trade Unionism* (London, 1974).
- Turner, H. A., *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy. A Comparative Study of the Cotton Unions* (London, 1962).

- Turner, J. (ed.), *Businessmen and Politics. Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945* (London, 1984).
- USDAW, *Usdaw – A Century of Service 1891-1991* (Manchester, 1991).
- _____, *Usdaw 1891-2016. 125 Years Strong. Celebrating 125 Years of Service* (Manchester, 2016).
- Waddington, J., *The Politics of Bargaining. The Merger Process and British Trade Union Structural Development 1892-1987* (London, 1995).
- Wallace, M., *Single or Return? The History of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association* (London, 1996).
- Waller, R. J., *The Dukeries Transformed. The Social and Political Development of a Twentieth-Century Coalfield* (Oxford, 1983).
- Walker, G. S., *The Politics of Frustration. Harry Midgley and the failure of Labour in Northern Ireland* (Manchester, 1985).
- Webb, P., *Trade Unions and the British Electorate* (Aldershot, 1992).
- White, J. L., *The Limits of Trade Union Militancy. The Lancashire Textile Workers, 1910-1914* (Westport, CT and London, 1978).
- Whiting, R. C., *The View From Cowley: the Impact of Industrialization upon Oxford, 1918-1939* (Oxford, 1983).
- Williams, C., *Democratic Rhondda. Politics and Society, 1885-1951* (Cardiff, 1996).
- Williams, F., *Fifty Years' March. The Rise of the Labour Party* (London, n.d. [1950]).
- _____, *Magnificent Journey. The Rise of the Trade Unions* (London, 1954).
- Williams, J. E., *The Derbyshire Miners. A study in industrial and social history* (London, 1962).
- Williamson, P., *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire 1926–1932* (Cambridge, 1992).
- Wilson, J. F., Webster, A., and Vorberg-Rugh, R., *Building Co-operation. A Business History of the Co-operative Group, 1863-2013* (Oxford, 2013).
- Worley, M., *Class Against Class. The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2002).
- _____, (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009).
- _____, *Labour Inside the Gate. A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars* (London and New York, 2008).
- _____, (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005).
- _____, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke, 2010).

Wrigley, C. J., (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987).

_____, (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979. Volume III: Industrial Relations in a Declining Economy* (Cheltenham, 1996).

Wrigley, C., and Shepherd, J., *On the Move. Essays in labour and transport history presented to Philip Bagwell* (London and Rio Grande, 1991).

Wynncoll, P., *The Nottingham Labour Movement 1880-1939* (London, 1985).

4. Articles and chapters

Ackers, P., 'Colliery Deputies in the British Coal Industry before Nationalization', *International Review of Social History* 39 (1994), 383-414.

Adams, T., 'Co-operators and Politics – a rejoinder', *International Review of Social History* 32:2 (1987), 174-179.

_____, 'The Formation of the Co-operative Party Reconsidered', *International Review of Social History* 32:1 (1987), 48–68.

Bagwell, P. S., 'The Triple Industrial Alliance, 1913-1922' in A. Briggs and J. Saville, (eds.), *Essays in Labour History 1886–1923* (London, 1971), pp. 96-128.

Ball, S., Thorpe, A., and Worley, M., 'Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives: Constituency Party Members in Britain between the Wars' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 7-32.

Barnes, D., and Reid, E., 'A new relationship: trade unions in the Second World War' in B. Pimlott and C. Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991), pp. 137-155.

Barron, H., 'Labour Identities of the Coalfield: the General Election of 1931 in County Durham', *History* 97:326 (2012), 204-229.

Beers, L., 'Counter-Toryism: Labour's Response to Anti-Socialist Propaganda, 1918-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 231-254.

_____, 'Education or Manipulation? Labour, Democracy, and the Popular Press in Interwar Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009), 129-152.

_____, 'Is this man an anarchist?' Industrial action and the battle for public opinion in interwar Britain', *Journal of Modern History* 82 (2010), 30-60.

_____, 'Labour's Britain, Fight for it Now!', *Historical Journal* 52:3 (2009), 667–695.

_____, 'A model MP? Ellen Wilkinson, gender, politics and celebrity culture in interwar Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 10:2 (2013), 231-250.

- Black, L., and Robertson, N., 'Taking stock: an introduction', in L. Black and N. Robertson, (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 1-9.
- Black, N., 'The Mothers' International: the Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Pacifism', *Women's Studies International Forum* 7:6 (1984), 467-476.
- Booth, A., 'How long are light years in British politics? The Labour party's economic ideas in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History* 7:1 (1996), 1-26.
- Brookshire, J. H., 'The National Council of Labour, 1921-1946', *Albion* 18:1 (1986), 43-69.
- Buchanan, T., 'The politics of internationalism: the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Spanish Civil War', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 53:3 (1988), 47-55.
- Campbell, A., 'The social history of political conflict in the Scots coalfields, 1910-1939' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 145-174.
- Casey, R. D., 'The National Publicity Bureau and British Party Propaganda', *Public Opinion Quarterly* (October 1939), 623-634.
- Childs, M., 'Labour grows up: the electoral system, political generations, and British politics 1890-1929', *Twentieth Century British History* 6:2 (1995), 123-144.
- Clarke, J. F., 'An interview with Sir William Lawther', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 19 (1969), 14-21.
- Close, D. H., 'The realignment of the British electorate in 1931', *History* 67:221 (1982), 393-404.
- Cohen, G., 'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank'? The Independent Labour Party and Local Labour Politics in Glasgow and Norwich, 1932-45' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 54-78.
- _____, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', *History* 86:282 (2001), 200-221.
- _____, 'Myth, History and the Independent Labour Party', in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 95-112.
- Cole, M., 'The Society for Socialist Propaganda and Inquiry' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 190-203.
- Coupland, P. M., 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: the Case of the British Union of Fascists', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:1 (2002), 38-61.

- Crompton, G., "Efficient and economical working"? The performance of the railway companies 1923-33', *Business History* 27:2 (1985), 222-237.
- _____'Lines of Division: Railway Unions and Labour, 1900-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 37-56.
- _____'The railway companies and the nationalisation issue 1920-1950' in R. Millward and J. Singleton (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 116-143.
- _____"Squeezing the Pulpless Orange': Labour and Capital on the Railways in the Inter-War Years' in C. Harvey and J. Turner (eds.), *Labour and Business in Modern Britain* (London, 1989), pp. 66-83.
- Crompton, G., and Jupe, R., "An awkward fence to cross': railway capitalization in Britain in the inter-war years', *Accounting, Business & Financial History* 12:3 (2002), 439-459.
- Croucher, R., and Upchurch, M., 'Political congruence: a conceptual framework and historical case study', *Labor History* 53:2 (2012), 205-223.
- Dare, R., 'Instinct and organization: intellectuals and British Labour after 1931', *Historical Journal* 26:3 (1983), 677-697.
- Davies, S., and Morley, B., 'Electoral Turnout in County Borough Elections, 1919-1938', *Labour History Review* 71:2 (2006), 167-186.
- _____'The Reactions of Municipal Voters in Yorkshire to the Second Labour Government, 1929-32' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp.124-146.
- Dawson, M., 'Money and the real impact of the Fourth Reform Act', *Historical Journal* 35:2 (1992), 369-381.
- Dawson, S., 'Working-Class Consumers and the Campaign for Holidays with Pay', *Twentieth Century British History* 18:3 (2007), 277-305.
- Dintenfass, M., 'The Politics of Producers' Co-operation: The FBI-TUC-NCEO Talks, 1929-1933' in J. Turner (ed.), *Businessmen and Politics. Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945* (London, 1984), pp. 76-92.
- Drucker, H. M., 'The influence of the trade unions on the ethos of the Labour Party' in B. Pimlott and C. Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991), pp. 243-255.
- Exell, A., 'Morris Motors in the 1930s. Part I', *History Workshop Journal* 6:1 (1978), 52-78.
- _____'Morris Motors in the 1930s. Part II: Politics and Trade Unionism', *History Workshop Journal* 7:1 (1979), 45-65.

- _____'Morris Motors in the 1940s', *History Workshop Journal* 9:1 (1980), 90-115.
- Fishman, N., 'Heroes and anti-heroes: communists in the coalfields' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 93-117.
- Flinn, A., 'Labour's Family: Local Labour Parties, Trade Unions and Trades Councils in Cotton Lancashire, 1931-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 102-123.
- _____'Mothers for Peace', co-operation, feminism and peace: the Women's Co-operative Guild between the Wars', in L. Black and N. Robertson, (eds.), *Consumerism and the Co-operative movement in modern British history. Taking stock* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 138-154.
- Fowler, A., 'Lancashire to Westminster: a study of cotton trade union officials and British Labour 1910-39', *Labour History Review* 64:1 (1999), 1-22.
- Gilbert, D., 'Imagined communities and mining communities', *Labour History Review* 60:2 (1995), 47-55.
- _____'The landscape of Spencerism: mining politics in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, 1910-1947' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 175-198.
- Gildart, K., 'Coal Strikes on the Home Front: Miners' Militancy in the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History* 20:2 (2009), 121-151.
- _____'Cooperation and conflict: episodes from the North Wales coalfield, 1925-35', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 12 (2001), 27-56.
- _____'Men of Coal: Miners' leaders in North-East Wales 1890-1961', *Llafur* 8:1 (2001), 111-130.
- _____'Militancy, moderation and the struggle against company unionism in the North Wales coalfield, 1926-1944', *Welsh History Review* 20:3 (2001), 532-564.
- _____'The Miners' Lockout in 1926 in the Cumberland Coalfield', *Northern History* 44:2 (2007), 169-192.
- Glucksmann, M., 'In a class of their own? Women workers in the new industries of inter-war Britain', *Feminist Review* 24 (1986), 7-37.
- Gospel, H. F., 'The Development of Bargaining Structure: the Case of Electrical Contracting, 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 284-297.
- _____'Employers' Labour Policy: a Study of the Mond-Turner Talks 1927-33', *Business History* 21:2 (1979), 180-197.

- _____. 'Employers and Managers: Organisation and Strategy, 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 159-184.
- Graham Jones, J., 'Welsh Politics between the Wars: the Personnel of Labour', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1983), 164-183.
- Greasley, D., 'The coal industry: images and realities on the road to nationalisation' in R. Millward and J. Singleton (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 37-64.
- Griffin, A. R., and Griffin, C. P., 'The Non-Political Trade Union Movement' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 133-162.
- Griffiths, C. V. J., 'Remembering Tolpuddle: rural history and commemoration in the inter-war Labour movement', *History Workshop Journal*, 44 (1997), 145-69.
- Griffiths, T., 'Work, class and community: social identities and political change in the Lancashire coalfield, 1910-1939' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 199-222.
- Griggs, C., 'The Trades Union Congress and secondary education for all 1926-39', *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 33:1 (2001), 30-47.
- Gurney, P., 'Co-operation and the 'new consumerism' in interwar England', *Business History* 54:6 (2012), 905-924.
- _____. 'The Curse of the Co-ops': Co-operation, the Mass Press and the Market in Interwar Britain', *English Historical Review* 130:547 (2015), 1479-1512.
- Hall, R. C., 'British Cooperatives in Politics', *Public Opinion Quarterly* (January 1939), 124-135.
- Hamill, J., and Prescott, A., 'The Masons' candidate': New Welcome Lodge No. 5139 and the Parliamentary Labour Party', *Labour History Review* 71:1 (2006), 9-41.
- Harmer, H., 'The Failure of the Communists: the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1921-1939: a Disappointing Success' in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 29-48.
- Harrison, B., 'Women in a men's House: the women M.P.s, 1919-1945', *Historical Journal* 29:3 (1986), 623-654.
- Heyck, T. W., 'From Men of Letters to Intellectuals: The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies* 20:1 (1980), 158-183.
- Hope, J., 'Blackshirts, Knuckle-Dusters and Lawyers: Documentary Essay on the Mosley versus Marchbanks Papers', *Labour History Review* 65:1 (2000), 41-58.

- Howard, C., 'Expectations born to death: local Labour party expansion in the 1920s', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History. Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling*. (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), pp. 65-81.
- Howell, D., "All or nowt': the politics of the MFGB' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 35-58.
- _____'A Faraway Country. Abyssinia and the British General Election of 1935', *Socialist History* 28 (2006), 60-75.
- _____'I Loved my Union and my Country': Jimmy Thomas and the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism' *Twentieth Century British History* 6: 2 (1995), 145-173.
- _____'The Sheik...A Valentino in Real Life: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Labour Party, 1924-1931', *Contemporary British History* 23:4 (2009), 425-443.
- _____'Traditions, myths and legacies: the ILP and the Labour left' in A. McKinlay and R. J. Morris (eds.), *The ILP on Clydeside. 1893-1932: from foundation to disintegration* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 204-232.
- Hunt, C., 'Dancing and Days Out: the Role of Social Events in British Women's Trade Unionism in the Early Twentieth Century', *Labour History Review* 76:2 (2011), 104-120.
- Hyman, R., 'Rank-and-File Movements and Workplace Organisation, 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 129-158.
- Jarvis, D., 'British Conservatism and class politics in the 1920s', *English Historical Review* 111:440 (1996), 59-84.
- _____'Mrs Maggs and Betty: the Conservative appeal to women voters in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History* 5:2 (1994), 129-152.
- _____'The shaping of the Conservative electoral hegemony, 1918-39' in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 131-152.
- Jones, S. G., 'Trade union policy between the wars: the case of Holidays with Pay in Britain', *International Review of Social History* 31:1 (1986), 40-67.
- Knox, W. W., and McKinlay, A., 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History* 6:2 (1995), 174-193.
- Lawrence, J., 'Fascist violence and the politics of public order in inter-war Britain: the Olympia debate revisited', *Historical Research* 76:192 (2003), 238-267.
- _____'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain' *Journal of Modern History* 75:3 (2003), 557-589.

- _____ 'Labour and the politics of class, 1900-1940' in D. Feldman and J. Lawrence (eds), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 237-260.
- _____ 'The transformation of British public politics after the First World War', *Past and Present* 190 (2006), 185-216.
- _____ 'Why Olympia mattered', *Historical Research* 78:200 (2005), 263-272.
- Laybourn, K., 'The disaffiliation crisis of 1932: the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the opinion of ILP members', in K. Laybourn and J. Shepherd (eds.), *Labour and Working Class Lives. Essays to celebrate the life and work of Chris Wrigley* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 110-132.
- _____ 'The Independent Labour Party and the second Labour government c. 1929-31: the move towards revolutionary change', in John Shepherd, Jonathan Davis, and Chris Wrigley, (eds.), *Britain's Second Labour Government, 1929-32. A Reappraisal* (Manchester and New York, 2011), pp. 100-116.
- _____ "Suicide during a Fit of Insanity' or the Defence of Socialism? The secession of the Independent Labour Party from the Labour Party at the special conference at Bradford, July 1932', *Bradford Antiquary* 5 (1991), 41-53.
- Lowe, R., 'The Failure of Consensus in Britain: the National Industrial Conference, 1919-1921', *Historical Journal* 21:3 (1978), 649-675.
- _____ 'The Government and Industrial Relations, 1919-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 185-210.
- Lyddon, D., 'Walter Milne-Bailey, the TUC Research Department, and the 1926 General Strike: the background to 'A Nation on Strike'', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 29/30 (2010), 122-151.
- McCarthy, H., 'Parties, voluntary associations and democratic politics in interwar Britain', *Historical Journal* 50:4 (2007), 891-912.
- _____ 'Whose democracy? Histories of British political culture between the Wars', *Historical Journal* 51:1 (2012), 221-238.
- McCarthy, H., and Thane, P., 'The Politics of Association in Industrial Society', *Twentieth Century British History* 22:2 (2011), 217-229.
- McIlroy, J., 'Financial Malpractice in British Trade Unions, 1800-1930: The Background to, and Consequences of, Hornby v. Close', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 6 (1998), 1-64
- _____ 'Two tales about crisis and corruption at the Central Labour College', *Labour History Review* 72:1 (2007), 69-93.
- McKinlay, A., 'From Industrial Serf to Wage-Labourer: the 1937 Apprentice Revolt in Britain', *International Review of Social History* 31:1 (1986), 2-18.

- McKinlay, A., and Smyth, J. J., 'The end of 'the agitator workman': 1926-1932', in McKinlay, A., and Morris, R. J. (eds.), *The ILP on Clydeside. 1893-1932: from foundation to disintegration* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 177-203.
- McKinlay, A., and Zeitlin, J., 'The Meanings of Managerial Prerogative: Industrial Relations and the Organisation of Work in British Engineering, 1880-1939' in C. Harvey and J. Turner (eds.), *Labour and Business in Modern Britain* (London, 1989), pp. 32-47.
- Malament, B. C., 'British Labour and Roosevelt's New Deal: the response of the left and the unions', *Journal of British Studies* 17:2 (1978), 136-167.
- Manton, K., 'The Labour party and the Co-op, 1918-58', *Historical Research* 82:218 (2009), 756-778.
- Melling, J., 'Employers and the Rise of Supervisory Unionism, 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 243-283.
- Miller, F., 'The British Unemployment Assistance Crisis of 1935', *Journal of Contemporary History* 14:2 (1979), 329-352.
- 'The Unemployment Policy of the National Government, 1931-36', *Historical Journal*, 19: 2 (1976), 453-476.
- Moher, J., 'Walter Citrine: a Union Pioneer of Industrial Cooperation' in P. Ackers, and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 179-210.
- Morgan, K., 'Class cohesion and trade-union internationalism: Fred Bramley, the British TUC, and the Anglo-Russian Advisory Council', *International Review of Social History* 58 (2013), 429-461.
- 'Colourless, dry and dull': Why British trade unionists lack biographers and what (if anything) should be done about it', *Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements* 54 (2014), 213-237.
- Newman, M., 'Democracy versus Dictatorship: Labour's role in the struggle against British Fascism, 1933-1936', *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978), 66-88.
- Owen, N., 'MacDonald's Parties: the Labour Party and the 'Aristocratic Embrace', 1922-31', *Twentieth Century British History* 18:1 (2007), 1-53.
- Parker, R. A. C., 'British rearmament 1936-9: Treasury, trade unions and skilled labour', *English Historical Review* (1981), 306-343.
- Peden, G., 'Arms, Government and Businessmen, 1935-1945' in J. Turner (ed.), *Businessmen and Politics. Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945* (London, 1984), pp. 130-145.
- Perry, M., 'In search of 'Red Ellen' Wilkinson beyond frontiers and beyond the nation state', *International Review of Social History* 58 (2013), 219-246.

- Petrie, M. R., "Contests of vital importance': By-elections, the Labour Party, and the Reshaping of British Radicalism, 1924-1929', *Historical Journal* 60:1 (2017), 121-148.
- _____'Public Politics and Traditions of Popular Protest: Demonstrations of the Unemployed in Dundee and Edinburgh, c.1921-1939', *Contemporary British History* 27:4 (2013), 490-513.
- Pollard, S., 'The Co-operative Party—Reflections on a Re-consideration', *International Review of Social History* 32:2 (1987), 168-73.
- _____'The Foundation of the Co-operative Party' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History 1886-1923* (London, 1971), pp. 185-210.
- _____'Trade union reactions to the economic crisis', *Journal of Contemporary History* 4:4 (1969), 101-115.
- Potts, A., "Bevin to Beat the Bankers': Ernest Bevin's Gateshead campaign of 1931', *Bulletin of the North East Group for the Study of Labour History* 11 (1977), 28-38.
- Price, R., "No safe or reliable substitute': the hostility of British unions to state regulation of wages, 1920-1935', *Labour History Review* 73:2 (2008), 208-227.
- Pugh, M., "Class traitors': Conservative recruits to Labour, 1900-30', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), 38-64.
- _____'The Daily Mirror and the revival of Labour 1935-1945', *Twentieth Century British History* 9:3 (1998), 420-38.
- _____'The Rise of Labour and the Political Culture of Conservatism, 1890-1945', *History* 87:288 (2002), 514-537.
- Redvaldsen, D., "Today is the Dawn': The Labour Party and the 1929 General Election', *Parliamentary History* 29:3 (2010), 395-415.
- Rees, D., 'Morgan Jones, Educationalist and Labour Politician', *Morgannwg – Transactions of the Glamorgan Local History Society* 31 (1987), 66-83.
- Renshaw, P., 'The depression years 1918-1931' in B. Pimlott and C. Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991), pp. 88-108.
- Riddell, N., "The age of Cole'? G. D. H. Cole and the British Labour movement 1929-1933', *Historical Journal* 38:4 (1995), 933-957.
- _____'Walter Citrine and the British Labour movement, 1925-1935', *History* 85 (2000), 285-306.
- Roberts, R., 'The Administrative Origins of Industrial Diplomacy: an aspect of Government-Industry Relations, 1929-1935' in J. Turner (ed.), *Businessmen*

and Politics. *Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945* (London, 1984), pp.93-104.

Robertson, N., 'The Political Dividend: Co-operative Parties in the Midlands, 1917-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 147-169.

——— 'A Union of Forces Marching in the Same Direction'? The Relationship between the Co-operative and Labour Parties, 1918-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 213-230.

Ryan, P., 'Apprentice strikes in the twentieth-century UK engineering and shipbuilding industries', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 18 (2005), 1-63.

Scott, P., 'British railways and the challenge from road haulage: 1919-39', *Twentieth Century British History* 13:2 (2002), 101-120.

——— 'The wolf at the door: the trade union movement and overseas multinationals in Britain during the 1930s', *Social History* 23:2 (1998), 195-210.

Seyd, P., 'Factionalism within the Labour Party: the Socialist League, 1932-1937' in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History. Volume 3, 1918-1939* (London, 1977), pp. 204-231.

Shackleton, R., 'Trade unions and the slump' in B. Pimlott and C. Cook (eds.), *Trade Unions and British Politics: the first 250 years*, second edition (London, 1991), pp. 109-136.

Singleton, J., 'Debating the nationalisation of the cotton industry, 1918-50' in R. Millward and J. Singleton (eds.), *The Political Economy of Nationalisation in Britain 1920-1950* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 212-236.

Smith, P., 'The road haulage industry 1918-1940: the process of unionization, employers' control and statutory regulation', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 3 (1997), 49-80.

Stack, D., 'Labour and the Intellectuals' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 113-130.

Tanner, D. M., 'Class voting and radical politics: the Liberal and Labour parties, 1910-1931' in J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 106-130.

——— 'The Fourth Reform Act and the rise of Labour', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 61 (1983), 205-219.

——— 'Gender, Civic Culture and Politics in South Wales: Explaining Labour Municipal Policy, 1918-39' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 170-193.

- _____ 'The Labour Party and electoral politics in the coalfields' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 59-92.
- Taylor, A., 'Deadweight or Bedrock? The Mineworkers and Labour' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 57-76.
- _____ '“Maximum benefit for minimum sacrifice”: the Miners’ wage campaign of 1935–1936', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 2 (1996), 65-92.
- _____ 'The Miners and Nationalisation, 1931-36', *International Review of Social History* 38:2 (1983), 176-199.
- _____ 'The politics of labourism in the Yorkshire coalfield, 1926-1945' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 223-249.
- Taylor, R., 'John Robert Clynes and the Making of Labour Socialism, 1890-1918' in M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 13-36.
- Temple, R., 'W. J. Brown, civil service unionism, and London busmen', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 8 (1999), 87-97.
- Thackeray, D., 'Building a peaceable party: masculine identities in British Conservative politics, c.1903–24', *Historical Research* 85:230 (2012), 651-673.
- _____ 'Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 49 (2010), 826–848.
- Thomas, G., 'The Conservative Party and Welsh Politics in the Inter-War Years', *English Historical Review* 128:533 (2013), 877-913.
- _____ 'Political modernity and ‘government’ in the construction of inter-war democracy: local and national encounters' in L. Beers and G. Thomas (eds.), *Brave New World. Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London, 2011), pp. 39-68.
- Thompson, J., 'The Liberal party, Liberalism and trade unions, 1906-24', *Cercles* 21 (2011), 27-38.
- Thorpe, A., 'Arthur Henderson and the political crisis of 1931', *Historical Journal* 31:1 (1988), 117-39.
- _____ 'The Communist Party and the New Party', *Contemporary British History* 23:4 (2009), 477-491.
- _____ 'I am in the Cabinet.' J .H. Thomas's decision to join the National government in 1931', *Historical Research* 64 (1991), 389-402.
- _____ 'The industrial meaning of ‘gradualism’’: the Labour party and industry, 1918-1931', *Journal of British Studies* 35:1 (1996), 84-113.

- _____'J. H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby', *Midland History* 15 (1990), 111-128.
- _____'Locking out the Communists: the Labour party and the Communist party, 1939-46', *Twentieth Century British History* 25:2 (2014), 221-250.
- _____'One of the Most Backward Areas of the Country': the Labour Party's Grass Roots in South West England, 1918-45' in M. Worley (ed.), *Labour's Grass Roots. Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 216-239.
- _____'The Only Effective Bulwark against Reaction and Revolution': Labour and the Frustration of the Extreme Left' in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 11-28.
- _____'Stalinism and British Politics', *History* 83:272 (1998), 608-627.
- Thurlow, R., 'The Failure of British Fascism' in A. Thorpe (ed.), *The Failure of Political Extremism in Inter-war Britain* (Exeter, 1989), pp. 67-84.
- Tolliday, S., 'The Failure of Mass-Production Unionism in the Motor Industry, 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 298-322.
- _____'Tariffs and Steel, 1916-1934: the Politics of Industrial Decline' in J. Turner (ed.), *Businessmen and Politics. Studies of business activity in British politics, 1900-1945* (London, 1984), pp. 50-75.
- Topham, T., 'The early years of the Transport and General Workers' Union: the Waterways' Group and the canal workers', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 27/28 (2009), 183-195.
- Toye, R., 'The gentleman in Whitehall' reconsidered: the evolution of Douglas Jay's views on economic planning and consumer choice, 1937-47', *Labour History Review* 67:2 (2002), 187-204.
- _____'Keynes, the Labour Movement, and 'How to Pay for the War'', *Twentieth Century British History* 10:3 (1999), 255-281.
- _____'The Labour party and the economics of rearmament, 1935-39', *Twentieth Century British History* 12:3 (2001), 303-326.
- _____'Perfectly Parliamentary'? The Labour Party and the House of Commons in the Inter-war Years', *Twentieth Century British History* 25:1 (2014), 1-29.
- Vorberg-Rugh, R., and Whitecross, A., 'The Co-operative Party: an Alternative Vision of Social Ownership' in P. Ackers, and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 57-92.
- Williams, C., 'The hope of the British proletariat': the South Wales miners, 1910-1947' in A. Campbell, N. Fishman and D. Howell (eds.), *Miners, Unions, and Politics, 1910-47* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 121-144.

- _____'The odyssey of Frank Hodges', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, New Series, Vol. 5 (1999), 110-130.
- Williamson, A., 'The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927 Reconsidered', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 37 (2016), 33-82.
- Williamson, P., 'The Labour Party and the House of Lords, 1918-1931', *Parliamentary History* 10 (1991), 317-41.
- Whitecross, A., 'The wasted years? The Co-operative party during the 1930s', in A. Webster, L. Shaw, and R. Vorberg-Rugh (eds.), *Mainstreaming co-operation. An alternative for the twenty-first century?* (Manchester, 2016), pp. 131-150.
- Whiteside, N., 'Public policy and port labour reform: the dock decasualisation issue, 1910-1950' in S. Tolliday and J. Zeitlin (eds.), *Shop-floor Bargaining and the State. Historical and comparative perspectives* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 75-107.
- _____'Social Welfare and Industrial Relations 1914-39' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 211-242.
- Whiting, R., 'Trade Unions: Voluntary Associations and Individual Rights' in P. Ackers, and A. J. Reid (eds.), *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain. Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 31-56.
- Whitston, K., 'Craftsmen and Skilled Workers in Engineering, 1914-64', *Labour History Review* 76:3 (2011), 207-226.
- _____'The Origins of Disorderly Wage-Bargaining in the British Engineering Industry', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 29/30 (2010), 33-60.
- Whittier, N., 'Political Generations, Micro-Cohorts, and the Transformation of Social Movements', *American Sociological Review* 62:5 (1997), 760-778.
- Worley, M., 'What was the New Party? Sir Oswald Mosley and associated responses to the 'crisis', 1931-1932', *History* 92:305 (2007), 39-63.
- _____'Why Fascism? Sir Oswald Mosley and the Conception of the British Union of Fascists', *History* 96:321 (2011), 69-83.
- Wrigley, C. J., 'The First World War and State Intervention in Industrial Relations, 1914-18' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 23-70.
- _____'Introduction' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 1-23.
- _____'The Second World War and state intervention in industrial relations, 1939-45' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979. Volume III: Industrial Relations in a Declining Economy* (Cheltenham, 1996).

_____'The Trade Unions between the Wars' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations. Volume II: 1914-1939* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 71-128.

Zeitlin, J., 'The internal politics of employer organization: the Engineering Employers' Federation 1896-1939' in S. Tolliday and J. Zeitlin (eds.), *The Power to Manage? Employers and industrial relations in comparative-historical perspective* (London and New York, 1991), pp. 52-80.

5. Theses

Beach, A. L., 'The Labour party and the idea of citizenship, c. 1931-1951', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 1996).

Boughton, J. F., 'Working-class politics in Birmingham and Sheffield, 1918-1931', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1985).

Carr, F. W., 'Engineering workers and the rise of Labour in Coventry 1914-1939', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1978).

Cohen, G., 'The Independent Labour Party 1932-1939', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 2000).

Greenwood, J. R., 'Central control and constituency autonomy in the Conservative party: the organisation of 'labour' and Trade Unionist support 1918-1970', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading, 1981).

Haunton, M. A., 'The Parliamentary Labour Party 1918-1923', (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Exeter, 1998).

Mates, L. H., 'The United Front and the Popular Front in the North East of England, 1936-1939', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Newcastle, 2002).

Muller, W. D., 'The Parliamentary activity of trade union MPs, 1959-1964', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Florida, 1966).

Neville, R. G., 'The Yorkshire Miners 1881-1926: a Study in Labour and Social History', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1974).

Webb, M., 'The rise and fall of the Labour League of Youth', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2007).

Whitecross, A. F., 'Co-operative Commonwealth or New Jerusalem? The Co-operative Party and the Labour Party, 1931-1951', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2015).