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The Responses to Unemployment in the 1930's,
with particular reference to South-East Lancashire
(in two volumes)

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by

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Summary of Thesis submitted for Ph.D. degree
by Ralph H.C. Hayburn
on
The Responses to Unemployment in the 1930's,
with special reference to South-East Lancashire.

This Thesis is a study of unemployment in the 1930's in the cotton-spinning region of South-East Lancashire, including the two cities of Manchester and Salford. It falls into three sections. The first concerns the economic background - contemporary explanations of mass unemployment, and interpretations of the problems facing the staple British industries in the 1920's - and also the social problems of long-term unemployment, the 'Means Test', families living 'on the dole'.

The second part deals with the response of voluntary organisations, including the T.U.C. and Labour Party (outside Parliament), to the problem of the unemployed. From early 1932, the National Council of Social Service began to undertake the organisation of occupational centres for the unemployed. This developed into an extensive movement, and by 1936 there were 1,500 centres in existence in Britain, about four hundred of which were for women. The response of the T.U.C. was rather limited: the Unemployed Associations established after 1932

were a half-hearted attempt to provide those who had lost their employment with the opportunity to remain in touch with their unions.

Part III is a history of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. This left-wing organisation, closely connected with the Communist Party, was particularly strong in South-East Lancashire, where unemployed skilled engineers provided a core of militant leaders. In the years between 1929 and 1936, the N.U.W.M. held five national hunger marches to London, and contingents of unemployed from South-East Lancashire took part on all of these. In addition, there were numerous local demonstrations in these years, especially in the last months of 1931, following the reductions in unemployment benefit and the introduction of the Means Test in the Budget of September of that year. After 1936, however, with the fall in unemployment, the activities of the N.U.W.M. began to decline.

PART I.

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND.

Chapter One

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The 1930's are still remembered by many people as a time of great hardship and insecurity, of idle factories and mines, and of queues of unemployed. In January 1933 the official unemployment figures issued by the Ministry of Labour reached almost three million, more than a fifth of the insured population.¹ From just over one million in the summer of 1929, the number had risen rapidly to more than two and a half million by the end of 1930: not until September 1935 did unemployment in Great Britain fall below two millions.² Several important sections of the population remained outside the field of insurance, and were, therefore, excluded from the official figures. These included agricultural workers, domestic servants and self-employed persons. Furthermore, many who were willing to work, if work could be found, especially elderly persons and married women, had ceased to be registered with the Ministry of Labour, since they had exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. Including these groups, the total true number of unemployed has been estimated at 3,289,000 in 1931, and 3,750,000 at the peak in September 1932. In Great Britain as a whole, some six or seven million people were living on unemployment benefit or assistance.³

1. S. Pollard, Development of the British Economy (1962), p. 243.

2. Figures from Ministry of Labour Gazette: see below, Appendix I.

3. S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 243; H.W. Robinson, 'Employment and Unemployment', in Britain in Recovery (1938), pp. 94-5; for a discussion on the difficulty of assessing the 'true' unemployment figures, see below, Appendix I.

In recent years, however, the idea that the 1930's were entirely a period of stagnation and recession for the economy of Great Britain has been challenged. Leading economic historians have instead suggested that the decade as a whole was a time of fairly active expansion and growth. Following a period of slow development in the 1920's,¹ during which the British economy failed to adjust to the post-war situation sufficiently rapidly to share in the world boom of the years 1925-9, the 1930's offered plenty of scope for investment once expectations had revived. The very absence of an upswing in the late 1920's meant that the slump of 1929-32 affected Britain less severely than most other industrialised countries, and recovery began much earlier and was far more substantial in Britain than elsewhere.²

1. This is the traditional view of the 1920's: see S. Pollard, op. cit., and H.W. Richardson, 'The Basis of Economic Recovery in the 1930's', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XV, 1962-3. In a recent article in the Scottish Journal of Political Economy, Neil Buxton has argued against what he calls D.H. Aldcroft's 'somewhat startling conclusion' that this interpretation requires any revision (see N.K. Buxton, 'Economic Progress in Britain in the 1920's: A Reappraisal', S.J.P.E., XIV, 1968). He suggests that 'Taking a balanced view, there would appear to be little about the 1920's that could appropriately be described as "buoyant"... the allegation that the the growth rates of the 1920's compare favourably with those after 1930 would appear to be a mis-interpretation of the available evidence.' The basis of Dr. Aldcroft's argument ('Economic Progress in Britain in the 1920's', S.J.P.E., XIII, 1966) was that industrial production showed a substantial rise in Britain after the first years of the 1920's, but this, as Buxton points out, discounts such factors as unemployment, declining staple industries, and a rapid relative decrease in exports: increasing industrial production, 'although a necessary condition of growth, is by no means synonymous with "real economic progress".'
2. H.W. Richardson, Economic Recovery in Britain, 1932-39 (1967), p. 1 et seq.

At the end of the First World War, in Britain more perhaps than in most countries, a serious attempt was made to return to pre-war conditions.¹ The demands in business circles for the ending of wartime controls was an early indication of what became a common cry: to get 'Back to 1914'. Fears of a post-war slump proved unfounded: instead the war was followed, within a month of the Armistice, by a wild boom, the immediate effect of which was to simplify immensely the change-over from war to peace. Factories were deluged with orders, and absorbed all available labour: demobilisation was speeded. The long-term results of the boom can hardly be counted as positive for British industry. At the time, however, the boom provided the leaders of business with irresistible demands for the scrapping of wartime restrictions. Controls seemed to stand in the way of a return to 'normalcy'. 'To make short work of these abominations became almost a crusade'.² Decontrol became the order of the day.

The boom was largely one of prices based on a world replenishing of stocks, and at no time did industrial output approach that of 1913. Prices rose at the rate of 2-4% a month. The price index rose from 192 in 1918 (1914 = 100) to 265 in April 1920. In this month the collapse

1. A.E. Kahn, Great Britain in the World Economy (New York, 1946), p. 42.

2. R.H. Tawney, 'The Abolition of Economic Controls, 1918-21', Economic History Review, 1st. Ser. XIII, 1943.

began. The Government took fright, introduced a deflationary budget and raised Bank Rate from 6 to 7%. The Government's action was 'a pinprick,' but coming when it did it 'let the gas out of the balloon.'¹ The work of post-war replacement had, by this time, been completed, and the rate of investment was slowed down. Prices fell almost as fast as they had risen only a short time before. From an average for the first six months of 1920 of 258.2, the index fell to 155 in 1921, and following the boom, a recession set in. Britain appeared like the rest of the industrial nations of the world to be the victim of a depression, the nature of which was understood by contemporaries to be in the nature of the orthodox cyclical sequence.²

Unemployment rose from 274,000 in September 1920 to more than half a million by the end of October of that year, and by January 1921 to 1,065,000. By May 1921 it had risen to 2,122,000. Over the next twelve months the figures fell gradually to just below one and a half million by the summer of 1922, fluctuating between 1.1-1.4 million until the General Strike. In the summer of 1926 the number out of work rose to 1.6 million, falling by the end of the year to about 1.2 million, a point at which it remained, with small fluctuations, until the winter of 1929-30. Although the worst years were 1921-2, therefore, at no time did unemployment in the 1920's fall below one million.

1. Ibid

2. Ibid; C.L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (1955), pp. 25-7; S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 215; W.A. Lewis, Economic Survey, 1919-39 (1949), pp. 18-19.

Table 1: Unemployment in Great Britain, 1921-1929

Jan 1921	1,065,000	Jan 1926	1,316,000
Jul	2,314,000	Jul	1,664,000
Jan 1922	2,194,000	Jan 1927	1,375,000
Jul	1,400,000	Jul	1,055,000
Jan 1923	1,460,000	Jan 1928	1,199,000
Jul	1,235,000	Jul	1,354,000
Jan 1924	1,322,000	Jan 1929	1,434,000
Jul	1,052,000	Jul	1,176,000
Jan 1925	1,281,000		
Jul	1,262,000		

(Figures from the Ministry of Labour Gazette, see below, Appendix I.)

After 1920-1 it was the aim of successive governments and chancellors to pursue a policy of severe deflation, the over-riding purpose of which was the restoration of the Gold Standard, suspended in 1919, at the earliest possible moment. In part this action was the result of the recommendation of the Cunliffe Committee on Currency and Foreign Exchanges, which insisted in its first interim report in August 1918 that:

'Nothing can contribute more to the speedy recovery from the effects of the war, and the rehabilitation of the foreign exchanges, than the re-establishment of the currency upon a sound basis.'¹

1. Quoted in S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 215; the Chancellor of the Exchequer from January 1919 until March 1921 was Austen Chamberlain; from March 1921 until October 1922, the post was held by Sir R.S. Horne; from then until August 1923, Stanley Baldwin was Chancellor, and also Prime Minister after May 1923. He was succeeded by Neville Chamberlain as Chancellor, who held the post until January 1924. Philip Snowden was the first Labour Chancellor from January to November 1924, when Winston Churchill was appointed under the new Conservative Government.

The appointment of the Geddes Committee in August 1921 was part of the deflationary drive. Criticism, by Keynes and other economists,¹ of the movement towards the restoration of the Gold Standard at pre-war parity went unheard. The return to gold would, it was widely thought, complete the return to pre-war conditions and prosperity.

The Cunliffe Report, which painted 'a decidedly idyllic picture of how the gold standard had worked before the war,' was a decisive influence on British monetary policy in the 1920's. The final decision to return to gold was announced by Winston Churchill, then Chancellor, in his Budget Speech of April 1925. This followed the Report of the Committee on Currency and Bank of England Note Issues (known as the Chamberlain-Bradbury Report), set up by Philip Snowden, the Labour Chancellor, in June 1924, to advise, in effect, as to what should be done to implement the Cunliffe Committee's recommendations.² The Bradbury Committee should have reported at the end of 1924, and its Report was in fact almost complete by September of that year. The resignation of the Labour Government the following month, however, delayed publication. Had it reported in October 1924, at which point the dollar exchange rate stood at \$4.40, it would have recommended that

1. See below, Chapter Two, p. 37.

2. See W.B. Reddaway's discussion in 'Was \$4.86 inevitable in 1925?', Lloyd's Bank Review, No. 96, April 1970 of D.E. Moggridge, The Return to Gold, 1925.

'for the time being no drastic action should be taken to restore the sterling exchange to parity' (i.e. £4.86), but that the credit policy of the Bank of England at the Joint Stock Banks should be aimed at keeping prices steady for a year in Britain in the hope that a rise in American prices would take the rate back to par. If the expected rise in American prices did not occur, the Committee's report, as it stood in September 1924, recommended that the situation be reviewed in the autumn of 1925. The election of a Conservative Government was however followed by a speculative rise in the exchange rate in anticipation of an early return to par. In December 1924 the pound stood at £4.79, only $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ below parity. When the Bradbury Report was finally published in February 1925, its opinion, based on the new high standing of the pound, was that an immediate return to gold should be made at the pre-war parity.¹

The Committee failed to take any account of prices in any external country except the United States, and also the fact that the Cunliffe Report's recommendations were made at a time when the exchange rate had fallen only to £4.76, as opposed to the level of £4.40 in the latter half of 1924. The Committee, in Professor Reddaway's opinion, should have realised 'how rash it was to fix an exchange rate for the pound in isolation from other European rates.' In the event, other countries, including France, Belgium and Germany, returned to gold at lower parities.

1. Ibid

The pound, in the years after 1925, was over-valued to the extent of about ten per cent., and, at a time of falling prices, British exports were placed under a severe competitive disability.¹

Thus British budgetary policy in the 1920's aggravated the already extreme difficulties facing British industry at this time. Until 1914, Britain's economic success had depended on the export performance of her staple industries, cotton, coal, shipbuilding and engineering. Even before this time her strength as an exporter had been endangered as industrialisation in other countries increased, and as overseas competition became keener. The war, during which many markets were closed to British exporters, speeded these changes: the extreme difficulty of obtaining British goods stimulated self-sufficiency, and when the war ended the markets were not re-opened.² The principal reason among many, for the economic difficulties of British industry in the 1920's was the decline in exports. While world trade after 1925 rose above the pre-war level, British exports remained less than before the war. 'It was unfortunate that it was just those products of which Britain had the most to offer, that the world had become least interested in taking.'² The staple industries, in which a substantial part of the British working population were employed were doomed to depression or decline in the

1. H.W. Arndt, Economic Lessons of the 1930's (1963), p. 21; A.E. Kahn, op. cit., pp. 42, 70; S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 210-1

2. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 271.

inter-war years because of this failure of the traditional export sectors to continue their pre-war growth.

Coal was the 'symbol of the old industrial Britain,'¹ having provided fuel for her industries and having largely determined their location since the eighteenth century. Before the war the domestic consumption of coal had been steadily rising, and in the years from 1914-8 demand was far in excess of supply. After 1920, however, that part of the demand for coal which came from the home market ceased to grow: the rising demand from power stations, and from household users was balanced by the decline in demand from the depressed iron and steel industry, from industry in general, and by the increasing use of oil and electricity. While domestic demand remained sluggish, exports fell by more than half in the years after 1923, again reflecting the substitution of coal by oil and water power, and the low growth in the world markets. Largely because of the fall in exports, annual output declined from a record of 287 million tons in 1913 to 232 million tons in 1927-33 and 228 million in 1934-8. Employment fell drastically from 1,226,000 in 1920 to 970,000 in 1929 and 702,000 in 1938.²

The world depression hit the iron and steel industry with particular intensity because of its dependence on capital goods. Production of

1. S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 110.

2. Ibid., pp. 110-4; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 276-7; see below Chapter Three, pp. 75-6.

steel in Britain was greater after the war than before, and remained so until 1929. Exports, however were lower,¹ although by 1925 the world's export trade in steel had exceeded the pre-war level, and Britain's chief European competitors, Germany, France, Belgium and Luxembourg, had all substantially increased their exports. Britain's imports of steel increased until 1930, especially in semi-manufactured steel, and in 1927 imports were almost double the 1913 level at 4.4 million tons compared with nearly 2.25 million in 1913.² At the same time there was a sharp decline in the consumption and export of British pig iron, bar iron and acid steel, products for which Britain had previously been predominant. Yet the world production of pig iron in 1930 exceeded that of 1913.

The fortunes of the iron and steel industry varied considerably from district to district. The most prosperous areas were the Midlands, Sheffield, South Wales and particularly Lincolnshire, where the finishing trades were strongest. Conditions were adverse in Scotland and the North of England. The industry as a whole suffered from a varying degree of technical inefficiency and an excess of productive capacity. During the war, and in the boom which followed, Britain's blast furnace capacity increased from 11 to 12 million tons, and steel works capacity from 8

1. Production of steel in Great Britain was 7.66 million tons in 1913, 9.64 million tons in 1929 and 7.3 million in 1930; exports were 4.98 million tons in 1913, 3.25 million in 1920, 4.38 million in 1929 and 3.16 million in 1930 (C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 278 (n)).

2. D.L. Burn, Economic History of Steel-Making, 1867-1939 (1940), pp. 393-5.

to over 12 million tons. In 1923 there were 483 blast furnaces in Great Britain, 59 built during or since the war: by 1934 the figure was down to 308, but a hundred of these had been out of blast for more than five years. In 1925, Britain was using only 44.5% of her capacity for making pig iron and 58% of her steel capacity. Britain, moreover, had changed from Bessemer to open-hearth to such an extent that the former had to be imported, although open-hearth was more expensive to produce. The industry was slow to reorganise in the 1920's: although there were 'efficient plants, there was hardly a firm in the industry in the 'twenties which at all points could be dubbed efficient.'¹ Between 1929 and 1932 the production of pig iron dropped by a further 53%, and that of steel by 45%. After 1928, however, some measure of rationalisation and amalgamation was forced on firms by their creditors, particularly the banks, and a large part of the industry's capital was written off. Assisted by a 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % tariff under the Import Duties Act of 1932, the industry recovered somewhat in the 1930's. By 1934 output had returned to the level of 1929, and thereafter it continued to expand. In April 1934, the British Iron and Steel Federation was formed, largely as a result of Government action, and Government help also led to the establishment of the International Steel Cartel the following year. The mergers and the officially exported cartel policy kept up prices and

1. Ibid., p. 441.

profits in the industry in Britain, but contributed little to greater efficiency.¹

Shipbuilding suffered even more than iron and steel in the depression years from the decline in demand for capital goods. In the war years other centres, formerly dependent on British-built tonnage, were forced to supply their own; the U.S.A. in particular expanded its ship-building capacity as a result of Britain's inability to meet foreign orders. After 1919 the British industry boomed: in 1920 just over two million tons of shipping was launched in Great Britain, the largest tonnage ever launched in one year. By 1921, however, the wartime losses in the world as a whole had been made good, and the tonnage under construction fell rapidly. In the slump, with millions of tons of shipping laid up, the building of new tonnage came to a standstill: in 1933 the launching from British yards were down to 7% of the 1913 figure and until 1937 a large section of the industry was idle, with unemployment at a high level.²

In contrast, some sections of the engineering industry expanded rapidly in the 1920's, and absorbed much labour and capital from the declining sectors. The main areas of growth were in electrical engineering and motor car manufacture. As far as car production was con-

1. Ibid., pp. 438-9, 483; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 277-8; S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 114-7.

2. Ibid., pp. 117-9; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 279-81.

cerned, Britain had been a late starter before 1914, although after 1900 some leeway was being made up, and the output of cars in Britain in 1913, some 34,000 vehicles, was approximately three-quarters of that of the French motor industry, Europe's leading manufacturers. Both were completely overshadowed by the American industry, however, with its output of 485,000 cars in 1914.¹ The sections of the engineering industry which suffered most in the 1920's were steam engine making, including locomotive and marine engineering, and the building of textile machinery. Prior to 1914, textile machinery and locomotive manufacture had been the largest branches of the industry. The United States, at this date, had been the only area in the world not dependent on Britain for a major part of its textile machinery, although even there Keighley firms monopolised the market for worsted machinery.² Engineering as a whole expanded faster than any other occupation during the war, the insurance figures registering an increase from 1,028,000 in 1913-4 to 1,647,000 in 1919-20. The necessary peace-time reduction, however, meant that production declined after 1918: engineering output in 1924 only slightly exceeded that of 1907. Production then rose rapidly until 1929, although as a proportion of world trade even at

1. S.B. Saul, 'Engineering Industry', in Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition, 1875-1914 (D.H. Aldcroft ed., 1968)

2. S.B. Saul, 'The Market and Development of the Mechanical Engineering Industries in Britain, 1860-1914', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XX, 1967.

this time British exports were declining. In the 1930's the export trade collapsed, and the industry came to rely increasingly on the home market, largely protected by the adoption of the tariff in 1932.¹

Of the textile industries, the cotton, woollen and finishing trades comprised four-fifths of the whole in the inter-war years. The cotton industry, the largest of the textile trades, had expanded in the nineteenth century principally as a result of overseas demand. The importance of cotton exports for the British economy can be seen in the fact that 75% of the British output was exported in 1913, while cotton goods accounted for one quarter of the total value of the nation's export trade. Despite the rapid growth of competing countries in the decades before 1914, Britain's share in the international trade of cotton yarns and piece goods was still 65% in 1909-13; and the decline after 1920 was wholly due to the fall in overseas demand, in itself the result of newly established competitors abroad. Cotton goods as a proportion of British exports fell to 20% in 1927-9 and 12% in 1937-9. Until 1930 some attempts were made to improve efficiency, but after this date panic efforts were resorted to in order to reduce capacity. The producers of finer counts suffered somewhat less than the makers of

1. S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

coarser yarns and fabrics, and hence the incidence of unemployment was uneven in the various districts. Such was the state of the cotton industry in the 1930's that the Government was forced to intervene and the Cotton Industry (Reorganisation) Act of 1936 established the Spindles Board, with powers to raise a compulsory levy, used to acquire and scrap.¹

The woollen and worsted industry was comprised of a large number of small firms, most of which engaged in both spinning and weaving. The industry was highly competitive, and even in 1935 half the working force worked in factories employing less than three hundred. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century home demand had increased in relative importance to exports.² This factor meant that the industry suffered less than cotton from the decline in export markets after the war, and also benefited from an expanding home market in the 1930's. As far as exports were concerned, the woollen and worsted industry suffered only from a general decline in world trade, a result of growing self-sufficiency and also of crippling tariffs. In the main, Britain's share of the quality markets was retained. Much of the industry's equipment was antiquated, however, and output per man-hour or per spindle was far

1. Ibid., pp. 120-3; see below Chapter Three, pp. 75-6.

2. E.M. Sigsworth and J.M. Blackman, 'The Woollen and Worsted Industries', in Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition.

less than in the United States. Employment declined steadily in the industry between the wars,¹ since the increase in home demand was not sufficient to make up the drop in exports: employment fell by more than 30,000 in the ten years from 1924 to 1934. The production of woollen and worsted tissues, which had fallen to 316 million square yards in 1930, from 440 million in 1924, rose again to 405 million in 1935. Of this, however, only 109 million square yards were exported, compared with 221 million in 1924.²

The decline of Britain's traditional export industries was thus the most important reason for the high level of unemployment in the country during the 1920's, as compared with other nations. The problem of exports was aggravated after 1925 by the return to the gold standard at pre-war parity. The British industrial machine remained in low gear at a time when, in the years 1925-9, many parts of the world enjoyed a considerable boom. In addition, the determination to return to pre-war conditions, which was the thinking behind the return to gold at the pre-war level, as well as the policy of deflation, contributed to the slow adjustment of Britain's economy away from dependence on the old staple industries. A feature of British business outlook in the 1920's decade was optimism in the ability of the old industries to recover, and a belief that the setbacks of the post-war years were only temporary.

1. A.N. Shimmin, 'The Wool Textile Industry', in Britain in Recovery.

2. H.W. Arndt, op. cit., p. 99.

By contrast, the removal of the monetary handicap in September 1931, when the Gold Standard was abandoned, constituted 'the first important step towards helping Great Britain out of the depression,' although the depreciation of the pound was 'generally considered at the time as a disaster of the first magnitude.'¹ With a National Government, in power, confidence in sterling was quickly restored, and, by April 1932, the financial crisis was over. Bank Rate was reduced steadily after March 1932, reaching 2% in June. By the end of that year all economic indices were beginning to show a strong upward trend, and this was maintained until 1937.² In the event, the 1929-32 depression, the most severe in history, was nonetheless moderate in the United Kingdom compared with most other countries. Industrial production fell by less than half as much as in Germany and the United States, and wholesale prices fell even less.³ Recovery in Britain, too, got under way earlier, probably due to the fact that the slump was that much milder than elsewhere.⁴ Signs of recovery, apparent at the end of 1932, became more noticeable in 1933, and gathered speed until 1937.

1. H.W. Arndt, op. cit., p. 99.

2. S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 229.

3. H. W. Richardson, Economic Recovery in Britain, 1932-39, p. 15.

4. H. W. Richardson, 'The Basis of Economic Recovery in the 1930's', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XV, 1962-3.

Government policy in itself, however, did little to initiate or encourage recovery. Richardson has made the point that, for the most part, the Government's role was designed to encourage exports, whereas the most notable feature of the recovery was that it was based on the home market, production rising by 29% between 1928 and 1938, while imports and exports remained at the same level. The effects of devaluation and protection were limited. A large number of other countries followed Britain off gold in the course of the few months after September 1931, and by the end of 1932 the number of currencies which had depreciated in relation to gold since the beginning of 1929 had risen to thirty-two. Almost all those countries which remained on the Gold Standard took measures to keep their imports and exports in line: import controls and higher tariffs, and hence generally lower exports was the result, the effect of which was a further hindrance to world trade.¹

The importance of cheap money as a factor in recovery has been much debated by economic historians, but it is now generally considered to have been a lesser influence than was widely accepted at the time.² Cheap money did not bring about large-scale assistance by the Government

1. S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 228; W.A. Lewis, op. cit., pp. 64-5; H.W. Richardson, op. cit.

2. Ibid; also C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 455-8.

in the creation of employment for British policy, unlike that of the United States and elsewhere, did not include large programmes of public works.¹ Yet it was an encouragement to house-building, generally accepted as the symbol of Britain's recovery from the depression:² the effect of low interest rates on mortgage repayments was considerable, and, on the supply side, the banks played a part complementary to the building societies by advancing to the builder part of the actual cost of construction. Banking facilities were both extended and less expensive in consequence of cheap money. Yet the point has also been made that the very fact that a 'National' Government was in power, whatever policies it pursued, was in many ways enough in itself to restore business confidence.³ In this light even protection was a stimulus to recovery, since it had a favourable impact on the psychology of those who had been agitating for a tariff, such as the heavy sectors of the iron and steel industry. Likewise, the influence of cheap money may have been mainly psychological, although capital investment remained small until 1934 in spite of low interest rates.

The most important factors in recovery, however, were the rise in real incomes, and a shift in the terms of trade in Britain's favour.

1. See below, Chapter 2.

2. H.W. Richardson, 'The Basis of Economic Recovery in the 1930's', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XV, 1962-3.

3. Ibid; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 457.

It proved impossible after 1929 to reduce wages to keep pace with falling prices, so that while the cost of living fell by 25%, wages fell by only six per cent. In the period 1929 to 1933. More than seventy per cent. of the population, it is estimated, benefited from an increased standard of living in this period.¹ In addition, the price of primary products, mainly food, which Britain imported, fell relatively to the price of manufactured goods, Britain's main exports, so that a smaller volume of exports purchased a larger volume of imports. This gain in the terms of trade, together with the rise in the value of wages, released a substantial volume of purchasing power, which became available for expenditure on housing, motor cars, washing machines, and other consumer durables.²

Thus the building trade, and other new industries, whose development had been held back in the 1920's because of the generally depressed state of the country, began to expand rapidly. In the United States the prosperity of the 1920's had rested mainly upon the opportunities for investment provided by the growth of new industries: in Great Britain, similar investment opportunities did not occur until after 1932.³ Improvements in technology in the new industries, and particularly in terms of the techniques of mass production, helped

1. H.W. Richardson, op. cit.

2. H.W. Arndt, op. cit., p. 131; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 263

3. W.A. Lewis, op. cit., p. 33; H.W. Arndt, op. cit., p. 126.

substantially to lower production costs, and therefore, retail prices, at the same time as the demand for consumer articles such as wireless sets, refrigerators, etc., was stimulated by the existence of an increased margin of purchasing power.¹ The change-over, from dependence on the export performance of the old staple industries to the new industries, geared to the home market, was made in Great Britain in the 1930's, rather than in the immediate post-war decade. As a result of the upswing created by the expansion of these industries after 1932, recovery was set in motion, and Britain's economic performance thereafter was surprisingly vigorous when compared with the 1920's.²

Just as coal had been symbolic of the old Britain, so the electrical engineering industry now became 'the symbol of the new industrial Britain, freeing other industries from dependence on the coalfields of the North and West, and setting in motion a vast migration to the Midlands and the South East.'³ Following the passing of the Electricity (Supply) Act in 1926, the Central Electricity Board was established, and the Grid system was completed by the mid-1930's. There were 730,000 consumers in 1920: 2,840,000 in 1929: 8,920,000 by 1938. This situation, together with the rising demand for electrical consumer durables, presented great opportunities to the electrical engineering industry,

1. H.W. Richardson, op. cit.; S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 93, 238-41.

2. H.W. Richardson, op. cit.

3. S. Pollard, op. cit., p. 99; see below, pp. 24-5.

while other new industries established away from the coalfields, electric street lighting, and the conversion of some stretches of railway line to electricity, added further important sources of demand.¹ Employment rose rapidly in the 1930's from 173,600 in 1924 to 267,000 in 1937. The adoption of a 15% tariff on domestic electrical appliances under the Import Duties Act of 1932 also had an expansive effect on home production. The output of vacuum cleaners, for example, rose from 37,550 in 1930 to 409,345 in 1935, the production of refrigerators more than doubled, and electric cookers more than trebled, in the years 1930-5.²

The car industry was of similar importance. The motor-car changed people's habits of living, working, shopping, and travelling, and, therefore, affected the siting and building of housing estates and whole suburbs. Moreover, it stimulated many ancilliary industries, some of which were of major importance in themselves; oil-refining, glass, rubber and mechanical engineering were the most notable of these. By the end of the 1920's, car output was rising rapidly: from 95,000 in 1923, annual production rose to 511,000 in 1937. The average price of cars made in Britain fell from £308 in 1912 to £259 in 1924 and £130 in 1935-6.³ In 1928 only 25% of cars sold were of ten horse-

1. Britain in Recovery, p. 276.

2. S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 100-1; H.W. Richardson, op. cit.

3. S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 101-2.

Table 2: Employment of males in certain industries, 1929-1937

Males in employment in July as percentages of 1929 (1929= 100)

	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Distributive trades	101.3	105.1	108.8	112.0	116.1	116.8	121.4	122.1
Trams, buses	104.5	110.3	113.5	114.3	115.0	119.4	121.4	130.1
Gas, water & electricity	100.5	102.9	100.6	106.3	113.6	115.8	124.1	130.5
Professional services	102.9	105.6	108.9	114.5	120.4	123.0	127.7	133.1
Hotel, Public House, Restaurant, etc.	100.9	102.3	102.0	111.3	118.7	125.0	131.3	134.8
Laundries, Job Dyeing, etc.	100.2	106.1	109.7	116.2	120.2	128.4	136.3	136.4
Entertainments, sports	99.0	112.4	118.4	132.9	140.3	146.4	156.6	163.6
Tobacco, Cigarettes	106.5	98.7	101.2	99.5	95.1	92.6	98.3	100.0
Printing, publishing	101.9	101.7	103.4	103.5	104.8	105.1	107.4	110.3
Artificial stone & concrete	92.6	99.3	103.9	111.4	119.8	132.0	146.3	169.8
Electrical cable apparatus, lamps, etc.	105.3	102.6	109.8	115.0	128.8	137.2	150.2	178.3
Electrical wiring & contracting	106.3	119.7	127.8	145.9	184.0	194.8	217.2	242.5

(From W. Beveridge, Full Employment in a Free Society (2nd. ed. 1960), p. 55.)

power or less: by 1933 the proportion had risen to 60%. The numbers employed in the industry rose from 245,000 in 1929 to 459,000 in 1939.¹

For the chemical and allied industries, too, the 1930's were a time of considerable technical progress and expansion. The man-made fibre industry, chiefly rayon, used in the replacement of goods formerly made of silk, grew particularly quickly, and by 1936 the numbers employed in the rayon industry had reached one hundred thousand. The chemical industry, notably the manufacture of heavy chemicals, industrial gases, fertilisers, and dyestuffs, was dominated by the formation in Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd., in 1926. The glass industry also showed substantial technical progress in the 1930's, while aluminium and plastic were two of the most important new industries based on new materials to be developed at this time.²

The migration in the 1930's from the Special Areas to the more prosperous regions of the Midlands and the South-East in response to the changing location of industry has been referred to earlier in this chapter.³ Writing in the 1930's, Brinley Thomas calculated that between the years 1920 and 1936 some 219,000 men and women had migrated to find new employment in London and the South-East, of whom almost 75% had

1. H.W. Richardson, op. cit.

2. S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 104-6.

3. See above, p. 21.

come from the North-East, North-West, Scotland and Wales.¹ In addition, rather more than half this figure, a further 116,000 persons, of whom a similar percentage had come from the depressed areas, had moved into the Midlands.² In both cases, the major part of this influx took place in the years after 1932: in 1936, the numbers of North-Eastern and Welsh immigrants moving into the South-East were greater by 75% and 61% respectively than in 1932. In both cases, too, by far the largest relative contribution had been made by Wales, while the outflow from Lancashire was surprisingly small. By 1936 some 7% of the insured population of Wales had been absorbed by the South-East alone, whereas the number of North-Westerners moving the relatively short distance into the Midlands was less than the number of migrants into that area from the prosperous South-East division.³ In the case of the South-East, the migration had been mostly to the West and North-West of London, where a number of new light industries had collected. These included motor vehicles, cycles and aircraft, electrical engineering, electric cables, paper and paperboard. In the Midlands, the areas of highest absorption were Coventry, Rugby and North Warwickshire, the centre of expanding industries such as motor vehicles, cycles and aircraft.

1. B. Thomas, 'The Influx of Labour into London and the South-East, 1920-1936', Economica, New Series, IV (1937).

2. The low mobility of Lancashire people during these years is referred to again the Chapter 3, p. 103.

3. Britain in Recovery, pp. 38-43.

Industrially, therefore, the main development in Britain between the wars was the enforced shift of resources from the old export trades to the new home industries. After a period of stagnation in the 1920's, when other industrialised nations enjoyed a sizeable boom, the years after 1932 were a time of fairly rapid economic growth in Britain. Expanding new industries, of which the most important were the building and electrical trades, and motor vehicle manufacture, formed a dynamic sector in the economy, and were the main reason for the upswing in economic activity. Employment in the building trades rose from 605,000 in 1932 to 899,000 in 1937: in the electrical trades, including engineering, wiring, cables and lamps, employment rose from 186,000 in 1929 to 317,000 in 1937. In the motor vehicles, cycles and aircraft group the increase was from 228,000 in 1929 to 235,000 in 1937. There was a sizeable increase, too, in certain metal trades connected with the building industry, from 332,000 in 1932 to 490,000 in 1937.¹ Unhappily, the new and expanding industries did not, for the most part, establish themselves in the same areas as the declining staple industries. Although the expansion of the industrial chemicals industry in Lancashire, Cheshire and Durham was of some significance in absorbing unemployment,

1. Britain in Recovery, pp. 38-43.

the new industries, mostly of a light nature, needing only supplies of power, semi-skilled labour, and accessible markets, grew in the South and East, some in the Midlands, but most in London and the Home Counties. The old industries in the North continued to decline. Corresponding with the increase in employment in the industries referred to above, there was a decrease in the number employed in the cotton industry from 480,000 in 1929 to 361,000 in 1937, and in coal from 900,000 to 739,000 in the same period.¹

1. Ibid; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 273-4.

Chapter Two

PUBLIC OPINION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In 1921, following the collapse of the post-war boom, unemployment in Great Britain rose to 19%: for most of the decade, until 1929, it remained at around 10%, about one and a quarter million. Mass unemployment, as has been suggested, was initially explained in terms of dislocation caused by the war. The aim of British governments in the first half of the 1920's was to restore as quickly as possible the pre-war monetary and trading structure. By 1927, however, it was becoming increasingly apparent, as it had been to some economists and industrialists all along, that Britain's leading export industries were being hit not only by temporary dislocations, but, more important, by long-term changes in demand which the war had accelerated. An important section of opinion had come round to the view that traditional remedies and a return to the conditions of 1914 would not meet the new economic situation. In this chapter an analysis is made of contemporary opinion as to the causes and cures for unemployment. In particular, the discussion here revolves round the proposals of J.M. Keynes for the development by the government of a large, deficit-financed programme of public works as a means of creating a cumulative upswing of industrial activity, increasing consumption, and stimulating new

investment.¹

Unemployment had been a problem long before the first world war, of course, but on average it had fluctuated around three or four per cent. Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the growth of a 'social conscience', together with the application of more sophisticated methods of recording unemployment and other forms of social distress, and increasing acceptance of state intervention in the nation's affairs, had resulted in the opening up of a fairly substantial debate among economists and politicians on the general problem of unused resources. The conclusion, for the most part, was that there would always be some unemployment; that it was necessary to have a certain amount of unemployment, in order to discourage the idle; and also that many of those out of work were unemployed because of deficiencies in their own character. William Beveridge, for instance, writing in 1908, devoted a complete chapter of his Unemployment: A Problem of Industry to 'The Personal Factor'.² Likewise, most academic

1. Some analysis of public opinion and unemployment has already been made by D. Winch in Economics and Policy (1969), R. Skidelsky in Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-31 (1967) and K. Hancock in 'Unemployment and the Economists in the 1920's', Economica, XXVII (1960). This chapter is not concerned with unemployment insurance as a means of dealing with the problem of unemployment, since this is a theme of Part III. Aspects of financial and monetary policy, such as Protection and the resumption of the Gold Standard, together with a number of Acts of Parliament (e.g. Wheatley's Housing Act of 1924), sometimes defended as employment promoting, are dealt with in this chapter, but, since they are not the prime concern of this thesis, are given only limited explanation.

2. W. Beveridge, Unemployment: A Problem of Industry (3rd. ed. 1912) p. 133 et seq.

economists treated unemployment as a phenomenon accompanying other problems. It was understood, for example, to be one of the inevitable consequences of the trade cycle. As such, they followed the 'classical' explanation of unemployment, put forward by Adam Smith, Ricardo, and John Stuart Mill. Their study of the problem of unemployment was by no means extensive, however, since, as they were propagating theories of laissez-faire and free enterprise, it was hardly to be expected that they would emphasise a point at which their ideas appeared to break down.¹ Thus, to economists such as Alfred Marshall, there could be no question that unemployment was the result of a defect in the functioning of the capitalist system itself. Malthus had been incorrect in suggesting that over-production might be the cause:

'Under ordinary conditions of industry, production and consumption move together: there is no consumption except that for which the way has been prepared by appropriate production: and all production is followed by the consumption for which it was designed. There may indeed be some miscalculation in particular branches of production: and a collapse of commercial credit may fill nearly all warehouses for a time with

1. F.C. Mills, Contemporary Theories of Unemployment and of Unemployment Relief (New York, 1917), p. 15 et seq.

unsold goods. But such conditions are exceptional.¹ Nor was the situation to be remedied by the provision of public works, as Thomas Malthus had also suggested. Marshall strongly opposed government intervention of any kind, and Beveridge, who thought that 'the unemployment percentage, however it may fluctuate, never fluctuates down to zero,' also wrote that, 'strictly speaking, it is impossible by any exercise of state authority to guarantee useful work to all and sundry of the unemployed.' Public works were 'extraordinarily costly', and would 'leave untouched the economic causes of unemployment'. They were also uneconomic, in the sense that they were exposed 'to the danger of setting a standard of output by the ability of the weakest or idlest worker.' They were a minor measure: it was upon the 'disorganised condition of the labour market' that the 'attack' must be concentrated. Beveridge recommended a nation-wide system of employment exchanges to increase labour mobility, unemployment insurance, greater elasticity of working hours and wages, and the abolition of casual labour. His views were upheld when, in 1910 and 1911, the first steps were taken towards

1. A. Marshall, Principles of Economics (6th. ed., 1916), p. 524.

the establishment of labour exchanges and a system of unemployment insurance.¹

There was one economist of pre-war days however, John Hobson, who held different views. In his opinion, 'under-consumption' was the 'direct cause' of unemployment.² The free play of individual interests did not always serve those of the nation as a whole by ensuring the correct balance between consumption and those savings which were invested and went to increase production. There existed a 'general excess of producing power beyond what is economically required to supply the current rate of consumption.' In almost all industries there was a 'considerably larger quantity of plant and labour than can be profitably employed.' As a result, industrial production takes the form of 'brief bursts of activity,' followed by 'long periods of torpor, during which the weaker mills, mines and works are closed, while others are working short time...' The remedy, in Hobson's view, lay in a reformed distribution of purchasing power. He proposed the taxation of unearned incomes, the public control of industry, and trade union pressure to raise wage-rates.³ Hobson's views were first put forward in The Physiology of Industry, written in collaboration with A.F. Mummery and

1. W. Beveridge, Unemployment, pp. 156-7, 195-6.

2. J.A. Hobson, The Problem of Unemployment (2nd. ed. 1904), p. viii.

3. Ibid., p. 155 et seq; Hobson's ideas were repeated in Economics of Unemployment, published in 1922, although this later work omits any discussion on public works.

published in 1889: The Problem of Unemployment was first published in 1896. Hobson was a lecturer, who had become dissatisfied with some aspects of traditional economic teaching, but his attack on the 'classical' school led to his exclusion from the academic establishment, and, although his analysis of the causes of unemployment anticipated much of Keynes' later reasoning, his ideas were banned as heretical by practically all academic economists, and little attention was paid to them. Yet even Hobson was agreed in assigning public works a minor role in the cure for unemployment: although they might help in the raising of the level of consumption, he felt that they were only a palliative measure.

Since 1886, however, following a circular from Joseph Chamberlain, Chairman of the Local Government Board, local authorities had been theoretically obliged to provide assistance to the unemployed in the form of relief work, which was to be distinguished from work undertaken as a condition of pauper relief. This policy was renewed in 1892, and the principle was embodied in legislation by the Unemployed Workman's Act of 1905, under which local authorities with more than 50,000 inhabitants were required to appoint distress committees, whose responsibility it was to provide public works in times of depression.¹ In 1909 the signatories of the Minority Report of the Royal Commission

1. D. Winch, op. cit., p. 53.

on the Poor Laws, which included Beatrice Webb, proposed a scheme by which the government would set aside part of its normal capital revenue for use in financing public works on a counter-cyclical basis when unemployment rose above what was accepted as the 'normal' level of about four per cent. If a small proportion of government orders were held back each year and concentrated on the slack years, cyclical unemployment could be eliminated. The Report stated:

'At present, it is not too much to say that the average citizen of the middle or upper class takes for granted the constantly recurring destitution among wage-earning families due to Unemployment, as part of the natural order of things.....Fifty years hence we shall be looking back with amazement at the helpless and ignorant acquiescence of the governing classes of the United Kingdom, at the opening of the twentieth century...'¹

Before the Minority Report was published, the Labour Party introduced in the House of Commons its own Bill to deal with unemployment, which was presented four times in the years between 1907 and 1911, each time failing to secure a Second Reading. The Bill gave expression to the idea of 'work or maintenance.' Local authorities were to replace the

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1. Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, 1909, Pt. II, pp. 323-4; R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 33; F.C. Mills, op. cit., p. 77.

Poor Law Guardians and distress committees as the 'unemployed authority' for their particular area. Their task was to provide work for the unemployed. A central committee was to be established to frame schemes of work, advise the local authorities, and co-ordinate their programmes.¹

By this time, however, relief works had become widely discredited. They were thought to be both expensive and demoralising: they did not help the worker to find regular employment, nor did they retrain him. They could only be used after the problem of unemployment had become acute. Finally, it was difficult to find work that was genuinely 'useful.' Nonetheless, the Minority Report scheme achieved limited legislative recognition in the Development and Road Fund Act of 1909, which made Britain the first country to make provision for the advance planning of counter-cyclical public works programmes. The Act stemmed from Lloyd George's famous budget of that year: it was an attempt by the state to intervene where private enterprise had failed, and carry out a comprehensive plan of public works which would exploit the resources of the nation, at the same time providing work for a large number of men.² As with Hobson, the Act, with its emphasis on national rather than local planning, prepared the way for later thinking.

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1. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 36

2. E. Halevy, Rule of Democracy, 1905-1914 (1961 ed.), pp. 289-290

Such was the position in 1921, therefore, at a time when unemployment had risen to more than two million. Despite the fact that, prior to 1914, very little in the way of public works had ever, in fact been attempted as part of government policy to deal with unemployment, accepted political and economic opinion attached very little weight to the argument that a national programme of public works could provide the solution. Socialists and conservatives alike regarded the provision of work of this kind as a palliative. In the eyes of the former, public works were damned by their association with nineteenth century 'relief works', and, in the early 1920's, the Labour Party was thus committed to the 'conservative' case, namely, that unemployment could only be remedied by the revival of the major export industries. The answer was to be found in trade with Russia, and in rectifying the punitive clauses of the treaty of Versailles. The Party was also committed to the principles of orthodox finance; deflation, and a return to gold at the pre-war parity. Hence, while the Conservatives treated public works as 'no substitute for capitalism,' the Labour Party thought of them as 'no substitute for socialism.'¹

1. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 44.

Furthermore, academic economists considered government expenditure on public works as no substitute for sound political economy. For their part, they insisted that during the downswing of the trade cycle, businessmen deliberately refrained from investment in the hope that prices would fall still further. The depression must be allowed to run its course, and after the downward point had been reached, investment, and business confidence, would increase, and recovery would begin of its own accord. Almost all economists, and many politicians and industrialists, thought that money wages were too high. The increase in the size and power of the unions, and the tremendous demand for labour during the war and immediately afterwards, had resulted in a considerable rise in wages. Wage reductions, it was argued, would help to reduce costs, which would enable Britain's exports to compete more favourably since prices could also be reduced; and a reduction in prices would help the downward point in the trade cycle to be reached more quickly.

Among the economists only Keynes, Hawtrey and J.R. Bellerby were critical of deflation, and only Keynes and Bellerby vigorously opposed the return to gold. In his Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill (1925), Keynes correctly anticipated that a return to gold at the pre-war parity would result in an over-valued currency, and a persistence

of heavy unemployment.¹ Keynes and Hobson were the only economists to disagree on the question of wages. In 1922 Hobson wrote:

'To lower costs of production by reducing wages is to take a backward step in civilisation: to achieve the same result by some improvement in machinery or process, some economy of the use of power, by discovering and developing a market for some by-product, or by better book-keeping, cost-taking and management, is to take a forward step...'²

Not until after 1924, however, was rationalisation accepted as an answer to the problems of British industry, and not until the 1930's were major steps taken in this direction.³

Unorthodox views, such as those of Keynes and Hobson, did not meet with the approval of the majority of economists in the 1920's. Keynes, himself, was not always clear in his unorthodoxy, and could not, for example, provide theoretical justification for his proposals for a deficit-financed programme of public works, strongly opposed by the Treasury and also by many other economists as unsound, since it would run the Exchequer into debt. It seemed obvious to them that the government would simply be spending a great deal of money and receiving nothing in return. Moreover, deliberately unbalancing the Budget in this way, they argued, would risk a crisis of business confidence.

1. M. Stewart, Keynes and After (1967), p. 47; K. Hancock, op. cit.

2. J.A. Hobson, Economics of Unemployment, p. 93.

3. See below, pp. 63-4.

In most cases, the prevailing monetary policy was accepted without question, and was not considered in any case to be very closely connected with unemployment. In the early part of the decade, therefore almost all shades of public opinion were agreed in assigning public works a very limited role in the solution of unemployment. An early revival of trade was confidently expected, and if the policy of deflation, in preparation for the return to the gold standard, was the cause of the new high level of unemployment, it was a small price to pay to restore Britain's former prosperity. T.E. Gregory, for example, felt that it was 'useless to allow working-class sentiment to govern monetary policy,' and that 'the question of deflation is not to be disposed of by showing that it will lead to unemployment, for it may be worthwhile to pay this price' in order to return to a sound currency.¹

The hope that Britain's unemployment problem was largely a temporary one, incorrect an analysis though it was proved to be, nonetheless determined the limits of government attempts to deal with unemployment in the early part of the decade. The resounding pledges given by war-time statesmen as to post-war conditions, made it impossible for the State to remain indifferent, however, and while it was held in parliamentary circles that the most appropriate government measures should

1. Quoted K. Hancock, op. cit.

be directed towards the return to 'normalcy', a number of other remedies were sought. The most important of these was unemployment insurance. To the insurance scheme, therefore, which had been extended during the war, and by 1920 covered some twelve million people compared with only two and a half million in 1911, was added an 'out-of-work' donation in 1919, with considerably higher rates of benefit, for demobilised soldiers unemployed pending reabsorption into industry, and civilian workers thrown out of work by the change from war to peacetime production.¹

As in the years before the war, however, some provision of work for the unemployed was also made. In December 1920, the Unemployment Grants Committee was set up for the purpose of allocating funds placed at its disposal by Parliament to assist local authorities in carrying out approved schemes. The work had to be of 'real utility'; the rates of wages were to be less (in most cases by 25%) than the local rate for regular workers in the schemes undertaken; and the schemes assisted must be such as would not normally be undertaken without such a grant being provided. On these conditions, the Committee made a grant usually of sixty per cent. of the labour costs involved in the work.² By May 1922 the assistance provided in this manner

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 45.

2. Third Winter of Unemployment (1922); this was the report of an enquiry privately undertaken in the autumn of 1922 by a group including A.L. Bowley, J.J. Astor, B. Seebohm Rowntree and other economists and based partly on reports from several areas by local investigators.

totalled £2.6 million. In addition to this sum, the Ministry of Transport made grants totalling £6.2 million for work on roads and bridges to be put in hand to relieve unemployment. In the winter of 1921-2, however, a new and more extensive scheme was initiated under the control of the U.G.C. Direct money grants were for the most part abandoned, and instead a system substituted by which the Government undertook a share of the loan charges in respect of capital expenditure. Up to May 1922, loans amounting to £17.5 million had been approved.¹ By 1926, the Committee had approved State assistance amounting to £40 million for more than 11,900 schemes, the total value of which was £104 million.²

The employment provided in this way was minimal, however; including secondary employment created, not more than one per cent. of the total work force was employed on these schemes.³ A consequence of the attempt to minimise the contribution of the central government, by imposing part of the cost on the local authorities, was that the number of schemes undertaken were limited by the resources of those authorities. The result was a quite inadequate attempt to provide work. At the time, however, the expenditure was regarded as substantial, and the failure of the schemes to provide a solution to the problem of unemployment

1. Ibid., pp. 52-3

2. Committee on Industry and Trade (Balfour Committee), Factors in Industrial and Commercial Efficiency (1927), pp. 394-6.

3. K. Hancock, 'The Reduction of Unemployment as a Problem of Public Policy', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XV, 1962-3.

once more condemned a public works programme in the eyes of many. The old arguments were put forward again: public works were too expensive for the amount of employment they provided: they were suitable only for general unskilled labour, and as such were likely to impair the more skilled, rather than maintain their fitness: their only real use was as a test of willingness to work.¹

There were those in the Labour movement, however, who began to indicate that a more positive approach to public works as a solution for unemployment was necessary. For example, in Labour's post-war programme, Labour and the New Social Order, written largely by Sidney Webb, it was stated that:

'...it is one of the foremost obligations of the Government to find, for every willing worker...productive work at standard rates...It is now known that the Government can, if it chooses, arrange the public works and orders of the National Departments and local authorities in such a way as to maintain the aggregate demand for Labour...at a uniform level from year to year, and it is, therefore, a primary obligation of the Government to prevent any considerable or widespread fluctuations in the total numbers employed..'²

1. Ibid; Third Winter of Unemployment, p. 82.

2. Labour and the New Social Order (1918).

Even in 1923, however, G.D.H. Cole remained sceptical of the value of a public works programme. Writing in Out of Work, he declared that such a programme:

'...has indeed everything in its favour, though it would certainly not achieve all that is claimed for it by some of its advocates. It should be done; but it is not so simple as it sounds. It would involve that the State and local authorities should tax the public more highly.....The better distribution of public work would not, however, by itself do more than a little to ease the situation. It would not remove at all the main causes of fluctuation... or do much to prevent that over-investment ... which arises from the bad distribution of purchasing power. It would certainly notdo away with the under-consumption which is the main factor in causing the crisis leading to the slump.'¹

A more important general contribution was made by Keynes in an article for the Nation in May 1924, entitled 'Does Unemployment need a

1. G.D.H. Cole, Out of Work (1923); Cole's main objection was the cost involved in a programme of public works, when reckoned with the number of persons for whom work would be provided. Once it had been made clear to him that such works could largely finance themselves, his doubts were resolved (see The Next Ten Years in British Social and Economic Policy (1929)).

drastic remedy?' He proposed the adoption of a large scale public investment programme, involving government expenditure of up to £100 millions a year, and including the construction of houses, road building and projects for the generation of electricity.¹ Since deflation was largely responsible for the high level of unemployment, he argued, and private investment had been curtailed as a result of a loss of profit-expectation, the State should stimulate investment to compensate for this, to start a cumulative movement upwards. This went beyond the usual arguments for counter-cyclical public works programmes, and was the basis of his later theories. In 1924, however, the ideas contained in the article were new, at least in that they insisted that nations were not helpless against the forces of depression. Keynes went unheard, despite the fact that a supposedly socialist government was in office.

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The Labour Government of 1924, A.J.P. Taylor has written, were 'peculiarly helpless' when faced with the problem of unemployment.² 'Mass unemployment was a puzzling accident, perhaps even a mean trick,

1. R.F. Harrod, Life of John Maynard Keynes (1951), pp. 345-8.

2. A.J.P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945 (1965), pp. 212-3, 228.

which the capitalists were playing..' Under the Labour Government some extension of public works was made, but the majority of the Cabinet, and Snowden and MacDonald in particular, adhered too much to the accepted view that Britain's recovery was dependent on the adoption of a 'sound' financial policy for this to be cast aside in favour of large-scale expenditure on the lines advocated by Keynes. In July 1924, Snowden announced government support of more than £27M. for road-building, standardisation of electricity frequencies, and municipal works.¹ Immediately prior to this, in June, a T.U.C. deputation to the Cabinet Unemployment Policy Committee (which included Webb, President of the Board of Trade, Snowden, and the Home Secretary, Arthur Henderson) led by A.A. Purcell, and including Walter Citrine, had called for the adoption of a major scheme of 'national reconstruction'. The deputation had declared that this would have

'..reactions upon other trades, and would not merely provide employment for the additional number of men directly employed upon the schemes themselves, but by the work such men did, other people would be brought into employment. The Housing Bill

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1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 175-6; the Economist, 2 August 1924, thought the Government's programme added up to an 'imposing total', although 'largely an anthology of the ideas put forward by members of the other two political parties.'
 2. See below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.

would of itself have considerable reactions, and would stimulate employment in the furnishing and a number of other trades..¹
 Here was an early version of R.F. Kahn's 'multiplier' theory.²

Nine months of office proved to the Labour Government the difficulties involved in starting a public works programme. In its policy statement, Work for the Workless, published at the end of 1924, it was stated:

'Labour has realised all through, and never more vividly than now, after some experience of administering the Government of this country, that schemes of work of the character mentioned can never solve the real unemployment problem, even though they may be of some use as stop-gap aids.'³

The failure of the Labour Government to find a remedy for unemployment, lessened, as it was to do again in 1931, the political pressure on the next government to find a solution. When the Conservatives returned to office in 1924, in pursuit of economy, the work of the Unemployment Grants Committee was severely curtailed, and the Trade Facilities Act, which also was held to have created employment, was brought to an end.⁴

After 1925, the 'Treasury view' on public works was one of growing

1. Report of the 56th Trades Union Congress, 1924, pp. 162-3.

2. See below, pp. 60-1.

3. Quoted R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 40.

4. Ibid., p. 22.

coolness, therefore. There were plenty of other ideas for tackling the problem. In 1925, Sir Alfred Mond, later Lord Melchett, the only important politician who in 1925 opposed both the return to gold and the policy of deflation,¹ put forward a proposal to subsidise employment in industry from the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Working men, he proposed, should be allowed to transfer 23s. per week from their insurance benefit to a prospective employer, as an inducement to the employer to increase his labour force. This would apply to 75% of the additional workers taken on by any employer.² Mond, too, showed some understanding of the 'multiplier' effects of getting people back into employment:

'Every man who is taken off the dole and put into work is going to help other people to come off the dole. If you throw a stone into a pool, from the great splash you get ring after ring going till finally you can scarcely see the edge of them. So, if you start industry and get it going, shipbuilding will help steel, steel will help coke and coal, and when they all get going, their making again a reasonable wage, adding to the consuming capacity of the country, they will help still other industries.....'³

In the same year, Oswald Mosley, John Strachey and Allen Young, the

1. K.J. Hancock, op. cit.

2. Sir Alfred Mond, Industry and Politics (1927), p. 47 et seq.

3. Ibid., pp. 68-9.

Birmingham I.L.P. organiser, brought out a pamphlet entitled Revolution By Reason. This proposed the nationalisation of banks to give industry the lead by a bold expansion of credit to create demand; if necessary, nationalisation of key industries; the abandoning of the gold standard; and the establishment of a minimum wage by government subsidies to industry. They also proposed the setting up of an Economic Council, whose task would be to:

'...estimate the difference between actual and the potential production in the country and to plan the stages by which that potential production can be evoked through the instrument of working-class demand. The constant care of the Economic Council must be to ensure that demand does not outstrip supply and thus cause a rise in price.'¹

This was followed in 1926 by the I.L.P.'s The Living Wage, rejected by the Labour Party at its Conference in 1927. The Living Wage advocated that the way out of the depression was to increase purchasing power, and proposed a scheme of family allowances to be financed by taxation, and the imposition of statutory wage minima throughout industry, to be sustained by the printing of new money.²

1. Quoted R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 49.

2. Ibid., pp. 47-8.

The previous year, in the House of Commons, the Labour Party had put forward a Prevention of Unemployment Bill, which sought to establish a National Employment and Development Board, composed of Ministers of State, whose duty it would be to look ahead and prepare schemes of National development to be put into operation in a time of bad trade. The Board was to be provided with £10 million annually which would accumulate in times of prosperity for use in periods of depression. It was argued that when the Labour Government came into office, it found no machinery for dealing with unemployment, and that if the Bill was passed it would ensure that, within a year or two, whatever Government were in power, Britain would be better equipped for launching schemes of national development, the plans for which would already have been prepared. The Bill was defeated, which was also its fate in 1926 and 1927.¹ Following this, in March 1927, the Labour Party proposed that a Select Committee be appointed to consider schemes of work of national importance designed to provide employment. This, too, was defeated, and a Tory amendment was moved, which reflected the prevailing Treasury view:

'That, at a time when employment is improving, it is undesirable

1. Reports of the Labour Party Conferences, 1925-7.

that industrial capital should be diminished in order to provide relief schemes and that large sums be drawn off from the normal channels of trade for extemporised measures which can only be palliatives.'¹

In these years, from 1925-7, the preoccupation with industrial disputes prevented the Government from taking further measures, or at least provided the Government with a politically convenient excuse for inaction,

By 1929, certain changes in Britain's economic position had become obvious. Yet, among economists and in parliamentary circles, it was still held that a lasting solution to Britain's problems could only come through ordinary industrial channels, and that the Government could, and should, do little more than ensure that its monetary and financial policies did not impair the position of industry to bring about its own recovery. In April 1929, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, stated in the House of Commons:

'... whatever might be the political or social advantages, very little additional employment, and no permanent additional employment, can, in fact, and as a general rule, be created by State borrowing and State expenditure.'²

1. Report of the 27th Labour Party Conference, 1927.

2. Hansard, 3rd. Ser. CCXXVII.

And this remained the outlook of the Treasury for the rest of the depression.

In the same year, R.C. Davison, writing in a book entitled The Unemployed, declared:

'Clearly it is difficult, if not impracticable, for the State to raise the level of employment or to stem abnormal employment by investing or expediting public works for the needy unemployed. Nothing less than the stimulation of ordinary industry and business is of any real good.'

In his opinion, the measure of relief afforded by public works was 'insignificant':

'The moral is clear: today, as in previous emergencies, the amount of employment which the State can create by these direct efforts is insufficient to have any material effect upon the Labour market.'

The amount of work provided was disproportionate to the expenditure involved, while, in taking work from the future, public works might diminish the contribution which the public bodies could make towards maintaining unemployment in years following.¹ Henry Clay whose sympathies lay with the Labour movement also remained doubtful as to the value of public

1. R.C. Davison, The Unemployed (1929), pp. 51, 53, 60.

works in combating high unemployment. If the undertaking of such works resulted in an increase of employment, he argued in 1929, so their suspension at a later date would reduce employment by the same degree. Public works must not be allowed to divert attention from the long-term needs of industry. Like Davison, who denied that such schemes could 'be said to have had any measurable effect in stimulating industry or remedying unemployment beyond the period of the job itself,' Clay was doubtful, too, that public works would create any secondary employment. Industry, he declared, does not recover 'without some more tangible reason than "the cumulation of activity".'¹ At this time, in 1929, Keynes' ideas were, as yet, not fully worked out, and it was still generally believed that there was only a limited amount of capital available for investment in the country. If savings were invested in largely unproductive projects, such as roads, they would no longer be available for investment in productive industry. New factories were obviously going to raise output and employment much more than the building of roads and houses. Investment in public works, therefore, was diversionary, and would delay the beginnings of a proper and soundly based recovery. In 1929, Keynes was unable to answer this: in continuing to advocate public

1. Ibid., p. 53; H. Clay, The Post-War Unemployment Problem (1929), pp. 135-6.

works 'he was like a man calling on emotional grounds for a course of action that the intellect showed was wrong.'¹ Clay on the other hand, argued that:

'The contribution to the relief of unemployment which a very slight recovery in the cotton or engineering industry might make is much more important than a large percentage increase in the production of artificial silk, gramophones, automatic machines, or cigarettes.'²

It was thus evident that the new economic ideas, even the growing acceptance of the long-term change in the position of Britain's export industries, went unheeded and unregarded.

In the same year, however, 1929, the Liberals emerged as the leading exponents of expansionist remedies. Britain's Industrial Future, published the previous year by a Liberal Industrial Inquiry, which included Keynes, Hubert Henderson, E.D. Simon,³ and Rowntree, had insisted that:

'A vigorous policy of national reconstruction and development directed by a Committee of National Development, would increase Britain's capital resources while serving to reduce unemploy-

1. M. Stewart, op. cit., p. 67.

2. H. Clay, op. cit., pp. 136-7.

3. See below, Chapter Three, p. 81, note 1.

ment. Advantage should be taken of the opportunity presented by unemployment to carry through a long-range programme of road reconstruction, housing and slum clearance.....'

It advocated the establishment of an Economic General Staff, to be closely associated with the Prime Minister and Cabinet; the putting of industries of 'public concern' under public boards; and a programme of national development, to be supervised by the National Committee, including roads, housing, improvements in electrical supply, canals, maintenance of docks and harbours, afforestation, reclamation, the revival of agriculture and imperial development.¹

This became the basis of the Liberal programme for the General Election of 1929, We Can Conquer Unemployment, which promised to reduce unemployment to normal proportions within a year by schemes of work. A large-scale, deficit-financed programme, its principal item was the building of a national system of trunk roads, ring roads round cities, and the building of some 7,500 to 10,000 new road bridges. It was estimated that these would employ some 350,000 men in the first year, directly or indirectly. In addition, a large housing programme, extension of telephones, electricity developments and land drainage schemes were

1. Liberal Industrial Inquiry, Britain's Industrial Future (1928).

planned, in which another 200,000 men would be employed.¹ The difference between the Liberal programme and those of the past decade were many: not only was the size of the programme much larger than anything any previous government had planned, but it differed, too, in the respect that the government, if the Liberals were returned, would assume full responsibility for the financing of the programme, whereas those in the past had involved a major contribution being made by the local authorities; the programme would finance itself, and would not involve additional taxation; and, most important, the unemployment problem was approached not as one requiring temporary treatment, but as a 'long-range' problem.

The proposals were supported by Keynes. In a pamphlet written jointly with Henderson, they declared:

'In addition to the indirect employment with which we have been dealing a policy of development would provide employment in other ways. The fact that many work people who are now unemployed would be receiving wages instead of unemployment pay would mean an increase in effective purchasing power which would give a general stimulus to trade; for the forces of prosperity like

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 349-50; Liberal Publication Department, Selection of Pamphlets and Leaflets (1929), including At Work Once More: The Liberal Plan to Conquer Unemployment (1929), 12 pp., The Liberal Pledge to Conquer Unemployment: A Speech by D. Lloyd George (1929), 32 pp.

those of trade depression work with cumulative effect.¹

At Baldwin's request, however, the ideas put forward in the Liberal programme were refuted in a Government White Paper, Memoranda on Certain Proposals Relating to Unemployment (1929). The Treasury objections to public works were restated: they were diversionary, and would discourage private enterprise; increased government borrowing would be inflationary. The real remedy for unemployment was to be found in the reduction of wages and costs, greater industrial efficiency and rationalisation.² For their part, the Conservative election programme promised to continue the measures which they had already adopted. Safeguarding had increased employment in every one of the industries to which it had been applied; the De-Rating Act of 1929 had relieved industry of three-quarters of its rating burden; there had been a reduction in rail freights, and a steady expansion of electricity development. In these ways employment had been found for many thousands of men and women.³

In the Election, however, Labour was returned as the major party, although, as in 1924, it was a minority Government which took office in July 1929. In their election programme, Labour and the Nation, written mostly by Tawney, the Labour Party had given an 'unqualified

1. J.M. Keynes and H. Henderson, Can Lloyd George Do It? (1929), p. 25; also Can the Liberal Pledge be carried out? Mr. J.M. Keynes says Yes. (1929), 8pp., an article in the Evening Standard, 19 March 1929, reproduced in Selection of Pamphlets and Leaflets (1929).

2. Memoranda on Certain Proposals Relating to Unemployment (Cmd. 3331), 1929.

3. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., pp. 58-9.

pledge' to deal with unemployment, though their ideas were a good deal less concrete than those of the Liberals.¹ The manifesto, How to Conquer Unemployment, attacked the Liberal ideas as offering no permanent solution to the problem of unemployment, while, it was claimed, the financing of the scheme would bring the country to ruin. Labour's own proposals were vague, and included everything.²

In the new Cabinet, J.H. Thomas was appointed to deal with the problem of unemployment, with the assistance of Lansbury, Tom Johnston and Mosley. A public works programme was soon announced, although the Economist was of the impression that it was merely a 'new stimulous on traditional lines':

'No strikingly original or dramatic measures are foreshadowed, and the lines on which this obdurate position is to be attacked are in the main those followed by the new Government's predecessor, with the difference that the new attack may now be pressed with more energy and enthusiasm.'

The Economist remained sceptical: the 'practical effects' of such schemes, it felt, 'cannot be startlingly great.'³ As before, the programme took a long time to set in motion; as before also, it rested upon the initiative

1. See D. Winch, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

2. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 60.

3. Economist, 6 July 1929.

of local authorities, the Government merely providing part of the cost. There was also Snowden, the most orthodox of Chancellors, who thought that it was 'the function of every Chancellor...to resist all demands for expenditure made by his colleagues.'¹ As before, the expenditure on public works was entirely inadequate.

As the situation worsened, Thomas lost enthusiasm. His performance, and also that of the Government, 'tailed off'.² By November, the Economist was declaring:

'The account of the progress which Mr. Thomas rendered this week reveals with terrible clarity how pitiably small an effort is being made...not because the financial powers have proved inadequate for the schemes, but because the schemes themselves no more than touch the fringe of the problem.'³

The Government was in danger of falling between two stools: its timidity in not providing enough public works, so the writer of the article thought, was probably worse than its not providing any at all.

At best the Labour schemes found employment for 60,000 men. In January 1930, MacDonald announced the creation of an Economic Advisory Council, with a staff of five, three of whom were economists, including Hubert Henderson and Colin Clark, which also included Sir Arthur Balfour,

1. Quoted, K. Hancock, op. cit.

2. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 358.

3. Economist, 9 November 1929; see also 30 November, 14 December.

R.H. Tawney, G.D.H. Cole, Ernest Bevin, Walter Citrine and J.M. Keynes, but it accomplished little.¹ In February 1930, Oswald Mosley produced his own plan of action. It included provision for increased old age pensions and allowances to permit earlier retirement from industry, and to increase purchasing power. He wanted planned foreign trade, protection of the home market by tariffs and import restrictions, public direction of industry, and a systematic use of credit to promote expansion. Involving as they did a breach with orthodox banking policies, and with Free Trade, Mosley's proposals were doomed in the view of Snowden, and indeed many others in the Labour Party. In May 1930 the Cabinet rejected them. Mosley resigned. His schemes were also rejected by the Parliamentary Labour Party, and later by the annual Party Conference. In February 1931 Mosley announced that he was forming the New Party to campaign for their adoption. It was, as it proved, a miscalculation: Mosley was ruined politically, and his ideas went with him.²

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A.J.P. Taylor has made the point that:

'The rejection by Labour of Mosley's programme was a decisive, though negative, event in British history: the moment when the British people resolved unwittingly to stand on the ancient ways. The very forces which made Great Britain peaceful and stable prevented her from becoming the country

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 359.

2. Ibid., pp. 359-61; A.J.P. Taylor, op. cit., pp. 285-6.

of the New Deal.'

The point is worth considering. From the autumn of 1929 there was considerable pressure on the Government to expand and accelerate the public works programme. The pressure was resisted. Soon after the rejection of Mosley's ideas, in December 1930 Keynes published A Treatise on Money, a massive work, which had taken five years to complete, and which developed many of the ideas that were later incorporated in his General Theory in 1936. His Treatise:

'..embodied Keynes' gathered learning and wisdom on the subject of money, which was pre-eminently his own special field...It comprises definitions, classifications, long passages of theoretical analysis, historical retrospect, statistical calculations...It was the work of a lifetime.'¹

At the same period, Keynes was a member of the MacMillan Committee on Finance and Industry, which reported in 1931. In an Addendum to this Report, Keynes and five others emphasised that the proposals of the Committee for improving British monetary institutions and policies could not of themselves improve the situation with regard to employment without other action. They recommended the adoption of a large-scale public works programme, and refused to accept the argument that increases in public investment would entail diversion from private investment.² In June 1931 Keynes' ideas received a further stimulus following an article by R.F. Kahn in the Economic Journal of that

1. R.F. Harrod, op. cit., pp. 402-3.

2. Report of the Committee on Finance and Industry (MacMillan Report) (Cmd. 3897), 1931, Addendum I.

month, which gave refinement and theoretical justification to the concept of the 'multiplier' effect of a government stimulus to home investment through a public works programme.¹

Yet it was not in Britain, the country most exposed to Keynesian ideas, that an attempt was made to alleviate the unemployment caused by the slump of 1929-32 by a large-scale programme of public works. In any event, by the spring of 1931 time was running out for the Labour Government to make such an attempt. The formation of the National Government in August 1931 offered little prospect of a deficit-financed programme being accepted. The May Report, with its recommendations in favour of financial orthodoxy, exerted greater influence than did the MacMillan Report, which had stated:

'..in the case of our financial, as in the case of our political and social institutions, we may well have reached the stage when an era of conscious and deliberate management must succeed the era of undirected natural evolution.'²

It was one of the novelties of the MacMillan Report that it attempted for the first time to pronounce a range of goals at which the government's monetary policy might aim.

The case for retrenchment put by the May Report was fully in line with the deflationist 'Treasury view', accepted throughout the 1920's. Britain had been living beyond her means. Lavish expenditure by the State on social services, including the maintenance of the unemployed,

1. R.F. Kahn, 'The Relation of Home Investment to Unemployment', Economic Journal, XLI (June 1931).

2. Report of the Committee on Finance and Industry, p. 5.

had necessitated a level of taxation which was crippling to industry. Britain's answer was to reduce prices by wage reductions: the government must do the same.¹ The limitations on the policy of the National Government towards the problem of unemployment for the rest of the depression years was thus established at the onset. The National Government was no more enthusiastic about capital expenditure solutions for unemployment than its predecessors had been. The activities of the Unemployment Grants Committee were virtually suspended during the worst years of unemployment. Local authorities were required to reduce their expenditure; the building of new schools was practically halted; the making of roads ceased altogether. Unemployment insurance remained the Government's main contribution to unemployment. Even this, however, was begrudgingly given, or so it seemed to many of those who were subjected to the Means Test, or whose income was reduced by a tenth as a result of the 'economies' of October 1931.² The voluntary schemes for self-help were given some measure of financial assistance,³ and late in 1934 the Special Areas Act was passed, amended in 1937 to include remission of rates, rent and income tax, up to 100% for five years to firms which would establish works in the distressed areas.

Apart from these measures, the National Government's answer to everything was the protective tariff, the issue of which the Conserv.

1. Report of the Committee on National Expenditure (May Report) (Cmd. 3920), 1931.

2. See below, Chapter 10, p. 401 et seq.

3. See below, Chapter 4.

atives had been defeated in 1906 and 1923. It was still in 1931 a major break with historic traditions. To the Conservatives, however, the case for Protection was obvious: fewer imports would give British industry a wider home market, and would help Britain out of debt. An Abnormal Importations Act was passed at once, in November 1931, and in February 1932 Neville Chamberlain introduced an Import Duties Bill which became law on 1 March of that year. Protection contributed little to recovery, however, although it might have helped to channel the increased purchasing power towards domestically produced goods.¹ Likewise, cheap money was not expected to have much effect: although advocated by Keynes and others on the MacMillan Committee as being necessary to stimulate borrowing and employment, it was promoted chiefly to reduce debt charges, rather than as a means to recovery.²

Rationalisation was another measure. Although much discussed in the 1920's, it was hardly ever undertaken. It required capital, management reorganisation and enforced liquidation: the benefits were long-term. Industries such as iron and steel, and cotton, had over-invested immediately after the war, in anticipation of boom conditions, and now they were expected to find money to liquidate their bad debts. Interest rates were also high. The depressed industries were not prepared to accept contraction as permanent. After 1924, however, the position began to change, and a drive towards rationalisation ensued,

1. D. Winch, op. cit., p. 204.

2. A.J.P. Taylor, op. cit., p. 338; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 456-7.

which was stepped up in the 1930's, when 'planning' became a vogue. The Russian 'Five Year Plan', begun in 1928, and Labour interest in nationalisation were two of the main influences on the belief in planning, which was reflected in an increasing amount of literature on the subject. The organisation known as Political and Economic Planning (P.E.P.) was begun in 1931: in 1932 Sir Arthur Salter's Recovery was published, followed by Barbara Wootton's Plan or no Plan in 1934. In 1935 The Next Five Years: An Essay in Political Agreement was published, written by more than one hundred and fifty people of all parties. There were plenty of Government measures to encourage industrial combination after 1930. In that year a National Shipbuilders' company was formed, most of the shipbuilding firms in Great Britain becoming shareholders, agreeing to pay a levy which was used to purchase and dismantle obsolete or redundant yards. In 1930 and 1933 competition in road transport was restricted by Traffic Commissioners: in 1934 a Herring Industry Board was set up. Marketing Boards were established for milk, bacon, potatoes and hops. As has already been seen, in 1934 a reorganisation of the iron and steel industry was accomplished with Government help, and the Spindles Board was established in 1936.¹

In spite of the new ideas, economic like parliamentary opinion in the 1930's was for the most part unaffected by them. In an article in 1932, the Economist, for example, was still arguing that:

1. H.M. Hallsworth, 'The Shipbuilding Industry', in Britain in Recovery; C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 441-2, 462-3; S. Pollard, op. cit., pp. 167-174; R. Skidelsky, op. cit., pp. 9-10, 151-3.

'So far as the merits of a balanced budget are concerned, there is little room for dispute. Of all the means of bringing about "monetary expansion", the creation of a Treasury deficit is the most likely to become unmanageable and to start the vicious spiral of uncontrolled inflation... In the case of countries with more vulnerable balances of foreign payments a "policy of deficit" is too palpably dangerous to merit consideration.'¹

The article felt that, until the 'essential conditions' of recovery, such as 'a settlement of the problem of international political debts, and by international agreement on saner policies', had been established, State-financed development would be 'fruitless', and apt to end in 'loss and waste'.

Similarly, Professor (now Lord) Robbins, writing in 1934, argued that 'So long as there remain anywhere wants which are unsatisfied, it is quite clear that there cannot be over-production in the sense of a real superfluity of commodities.' The answer to unemployment was lower wages:

'If it had not been for the prevalence of the view that wage rates must at all costs be maintained in order to maintain the purchasing power of the consumer, the violence of the present depression and the magnitude of the unemployment that accompanied it would have been considerably less.'

On the subject of the American New Deal, Robbins' doubts in 1934 were

1. Economist, 18 June 1932.

typical:

'It is yet too early to say whether the American emergency legislation will prevent the coming of some degree of recovery...The unbalancing of the Budget and the vast expenditures on public works have an inflationary tendency which may well...engender an inflationary boom..to be followed by a deflationary collapse.'¹

The case for deficit-financed expenditure as a means of raising the level of domestic consumption was put by the Times in March 1933 in a series of leader articles calling for a bold policy towards unemployment. Keynes contributed a series of articles under the general title of 'The Means to Prosperity'. The argument was rejected by the Government.² In January 1935, Lloyd George made a further attempt to persuade the Government to introduce a New Deal approach.³ Neville Chamberlain's reply to the House of Commons in February was that:

'There may be circumstances when it is right and sound to follow a policy of that kind, but...the whole experience of the past shows that for the purpose of providing employment,

1. L. Robbins, The Great Depression (1934), pp. 13, 125, 186.

2. D. Winch, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

3. D. Ll. George, Organising Prosperity (1935) 107pp; the proposals made here were similar to those of 1929. Lloyd George wrote (p. 25) that 'Since private enterprise is palpably unable to solve our problems unaided...there is obviously only one possible course open: the administrative and financial resources of the nation as a whole must be made responsible for setting on foot those developments in town and country which will bring into fruitful activity our unutilised labour, our idle capital, our undeveloped resources and opportunities.'

this policy of public works is always disappointing...The conclusion...is that the quickest and most effective contribution which any government can make towards an increase of employment is to create conditions which will encourage and facilitate improvement in ordinary trade.'¹

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Between the wars, therefore, the response of successive British governments to the problem of unemployment was minimal: their main contribution was the payment of unemployment insurance benefits and allowances. In Professor Mowat's opinion the very existence of unemployment insurance was in itself one reason for their 'limping efforts' to conquer unemployment. 'Not to end unemployment but to relieve the unemployed as economically as possible was the great preoccupation,' although at least 'the dole kept people alive, and it kept them on the safe side of discontent and thoughts of revolution.'² Yet while America had the New Deal, France the Blum Experiment, and while extensive public works schemes were also part of government programmes in Germany, Sweden and elsewhere,³ in Britain internal economic policy in the 1930's hardly departed from orthodox practice. In spite of the new ideas, in Britain government intervention was confined to measures intended to provide suitable conditions for a recovery of private enterprise. In A.J.P. Taylor's view, the 'old

1. Hansard, 3rd. Ser. CCXCVII.

2. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 470, 484.

3. See H.W. Arndt, op. cit.

outlook' was too 'entrenched', and even the crisis of 1931 was 'not fundamental enough to shake men from their moorings.'¹ The theories of Keynes were not fully worked out in 1931, and 'at best views about fiscal policy for stabilisation purposes could only be described as embryonic.' The National Government in the 1930's did not have a fiscal policy, other than attempting to balance the budget, although a public works programme had been suggested for a decade or so before this as a means to solving the problem of unemployment. Even a balanced budget, of course, had a deflationary effect, since 'balancing' took the form of a decrease in expenditure, when Keynes was arguing for more not less government spending. Yet, paradoxically, the most important consequence of the Budget of September 1931 was that it restored business confidence, and led to a more speedy recovery in Britain than in most other parts of the world. In view of the prevailing conceptions of 'sound' public finance, the psychological effect of the 'economy campaign' on investment and business confidence outweighed the deflationary effects of cuts in expenditure and higher taxes, and resulted, as has already been noted, in a higher rate of growth in Britain in the 1930's as compared with the 1920's.²

1. A.J.P. Taylor, op. cit., p. 286.

2. H.W. Richardson, Economic Recovery in Britain, 1932-39, p. 211 et seq; H.W. Arndt, op. cit., p. 129; see below, Chapter 10.

Chapter Three

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND:
SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE IN THE 1930's

The region of South-East Lancashire, which is the main area of this study, is fairly distinct and easy to define. It consists of an inner region comprised of the two cities of Manchester and Salford, and a number of smaller districts, including Stretford, Eccles, and Swinton and Pendlebury, and a semi-circular outer ring of towns, to the north and east of the central region, the most important of which are Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Oldham. Generally known as the 'spinning' region of Lancashire, because of the former predominance of cotton-spinning among the industries of this area, it is separated from the 'weaving' towns of North Lancashire by the Rossendale Moors, while to the east and north-east are the Southern Pennines and the West Riding of Yorkshire. To the south and west lies the county of Cheshire.

In 1931 the population of South-East Lancashire totalled almost two million, of which one and three-quarter million was comprised as follows:¹

- i) the cities of Manchester (population in the 1931 Census, 766,000) and Salford (223,000);
- ii) the county boroughs of Bolton (177,000), Bury (56,000), Rochdale

1. C.B. Fawcett, 'Distribution of the Urban Population in Great Britain, 1931', Geographical Journal, LXXXIX (Jan-June 1932); Economics Research Section, University of Manchester, Re-adjustment in Lancashire (Manchester, 1936). Borough Charters were granted to Swinton and Pendlebury, and also Stretford, in the 1930's.

(90,000), and Oldham (140,000);

iii) the boroughs of Eccles (44,000), Ashton-under-Lyne (52,000), Heywood (26,000), and Middleton (29,000);

iv) twelve urban districts, including Stretford (57,000), Swinton and Pendlebury (33,000), Farnworth (29,000), Radcliffe (25,000), Prestwich (24,000), Royton (17,000) and Worsley (15,000).

Often spoken of disparagingly, the region has been described as 'one large urban sprawl, where only a street boundary sign or a change of texture in the road surface indicates where the municipal boundaries run.'¹ J.B. Priestley, on his journey through England in 1933, called it a 'smudge of towns'.² In fact the towns of South-East Lancashire are by no means mere industrial and urban extensions of Manchester, and cling fiercely to their independence of that city. At the foot of the Rossendale Uplands lies Bolton, traditional centre of fine-cotton spinning. The Town takes pride in its appearance: its municipal buildings, in classical style, are all fine structures. The Town Hall, in particular, is an impressive building, but so, too, are the museum, library and art gallery.³

Nearby Bury manufactures top quality blankets and felts, but is also noted for paper manufacture, while Radcliffe has always been unique - a weaving town in the midst of the spinning region. In

1. W. Taylor, 'Social Statistics and Social Conditions of Greater Manchester', Manchester and Its Region (ed. C.F. Carter, 1962), p. 171.

2. J.B. Priestley, English Journey (1934), p. 262.

3. Bolton Civic Trust, The Buildings of Bolton (Bolton, 1968).

Rochdale, birthplace of the Co-operative movement, and also of John Bright, the Pennines are visible from almost every street corner. The town had a strong interest in woollens in the early period of the industrial revolution, and developed a special concern with heavy yarns, replaced in the present day by an asbestos industry.

Oldham showed the fastest growth in the nineteenth century of any town in South-East Lancashire, and by 1920 contained the largest single concentration of mills in Lancashire. Walter Greenwood, the novelist, counted two hundred and twenty chimneys on one clear day in 1951, most of them with a mill alongside, and all 'pointing their cannon-like muzzles at the sky, which they bombarded day in and day out with a barrage of never-ending filth.'¹ The centre of coarse spinning, Oldham was heavily dependent on exports, and the 1930's saw a catastrophic decline in its fortunes. Oldham, perhaps more than anywhere else in Lancashire, felt the 'bitter freezing wind of unemployment'. 'While spiders were the only workers at the silent spinning frames, humanity rusted at the windy street corners.'²

Towns and districts closer to Manchester show less individual character. Eccles is a market town of some antiquity. Until the second world war, Eccles Cross, in the centre of the town, near the market place, was the 'Speakers' Corner' of South-East Lancashire, and on Sunday afternoons prominent speakers from all over the North of

1. W. Greenwood, Lancashire (1951), pp. 78-9.

2. Ibid., p. 77.

England would come to hold audiences.¹ The borough is situated on the northern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, and by the 1930's had become something of an overspill for companies from the Trafford Park Industrial Estate, on the opposite side of the Canal. The town has political traditions of some significance for this thesis. From the late nineteenth century onwards, Eccles has bred a number of men who throughout their lives have remained devoted adherents of the working class cause. The Social Democratic Federation and Independent Labour Party were active here.²

Likewise, left-wing politics flourished in Salford from the last years of the nineteenth century until the end of the 1930's. The history of Salford, which became a City in 1926, goes back even further than that of Manchester, but, nowadays, Salford is entirely dependent on her larger neighbour. 'Salford is a drab and sluttish City', wrote Greenwood, who was born there, and grew famous because of it:³ once

1. J. McCann, M.P., Political Life in Eccles, 1930-1967 (Eccles, 1967) 3pp; John McCann, C.B.E. 1966; M.P. (Lab.) Rochdale since Feb. 1958; b. 4 Dec. 1910. Diesel engineer; councillor, Eccles, 1945; Alderman, 1952; Mayor of Eccles, 1955-6; an Opposition Whip, 1961-4; Vicar-Chamberlain of the Household, 1966-7; a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury, 1964-6 and 1967-9.

2. Interview with John B. Smethurst; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details. These men include Elijah Wroe, Secretary, Eccles Branch, S.D.F., still an active political worker in the 1930's; H.H. Lindsay, Secretary, Eccles Branch, Amalgamated Engineering Union (formerly A.S.E.) 1916-1964; John McCann; and Ellis Smith (see below, Appendix VI for biographical details).

3. Greenwood's first novel, Love on the Dole, was published in 1933, and concerned Salford in the depression years. His Worship The Mayor (1934) was also about Salford in the 1930's. His autobiography, There Was a Time, was published in 1967.

within its boundaries, 'one can only stand appalled at the spectacle of man's handiwork.'¹ On Salford's western boundary lies the borough of Swinton and Pendlebury, a town which has preserved a remarkable degree of local character, and a unique tradition of nicknames for people and places: 'Owd George Pollits Lane', 'Daub House', 'Bug and Flea Row', and 'Jenny Greenteeth's Pond', were just a few of the names applied to particular parts of the borough in former times.

Manchester itself was a drab city in the 1930's. J.B. Priestley thought:

'There is a suggestion of the fortress about it. You always seem to be moving....between rows of huge black warehouses. Even the public buildings....look as if they are slowly transforming themselves into square black warehouses.'²

The victim of jokes about its weather and the accents of its people, Manchester also had its own 'dreary inheritance of the foulest slums.'³ If it had reason to be proud of its record in the field of social service in the 1930's, this could be taken as proof that a section of its population were living in conditions which did little credit to a great city.⁴ The opening of the Ship Canal in 1894 saw the development of Manchester as a commercial rather than a manufacturing centre. The prosperity of the city in the early years of the present century was

1. W. Greenwood, Lancashire, pp. 136-8.

2. J.B. Priestley, op. cit., p. 255.

3. W. Greenwood, op. cit., p. 180.

4. M. Pilkington, 'Social Services', The Soul of Manchester (ed. W.H. Brindley, 1929), p. 233.

the result of its dealing in goods rather than its making of them, although it was only natural that, being the port and pivot of such a large industrial area, the city should have large numbers of importers and exporters, agents, merchants and middlemen.¹ The expansion after 1919 of the Trafford Park Industrial Estate, situated in Stretford and Urmston, restored the element of manufacturing in the neighbourhood of Manchester, however:

'Trafford Park is a modern miracle. Thirty years ago it was the country seat of a family whose line goes back to the ancient British kings. Thirty years ago its woodlands were chopped down to clear the way for commerce.... The Hall still stands though it now houses only dust and memories and echoes. And the twin lions surmounting either side of the wide flight of steps now survey, instead of lawns alive with guests, a double railway track only six yards away, and, where the drives once wound their serpentine paths through the woods, the fungus of modern industry, huge engineering shops, flour mills, timber yards, oil refineries, automobile works, repositories for bonded merchandise, choke and foul the prospect.'²

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Though never officially classified as a 'Special Area', industrial Lancashire was at a standstill for most of the 1930's. The words

1. W.G. Pilkington, 'Manchester's Merchants', The Soul of Manchester, pp. 210-1.

2. W. Greenwood, Love on the Dole, p. 116.

'Lancashire' and 'cotton' are almost synonymous to many people: in the 1920's, 85% of those engaged in the cotton industry were in Lancashire.¹ The county's industrial history extends a considerable distance in time. The rapid succession of inventions which revolutionised manufacture in the eighteenth century were, in the first instance, mostly applied to cotton. John Kay, inventor of the flying shuttle, was born at Bury; the spinning mule was invented by Samuel Crompton, a Bolton weaver. Richard Arkwright was born at Preston; James Hargreaves lived at Blackburn. As in the case of other staple industries, however, being first in the field in cotton proved to be a dubious honour for Lancashire. The cotton industry was the most depressed of the textile trades in the 1920's, a fact which was entirely the result of changes in the export markets which had provided the greater part of its demand.²

In 1912, the United Kingdom had produced 8,000 million yards of cloth, of which 6,900 million had been exported: in 1924, by which time world demand had reached its pre-war level, British production was still only 5,600 million yards, exports totalling 4,500. By 1929, when world consumption had increased by over 20% on the pre-war level, and world trade in cotton goods had gone up by 5%, British production showed a 6% decline, and exports registered a drop of 15%. The United States, France, Italy and India had all increased their share of the world's exports, but it was Japan who had made the biggest gains. The principal markets lost to British goods were India and the Far East,

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 281.

2. See above, Chapter One, pp. 8, 14-15.

the Balkans and the Near East, which had taken 67% of Britain's exports in 1913. By 1929, exports to India had fallen to 42% of the pre-war figure; to China and Japan to 29%; and to the Balkans and Near East to 47%. The chief losses were in the markets for the cheaper coarser cloths (the American section), where Japanese competition was keenest: Lancashire was able to hold its own in the markets for the finer counts, the Egyptian section of the industry.¹

The economy of Lancashire in the inter-war years was by no means as homogeneous as is often supposed. Yet, if the towns and districts within the county were not wholly dependant on cotton and textiles, there was every chance that their other industries were also staple trades, whose position was equally one of stagnation or decline. In addition to cotton and textiles, coal and engineering, particularly the manufacture of textile machinery, were also of considerable importance in Lancashire's economy. Coal-mining can claim to be Lancashire's 'forgotten' industry. Situated mainly in the southern part of the county, the most important section of the industry was that which came within the triangle of land formed by the three towns of Wigan, Leigh and St. Helens. Another section, however, was to be found in the lowland to the north and east of Manchester, stimulated directly by the growth of cotton-spinning in that region. At one time, almost every cotton town had its own local collieries, and the peak of the industry's fortunes in Lancashire, in terms of the number of seams worked, was reached about 1870. At this date, Rochdale and Middleton,

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 281-3.

Bolton, where the industry was second only to cotton, and the Farhworth and Radcliffe district, were among the strongest mining areas in the county. Many of the pits were uneconomic, however, the seams being very narrow, or inclined at steep angles, and, following a dramatic fall in prices after the great boom of the years 1871-3, many of the smaller pits were closed. Even so, at the turn of the century, there were still some nine or ten pits in the Swinton district alone, as well as others at Pendleton (Salford), and at Ashton Moss and Bradford (Manchester).¹ Coal output was declining after 1907, however, and even more so after 1919.² Even in the cotton industry, the capacity of electric motors installed increased by over 35% between 1924 and 1930. Output in the Lancashire coal-mining industry never rose to more than 75% of the pre-1914 level in the years between 1925 and 1929.³

Like coal, engineering in Lancashire was closely related to the needs of the cotton industry. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the manufacture of textile machinery had become the largest single branch of the industry in Great Britain, and 'an overwhelmingly dominant force in world trade.'⁴ In 1913 about 40,000 men were employed in textile engineering in Great Britain, over three-quarters of these being employed by six large manufacturers of cotton machinery in Lancashire. These included Platt Brothers of Oldham, founded in 1821, and employing 12,000 men in 1913; Asa Lees of Oldham, founded in the

1. Interview with John B. Smethurst: see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2. University of Manchester, An Industrial Survey of Lancashire (excluding Merseyside) (1932), pp. 13, 18.

3. Ibid., p. 18.

4. S.B. Saul, 'The Market and Development of the Mechanical Engineering Industries', Economic History Review, 2nd. Ser. XX, 1967.

1790's, with 3,000 employeas in 1913; Dobson and Barlow of Bolton, employing 4,000; and Brooks and Dixey, and John Hetherington's, both of Manchester, each employing about 4,000 in 1913. In 1914 the output of Platt's was equal to that of the whole American textile engineering industry: each week the works turned out twenty mules, more than one hundred ring frames, 320 looms, eighty carding machines, and many other ancilliary machines. In addition, the firm of Tweedale and Smalley of Rochdale, founded in 1892, employed more than 1,700 men by 1900. After the first world war, however, the picture changed drastically; As the demand from both Lancashire and overseas fell, the manufacture of cotton textile machinery declined sharply. Between 1929 and 1932 exports of textile machinery fell by more than half. The heaviest unemployment among engineers in Lancashire was in the towns of Oldham and Bolton, due to the preponderance of textile engineering in these two towns.¹

The metal and engineering trades in Lancashire in the 1930's were both large and diverse. In 1930 the number of insured persons employed in the four main sections - metal manufacture, engineering, construction of vehicles and metal trades - was 199,510, 9.2% of the total in Great Britain as a whole. Almost every branch of the metal and engineering trades was to be found in Lancashire at this date, although the heavier sections, blast furnaces and steel mills, were less well represented than others. The most important were general

1. S.B. Saul, op. cit; An Industrial Survey of Lancashire, p. 20.

engineering (of which textile machinery manufacture formed a large part), electrical engineering, motor vehicles, electric cables, wire and wire netting, steel melting, iron puddling, and railway carriage construction. These were concentrated mainly in the south and east of the county: 40% of general engineering in Lancashire was to be found in Manchester and Trafford Park; 65% of electrical engineering in the same area; 80% of electric cables made in Lancashire were manufactured in Trafford Park, Oldham and Bolton. Many of the remaining trades, too, were to be found in the Manchester district.¹

What had previously appeared to be the strongest factor in the stability of the Lancashire economy, namely, the building up of a group of industries in close contact with the cotton industry, now revealed itself as dangerous, since it was in the cotton industry that the depression was most acute. The post-war economic changes fell upon a close-knit industrial group, and the three industries on which Lancashire's prosperity depended so much, cotton, coal and engineering were the very industries affected most adversely by the general trends of world post-war economic and technical development. Over-dependence on staple export industries also meant that recovery in Lancashire was slower than for Great Britain as a whole, although for the cotton industry, at least, it began earlier with an improvement in the export position following the abandonment of the gold standard in September 1931. Unemployment fell by 90,000 in the cotton industry in three months. Revival was short-lived, however; the improvement in exports was checked when Japan, too, depreciated her currency.

1. An Industrial Survey of Lancashire, pp. 147, 149, 151.

After that, recovery proceeded at a much slower rate, and it was not until rearmament began in 1936 that there was a surge forward. Recovery, even by 1939, had 'barely succeeded' in returning Lancashire to the level of ten years earlier.¹

A certain amount of new industry had come to Lancashire by this time, although, as in the Special Areas, the employment opportunities created by these industries was by no means sufficient to offset the decline in the older industries. Two areas in particular, Fylde and

Table 1: Insured employed in 42 expanding industries, 1929-31.

	1923	1929	1930	1931
Lancashire	356,303	458,632	447,981	453,817
	100%	128.7%	125.7%	127.4%
Gt. Britain	4,368,849	5,598,751	5,600,084	5,673,613
	100%	128.2%	128.2%	129.9%

(from An Industrial Survey of Lancashire, p. 92.)

and the Manchester district, benefited substantially from a structural readjustment to newer industries. In the spinning region, however, there was a considerable net decrease in employment, while in the weaving area, centred on Blackburn, Burnley and Accrington, the position was even worse, and was compared to the Special Areas.² The years 1923-9, as can be seen from the above Table, saw an increase in employment in new industries in the county of slightly more than the

1. Ibid., p. 39; H.W. Richardson, Economic Recovery In Britain 1932-39, pp. 292-3; see below, p. 83.

2. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, p. 49.

national average, but after 1929 this position was not maintained.

As far as new housing was concerned, Manchester was one of the most progressive cities in Britain. It was fortunate in having as active propagandists 'two of the countries most zealous advocates of better housing and public education' in Sir Ernest and Lady Simon.¹ Both were guiding lights behind the building of the Wythenshawe Housing Estate in the 1930's, Manchester's garden suburb, on land acquired from the Tatton family, just outside the city's southern boundary.² In 1920, the Manchester Housing Committee, of which Simon was Chairman, had estimated that twenty thousand houses were needed in the next three years. Progress under the Addison Act of 1919 was slow, however, and in four years only 4,100 houses were built: a further 1,350 were built under the 1923 Act. Before successive reductions in the government subsidy were made after 1929, however, much more rapid progress was made under the Housing Act of 1924. 16,277 council houses were built in Manchester in the years 1924-30. Under the Greenwood Act of 1930, the first comprehensive effort was made in the city, as elsewhere, to deal with the slums,

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 511; Simon, Ernest Darwin (1879-1960), 1st. Baron cr. 1947 of Didsbury; m. Sheena Potter, 1912. Member, Manchester City Council, 1911-25; M.P. (Lib.) Withington Div. of Manchester, 1923-4 and 1929-31; Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, 1931. Chairman, Manchester University Council, 1941-57; Chairman, B.B.C. 1947-June 1952; President, Simon Engineering. Author of A City Council from Within (1926); How to Abolish the Slums (1929); The Anti-Slum Campaign (1933); and The Rebuilding of Manchester, with J. Inman (1935).

2. M. Stocks, Ernest Simon of Manchester (1963); Sir E.D. Simon and J. Inman, The Rebuilding of Manchester (1935); to the Tatton Estate were added the three parishes of Baguley, Northenden and Northern Etchells, by the Manchester (Extension) Act, 1930.

and plans were laid for the demolition of 15,000 homes. The building of the Wythenshawe Estate was commenced, and by 1939 some 7,700 houses had been completed. Together with more than 1,700 flats, almost 30,000 homes were built by the Manchester City Council between the wars, and by 1939 16% of the city's population lived in corporation dwellings. In addition, 45,949 houses were built by private enterprise in these years, but few, if any, came within the income range of working class families.¹

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In 1936, by which time unemployment in Great Britain as a whole had fallen to 1.7M, there were still one quarter of a million unemployed in Lancashire, rather more than one sixth of the insured population of the county, somewhat less than a sixth of the national total of unemployed.² During the years 1923-9 unemployment in Lancashire had ranged from 140,000 to 180,000, the latter figure, in 1929, being about 12% of the insured population of the county. This had grown rapidly in the years after 1929, reaching a peak of 31%, or 490,000, in September 1931.³ Of this total, some 220,000 had formerly been employed in the cotton industry; 42,000 were unemployed engineers;

1. City of Manchester Housing Committee, Housing (Manchester, 1936) 36pp; Municipal Housing Schemes (Manchester, 1939) 44pp; A Short History of Manchester Housing (Manchester, 1947) 100pp. Also Manchester Guardian, 13, 23 February 1923.

2. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, p. 3.

3. Ibid., pp. 3-5.

and 32,000 were unemployed miners:

Table 2: Unemployment in selected industries in Lancashire

Nos. out of work in 1929 (4 mths. avge)	Cotton	Gen.Eng.	Coal	Bldg, Tdes.	Text. Finish- ing	TOTAL for Lancashire
Jan-Mar 1930	63,010	15,687	18,970	9,644	8,580	179,624
Apr-Jun	130,458	24,683	13,069	14,039	13,186	286,775
Jul-Sep	207,341	27,480	28,282	11,614	14,715	386,681
Oct-Dec	220,293	32,221	27,689	13,344	18,396	429,223
Jan-Mar 1931	238,007	39,974	16,502	19,131	16,368	464,114
Apr-Jun	182,902	40,715	16,444	17,714	20,062	418,168
Jul-Sep	197,342	42,046	27,643	14,004	17,819	435,219
	222,427	42,283	32,033	15,684	20,171	485,322

(From AN Industrial Survey of Lancashire, p. 378.)

Following the abandonment of the gold standard in September 1931, as has already been noted,¹ unemployment in the cotton industry fell, although the revival in the fortunes of the industry was to prove only temporary: from 219,953 in September 1931, the numbers out of work in the cotton industry fell to 112,294 in December of that year.² Much short-time was worked in the industry. In this respect the cotton industry was better off than coal-mining in Lancashire. In 1928, unemployment among miners in Lancashire stood at 19%, compared with a national average of 11%. In the towns of Wigan and Hindley the proportion was even higher at 23%. In Durham, unemployment among miners was 22.4%: in South Wales, 27%; S.W. Scotland, 13.3%; and in

1. See above, p. 79.

2. An Industrial Survey of Lancashire, p. 40.

Cumberland it was 20.2%. But the population of the Lancashire mining districts was 350,000, compared with 163,000 for the Special Area of West Cumberland. By 1931 unemployment in the coal industry in Lancashire had reached 29.7%: in 1935 it was still 25%. Again in comparison with cotton, unemployment among miners was mostly long-term. In Wigan, in 1935, over half the total of more than three thousand unemployed miners had been out of work for more than a year: in many cases they had been out of work for four years. There was a permanent surplus of miners in Lancashire. Out of a total of 31,500 unemployed at the seven exchanges of Ashton-in-Makerfield, Leigh, Wigan, Hindley, Upholland, Westhoughton and St. Helens in 1935, more than nine thousand were coal-miners.¹

The leisure enforced by unemployment was difficult to occupy. The men were, for the most part, hopelessly lost:

'They had been brought up to work, and behold! it seemed as if they were never going to have the chance of working again. In their circumstances it was inevitable, at first, that they should be haunted by a feeling of personal degradation.'²

Many were ashamed to be unemployed, reluctant to join unemployed organisations or clubs, since it meant assuming the full character of unemployment. They thought of nothing but getting back to work again:

1. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, pp. 63-7.

2. G. Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier (1966 Penguin ed.), pp. 76-7.

'So long as Bert Jones across the street is still at work, Alf Smith is bound to feel himself dishonoured and a failure. Hence that frightful feeling of impotence and despair, which is almost the worst evil of unemployment - far worse than any hardship, worse than the demoralisation of enforced idleness, and only less bad than the physical degeneracy of Alf Smith's children, born on the P.A.C.'¹

The appearance of Lancashire varied little from that of the Special Areas. 'Everywhere you saw shops closed and boarded up, houses with peeling paint and broken slates. Only the pawnshops and cinemas flourished...'² Unemployment 'got you slowly, with the slippered stealth of an unsuspected, malignant disease.'³ George Orwell, writing of Wigan, noticed that the 'people go creeping round and round, just like blackbeetles.'⁴ Walter Greenwood explained why this should be so:

'You fell into the habit of slouching, of putting your hands into your pockets and keeping them there: of glancing at people, ashamed of your secret, until you fancied that everybody eyed you with suspicion. You knew that your shabbiness betrayed you: it was apparent for all to see. You prayed for the winter evenings and the kindly darkness.'

1. Ibid., p. 77; see also, H. Jennings, Brynmawr: A Study of a Distressed Area (1934), p. 140.

2. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 482.

3. W. Greenwood, Love on the Dole, p. 124.

4. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 15.

Darkness, poverty's cloak.¹

The worst problem was often what to do with time. 'Take a miner, for

Table 3: Unemployment in Great Britain, 1930-1939

Jan 1930	1,534,000	Jan 1935	2,325,000
Jul	1,972,000	Jul	1,972,000
Jan 1931	2,692,000	Jan 1936	2,059,000
Jul	2,713,000	Jul	1,652,000
Jan 1932	2,726,000	Jan 1937	1,689,000
Jul	2,811,000	Jul	1,379,000
Jan 1933	2,903,000	Jan 1938	1,827,000
Jul	2,439,000	Jul	1,773,000
Jan 1934	2,439,000	Jan 1939	2,039,000
Jul	2,126,000	Jul	1,256,000

(From Ministry of Labour Gazette; see below, Appendix I.)

instance', wrote Orwell, 'who has worked in the pit since childhood, and has been trained to be a miner and nothing else. How the devil is he to fill up the empty days?.'² Again, Greenwood elaborated:

'Nothing to do with time; nothing to spend; nothing to do tomorrow nor the day after; nothing to wear....

'Hands in pockets, shoulders hunched he would slink round the by-streets, glad to be somewhere out of the way of the public gaze, any place where there were no girls to see him in his threadbare jacket and patched overalls... "I may as well be in blurry prison." He suddenly awakened to the fact that he was a prisoner. The walls of the shops, houses and places of amusement were his prison walls: lacking money money to buy his way into them the doors were all closed against him.... Where can a man go who hasn't got any money?'³

1. W. Greenwood, op. cit., pp. 124-5.

2. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 73.

3. W. Greenwood, op. cit., pp. 125-6.

The unemployed fell into three groups: those who were temporarily out of work, or who were working short-time; young men who had worked as youths until they qualified for a man's wage, and then were dismissed and replaced by other youths; and the long unemployed, mostly over fifty years of age, many of whom were unlikely to find work again. The last

Table 4: Duration of Unemployment among Applicants for benefit and allowances at 21 June 1937

Division	less than 3 months	3-5 months	6-8 months	9-11 months	12 months and over	<u>Total</u>
London	97,556	17,611	7,310	4,425	10,560	137,462
S.E.	29,715	5,872	2,744	1,628	4,270	44,229
S.W.	39,827	6,313	2,883	1,903	7,033	57,959
Midlands	75,807	13,996	6,958	4,304	23,807	124,872
N.E.	111,993	13,813	7,431	5,027	27,197	165,461
N.W.	132,581	31,108	14,843	10,449	63,800	252,781
North	47,055	14,104	8,518	7,049	51,829	128,555
Scotland	79,236	26,550	14,520	10,627	64,573	195,506
Wales	44,755	14,034	9,350	7,272	48,781	124,192
TOTAL	658,525	143,401	74,557	52,684	301,850	1,231,017

(From W. Beveridge, Full Employment in a Free Society, p. 67.)

group were those who suffered most. In January 1932 there were 300,000 men in Great Britain who had been out of work for a year or more. By July 1933 this number had grown to 480,000: in July 1936 the number of long-term unemployed was still 337,000, and of this figure 52,900 had been out of work for more than five years, 205,000 for two years or longer.¹ The number was greatest among men aged sixty to sixty-five. At sixty-five unemployment benefit ceased: the old age pension was ten shillings a week. Since the physical (and mental) condition of the long-term unemployed had often deteriorated

1. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 482-3.

more than the rest, these were the last to be taken on again, and, as a result, while the number of unemployed fell gradually after 1936, the number of long-term unemployed declined much more slowly.

These were the men who had to undergo the Means Test. In His Worship The Mayor, Walter Greenwood described the plight of one elderly man, when called to 'face the (Unemployment Assistance) Board':

'He stood there transfixed, mouth open a little, his arms hanging forgotten by his side, cap bulging in his pocket where it had been hurriedly stuffed. He would have liked to have loosened his shabby scarf but dared not raise his hands. He felt himself shrinking inwardly, when the well-dressed gentleman stared at him. He was poignantly conscious of his dirty shabbiness, felt his shame deeply. He dropped his gaze, lowered his chin a little, stood motionless, like a suspended marionette.'¹

As often as not, it seemed, the local councillors and dignitaries who constituted the Courts of Referees and Unemployment Assistance Boards, took undue care in 'guarding' the 'ratepayers' money', when it came to deciding whether or not particular families should have their allowances deducted by two shillings and sixpence or five shillings per week.

The hardships of trying to raise a family on thirty shillings a week or thereabouts were extreme. George Orwell thought that;

1. W. Greenwood, His Worship The Mayor, p. 273.

Table 5: Duration of Unemployment among Applicants for benefit and allowances at 21 June 1937.

Division	Percentage of applicants unemployed					<u>Total</u>
	less than 3 months	3-5 months	6-8 months	9-11 months	12 months and over	
London	71.0	12.8	5.3	3.2	7.7	100%
S.E.	67.2	13.3	6.2	3.7	9.6	100%
S.W.	68.7	10.9	5.0	3.3	12.1	100%
Midlands	60.7	11.2	5.6	3.4	19.1	100%
N.E.	67.7	8.4	4.5	3.0	16.4	100%
N.W.	52.4	12.3	5.9	4.1	25.3	100%
North	36.6	11.0	6.6	5.5	40.3	100%
Scotland	40.5	13.6	7.4	5.4	33.1	100%
Wales	36.0	11.3	7.5	5.9	39.3	100%
TOTAL for Gt. Britain	53.5	11.6	6.1	4.3	24.5	100%

(From W. Beveridge, Full Employment in a Free Society, p. 68.)

often, 'The most cruel and evil effect of the Means Test is the way in which it breaks up families. Old people, sometimes bedridden, are driven out of their houses by it.' An old age pensioner, for instance, Orwell argued, would normally be able to live with one of his children. Under the Means Test, however, he was treated as a lodger, and, if he remained at home, his children's allowance would be reduced. So, 'he has to turn out into lodgings, handing over his pension to the lodging-house keeper and existing on the verge of starvation.' This, he alleged, was happening throughout England.¹

As all social surveys of poverty have discovered, the women suffered more than the men. Whereas unemployment brought rest and leisure to the men, the women were forced to 'make do' on less than

1. G. Orwell, op. cit., pp. 70-1.

before. 'A married woman could be distinguished from a single by a glance at her facial expression,' wrote Greenwood. The faces of married women bore

'...a kind of pre-occupied, faded, lack-lustre air as though they were constantly being plagued by some problem. As they were. How to get a shilling, and, when obtained, how to make it do the work of two. Though it was not so much a problem as a whole-time occupation to which no salary was attached, not to mention the sideline of risking one's life to give children birth and being responsible for their upbringing afterwards,'¹

The competence of the housewife often determined whether or not a family lived in poverty. The weekly budget of an unemployed Wigan miner, his wife and two young children was as follows:²

rent	9s 0½d	dripping	10d
clothing club	3s 0	margarine	10d
coal	2s 0	bacon	1s 2d
gas	1s 3d	sugar	1s 9d
milk	10½d	tea	1s 0
union fees	3	jam	7½d
insurance for children	2	peas and cabbage	6d
meat	2s 6d	carrots and onions	4d
flour	3s 4d	quaker oats	4½d
yeast	4d	soap powders etc.	10d
potatoes	1s 0	Total	£1 12s 0d

If anyone in the family went short it was the woman. Very often the children were healthy enough, but in one third of the homes

1. W. Greenwood, Love on the Dole, p. 20.

2. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 83.

visited by the makers of the Pilgrim Trust Report, Men Without Work, the wife was found to be in poor health. Instances reported included the following:

'Children very pleasant, rosy cheeks, clean white regular teeth: disproportionate amount spent on children who are neatly and sensibly clothed and appear to be well fed and extremely healthy. Parents determined to do their best for them. Wife seems undernourished.'

'Evidently this is a case where the wife goes short to give the children enough for food and clothes.'¹

The wife often became little more than a drudge, fighting a constant battle to keep up decent standards of cleanliness and tidiness.

Circumstances did not encourage this. Houses of the 'blind back' type still existed in 1930. Really two homes in one, the householder at the front had to walk to the corner of the street and down the back alley to reach the toilet and waste-bins. Little wonder that many fell into the habit of throwing their refuse out of the front door into the street, so that the gutter was always littered with bread-crusts and tea-leaves.

Nonetheless, the majority of homes were clean and tidy. That this was so was due entirely to the womenfolk. 'I suspect that it is really the women who keep Lancashire going,' wrote J.B. Priestley in 1933,²

1. Men Without Work: A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust (1938).

2. J.B. Priestley, op. cit., p. 261.

while Greenwood thought that 'Lancashire women are extraordinary.'¹ As far as every Lancashire mother was concerned, her flag was 'securely nailed' to the 'mast of respectability':

'She will remind all that she "brought up a family respectable", without asking a penny from anybody. She will declare that it is bad for anybody's character to look beyond your own efforts for aid in the improvement of one's condition. She will recall the time in Lancashire when it was the ultimate in personal disgrace when any woman applied to the Authorities for aid.'²

The worst effects of long unemployment were on the health of those families living on the 'dole'. Listlessness and decaying teeth were signs of malnutrition and undernourishment, the result of poor quality food, and lack of variety in diet. When out of work the men often did not eat well anyway. The anxiety of unemployment, the bitterness and resentment of not being able to provide adequately for their family, took its toll of self-respect among older men.³ At first, hopes of finding fresh employment were high; but as factory after factory turned a man away, searching for work became a habit rather than a conviction. Men lost the will to work, and their physical condition deteriorated. Although unemployment was accepted by many as the normal state, for the more sensitive anxiety formed part of a

1. W. Greenwood, Lancashire, p. 15.

2. Ibid., pp. 26-7.

3. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 486.

vicious circle: the more a man worried, the more he became unfit for work should the opportunity arise. Perfectly healthy men became ill after a period of unemployment. Depression, as it were, bred depression. As firms closed, their best workers found new jobs, but the rest went onto the roll of the unemployed and remained there. The longer they were out of work, the less suitable for employment they became, due to loss of physical skill and strength.¹

With so many families living on such small incomes, the extent of indulgence in what middle class writers have often referred to as 'cheap luxuries' is not perhaps as surprising as might seem at first sight. Several authors have remarked on the apparent anomaly that in times of depression people did not always lower their standards by cutting out luxuries and concentrating on necessities. The anxiety of unemployment was relieved by small flutters on horses, dogs and the 'pools'. Spirits were kept alive by hire purchase and cheap, bright clothes: young men and women could look, at a glance, like their counterparts on the cinema screen. 'Keeping one's pecker up' was a deeply ingrained Lancashire habit. Soccer, cricket, rugby league, horse-racing and greyhound meetings, all to be found in plenty in the towns of South-East Lancashire, offered a chance of excitement and 'winnings' to a people who might otherwise have turned to explore the root causes of their underprivilege.² Fish and chips offered a welcome change from bread and dripping. The cinemas were full of unemployed.

1. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, p. 30; E.W. Bakke, The Unemployed Man (1933), p. 62 et seq.

2. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 79.

This was, in George Orwell's opinion, 'a very fortunate thing for our rulers.' 'It is quite likely that fish-and-chips, art-silk stockings, tinned salmon, cut-price chocolate, the movies, the radio.... and the Football Pools have between them averted revolution.'¹ His point is worth considering: the people neither turned revolutionary, nor lost their self-respect; they were not even discouraged from marrying on the dole. In most cases, they simply tried to make the best of things.

x x x x x x x x x

Reference has already been made to the housing conditions of the working class in South-East Lancashire.² By 1930 fewer people were badly housed in the industrial areas of Great Britain than thirty years before, and overcrowding had been reduced. Nor were things quite so bad, as far as South-East Lancashire was concerned, in towns such as Rochdale, and parts of Bury, Bolton and Oldham, which were closer to the Pennines and the Rossendale Uplands, where at least the air was fresh and the children had moorlands and fields in which to play close by their homes. After 1933, too, more rapid progress was made in the clearing of slum houses, and in the building of new homes for lower paid working class families.

Nonetheless, the situation left much to be desired. Under the 1933 Act, Manchester Corporation proposed to demolish some 15,000 houses, though 30,000 had been declared unfit for human habitation, and 80,000 more were little better.³ 'As you walk through the

1. Ibid., pp. 80-1.

2. See above, p. 81.

3. Sir E.D. Simon and J. Inman, op. cit., p. 58.

industrial towns,' wrote Orwell, 'you lose yourself in labyrinths of little brick houses blackened by smoke, festering in planless chaos round miry alleys and little cindered yards.'¹ Certainly this was so in Manchester, Salford and elsewhere in South-East Lancashire. Not an inch of space was wasted. The comfortless, insanitary houses were squeezed between mills, around factories, alongside canals. The children had only 'crofts' on which to play: 'nude black patches of land', 'waterlogged, sterile, bleak and chill'.²

Such was the lack of housing of any sort that 'people will put up with anything;' so much so that 'Some people hardly seem to realise that such things as decent houses exist and look on bugs and leaking roofs as acts of God...'³ Orwell conducted his own survey of houses in Wigan to show what he meant:

'1. House in Wallgate quarter. Blind back type. One up, one down. Living-room measures 12 ft. by 10 ft., room upstairs the same. Alcove under stairs measuring 5 ft. by 5 ft. and serving as larder, scullery, and coal-hole. Window will open. Distance to lavatory 50 yards. Rent 4s. 9d., rates 2s. 6d., total 7s. 3d.

2. Another near by. Two up, two down and coal-hole. Walls absolutely falling to pieces. Water comes into upstairs rooms in quantities. Floor lopsided. Downstairs windows will not

1. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 45.

2. W. Greenwood, Love on the Dole, p. 5.

3. G. Orwell, op. cit., p. 46.

open. Landlord bad. Rent 6s., rates 3s. 6d., total 9s. 6d.' Subsidence, the cause of windows slipping, was a peculiarity of mining areas.¹

If Manchester was a progressive city as far as housing was concerned, Salford was extremely backward. Hemmed in by a ring of other urban areas, Manchester, Stretford, Eccles, Swinton and Pendlebury, and Prestwich, it had nowhere to build in order to rehouse its slum-dwelling population. It was the most crowded town in Lancashire, and the second most crowded borough in England (West Ham was the most crowded), and in 1931 its problem was growing steadily worse. Out of a population of 223,000, some 6,140 persons (2,486 families) were living in one room; 16,286 persons (5,295 families) were in two-roomed flats. There had been no ordinary municipal house-building since before 1914: out of 2,375 houses condemned by the Medical Officer of Health in Salford in 1919, only 82 had been demolished, and the city's programme under the 1930 Act was the clearance of a mere 291 houses, and the building of 398.²

In the depression years several notable housing surveys were carried out in electoral wards of Manchester and Salford by the two cities' Better Housing Council, a body comprising representatives from various philanthropic organisations. Its Chairman was A.A. Purcell, whose work on behalf of the unemployed as Secretary of the Manchester

1. Ibid., p. 47.

2. Manchester Guardian, 22 February 1933.

and Salford Trades Council in these years is recorded in Chapter Eight.¹ One such survey, conducted in 1934, was of the Miles Platting district of Manchester, through the centre of which runs the Rochdale Canal.

Here it was reported that:

'The canal has obviously had a considerable influence in the establishment of industries in the district. There are few parts of its banks which are not bordered by warehouses or manufacturing establishments, and the mills and workshops in the ward are practically all situated in close proximity to the canal, forming a sort of industrial belt, on either side of which to the east and west, lie agglomerations of working-class houses.'²

Industries in the district included cotton mills, chemical and engineering establishments, and a gas works. The residential areas were stated to be almost entirely working class. The district as a whole, it was reported, displayed a complete lack of considered plan. Many of the streets were little better than alleys, the sun being kept out of them by the proximity of the mills and warehouses. The atmosphere was polluted by fumes from the gas and chemical works. Most of the houses were extremely old, damp, and verminous. None had any

1. See below, Chapter Eight, p.297 et seq; see Appendix VI for biographical details of A.A. Purcell. Other housing surveys, as well as those quoted here, included St. James', Birch, Fellowship, Some Housing Conditions in Chorlton-on-Medlock (Manchester, 1931) 16pp; Red Bank Survey Group, Angel Meadow and Red Bank (Manchester, 1931) 20pp; Hulme Housing Association, Housing in Hulme (Manchester, 1932) 16pp.

2. J. Inman, Poverty and Housing in a Manchester Ward (Manchester, 1934) 28pp.

garden. Recreational facilities were nil, and the children were left to play on waste ground. The Report found that the inhabitants of the area were largely poverty-stricken, subsisting on casual work or public assistance. Few children were receiving secondary education. The extent of over-crowding was remarkable: out of 750 persons in the sample, 288 or 38% were stated to be living in overcrowded conditions.¹

In one Salford ward, a similar survey, carried out in 1930, found streets only fifteen feet wide not uncommon:

'Tall factory buildings pollute the air with smoke, and block out sunshine and light, so that many householders have to burn gas all day. Not a single house had a garden and all are grimy with soot. There is no recreation ground, although small vacant plots, dusty, often littered with refuse, and absolutely devoid of grass, are sometimes used for this purpose.'

of 500 houses examined, almost all were more than one hundred years old.

'An opportunity was presented of taking an inventory of a first floor room measuring 14 ft. by 14 ft. It was unoccupied when visited, but would be let at ten shillings weekly. The furniture consists of an iron double-bedstead, with filthy cotton bedding, one broken chair, a dresser without two

11. This estimate was based on the 'Manchester Standard', adopted by the Better Housing Council, which was somewhat more strict than that used by the 1931 Census. Households were considered overcrowded if either there were more than two and a half persons per bedroom (children counting as half a person up to age ten), or if there was not separate sleeping accommodation for people of opposite sex over ten years of age.

drawers, a rickety kitchen table, a wash bowl, and three cheap prints. Water and w.c. shared with the other inhabitants of the house are on the ground floor. There are no curtains at the windows...¹

The Report published the result of a survey of rents in the district:

Table 6: Rents of houses in a Salford Ward in 1930

1 room up and 1 down		2 rooms up and 1 down		2 rooms up and 2 down		3 rooms up and 2 down	
no. of houses	rent	no. of houses	rent	no. of houses	rent	no. of houses	rent
1	4s 1d	1	5s	18	6s 6d	5	7s 5d
4	6s	6	7s 6d	5	7s	4	8s
6	6s 6d	2	8s	6	7s 6d	2	9s
5	7s	4	10s	25	8s	4	10s
9	7s 6d	1	12s	30	8s 6d	2	11s 8d
2	8s			13	9s	1	12s 10d
				7	9s 6d	2	15s
				19	10s		
				23	10s 6d		
				8	11s		
				7	11s 6d		
				2	12s		
				1	13s 6d		
				3	15s 6d		
4 rooms up and 2 down		3 rooms up and 3 down		4 rooms up and 3 down			
no. of	rent	no. of	rent	no. of	rent		
1	6s 3d	4	10s	1	10s 4d		
3	10s	3	10s 6d	1	11s 7d		
4	11s	12	11s	1	13s 9d		
1	11s 7d	3	11s 6d	2	15s 6d		
1	15s 6d	6	12s 6d	1	16s 1d		

(From Manchester Social Service Group of the Auxiliary Movement, Report on a survey of housing conditions in a Salford area (Manchester, 1930) 12pp.)

1. Manchester Social Service Group of the Auxiliary Movement, Report on a survey of housing conditions in a Salford area (Manchester, 1930) 12pp.

Table 7: Rents of rooms in a Salford Ward in 1930

No. of rooms	Furnished		Unfurnished	
	no. of cases	rent	no. of cases	rent
1	2	9s		
	8	9s 6d		
	23	10s	1	3s
	4	10s 6d	1	8s
	6	11s	1	9s
	1	12s 6d		
2	1	14s		
			2	10s
			3	11s
			2	12s 6d
4			1	13s 9d
			1	15s 6d

(From Manchester Social Service Group of the Auxiliary Movement, Report on a survey of housing conditions in a Salford area.)

Another survey, of the St. Clement's Ward, Manchester, made in 1931, reported on dilapidations:

1. 'Two up and two down. Rent 7s. 4d. 6 persons. Falling bedroom ceiling: plaster dropping continually: back bedroom exposed to laths: stair-rail coming away from wall. Floor of living room collapsing, large hole by front door, which tenant had covered with a board. Lavatory door off. Sink (very small) is at foot of stairs, almost in total darkness. Water cistern leaks and wall is saturated. The sink is the only place in which the tenant can wash herself and five children, as boiler is unusable.'
2. 'One boxroom up and down: rent 6s. 7d. Five persons. The entire family sleeps in one bedroom, as the boxroom is unfit for habitation owing to crumbling walls and falling plaster.'

Rain penetrates bedroom roof and soaks beds in wet weather: leaking lavatory roof. The cupboard is unfit for food owing to vermin: house over-run by mice and beetles.¹

Another Salford survey found that, out of 950 houses visited:

'94 were without a yard; 47 shared a yard; 67 had to use a water tap outside; 26 had to share a water tap; 33 had no sink; 152 had no boilers at all; 28 had boilers which were unfit for use; 15 had to share a boiler; 129 had to share a w.c.²

Of the 129 houses sharing a water closet, there were:

'5 cases of 7 houses sharing 1 w.c;
 2 cases of 6 houses sharing 1 w.c;
 1 case of 5 houses sharing 2 w.c.'s;
 2 cases of 8 houses sharing 2 w.c.'s;
 1 case of 4 houses sharing 1 w.c;
 6 cases of 3 houses sharing 1 w.c;
 2 cases of 3 houses sharing 2 w.c.'s;
 and 21 cases of 2 houses sharing 1 w.c.'

In addition, various instances of overcrowding were given. These included:

1. 'Husband and wife, and two sons aged 17, 16, 11 and 9, together with two daughters aged 6 and two years. 8 people

1. St. Chrysostom's Housing Survey Group, Under the Arches (Manchester, 1931) 16pp.

2. Salford Women's Citizen's Association, Housing Conditions in the St. Matthias' Ward, Salford (Manchester, 1931) 23pp.

in all, living in a house, one room up and one down, and sharing a w.c. with six other households.'

2. 'Husband and wife, with three sons, aged 24, 18 and 9, and four daughters, aged 21, 15, 12 and 4. 9 people in all, in a one up and one down.'

3. 'Husband and wife, sons aged 24 and 19, and six daughters, aged 22, 17, 15, 13, 9 and 4. 10 people, in a house with two small bedrooms, a living room and scullery.'¹

x x x x x x x x x

In the main, the picture of unemployment presented in the above pages was typical of the 1930's, although it should be remembered that, while some effects of unemployment were general, individual men and their families reacted to it in many different ways, and it was true to say, as Hilda Jannings wrote in 1934, that 'out of six hundred families normally dependent on unemployment benefit, probably no two have precisely the same attitude to life and circumstances.'² The picture was the same in Lancashire as it was in Northumberland and Durham, South Wales, or Scotland. As has been indicated, many families, or single men, moved from the depressed regions to more prosperous areas, usually the Midlands or London and the Home Counties. Substantially fewer people moved from Lancashire than was true of other depressed industrial areas, however. There were several reasons for this. In the first place, Lancashire was, relatively speaking,

1. Ibid.

2. H. Jennings, op. cit., p. 138.

better equipped than, for example, South Wales or Scotland, to stand the economic strain of unemployment, provided that it was not too prolonged. The large number of women employed in the cotton industry meant that the number of wage earners in each family was higher in Lancashire than elsewhere. Much short-time was worked in the industry, as a means of spreading out the available work, so that the temporary unemployment of one member reduced the family income, but the chances were that some other members were still in employment to help tide over a difficult period.¹ Brinley Thomas noted that 'It is surprising that relatively so few have left Lancashire..,'² and concluded that 'A low degree of mobility seems to be a strong characteristic of the North West in marked contrast to what has been happening in South Wales.'³ The main reason was that:

'The large scope for female employment in the cotton industry has the effect of making unemployment much less severe than the general percentage would suggest. When the net advantages are considered from the point of view of the family as a unit, there can be little doubt that the costs of movement for the average household in Lancashire are much higher than in a coal-mining area. It is also well-known that short-time and unemployment are regarded as in the nature of things in the

1. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, p. 23.

2. B. Thomas, 'The Influx of Labour into London and the South East, 1920-1936', Economica, New Series, IV (1937).

3. B. Thomas, 'The Influx of Labour into the Midlands, 1920-1937', Economica, New Series, V (1938).

cotton districts: even in a most severe depression it is not very often that all members of a Lancashire family are out of work at the same time. Conditions are, therefore, materially different from those found in the depressed coalfield.¹

Thus the employment of women, while it had obvious advantages in terms of family income, also lessened the degree of mobility, and Lancashire families were not easily induced into moving from one district to another. There was one other factor. Lancashire was typical of all one-industry regions in that it was difficult to persuade those who lived in an area dominated by one industry to move to another region. The horizons of most working people in Lancashire were very limited. For a family which had for several generations worked in and been dependent upon the cotton industry, and even a particular cotton mill, even a journey to the Midlands to work was a break with their traditional patterns of life.²

1. Ibid.

2. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, p. 24.

Appendix I.

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES, 1921-1940

At any one date in the whole of the inter-war years, it is almost impossible to assess exactly the number of persons out of work in Great Britain. Miss Beck, if anything, somewhat understates the case when she writes that:

'The figures collected by the Government departments in the course of their administrative work are not designed primarily for the needs of the research worker: from his point of view they bristle with complications.'¹

She adds that 'Recorded unemployment is not the whole truth about unemployment, but merely the nearest we can get to the whole truth.' It is unfortunate that 'nearest' is such a long way from the mark. Readers of history would do well to remember that every time they encounter a figure of unemployment in this period, that this is only an approximate estimate. It is disconcerting to find that, because of the provisos which must be attached to them, the 'official' figures can really only be used to determine general trends - a very limited use in view of the extent of unemployment in these years, and in view of its importance to the historian.

1. G.M. Beck, A Survey of British Employment and Unemployment, 1927-1945 (Oxford, 1951), p. 2.

In the first instance, the figures depend much on the official definition of unemployment at any particular time. Changes in the law made a considerable difference. Thus, after the 'Anomalies Act' of 1931,¹ the official figures did not include all those struck off from benefit - yet unemployed all the same - and were, therefore, lower than at a time when the law was relaxed. Furthermore, at no stage did the official figures include uninsured persons.² The inclusion of this group at the peak of unemployment in Britain, in January 1933, may have made a difference of 20%.³ To complicate the issue still further, for most of this period there were no less than three sets of statistics available, all issued by the Ministry of Labour, and all entirely different. These were:-

a) those published in the Ministry of Labour Gazette from October 1920 onwards. In June 1930, with unemployment rising sharply, and thereafter until the end of the period, three groups of figures were published: (i) those 'completely stopped', (ii) those temporarily unemployed, and (iii) those 'who normally seek

1. See below, Chapter 10, pp. 398-9.

2. See above, Chapter 1, p. 1.

3. Britain in Recovery, p. 45.

a livelihood by means of jobs of short duration.¹ The first date at which this division was made was for 26 May 1930, as follows:

- i) 1,164,468 completely stopped, or 6,359 more than a month before, or 384,783 more than a year before;
- ii) 509,621 temporarily unemployed, or 62,377 more than a month before, or 236,152 more than a year before;
- iii) 95,962, or 2,929 more than a month before, or 16,835 more than a year before.

The total for 26 May 1930 was 1,770,051. By subtracting from this figure the increase between April and May 1930 a total of 1,698,386 is arrived at for April: but the published figure was 1,752,000. Similarly, by subtracting from the May figure the increase in the past year, a total of 1,132,281 is reached: but, again, the published figure for that month was 1,165,000. There are discrepancies of 53,000 and 32,000 respectively. Finally, after May 1930, a fourth figure was also given, being the total claimants for benefit. For the month ending 26 May 1930 this was stated to have been 1,053,016, a figure which in no way corresponds with any of the others. This situation continues until November 1936, when, suddenly, the total number of claimants equalled the total of groups (i), (ii) and (iii); this remains the case for the rest of the period. In the Tables in this Appendix, therefore, the groups (i),

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVIII (June 1930).

(ii) and (iii) have been added together from May 1930 until the end of 1936, after which just one figure is given.

b) Those published weekly in the Ministry of Labour Gazette. In October 1924 the Ministry issued a revised set of figures, for the period January 1921 to September 1924, which excluded all persons working systematic short-time. This was brought up to date at intervals until January 1930.

c) Those published in the Statistical Abstract of the United Kingdom from December 1921 onwards. Like a), these were monthly figures, and, generally speaking, were the highest of the three sets.

In this Appendix the following page headings have been used:

1921-1929

A.
weekly figures
published in the
Ministry of
Labour Gazette

B.
monthly figures
published in the
Ministry of
Labour Gazette

C.
monthly figures
from
Statistical
Abstract

1930-1936

B.
monthly figures published in
the Ministry of Labour Gazette

C.
monthly figures
from
Statistical
Abstract

(i)
completely
stopped

(ii)
temporarily
unemployed

(iii)
those normally
employed in
jobs of short
duration

1937-1940

B.
monthly figures published in
the Ministry of Labour Gazette

C.
monthly figures
from Statistical
Abstract

1921 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C.
7 Jan.	1,010,021		
14	1,140,870		
21	1,205,249		
28	1,276,577	1,065,000 ²	
4 Feb.	1,329,130		
11	1,380,938		
18	1,424,320		
25	1,465,316	1,218,000 ³	
4 Mar.	1,509,029		
11	1,584,500		
18	1,661,844		
25	1,697,938	1,414,000 ⁴	
1 Apr.	1,817,009		
8	1,948,396		
15	2,039,709		
22	2,145,333		
29	2,246,082	1,854,000 ⁵	
6 May	2,329,399		
13	2,402,984		
20	2,514,311		
27	2,558,190	2,122,000 ⁶	
3 June	2,580,429		
10	2,448,487		
17	2,429,818		
24	2,438,125	2,178,000 ⁷	

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXIX (February 1921).
 3. Ibid., XXIX (March 1921).
 4. Ibid., XXIX (April 1921).
 5. Ibid., XXIX (May 1921).
 6. Ibid., XXIX (June 1921).
 7. Ibid., XXIX (July 1921).

1921 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
1 July	2,507,670		
8	2,412,695	1,780,000	
15	2,244,480	278,000	
22	2,031,441	256,000	
29	1,905,196	<u>2,314,000</u> (2)	
5 Aug.	1,836,191	1,573,000	
12	1,786,137	218,600	
19	1,731,028	189,200	
26	1,656,452	<u>1,980,800</u> (3)	
2 Sep.	1,613,782		
9	1,577,488	1,405,000	
16	1,544,858	177,000	
23	1,517,699	145,000	
30	1,470,388	<u>1,727,000</u> (4)	
7 Oct.	1,441,281	1,611,000	
14	1,443,705	152,000	
21	1,474,668	100,000	
28	1,639,545	<u>1,863,000</u> (5)	
4 Nov.	1,746,742	1,834,000	
11	1,803,054	155,000	
18	1,831,258	113,000	
25	1,849,069	<u>2,102,000</u> (6)	
2 Dec.	1,845,723	1,886,000	
9	1,854,916	178,000	
16	1,841,141	137,000	
22	1,824,643	<u>2,201,000</u> (7)	
30	1,885,478		2,038,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).

2. Ibid., XXIX (August 1921); from this date until May 1922, the figures in Column 'B' are as follows:

e.g. 29 July	1,780,000	totally unemployed
	278,000	males working short-time
	256,000	females working short-time
Total	<u>2,314,000</u>	

3. Ibid., XXIX (September 1921).

4. Ibid., XXIX (October 1921).

5. Ibid., XXIX (November 1921).

6. Ibid., XXIX (December 1921).

7. Ibid., XXX (January 1922).

1922 (January to June)

	A. ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
10 Jan.	2,003,493	1,906,000	
17	1,963,568	166,000	
24	1,955,555	122,000	
31	1,936,081	<u>2,194,000</u> (2)	2,015,000
7 Feb.	1,929,821	1,837,000	
14	1,925,273	156,000	
21	1,891,485	110,000	
28	1,859,137	<u>2,103,000</u> (3)	
6 Mar.	1,828,223	1,740,000	1,948,000
13	1,798,619	132,000	
20	1,772,712	91,000	
27	1,736,457	<u>1,963,000</u> (4)	
3 Apr.	1,735,525	1,699,000	1,827,000
10	1,708,711	114,000	
17	1,712,825	75,000	
24	1,712,051	<u>1,888,000</u> (5)	1,811,000
1 May	1,686,299		
8	1,646,626	1,566,000	
15	1,609,743	84,000	
22	1,565,429	50,000	
29	1,519,589	<u>1,700,000</u> (6)	1,667,000
5 June	1,475,405		
12	1,475,272		
19	1,467,728		
26	1,436,100	1,455,000 ⁷	1,563,000

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXX (February 1922).
 3. Ibid., XXX (March 1922).
 4. Ibid., XXX (April 1922).
 5. Ibid., XXX (May 1922).
 6. Ibid., XXX (June 1922).
 7. Ibid., XXX (July 1922).

1922 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
3 July	1,423,038		
10	1,404,299		
17	1,398,728		
24	1,389,257	1,400,000 ²	
31	1,378,835		1,502,000
7 Aug.	1,352,248		
14	1,356,330		
21	1,359,376	1,378,000 ³	
28	1,357,322		1,466,000
4 Sep.			
11	1,342,292		
18			
25	1,342,503	1,368,000 ⁴	1,449,000
2 Oct.			
9	1,353,183		
16			
23	1,348,960	1,385,000 ⁵	
30			1,443,000
6 Nov.	1,387,878		
13			
20	1,401,093		
27		1,437,000 ⁶	1,485,000
4 Dec.	1,414,619		
11			
18	1,381,612	1,408,000 ⁷	1,464,000
25			

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXX (August 1922).
 3. Ibid., XXX (September 1922).
 4. Ibid., XXX (October 1922).
 5. Ibid., XXX (November 1922).
 6. Ibid., XXX (December 1922).
 7. Ibid., XXXI (January 1923).

1923 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
1 Jan.	1,511,377		
8	1,500,898		
15	1,483,467		
22	1,463,612		
29	1,435,642	1,460,000 ²	1,525,000
5 Feb.	1,409,961		
12	1,387,450		
19	1,364,193		
26	1,353,173	1,376,000 ³	1,421,000
5 Mar.	1,343,725		
12	1,327,082		
19	1,284,209		
26	1,266,997	1,289,000 ⁴	1,336,000
3 Apr.	1,307,629		
9	1,284,278		
16	1,266,500		
23	1,263,665		
30	1,248,724	1,261,000 ⁵	1,316,000
7 May	1,235,488		
14	1,200,291		
21	1,237,716		
28	1,252,340	1,261,000 ⁶	1,291,000
4 June	1,220,394		
11	1,230,288		
18	1,236,039		
25	1,223,152	1,226,000 ⁷	1,298,000

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXXI (February 1923).
 3. Ibid., XXXI (March 1923).
 4. Ibid., XXXI (April 1923).
 5. Ibid., XXXI (May 1923).
 6. Ibid., XXXI (June 1923).
 7. Ibid., XXXI (July 1923).

1923 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
2 July	1,225,937		
9	1,223,622		
16	1,215,765		
23	1,221,554		
30	1,232,585	1,235,000 ²	1,327,000
6 Aug.	1,228,541		
13	1,248,163		
20	1,261,969		
27	1,268,828	1,266,000 ³	1,357,000
3 Sep.	1,275,396		
10	1,265,302		
17	1,270,905		
24	1,275,770		1,347,000
1 Oct.	1,290,092	1,285,000 ⁴	
8	1,294,790		
15	1,296,782		
22	1,293,317		
29	1,297,054	1,296,000 ⁵	1,350,000
5 Nov.	1,286,360		
12	1,288,455		
19	1,276,935		
26	1,261,838	1,257,000 ⁶	1,327,000
3 Dec.	1,237,505		
10	1,222,079		
17	1,174,486	1,289,000 ⁷	
24			
31	1,285,623	1,174,000 ⁸	1,229,000

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXXI (August 1923).
 3. Ibid., XXXI (September 1923).
 4. Ibid., XXXI (October 1923).
 5. Ibid., XXXI (November 1923).
 6. Ibid., XXXI (December 1923).
 7. Ibid., XXXII (January 1924).
 8. Ibid., XXXII (January 1924).

1924 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
7 Jan.	1,267,675		
14	1,255,919		
21	1,251,822	1,253,000 ²	
28	1,320,518	1,322,000 ²	1,374,000
4 Feb.	1,248,475	1,248,000 ³	
11	1,188,673		
18	1,160,067		
25	1,154,504	1,156,000 ³	1,229,000
3 Mar.	1,134,742		
10	1,113,825		
17	1,094,111		
24	1,063,519		
31	1,058,273	1,057,000 ⁴	1,141,000
7 Apr.	1,044,246		
14	1,039,187		
21	1,050,546		
28	1,047,780	1,052,000 ⁵	1,122,000
5 May	1,040,660		
12	1,036,138		
19	1,021,032		
26	1,015,626	1,022,000 ⁶	1,091,000
2 June	1,002,915		
9	1,027,515		
16	1,052,641		
23	1,013,782		
30	1,009,444	1,015,000 ⁷	1,087,000

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924).
 2. Ibid., XXXII (February 1924).
 3. Ibid., XXXII (March 1924).
 4. Ibid., XXXII (April 1924).
 5. Ibid., XXXII (May 1924).
 6. Ibid., XXXII (June 1924).
 7. Ibid., XXXII (July 1924).

1924 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
7 July	1,024,551		
14	1,025,993		
21	1,041,784		
28	1,048,261	1,052,000 ²	1,138,000
4 Aug.	1,080,234		
11	1,091,843		
18	1,122,315		
25	1,149,078	1,152,000 ³	1,223,000
1 Sep.	1,162,880		
8	1,163,648		
15	1,163,950		
22	1,180,290		
29	1,199,316	1,205,000 ⁴	1,242,000
6 Oct.	1,215,575		
13	1,210,201		
20	1,204,078		
27	1,203,229	1,247,000 ⁵	1,281,000
3 Nov.	1,228,023		
10	1,218,392		
17	1,208,999		
24	1,190,592		1,274,000
1 Dec.	1,190,254	1,233,000 ⁶	
8	1,182,188		
15	1,158,475		
22	1,169,227	1,213,000 ⁷	
29	1,273,885	1,319,000 ⁷	1,263,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXII (October 1924); after 5 October 1924, in XXXIII (May 1925).

2. Ibid., XXXII (August 1924).

3. Ibid., XXXII (September 1924).

4. Ibid., XXXII (October 1924).

5. Ibid., XXXII (November 1924).

6. Ibid., XXXII (December 1924).

7. Ibid., XXXIII (January 1925).

1925 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
5 Jan.	1,307,140		
12	1,279,854		
19	1,269,733		
26	1,240,922	1,281,000 ²	1,322,000
2 Feb.	1,238,287		
9	1,242,959		
16	1,239,796		
23	1,236,065	1,287,000 ³	1,334,000
2 Mar.	1,235,618		
9	1,220,733		
16	1,219,206		
23	1,201,315		
30	1,194,313	1,249,000 ⁴	1,310,000
6 Apr.	1,166,353		
13	1,204,770		
20	1,202,671		
27	1,187,068	1,251,000 ⁵	1,294,000
4 May	1,180,479		
11	1,184,251		
18	1,185,020		
25	1,186,522	1,253,000 ⁶	1,297,000
1 June	1,247,306		
8	1,291,191		
15	1,280,370		
22	1,299,667		
29	1,304,243	1,368,000 ⁷	1,409,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIII (May 1925); after 10 May 1925, in XXXIII (November 1925).

2. Ibid., XXXIII (February 1925).

3. Ibid., XXXIII (March 1925).

4. Ibid., XXXIII (April 1925).

5. Ibid., XXXIII (May 1925).

6. Ibid., XXXIII (June 1925).

7. Ibid., XXXIII (July 1925).

1925 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
6 July	1,300,350		
13	1,248,466		
20	1,221,912		
27	1,197,613	1,262,000 ²	1,329,000
3 Aug.	1,260,407		
10	1,269,450		
17	1,298,285		
24	1,343,738		
31	1,354,302	1,418,000 ³	1,443,000
7 Sep.	1,345,455		
14	1,327,637		
21	1,311,558		
28	1,336,155	1,401,000 ⁴	1,426,000
5 Oct.	1,297,628		
12	1,258,825		
19	1,238,158		
26	1,232,396	1,295,000 ⁵	1,354,000
2 Nov.	1,207,612		
9.	1,198,126		
16	1,196,237		
23	1,174,545		
30	1,165,275	1,227,000 ⁶	1,314,000
7 Dec.	1,161,257		
14	1,127,446		
21	1,102,400	1,166,000 ⁷	1,243,000
28			

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIII (November 1925); after 8 November 1925, in XXXIV (April 1926).

2. Ibid., XXXIII (August 1925).

3. Ibid., XXXIII (September 1925).

4. Ibid., XXXIII (October 1925).

5. Ibid., XXXIII (November 1925).

6. Ibid., XXXIII (December 1925).

7. Ibid., XXXIV (January 1926).

1926 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
4 Jan.	1,251,706	1,316,000 ²	
11	1,221,403		
18	1,215,875		
25	1,200,827		1,318,000
1 Feb.	1,174,978	1,237,000 ³	
8	1,164,957		
15	1,139,000		
22	1,125,760		1,248,000
1 Mar.	1,107,138	1,169,000 ⁴	
8	1,094,082		
15	1,070,843		
22	1,039,354		
29	1,013,609	1,070,000 ⁵	1,171,000
5 Apr.	1,049,786		
12	1,024,389		
19	996,646		
26	981,877	1,034,000 ⁶	1,094,000
3 May	1,105,916		
10	1,575,899		
17	1,612,744		
24	1,597,679		
31	1,614,212	1,675,000 ⁷	1,719,000
7 June	1,609,119		
14	1,629,939		
21	1,634,742		
28	1,639,776	1,699,000 ⁸	1,751,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIV (April 1926); after 11 April 1926, in XXXIV (October 1926).

2. Ibid., XXXIV (January 1926).

3. Ibid., XXXIV (February 1926).

4. Ibid., XXXIV (March 1926).

5. Ibid., XXXIV (April 1926).

6. Ibid., XXXIV (May 1926).

7. Ibid., XXXIV (June 1926).

8. Ibid., XXXIV (July 1926).

1926 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
5 July	1,645,070		
12	1,644,194		
19	1,631,268		
26	1,605,420	1,664,000 ²	1,737,000
2 Aug.	1,618,744		
9	1,594,169		
16	1,580,520		
23	1,558,938		
30	1,549,759	1,606,000 ³	1,685,000
6 Sep.	1,559,535		
13	1,551,924		
20	1,530,884		
27	1,527,751	1,582,000 ⁴	1,648,000
4 Oct.	1,572,200		
11	1,536,332		
18	1,520,475		
25	1,516,171		1,636,000
1 Nov.	1,559,236	1,610,000 ⁵	
8	1,562,959		
15	1,551,535		
22	1,514,733		
29	1,496,067	1,545,000 ⁶	1,630,000
6 Dec.	1,506,320		
13	1,410,378		
20	1,309,739	1,357,000 ⁷	
27	1,351,045		1,432,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIV (October 1926); after 10 October 1926, in XXXV (April 1927).

2. Ibid., XXXIV (August 1926).

3. Ibid., XXXIV (September 1926).

4. Ibid., XXXIV (October 1926).

5. Ibid., XXXIV (November 1926).

6. Ibid., XXXIV (December 1926).

7. Ibid., XXXV (January 1927).

1927 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
3 Jan.	1,495,839		
10	1,432,014		
17	1,391,018		
24	1,348,719		
31	1,331,543	1,375,000 ²	1,451,000
7 Feb.	1,303,493		
14	1,270,217		
21	1,196,059		
28	1,169,283	1,208,000 ³	1,315,000
7 Mar.	1,144,060		
14	1,118,736		
21	1,078,530		
28	1,081,729	1,115,000 ⁴	1,188,000
4 Apr.	1,073,759		
11	1,078,252		
18	1,106,440		
25	1,044,757	1,075,000 ⁵	1,133,000
2 May	1,021,728		
9	998,291		
16	1,007,017		
23	978,176		
30	985,513	1,015,000 ⁶	1,059,000
6 June	1,089,640		
13	1,028,732		
20	987,348		
27	1,004,613	1,032,000 ⁷	1,069,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXV (April 1927); after 10 April 1927, in XXXV (October 1927).

2. Ibid., XXXV (February 1927).

3. Ibid., XXXV (March 1927).

4. Ibid., XXXV (April 1927).

5. Ibid., XXXV (May 1927).

6. Ibid., XXXV (June 1927).

7. Ibid., XXXV (July 1927).

1927 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
4 July	1,053,576		
11	1,036,516		
18	1,047,956		
25	1,026,902	1,055,000 ²	1,114,000
1 Aug.	1,119,828		
8	1,024,741		
15	1,022,150		
22	1,044,355		
29	1,049,261	1,076,000 ³	1,130,000
5 Sep.	1,074,620		
12	1,052,551		
19	1,047,992		
26	1,050,117	1,075,000 ⁴	1,126,000
3 Oct.	1,075,875		
10	1,073,000		
17	1,071,296		
24	1,074,032		
31	1,106,057	1,132,000 ⁵	1,156,000
7 Nov.	1,111,651		
14	1,125,735		
21	1,126,254		
28	1,145,230	1,172,000 ⁶	1,210,000
5 Dec.	1,149,648		
12	1,125,223		
19	1,100,052	1,127,000 ⁷	1,194,000
26			

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1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXV (October 1927); after 9 October 1927, in XXXVI (May 1928).
 2. Ibid., XXXV (August 1927).
 3. Ibid., XXXV (September 1927).
 4. Ibid., XXXV (October 1927).
 5. Ibid., XXXV (November 1927).
 6. Ibid., XXXV (December 1927).
 7. Ibid., XXXVI (January 1928).

1928 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
2 Jan.	1,336,303	1,368,000 ²	
9	1,232,069		
16	1,193,813		
23	1,178,750		
30	1,168,941	1,199,000 ³	1,261,000
6 Feb.	1,162,153		
13	1,159,772		
20	1,136,687		
27	1,108,676	1,139,000 ⁴	1,228,000
5 Mar.	1,094,452		
12	1,071,735		
19	1,066,077		
26	1,033,845	1,063,000 ⁵	1,127,000
2 Apr.	1,041,935	1,071,000 ⁶	
9			
16	1,083,774		
23	1,062,285	1,094,000 ⁷	
30	1,136,003	1,171,000 ⁶	1,128,000
7 May	1,103,822		
14	1,118,390		
21	1,101,026	1,143,000 ⁷	1,168,000
28			
4 June	1,160,049		
11	1,149,943		
18	1,162,521		
25	1,192,564	1,239,000 ⁸	1,273,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVI (May 1928); after 13 May 1928 in XXXVI (November 1928).

2. Ibid., XXXVI (January 1928).

3. Ibid., XXXVI (February 1928).

4. Ibid., XXXVI (March 1928).

5. Ibid., XXXVI (April 1928).

6. Ibid., XXXVI (May 1928).

7. Ibid., XXXVI (June 1928),

8. Ibid., XXXVI (July 1928).

1928 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
2 July	1, 217,478		
9	1,242,435		
16	1,247,435		
23	1,282,934		
30	1,304,971	1,354,000 ²	1,377,000
6 Aug.	1,		
13	1,314,159		
20	1,308,160		
27	1,320,027	1,367,000 ³	1,375,000
3 Sep.	1,324,675		
10	1,299,977		
17	1,293,659		
24	1,295,234		1,355,000
1 Oct.	1,366,379	1,384,000 ⁴	
8	1,319,706		
15	1,321,154		
22	1,344,187		
29	1,374,741	1,421,000 ⁵	1,403,000
5 Nov.	1,349,776		
12	1,348,158		
19	1,364,423		
26	1,395,505	1,439,000 ⁶	1,453,000
3 Dec.	1,350,806		
10	1,320,912		
17	1,271,122	1,312,000 ⁷	
24			
31	1,520,730	1,565,000 ⁷	1,334,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVI (November 1928); after 4 November 1928, in XXXVII (March 1929).

2. Ibid., XXXVI (August 1928).

3. Ibid., XXXVI (September 1928).

4. Ibid., XXXVI (October 1928).

5. Ibid., XXXVI (November 1928).

6. Ibid., XXXVI (December 1928).

7. Ibid., XXXVII (January 1929).

1929 (January to June)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
7 Jan.	1,452,619		
14	1,434,997		
21	1,425,620		
28	1,394,078	1,434,000 ²	1,466,000
4 Feb.	1,369,475		
11	1,342,505		
18	1,458,032		
25	1,391,861	1,430,000 ³	1,454,000
4 Mar.	1,387,332		
11	1,268,839		
18	1,182,454		
25	1,132,856	1,168,000 ⁴	1,204,000
1 Apr.	1,		
8	1,178,067		
15	1,153,535		
22	1,140,722	1,175,000 ⁵	
29	1,163,808	1,198,000 ⁵	1,181,000
6 May	1,132,705		
13	1,104,662		
20			
27	1,132,281	1,165,000 ⁶	1,177,000
3 June	1,100,125		
10	1,112,792		
17	1,122,713		
24	1,117,807		1,164,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVII (March 1929); after 3 March 1929, in XXXVII (June 1929); after 9 June in XXXVIII (January 1930).

2. Ibid., XXXVII (February 1929).

3. Ibid., XXXVII (March 1929).

4. Ibid., XXXVII (April 1929).

5. Ibid., XXXVII (May 1929).

6. Ibid., XXXVII (June 1929).

1929 (July to December)

	A ¹	B.	C. (at or near the end of each month)
1 July	1,142,382	1,176,000 ²	
8	1,144,246		
15	1,136,665		
22	1,122,643		
29	1,154,129	1,188,000 ³	1,178,000
5 Aug.			
12	1,168,068		
19	1,162,284		
26	1,155,803	1,190,000 ⁴	1,198,000
2 Sep.	1,152,260		
9	1,149,692		
16	1,147,519		
23	1,162,940		
30	1,181,862	1,217,000 ⁵	1,204,000
7 Oct.	1,207,236		
14	1,215,049		
21	1,214,494		
28	1,234,388	1,270,000 ⁶	1,254,000
4 Nov.	1,251,958		
11	1,259,134		
18	1,273,531		
25	1,285,458	1,323,000 ⁷	1,326,000
2 Dec.	1,302,930		
9	1,309,504		
16	1,303,557	1,341,000 ⁸	1,344,000
23			
30	1,510,231	1,552,000 ⁸	

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVIII (January 1930); these were the last figures of this kind to be published.

2. Ibid., XXXVII (July 1929).

3. Ibid., XXXVII (August 1929).

4. Ibid., XXXVII (September 1929).

5. Ibid., XXXVII (October 1929).

6. Ibid., XXXVII (November 1929).

7. Ibid., XXXVII (December 1929).

8. Ibid., XXXVIII (January 1930).

1930.

	B ¹			<u>TOTAL</u>	C. (at or near the end of each month)
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)		
27 Jan.				1,534,000	1,520,000
24 Feb.				1,582,000	1,583,000
31 Mar.				1,731,000	1,694,000
28 Apr.				1,752,000	1,761,000
26 May	1,164,468	509,621	95,962	<u>1,770,051</u>	1,856,000
23 June	1,160,935	562,134	92,273	<u>1,815,342</u>	1,911,000
21 July	1,226,404	652,451	93,875	<u>1,972,730</u>	2,070,000
25 Aug.	1,333,850	609,309	96,543	<u>2,039,702</u>	2,119,000
22 Sep.	1,413,242	596,773	99,643	<u>2,109,658</u>	2,188,000
27 Oct.	1,551,095	581,614	104,792	<u>2,247,501</u>	2,319,000
24 Nov.	1,659,867	521,305	105,288	<u>2,286,460</u>	2,369,000
29 Dec.	1,766,398	774,630	102,099	<u>2,643,127</u>	2,500,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVIII (1930); those for 29 December 1930 in XXXIX (January 1931).

1931.

	B ¹				C.
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<u>TOTAL</u>	(at or near the end of each month)
26 Jan.	1,875,330	607,443	109,877	<u>2,692,650</u>	2,663,000
23 Feb.	1,888,716	613,692	115,250	<u>2,617,658</u>	2,697,000
23 Mar.	1,859,526	604,089	116,503	<u>2,680,118</u>	2,666,000
27 Apr.	1,848,170	556,978	114,965	<u>2,520,113</u>	2,593,000
18 May	1,840,562	550,907	115,468	<u>2,506,937</u>	2,578,000
22 June	1,851,421	662,141	113,824	<u>2,637,486</u>	2,707,000
27 July	1,877,543	724,690	111,117	<u>2,713,350</u>	2,806,000
24 Aug.	1,958,395	661,829	113,558	<u>2,733,782</u>	2,813,000
21 Sep.	2,044,482	654,755	112,378	<u>2,811,615</u>	2,880,000
26 Oct.	2,127,943	482,553	115,596	<u>2,726,092</u>	2,793,000
23 Nov.	2,070,442	435,705	108,968	<u>2,615,115</u>	2,735,000
21 Dec.	2,002,464	403,432	104,025	<u>2,510,431</u>	2,671,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIX (1931); those for 21 December 1931 in XL (January 1932).

1932.

	B ¹				C.
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<u>TOTAL</u>	(at or near the end of each month)
25 Jan.	2,131,298	496,408	100,705	<u>2,726,411</u>	2,855,000
22 Feb.	2,122,927	486,599	101,647	<u>2,701,173</u>	2,809,000
21 Mar.	2,042,444	422,676	102,212	<u>2,567,332</u>	2,660,000
25 Apr.	2,031,888	516,563	103,730	<u>2,652,181</u>	2,727,000
23 May	2,001,127	630,664	109,515	<u>2,741,306</u>	2,822,000
27 June	1,961,769	688,378	97,196	<u>2,747,293</u>	2,843,000
25 July	1,995,453	721,552	94,777	<u>2,811,782</u>	2,921,000
22 Aug.	2,040,078	719,295	100,455	<u>2,859,828</u>	2,947,000
26 Sep.	2,119,218	639,160	99,633	<u>2,858,011</u>	2,925,000
24 Oct.	2,139,448	508,923	98,635	<u>2,747,006</u>	2,810,000
21 Nov.	2,189,258	512,998	97,550	<u>2,799,806</u>	2,849,000
19 Dec.	2,171,175	454,522	97,590	<u>2,723,287</u>	2,776,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XL (1932); those for 19 December 1932 in XLI (January 1933).

1933.

	B ¹			<u>TOTAL</u>	C. (at or near the end of each month)
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)		
23 Jan.	2,280,033	524,229	98,803	<u>2,903,065</u>	2,955,000
20 Feb.	2,241,168	512,587	102,883	<u>2,856,638</u>	2,915,000
20 Mar.	2,170,252	503,377	102,555	<u>2,776,184</u>	2,821,000
24 Apr.	2,070,814	527,418	99,402	<u>2,697,634</u>	2,737,000
22 May	1,998,567	490,243	94,069	<u>2,582,879</u>	2,626,000
26 June	1,884,322	463,712	90,074	<u>2,438,108</u>	2,498,000
24 July	1,855,214	501,702	82,259	<u>2,439,275</u>	2,508,000
21 Aug.	1,843,517	483,432	84,188	<u>2,411,137</u>	2,459,000
25 Sep.	1,857,064	393,517	86,146	<u>2,336,727</u>	2,375,000
23 Oct.	1,854,290	357,669	86,794	<u>2,298,753</u>	2,335,000
20 Nov.	1,855,808	340,135	84,074	<u>2,279,017</u>	2,309,000
18 Dec.	1,830,977	308,821	84,281	<u>2,224,079</u>	2,263,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLI (1933); those for 18 December 1933 in XLII (January 1934).

1934.

	B ¹			C.	
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<u>TOTAL</u>	(at or near the end of each month)
22 Jan.	1,944,026	355,240	84,281	<u>2,439,068</u>	
19 Feb.	1,881,532	340,897	95,480	<u>2,317,909</u>	
19 Mar.	1,796,787	312,622	92,168	<u>2,201,577</u>	
23 Apr.	1,729,942	329,913	89,040	<u>2,148,895</u>	
14 May	1,658,677	341,028	90,676	<u>2,090,381</u>	
25 June	1,563,432	447,320	81,834	<u>2,092,586</u>	
23 July	1,553,747	492,872	79,641	<u>2,126,260</u>	
20 Aug.	1,598,338	456,841	81,399	<u>2,136,578</u>	
24 Sep.	1,647,673	352,696	81,618	<u>2,080,987</u>	
22 Oct.	1,695,897	338,199	85,839	<u>2,119,635</u>	
26 Nov.	1,729,838	309,643	81,304	<u>2,120,785</u>	
17 Dec.	1,717,005	288,257	80,553	<u>2,086,815</u>	

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLII (1934); those for 17 December 1934 in XLIII (January 1935).

1935.

	B ¹				C.
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	<u>TOTAL</u>	(at or near the end of each month)
28 Jan.	1,882,034	353,994	89,345	<u>2,325,373</u>	2,333,000
25 Feb.	1,840,136	353,548	91,779	<u>2,295,463</u>	2,310,000
25 Mar.	1,746,277	317,910	89,883	<u>2,153,810</u>	2,176,000
15 Apr.	1,676,623	280,333	87,504	<u>2,044,460</u>	2,060,000
20 May	1,641,969	314,775	88,008	<u>2,044,752</u>	2,055,000
24 June	1,555,184	361,825	83,101	<u>2,000,110</u>	2,033,000
22 July	1,501,226	393,198	78,517	<u>1,972,941</u>	2,019,000
26 Aug.	1,533,259	334,419	80,286	<u>2,047,964</u>	1,983,000
23 Sep.	1,576,425	298,845	83,340	<u>1,958,610</u>	1,989,000
21 Oct.	1,595,689	238,866	81,835	<u>1,916,390</u>	1,936,000
25 Nov.	1,617,237	221,443	79,882	<u>1,918,562</u>	1,938,000
16 Dec.	1,585,990	205,574	77,001	<u>1,868,565</u>	1,888,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLIII (1935); those for 16 December 1935 in XLIV (January 1936).

1936.

	B ¹			<u>TOTAL</u>	C. (at or near the end of each month)
	(i)	(ii)	(iii)		
20 Jan.	1,732,503	345,117	82,102	<u>2,059,722</u>	2,169,000
24 Feb.	1,677,077	259,292	88,652	<u>1,924,921</u>	2,051,000
23 Mar.	1,560,574	235,280	85,677	<u>1,881,531</u>	1,908,000
27 Apr.	1,498,579	247,272	85,379	<u>1,831,230</u>	1,835,000
25 May	1,397,755	225,285	82,002	<u>1,705,042</u>	1,723,000
22 June	1,326,057	301,793	74,826	<u>1,702,676</u>	1,731,000
20 July	1,285,805	296,007	70,260	<u>1,652,072</u>	1,682,000
24 Aug.	1,297,596	244,874	71,470	<u>1,613,940</u>	1,640,000
21 Sep.	1,322,934	232,122	69,283	<u>1,624,339</u>	1,650,000
26 Oct.	1,345,789	193,429	72,592	<u>1,611,810</u>	1,643,000
23 Nov.	1,367,492	188,643	67,467	<u>1,623,602</u>	1,663,000
14 Dec.	1,365,035	194,841	68,843	<u>1,628,719</u>	1,670,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLIV (1936); figures for 14 December 1936 in XLV (January 1937).

1937-1938.

	B ¹	C. (at or near the end of each month)
25 Jan. 1937	1,689,223	1,738,000
22 Feb.	1,627,845	1,683,000
15 Mar.	1,601,201	1,632,000
19 Apr.	1,454,443	1,479,000
24 May	1,451,330	1,495,000
21 June	1,356,598	1,400,000
26 July	1,379,459	1,419,000
23 Aug.	1,358,621	1,398,000
13 Sep.	1,339,204	1,373,000
18 Oct.	1,390,249	1,436,000
15 Nov.	1,499,203	1,560,000
13 Dec.	1,665,407	1,739,000
17 Jan. 1938	1,827,607	1,904,000
14 Feb.	1,810,607	1,888,000
14 Mar.	1,748,981	1,829,000
4 Apr.	1,747,764	1,818,000
16 May	1,778,805	1,846,000
13 June	1,802,912	1,885,000
18 July	1,773,116	1,871,000
15 Aug.	1,759,242	1,836,000
12 Sep.	1,798,618	1,856,000
17 Oct.	1,781,227	1,855,000
14 Nov.	1,828,103	1,904,000
12 Dec.	1,831,372	1,912,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLV (1937); those from 13 December 1937 to 14 November 1938, inclusive, in XLVI (1938); those for 12 December 1938 in XLVII (January 1939).

1939-1940.

	B ¹	C. (at or near the end of each month)
16 Jan. 1939	2,039,026	2,032,000
13 Feb.	1,896,718	1,890,000
13 Mar.	1,726,929	1,728,000
17 Apr.	1,644,394	1,626,000
15 May	1,492,282	1,478,000
12 June	1,349,579	1,342,000
10 July	1,256,424	1,251,000
14 Aug.	1,231,692	1,203,000
11 Sep.	1,330,928	1,261,000
16 Oct.	1,430,638	1,327,000
14 Nov.	1,402,588	1,322,000
11 Dec.	1,361,525	1,305,000
15 Jan. 1940	1,518,896	1,471,000
12 Feb.	1,504,100	1,466,000
11 Mar.	1,121,213	1,083,000
15 Apr.	972,695	931,000

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLVII (1939); those after 10 December 1939 in XLVIII (1940).

PART II.

THE RESPONSE TO UNEMPLOYMENT:

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS.

Chapter Four

THE NATIONAL STORY

It has been argued in Chapter Two that economic orthodoxy remained strongly opposed to the ideas of J.M. Keynes for most of the 1930's. Put in a different way, the theories of Keynes were not completely evolved until the publication of his General Theory in 1936, and prior to this date as well as for some time afterwards, his theories were opposed by most academic economists of standing. Keynes was supported only by R.F. Kahn, Joan Robinson, and a few junior economists. His opponents not only included several of his associates at Cambridge, such as Professor A.C. Pigou, Alfred Marshall's successor and disciple, and even D.H. Robertson, who had sided with Keynes in advocating increased public investment as a solution to depression and unemployment in the 1920's,¹ but also, since there was a wide gulf in the thinking at Cambridge and at the London School of Economics, Professor Lionel Robbins and almost all his senior colleagues.² As has been stated, although the United States had the New Deal, and although the governments of other nations adopted similar public works programmes, in Britain there was no government intervention of this kind in the 1930's, and the majority of economists and politicians were content to sit back and wait for the problem of unemployment to solve itself, thinking that they could do little to help

Furthermore, just as the economics of unemployment had received little attention before 1929, so, too, contemporary knowledge of the

1. R.F. Harrod, op. cit., p. 452.

2. Ibid., p. 323; these included T.E. Gregory, F. Benham and F.A. von Hayek.

social and psychological problems presented by unemployment was restricted. The study of unemployment in York made by Seebohm Rowntree and Bruno Lasker in 1911 was almost the only book of its kind.¹ The problem of poverty, but only indirectly that of unemployment, was the subject of Charles Booth's study of Life and Labour in London (1892), while in 1915 A.L. Bowley and A.R. Burnett-Hurst had published their book on Livelihood and Poverty in the four towns of Northampton, Reading, Warrington, and Stanley. Largely as a result of this absence of knowledge, nineteenth century ideas on charity and public relief were still widely accepted even in the 1920's: unemployment was thought to be a result of character defects, or laziness, and there was work for all of those who genuinely wanted it. Such arguments had been reaffirmed as recently as 1909 by William Beveridge, in Unemployment: A Problem of Industry,² and formed much of the reasoning behind the objectionable 'genuinely seeking work' clause of the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1927, under which tens of thousands of men and women were refused benefit.³ Not until such studies as E.W. Bakke's The Unemployed Man (1933), and Hilda Jennings' Brynmawr (1934), or John Boyd Orr's Food Health and Income (1936), had been made, and until the writings of Walter Greenwood in Love on the Dole (1933) and George Orwell in Road to Wigan Pier (1937) had been published, was unemployment viewed in a different light. In the years between 1929 and 1936,

1. B.S. Rowntree and B. Lasker, Unemployment: A Social Study (1911).
2. W.H. Beveridge, Unemployment: A Problem of Industry, p. 133 et seq.
3. See below, Chapter 10, p. 387-8.

when unemployment was at its highest, the response of successive governments in Great Britain was small, and the unemployed were left largely to themselves. They could either join the militant National Unemployed Workers' Movement (see Part III of this thesis), and demonstrate or take part on hunger marches in an effort to bring their situation to the attention of the authorities, or they could join one of the occupational centres, run by voluntary organisations, or one of the T.U.C. Unemployed Associations, the history of which is discussed in the following section. The majority, however, could be persuaded to do neither of these things.

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In 1927 an educational settlement was founded by a small group of members of the Society of Friends, under the chairmanship of Dr. A.D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol,¹ at Maes-yr-Haf, Trealaw, in the Rhondda. In the same year, members of the Workers' Educational Association established a service club and workshop for the unemployed at Lincoln, where articles for which there was no economic demand could be made as a service to others.² Woodwork and metal workshops were opened, in which sets of tables or playground equipment were built for nurseries, toys were made for poor children, and comforts were provided for invalids and old-age pensioners. In 1928 what was to become known as

1. C.L. Mowat, *op. cit.*, p. 489; Alexander Dunlop Lindsay (1879-1952); C.B.E. 1919; Master of Balliol, 1924-49; Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, 1935-8; 1st. Baron (cr. 1945) of Low Ground; 1st. Vice-Chancellor of Keele University.

2. Men Without Work, pp. 371-7.

the Brynmawr Experiment was begun, again largely due to the efforts of the Quakers.¹ Early in 1929 the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and the National Council of Social Service set up a Committee to begin educational work among the unemployed in the distressed mining areas of Durham, Northumberland and South Wales. The response was described by the National Council as 'impressive', showing 'how real a need for such facilities was felt by people suffering from the monotony and depression of prolonged unemployment...'²

1. At Brynmawr, by means of a community council, unemployed clubs were started, a swimming bath, paddling pool and gardens were built, and two new industries, Brynmawr Bootmakers Ltd., and Brynmawr Furniture Makers Ltd., began production. The Brynmawr Subsistence Production Society, for older men, worked in close contact with the community settlement. The subsistence experiment was repeated at Upholland, near Wigan, Lancashire, where in March 1934 eleven men and two women began to build a dairy, greenhouse and cobbler's shop, tailor's room and common-rooms. With a cow, ten pigs, and a hundred poultry, they produced 200 lb. of bacon, ham and pork, 400 lb. of tomatoes, and raised their standard of living by ten shillings per week. The Nuffield Trust made a donation of £30,000 to the Upholland Society, which enabled the experiment to be expanded considerably. As at Brynmawr there was no sale outside the group, and members were credited with the number of hours worked, the commodities being priced in those terms. Labour, therefore, paid for what was produced. The original Upholland site was later supplemented by four others, at Parbold Hall, Billinge, Pemberton and Ashfield House, Standish, all to the west of Wigan. (Community Council of Brynmawr, The Brynmawr Experiment, 1928-1933 (Brynmawr, Community House, 1934) 23pp; Men Without Work, pp. 354 et seq; W.H.G. Armytage, Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England, 1560-1960 (1961), pp. 410-1.)

2. National Council of Social Service, Unemployment and Community Service (1936), p. 9; there is no evidence to indicate that any schemes of this nature, on behalf of the unemployed, were begun before 1927, in spite of the fact that, as has been stated, the national level of unemployment in Great Britain had been approximately ten per cent. for most of the 1920's. The Quakers and the Workers' Educational Association were the two organisations mainly responsible for the initiative shown in this direction, and the Lincoln People's Service Club became something of a model for all occupational centres established in the 1930's.

These were the beginnings of what was to become an extensive movement on behalf of the unemployed, a movement the purpose of which was to provide fellowship for those who were 'denied a place in the community of the workers', as the National Council of Social Service put it.¹ In the next two years, as the numbers out of work rose, similar experiments were begun elsewhere, and by September 1931 more than one hundred voluntary schemes were in operation in Great Britain, all owing their origins to local initiative.² There existed many differences of opinion as to the aims and possibilities of such work among the unemployed, however. The tendency to think of unemployment as a temporary phenomenon, one which would soon disappear, inhibited the development of other schemes, since it was felt that the need for occupational centres would quickly pass. In addition, many still believed that the unemployed required little more than games, lectures and concerts to relieve their boredom. In particular, the problem of extensive long-term unemployment was new in character, at least in the scale on which it appeared in the years after 1929.

In January 1932, the Prince of Wales, Patron of the National Council, spoke at a meeting arranged by the Council at the Albert Hall, London. He called upon the British people to face the problem of unemployment as a 'national opportunity for voluntary social service': 'refusing to be paralysed' by the size of the problem, they should

1. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 9.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

'break it up into little pieces'.¹ There was a widespread response to the Prince's appeal, all kinds of voluntary organisations, existing councils of social service, and local committees which were formed especially for the purpose, setting out to organise schemes of voluntary occupation for the unemployed. By the autumn of 1932, more than seven hundred schemes had been started in all parts of Great Britain.²

It was evident, however, that if proper advantage was to be taken of the possibilities of such a movement, of the public concern which had been aroused, as well as the response from the unemployed themselves, some central agency was required to co-ordinate the efforts being made in this direction, and to be responsible for the distribution of the large sums of money which had been donated. In November 1932, the Minister of Labour, Sir Henry Betterton, invited the National Council to act as the central advisory body for the voluntary movement, and promised an initial grant of £20,000 to assist in the development of local schemes. The National Council, which reported that the number of requests for its help had so increased after the Prince of Wales' speech, and which had already decided to form a special committee to deal with this branch of its work,³ decided to accept the invitation:

'..on the understanding (in which the Minister fully concurred) that freedom of action be preserved both to the Council itself, as a purely voluntary organisation, and to those

1. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

2. Ibid., p. 11.

3. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1932-3, p. 10.

responsible locally for the conduct of local schemes.'¹

The aims of the Council in accepting were:

'..to ensure that, in addition to whatever may be done by the State or by local Authorities to ease the hardship of unemployment, people with time on their hands shall have within their reach a club where, if they wish they can find not only good fellowship, but opportunities to develop interests for which they often have had little time when they are in work.'²

The Special Unemployment Committee of the National Council thus began its work of advising in the establishment and management of local schemes, and of setting up regional councils throughout Great Britain, which would be responsible for the guidance and co-ordination of the activities of the centres within their particular area. Three Chief Advisory Bodies were also established, these being situated in Leeds, Cardiff and Birmingham, whose task it was to 'co-ordinate the local experience of various districts, promote further activities, and assist in the administration of grant-aid from Government funds.'³

After February 1933, the Chairman of the Special Unemployment Committee was Dr. Lindsay: also on the Committee were Dr. Thomas Jones, President of Coleg Harlech, and Secretary of the Pilgrim Trust, the Earl of Elgin, Chairman of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, and

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 11-12.

2. Ibid., p. 7.

3. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

Dr. J.J. Mallon, Honorary Treasurer of the Workers' Educational Association.¹

Throughout 1933 the number of voluntary centres for the unemployed continued to grow rapidly. By March 1935 there were more than one thousand centres for men, and over three hundred for women, in existence in England, Scotland and Wales, with a total membership of more than 150,000. There were at this date more than one hundred clubs for men in the North-East, with a membership of more than 11,000; there were also almost forty clubs for women. In the London district there were 107 clubs for men, with a membership of more than 15,000, while Glamorgan had 123 men's clubs, with a total of almost 16,000 members. In Lancashire there were 114 centres for men, and thirty-five for women, membership exceeding 19,000. Of this total, the South-East region of the county had sixty-five men's centres and nine clubs for women, with a total membership of more than 13,000.²

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1. Ibid; National Council of Social Service, Annual Report, 1932-3, p. 20 (n); see below, Appendix IV, for full Committee.

Thomas Jones (1870-1955); C.H. 1929; President, Coleg Harlech; Governor, National Library and National Museum of Wales; Professor of Economics, Queen's University, Belfast, 1909-10; Secretary, National Health Insurance Commissioners (Wales) 1912-16; late Deputy Secretary, Cabinet, and Secretary, Economic Advisory Council; member, Unemployment Assistance Board, 1934-40; Secretary, Pilgrim Trust.

10th. Earl of Elgin, born 1881; Lord High Commissioner of Church of Scotland, 1925 and 1926; Chairman, National Commission on Juvenile Employment (Scotland) 1926-46; Chairman, Land Settlement Association of England and Wales, 1933-46; Chairman, Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, 1923-46.

J.J. Mallon was Honorary Treasurer of the W.E.A. from 1917-49 (information supplied by the Association).

2. See below, Appendix III.

Within the voluntary movement, the role of the National Council of Social Service and the regional bodies was a purely advisory one. Before the end of 1932 only two regional organisations had been in existence to deal with occupational work among the unemployed, these being the Tyneside Council of Social Service and the Friends' Unemployment Committee in West Cumberland. By 1936 nineteen others had come into being with the help and support of the National Council, covering most of the industrial regions of Britain. Similar work was being done in the major cities by local bodies, these being closely associated with the regional organisation for their particular area. There were a small number of other bodies not within the area of the regional organisations. These included the Bristol Unemployed Welfare Association, the Hull Unemployment Committee and the Leeds Unemployed Social Work Committee.

The twenty-one regional organisations were:¹

Name and Date established	Headquarters and area covered
<u>Scotland</u>	
Scottish Council for Community Service during Unemployment (1933)	Glasgow: whole of Scotland
<u>North-East</u>	
Community Service Committee for Northumberland (1934)	Newcastle: Northumberland except Tyneside Industrial Area
Tyneside Council of Social Service (1929)	Newcastle: Tyneside
Community Service Council for Durham County (1935)	Durham: Durham coalfield, Wearside
Teeside and District Council of Social Service (1934)	Middlesborough: Teeside Industrial Area
Cleveland Council of Social Service (1933)	Middlesborough: Cleveland

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 79-81.

Cumberland

Friends' Unemployment Committee (1932) Cleator Moor: West Cumberland

Lancashire and Cheshire

Mid-Lancashire Unemployment Advisory Council (1934) Blackburn: textile districts near Blackburn and Burnlèy.

South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council (SEINEC) (1935) Manchester; textile districts of South-East Lancashire, and Wigan district.

South-West Lancashire and North-West Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council (1933) Wincham Hall, Lostock Gralam, near Northwich, Cheshire: Merseyside, Lancashire coalfield, industrial Cheshire

Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Unemployment Advisory Council (1934) Wakefield: West Riding textile area and northern part of Yorkshire coalfield

South Yorkshire Unemployment Advisory Council (1934) Sheffield: southern part of Yorkshire coalfield, iron and steel districts

Midlands

North Staffs. and District Association of Social Service Clubs (1935) Stoke: Potteries, Kidsgrove coalfield

South Staffs. and District Association of Social Service Clubs (1935) Wolverhampton: Black Country, Cannock Chase

East Shropshire Association of Mutual Service Clubs (1934) Wellington: East Shropshire coalfield

Derbyshire Association of Social Service Clubs (late 1935) Derby: Derbyshire coalfield

Notts. Co. Association of Social Service Centres (1935) Nottingham: Notts. coalfield and textile districts

Forest of Dean Association of Social Service Clubs (late 1935) Gloucester: Forest of Dean coalfield

Wales

South Wales and Monmouthshire Council of Social Service (1934) Cardiff: South Wales and Monmouthshire

Southern England

London Council for Voluntary Occupation during Unemployment (1935) London: Greater London

Cornwall Central Committee for Social Service Truro: industrial districts of Cornwall

The regional organisations did not attempt to direct local effort, but, instead:

'..adopted a role which left the initiative and organisation in the hands of those who were actually in contact with local conditions and needs. Their policy was to try to direct voluntary effort into channels which their pooled experience indicated as likely to produce the best results. They were able, by reason of their recognised status, to procure the assistance of Government departments and Local Authorities and of the great charitable trusts, in furthering the aims of local effort.'¹

Similarly, the Annual Report of the National Council of Social Service for the year 1932-3 declared:

'..the Council believes that action must be inspired by a real desire to serve and must be free to make full use of initiative unfettered by central regulation or control. The activity that had already been set on foot owed its inception to local initiative and its strength to local energy, and it seemed to the Council that the vitality and vigour of the movement would be best fostered if the continuance of this variety and local initiative were encouraged.'

Following the Council's 'normal method', therefore, no attempt was made 'to organise the movement on any centrally conceived pattern.'²

1. J.Q. Henriques, A Citizen's Guide to Social Service (1938), pp. 116-7.

2. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1932-3, pp. 10-11.

It was not the aim of the National Council 'to supplement what the State or other societies may do to provide for the maintenance of those who cannot get work.' Its intention was rather to provide what it termed 'food for their minds', and some purpose 'to fill empty days', and to this end it believed itself to be eminently successful, many thousands of men and women, so it was argued in 1936, finding themselves fitter and happier as a result of their involvement in the occupational movement.¹ Although government financial support was a valuable factor, the movement stood or fell in any particular area according to the response of the local community, and of the unemployed themselves. Capabilities and demands differed, and the variety that was to be found in the centres and clubs corresponded with the varying skills and interests to be found among different groups of unemployed people, as well as variations in the social and industrial character of different regions, and in the understanding and help given by different local communities.

Within these limits, the work of the National Council and regional organisations was to stimulate the formation of occupational centres, advise on methods of running them, and provide a number of common services, such as camps and instruction in crafts. Conferences of club members and leaders were arranged, for the purpose of discussion and exchange of views. Pamphlets were issued, giving suggestions on various aspects of club management, such as the keeping of minute books for committee meetings, or containing ideas for new club activities.

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 7-8.

Leaflets were produced containing details of the procedure for obtaining unemployment benefit and assistance, for example. The National Council also negotiated with the Ministry of Labour on such matters as the payment of benefit while absent at holiday camp.¹ In such ways ideas and information was circulated between the centres, which were able to benefit from each other's experience, as well as from the advice of the full-time national and regional officials. By 1936 there were thirty-five handicraft instructors, twenty-one physical training instructors, and nine music and drama advisers on the staffs of the regional organisations, and in many instances local education authorities provided further instructors.²

The most important aspect of the work of the National Council of Social Service as regards the occupational centres was in the distribution of the movement's finance. Up to March 1935 the National Council had spent almost £80,000 received from the Ministry, and over £128,000 from voluntary donations.³ The Ministry grant was available for the strengthening of national, regional and district committees, to be selected and approved by the National Council's Unemployment Committee, on which the Ministry was represented; for the assistance of local schemes, also to be approved by the Committee; and the maintenance of the residential centres.⁴ With the exception of the latter, the Unemployment Committee had to be satisfied that the bodies

1. H.A. Mess, Voluntary Social Services since 1918 (1947), p. 49.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 81.

3. Ibid., p. 44.

4. See below, p. 153 et seq.

to whom it was proposed that grants should be made were able to provide from other sources as large a proportion as possible of the expenditure involved in any particular project. In addition, the Ministry grant-in-aid was not available to towns and cities with populations of more than 200,000 unless the percentage of unemployment there was higher than twenty per cent. In this case, the Council had to be satisfied that a sum of £2 would be provided from other sources for every £1 that it was proposed to grant. The Ministry grant was also limited to the 'unemployed' alone: 'wives of unemployed men', therefore, did not come into this category, and centres which admitted such women to membership did not qualify for assistance. Cities such as Manchester and Salford, and also Liverpool, with populations of more than 200,000, but with unemployment rates of less than twenty per cent. were not eligible for grant-aid.

In spite of these restrictions, the National Council felt that the Ministry grant was extremely valuable:

'..it has made possible grants in aid of local effort in those places where the need for clubs is greatest and where, by reason of severe and prolonged unemployment, local resources are smallest... In the second place the Ministry's grant has enabled help to be given to national and regional organisations on whose effort the extension of clubs and the development of a higher standard in club activities very largely depend..'¹

Because of the Ministry grant, the residential centres and regional

1. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 49.

councils were able to employ instructors on a full-time basis.

Up to October 1935, the National Council had made grants of over £22,000 to 152 clubs towards the cost of purchasing premises or of materials for constructing them. Over £14,000 had been granted to more than 360 clubs for the purpose of adapting premises or decorating them, and almost £8,000 to nearly four hundred clubs towards the purchase of equipment for occupational work, such as woodwork or metal-work tools and fittings. In addition, 280 centres had received grants totalling £3,500 for physical training and sports equipment. More than six hundred centres and groups had received grants for one or more of these purposes, while the Council had also made grants from voluntary funds towards the cost of holidays and demonstration courses at the residential centres.¹

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As well as being responsible for the finances of the occupational movement, the National Council gave help in a number of other ways. One of the most important aspects of the movement was the provision of holidays for the unemployed. This had been begun, on a small scale, in the earliest days of the centres, with the provision by individual clubs or local voluntary organisations for camping holidays for groups of unemployed. From the summer of 1933 onwards, however, the regional organisations and the National Council took over the direction of this work, the regional councils arranging holiday camps open to the members of all the centres within their region, and the National Council

1. Ibid., pp. 22, 35.

negotiating with organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association and the Co-operative Holidays Association for the loan of halls and the provision of summer schools for the unemployed club members.

In the summer of 1935 more than 15,000 men and women were given a holiday, and numbers increased even beyond this in later years. The importance of a change of environment was recognised to be vital. The National Council felt that 'the need of a holiday for men and women who have been long unemployed, is at least as great as for those at work..'¹ Living in 'an atmosphere of depression and restriction from which they can not escape', the value of a complete change for the unemployed, such as was offered by a period in camp, could 'scarcely be exaggerated'.² The camps filled a great need, the National Council alleged: often they had to be extended beyond the time originally planned, so popular and so valuable did they prove. In many cases the Council believed that those who attended them returned 'with renewed zest and greater courage to face the difficulties of unemployment.'

Holidays were provided not only for men, but, in a number of cases, for unemployed women, for wives of unemployed men, and, in some districts, for whole families. After the summer of 1934, many camps began to take on a more permanent nature. Huts replaced tents, and sanitary and cooking arrangements were made more ambitious, thus enabling the camps to be used the whole year round, instead of only in

1. Ibid., pp. 35-6.

2. National Council of Social Service, Social Service Review, XV (March 1934).

the summer months. The activities of the camps also became more elaborate, and unemployed men and women were able to take holidays at camps organised by neighbouring regional councils. Arrangements were also made, as has been stated, for the payment of unemployment benefit or assistance while the unemployed were away from home. In most cases, the cost of a holiday was less than ten shillings per adult per week.¹

The development of residential centres for the unemployed was another of the most successful ventures undertaken by the National Council. There were five in all. King's Standing, near Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, was opened in 1933 in a house belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster. Hardwick Hall, Co. Durham, was opened in 1934; courses for the unemployed were begun at Wincham Hall, near Northwich, Cheshire, in November 1933. Coleg Harlech was an established residential centre for adult education, at which short courses for the unemployed, mainly from South Wales, were commenced in October 1933. The fifth, The Beeches, at Bournville, was solely for women.

Apart from Coleg Harlech, the residential centres came into being after the inception of the voluntary movement, and in direct response to its needs.² The National Council alone was responsible for the centre at King's Standing, which specialised in giving instruction in craftwork. The house had been placed freely at the disposal of the Council, and alterations, carried out mainly by the unemployed themselves, converted the hall into a well-equipped centre where some

1. Ibid.

2. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1937-8, pp. 53-4.

fifty men at a time could attend courses on the conduct and management of clubs, and receive what the National Council considered to be 'expert instruction' on the organisation and conduct of club activities.¹ There was a resident Warden, two assistant wardens, and five qualified instructors in woodwork, cobbling, weaving, metal-work and upholstery.²

The centre at Wincham Hall was also the headquarters for the South-West Lancashire and North-West Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council, one of the three regional councils responsible for the direction of the voluntary movement in Lancashire and Cheshire.³ Like the remaining residential centres, it was organised and run with the co-operation of the National Council, from whom it received financial support, towards capital expenditure, staff and running expenses. The Pilgrim Trust Report, Men Without Work, published in 1938, found that there was a unique spirit of co-operation at this centre:

'The Wardens and staff have found the secret of becoming equal members of the same community as the students: a fine achievement, and one that is no doubt responsible for the extraordinary friendliness of the atmosphere there, and the close bond that unites "Old Winchamites" long after their course is over.'⁴

The Warden at Wincham Hall was Frank Milligan, who had previously been Warden of the Beechcroft Educational Settlement at Birkenhead, in

1. Men Without Work, p. 352; Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 18-21.

2. Ibid.

3. See above, p. 146.

4. Men Without Work, pp. 351-2.

Cheshire.¹ There was also a sub-warden, who was a qualified technical instructor, two handicraft instructors, and an art and drama adviser.² An 'Old Winchamites' Association was established, branches of which were formed in several towns and cities in Lancashire and Cheshire, membership of which was open to all who had attended courses at the Hall.³

Courses at The Beeches, Bournville, were restricted to a fortnight in length, since it was felt that the women could not afford to be away from home for longer: elsewhere they lasted six weeks, although there were some longer ones, of three months duration, and some shorter, of one or two weeks. At The Beeches advice was given on cooking, hygiene, child welfare and nursing. Crafts taught included knitting, dress-making and rug-making, and there were also activities such as play-reading, singing and country dancing.⁴ The first Annual Report of the centre declared that:

1. Interview with Tom Quail, Deputy Secretary, Community Council of Lancashire, on 14 April 1969, at Community House, 5 Wynnstay Grove, Withington, Manchester (formerly the offices of the South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council, see below, Chapter 6). Born at Birkenhead in 1904, Tom Quail left school at the age of 14, and became an apprenticed shipwright at Cammel Lairds. Encouraged by the firm, he attended night-school classes, to qualify for bonus pay. After successfully passing the night-school examinations, he attended the Beechcroft Settlement, where he met Frank Milligan. Quail's main interest was in amateur dramatics. On completing his apprenticeship in 1925, he joined the Blue Funnel Line and was at sea until 1935, at which date he was invited by Milligan to become technical instructor at Wincham Hall. In October 1935 he was appointed handicrafts instructor for SELNEC, at which post he remained until the Council became the Community Council of Lancashire in 1940.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 19; see below, Chapter 6, p. 221.

3. See below, Chapter 6, p. 222.

4. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 20; see below, Chapter 6, p. 224.

'The women who attended these courses came as representatives of their clubs determined to derive as much practical help as possible from their visit. They take back with them new ideas and suggestions, which should tend to improve the standard of work in handicrafts and make clubs programmes more interesting and varied. What is even more important, however, is the fact that people from many different areas have come into contact with each other and exchanged ideas and experiences. In comparing notes about what various clubs are doing or what they may do in the future, these women have realised that they are co-operating in a movement which extends far beyond their particular town or district.'¹

Like the centre at King's Standing, Hardwick Hall, in Co. Durham, was also noted for the instruction given in handicrafts. There were classes in weaving, given by the wife of the Warden, in book-binding and in upholstery. Classes in horticulture, poultry and pig-rearing were given with the aid of the Durham County Council.² At Coleg Harlech, in contrast, the main emphasis was more academic, and, although classes were given in physical training, carpentry, book-binding and metal-work, the unemployed could also take part in the normal educational classes, such as those in economics, literature, philosophy and music.³ In some ways this was highly beneficial to the

1. Quoted in Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1934, p. 6.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 18-21.

3. Ibid.

unemployed: the fact that many of those at Coleg Harlech were not unemployed, argued the Pilgrim Trust Report, Men Without Work, 'means that unemployment is not in the air there,' and that 'even those taking the short course lost the immediate sense of being unemployed.'¹

The residential centres not only ran courses for the unemployed club members themselves, but also for the club leaders, with instruction in club management and the supervision of activities. Like the unemployed, the leaders were able to see that they, too, were part of a nation-wide movement.² Attendance at a residential centre usually cost an unemployed man or woman about 12s. 6d. per week, which was taken from his or her unemployment benefit, the balance being found partly by the National Council and partly by the centre from which the man or woman came. Occasional courses were arranged at Carnegie College, Leeds, for those with a special interest and ability in physical training.³ The residential centres also took part in the holiday schemes.

In the early years of the club movement, the connection between the residential centres and the clubs themselves was often found to be lacking: too frequently it was found that the clubs did not afford their members the opportunity to develop interests that the residential centres had begun.⁴ Gradually, however, such faults were overcome,

1. Men Without Work, p. 350.

2. This was the original purpose of the hall at King's Standing - a national institution for the purpose of training club leaders.

3. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 20; see below, p. 160.

4. Men Without Work, pp. 351-3.

and the residential centres were linked more closely to the requirements of the clubs. In the year 1937-8, more than 1,150 men and 430 women attended course at the five residential centres.¹ One of the difficulties of the club movement was always to secure good leaders: the most enterprising men were often among the first to find employment, and leave the centres.² The residential courses were designed to combat this, and equip those who attended them for club leadership. It was thought that 'if a man had a short residential course, he could go back to his club with new ideas and with his skill in some craft considerably increased.'³ The result, it was hoped, would be as valuable to the club as a whole as to the unemployed man himself, and through the residential centres the general standard of club activities was gradually raised.⁴

Although the original emphasis was thus placed on the advantage which the clubs themselves might secure as a result of their members attending courses at the residential centres, the claims of individual education became more important as the club movement continued in existence. The five centres, especially Coleg Harlech, in providing courses in academic as well as occupational subjects, offered the opportunity of further education to many of those who had previously had no organised secondary education. Longer courses of six months duration, little related to club life, were commenced, and Men Without

1. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1937-8, p. 54.

2. See below, Chapter 7, pp. 251-2.

3. Men Without Work, p. 349.

4. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1937-8, p. 54.

Work, in 1938, stated that:

'...men went on during the year 1935-6 from Wincham Hall to Fircroft residential college for a year's course and to Avoncroft Agricultural College, and others have gone on to Oxford.'¹

In this respect the organising of libraries for the clubs, begun in 1935 by the National Council of Social Service, was also of importance. The supervision of the scheme was undertaken by the Libraries Association, to which was sent more than 40,000 books in the first year. Although the majority of these were received from people in London and the Home Counties, and although there was a certain amount of 'dumping' of out-of-date and worthless books, the scheme was considered to have been fairly successful. Local public libraries played an important role, and centres which had already begun libraries of their own were encouraged to lend books to the central pool, from which, once a month, a delivery of books would be made to each centre taking part.²

Although in the main the development of interests and activities was left to the centres themselves, the National Council paid particular attention to the development of physical training classes. Interest in physical training was easily aroused, but just as easily inclined to wane if skilled instruction was not provided, and unless the work of the classes had some definite purpose in mind, such as physical fitness for outdoor games. In 1936 the National Council

1. Men Without Work, p. 349.

2. Social Service Review, XVII (January 1936).

reported that it had:

'..supported the development of physical training through the clubs rather than as an independent activity, and has in recent months begun to build up through the regional organisation a service of qualified instructors able to take charge of the physical training and sports in small groups of clubs. Twenty-one instructors are now in the field and the value of their work has already received confirmation in the third annual course for unemployed men in July, 1935, at the Carnegie P.T. College...'¹

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The provision of holidays for the unemployed, and the development of residential centres, were thus two of the most important aspects of the voluntary response to the unemployed. Full advantage was also taken by the centres of the Society of Friends scheme to assist men in distressed areas to raise their standard of living by growing vegetables on their own allotments.² This was first begun in 1928, when, with the

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 32-3; see below, Chapter 5, pp. 196, 199.

2. Allotments were, of course, nothing new, although this was the first scheme designed for the benefit of the unemployed. There had been a series of Acts of Parliament relating to the formation of smallholdings in the late nineteenth century, notably the Allotments Acts of 1887 and 1890, and the Small Holdings Act of 1892. The latter empowered county and borough councils to create smallholdings where a need was proved to exist. The response was limited, however, largely due to the permissive character of the Act, and in 1908 a further Act was passed which placed the council under an obligation to meet the demand for smallholdings.

Operations under the 1908 Act were suspended during the first world war. In December 1918, however, a land settlement scheme for ex-servicemen was brought into operation, and in the following eight years

financial support of the Coalfields Distress Fund, some 203 allotment societies were begun among the unemployed of South Wales alone, the Quakers providing tools, seeds and fertilisers at low cost. In 1930 the Society of Friends decided to set up an Allotments Committee to deal with this branch of its work, and the Labour Government gave financial support to their scheme. In 1931 some 64,000 men were assisted, involving the distribution of over a million packets of seeds, 1,600 tons of lime, 1,600 tons of seed potatoes, over one thousand tons of fertiliser, and 47,000 spades and forks. The cost amounted to £36,000 (11s. 3d. per head), which was shared approximately equally between the plot-holders and the State.¹

Towards the end of 1931, as part of the economy campaign, the newly-elected National Government withdrew its financial support, and the activities of the allotments scheme were temporarily slowed down. In October 1932, however, the National Council announced that:

'..the Government is again coming to the assistance of the Society of Friends in providing allotments for the unemployed in distressed areas. A grant is to be made in aid of next season's work up to £10,000 on the basis of a pound for pound

more than 24,000 men were settled, of whom almost 19,000 had remained in occupation of their holdings by the time of the passing of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1926, which renewed the obligations of county and borough councils to provide small holdings. In the event that these could not be provided without loss, the Ministry of Agriculture would contribute up to a maximum of 75% of the estimated annual loss. (A.W. Menzies-Kitchin, Land Settlement: A Report prepared for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees (Edinburgh, 1935), pp. 28 et seq.) For allotments in South-East Lancashire, see below, Chapter 6, p

1. Social Service Review, XIII (October 1932).

contribution, and a further grant will be made on the basis of one pound for every two pounds otherwise contributed.¹

After this date, the allotments movement among the unemployed centres expended rapidly, with the encouragement and support of the National Council, and by 1936 there were 2,671 societies and 135,378

Table 1: Allotment societies and holders in England and Wales, 1936.

	No. of socs.	Recipients		No. of socs.	Recipients
Durham	340	17,105	Norfolk	12	1,868
Northumb.	87	4,128	Suffolk	24	2,154
Yorkshire	412	14,553	Essex	33	1,548
Lancashire	151	6,309	Herts.	12	218
Cumberland	46	1,907	Bucks.	17	655
Cheshire	35	1,761	Bedford	4	360
Derbyshire	117	6,466	Oxford	14	785
Notts.	61	3,648	Gloucs.	65	5,472
Lincs.	23	1,585	Kent	37	1,811
Salop.	16	1,160	Middlesex	12	300
Staffs.	123	5,179	London	44	1,599
Leics.	34	1,344	Sussex	16	332
Rutland	1	25	Surrey	14	299
Warwick.	60	1,200	Berks.	23	1,497
Hereford	8	392	Hampshire	44	2,156
Worcs.	11	361	Wiltshire	26	2,183
Northants.	22	795	Dorset	18	845
Huntingdon	3	68	Somerset	35	3,028
Cambridge	4	460	Devon	31	1,344
			Cornwall	37	1,528
Wales					
Anglesey	20	390	Pembroke	17	1,664
Caerns.	23	690	Brecknock	4	65
Flint	40	2,075	Monmouth	139	8,238
Merioneth	5	137	Glamorgan	335	21,336
Montgomery	-	-	Cardigan	1	70
Radnorshire	-	-	Cardigan	15	2,285

(From Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1936, p. 14)

1. Ibid.

holders in counties throughout England and Wales. All of these holders were able to buy at reduced prices seeds, potatoes, fertilisers, lime and tools. In addition, grants were made for materials to erect fencing and huts. The Pilgrim Trust estimated that over 9,000 acres were under cultivation under the scheme in 1936, producing nearly one million pounds worth of food per year. The Pilgrim Trustees made a grant to the Scottish National Union of Allotment Holders who were responsible for a similar scheme in Scotland.¹

A considerable number of occupational centres, or groups of centres, formed allotment societies and entered the Quakers' scheme. The individual societies varied in their administration of the plots and the distribution of the produce. Some preferred the principle of 'common land'. In other places the men who cultivated the allotments used their produce as individuals. Still others, where the work was done co-operatively, used the produce to supply the club canteen, or distributed it among the men on an hours of work basis. Help was forthcoming in many ways to those centres interested in beginning an allotments section. In addition to the local council, in many instances private landlords, wishing to help the movement, loaned or rented land to the clubs at low cost. Skilled instruction was also available. Education committees in most of the larger towns had lecturers competent to speak on such matters as soils, seeds, cuttings, pests and other problems. Help was also obtainable from local gardening enthusiasts or from Parks Committees, Agricultural Colleges,

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1936.

or County Small Holdings Officers.¹

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In many cases, individual centres, or a group of clubs in one town, were 'adopted' by more prosperous areas, by groups of employed people in business houses, banks or the public services. The practice of adoption began in the early days of the occupational centres, and its growth was steady: by 1936 there were ninety-six schemes in operation in England, Scotland and Wales, of which thirteen were in Lancashire.² The financial support given by the adopting bodies was of great value to the clubs concerned. In a number of instances it was supported by personal service.³ However, the adoption schemes carried with them dangers of paternalism if not carefully controlled. Since adopting bodies usually raised their funds on what the Report, Men Without Work, termed 'the strength of a compassionate appeal', it was natural for them to wish to spend part of this money in 'an obviously compassionate way.' Children's toys, Christmas gifts, outings, donations of clothing and equipment for premises, were the sort of expenditure which appealed to members of adopting bodies. Gifts of this kind carried 'certain dangers of pauperisation of the beneficiaries by undermining their initiative and independence.'⁴

Since one of the most valuable achievements of the centres was in restoring self-confidence to their members by encouraging them to take part in the club's activities, any loss of effort which the unemployed might be inclined to make if they felt that the adopting

1. Ibid.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 47-8.

3. See below, Chapter 6, pp. 227-8.

4. Men Without Work, pp. 282-3.

body could be persuaded to increase its financial support was obviously to be avoided. The Pilgrim Trust Report, Men Without Work, alleged that:

'There have been examples where groups of unemployed men who have raised money themselves in various ways to provide club equipment, gardening tools,... concerts, children's parties and outings, have lost all will to continue these things since they have learned that a request to the adopting body would "do the trick" without further effort on their part. Club committees, which had previously devoted themselves to careful planning of projects involving the raising of funds by their own efforts, have in some cases lost all interest in anything except devising projects and thinking of club necessities for which the adopting body can be induced to pay.'¹

In the main, however, the dangers involved in adoption were recognised and guarded against, and the contacts established in this way proved extremely valuable to the centres.²

A good deal of support and help was given both to individual clubs and to the movement as a whole by the Pilgrim Trust and the Workers' Educational Association. Many schemes received financial aid from the Pilgrim Trust, including a number of clubs in the Manchester district,³ the residential centres at King's Standing, Hardwick Hall and The Beeches, and, in other parts of the country, the Lincoln People's

1. Ibid.

2. National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1937-8, p¹/₂ 58.

3. See below, Chapter 6, p. 232.

Service Club and the Clydebank Mutual Service Association. In 1934 the Trustees granted the Tyneside Council of Social Service monies to provide salaries for handicraft instructors for the centres within its region for three years. In December 1930 a grant of £15,000 was made to the Educational Settlements Association to extend and develop occupational work among the unemployed, and Wincham Hall was established using part of this grant.¹ Financial support was also provided for the holiday scheme run by the Universities Council for Unemployed Camps, a voluntary organisation which came into being in 1932, when a camp for one hundred unemployed men, staffed by students, was held at Eastnor in Worcester. In the summer of 1934 nine such camps were held, the Pilgrim Trustees making a grant of £200 towards the expenses of one of them. In 1935 the Universities scheme was extended still further: ten camps each of four weeks duration were held, and holidays provided for almost one thousand unemployed men.²

A contribution of a different nature, and in some ways more valuable than that of the Pilgrim Trust, was made by the Workers' Educational Association, branches of which, after 1932, began to allow the unemployed to attend classes free of charge.³ The Association, which had been responsible for the establishment of the Lincoln People's Service Club in 1927, had thus been connected with the voluntary movement from the outset. Early in 1934 the Association's Executive Committee passed a resolution instructing all its branches to admit the

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Reports 1934-7.

2. Ibid.

3. See below, Chapter 6, p. 233.

unemployed free of charge, and, wherever possible, to meet the demand from 'all groups of unemployed workers for short courses and single lectures.' At the same time, the Executive issued an appeal for voluntary service to enable the Association to extend its work in this direction. In the summer of 1934 several districts, including the South-West and North Wales, organised summer schools for the unemployed.¹ At the Association's Annual Conference in November 1934, held at Manchester University, the President, R.H. Tawney, declared that:

'..the greatest service we can render is to strengthen the links which unite the unemployed worker with his fellows, and to show that we regard him, not as a patient demanding a special regimen, but as a comrade whose association with our cause is not severed by economic misfortune.'

In some areas, he estimated, as many as one third or one half the class members were unemployed.²

The Association's Annual Report of 1934-5, however, noted that:

'One of the disillusionments which educational and social workers have had in recent years has been to find that generally speaking the unemployed do not appear to be particularly keen about education. The mere creation of leisure...offers no guarantee that the leisure will stimulate educational interest. In fact, one of the most unfortunate results of unemployment is that it creates a mental confusion

1. Workers' Educational Association, Annual Report 1933-4.

2. Ibid., Annual Report 1934-5.

and depression in its victims which is most difficult to penetrate.'¹

The Report commented that the lack of interest in education among the unemployed was 'less likely to be penetrated' where the unemployed were segregated from those in employment, and was satisfied that the Association was 'doing its best work' among the unemployed by keeping them in the normal classes 'in which they enjoy the comradeship of those in employment.'² During the year 1934-5 instances of courses for the unemployed being provided by the districts of the Association included two terminal courses at Newton Abbott (South-West District), one at Brixham, and a one-day school attended by eighty unemployed men in the South Yorkshire District, which also provided scholarships for twenty unemployed men to attend the Aberystwyth Summer School.³

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The distribution of the finances of the voluntary movement, the formation of regional organisations, the provision of holidays for the unemployed, and the development of residential centres, thus formed the most important aspects of the work of the Special Unemployment Committee of the National Council of Social Service with regard to the occupational centres. The Committee also supervised the allotments scheme and the adoptions which took place. In all these respects, as with the centres and clubs themselves, variety was a keynote: 'the uniformity that might be expected in a public service,' warned the

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

National Council in 1936, 'must not be looked for here.'¹ The Unemployment Committee was aided in its work by donations to individual centres, holiday camps, or to the residential centres, made by organisations such as the Pilgrim Trust or Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. In addition, help was forthcoming from bodies as diverse as the Co-operative Holidays Association, the Workers' Travel Association, the Workers' Educational Association, the Y.M.C.A., and the Boys' Brigade. Only the aim was similar throughout the country as a whole: that the unemployed should have within reach a club offering the companionship denied by their lack of work, and the opportunity to turn their enforced leisure to useful purpose.

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 7-8.

Chapter Five

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS IN THE MANCHESTER REGION

The nature and activities of the occupational centres for the unemployed varied considerably. So, too, did their origins. Many were initially opened in unsuitable premises, such as disused factories, or public or church halls, available only for a few hours weekly, but later moved to more satisfactory buildings: in some cases wooden halls were constructed by the members themselves, using monies provided by the National Council, and in most cases a certain amount of repairing and decorating was undertaken by the unemployed in order to make the buildings more pleasant. As has been suggested, although the National Council of Social Service took over the direction of voluntary work among the unemployed after 1932, many centres had already been opened prior to this date, as a result of local initiative, and, in consequence, the National Council cannot be accredited with the responsibility for the beginning of a considerable number of the occupational centres.

This was the case in several of the towns in South-East Lancashire, including Manchester and Salford, where, in the period 1932-9, there were approximately sixty-five occupational centres open at any one time.¹

1. See below, Appendix II.

In Manchester, where a Lord Mayor's Relief Fund for the unemployed had been in existence since 1920,¹ some nine unemployed centres, with facilities mainly for recreational purposes, had been established in the winter of 1930-1, but were closed again in the summer owing to lack of money.² In the last months of 1932, however, with unemployment in Great Britain as a whole standing at more than two and three-quarter million, and with more than fifty thousand unemployed in Manchester itself, it was decided to reopen the centres, and, on 8 December 1932, the Lord Mayor issued a public appeal for '50,000 shillings' as the amount necessary to provide lighting, heating and cleaning for the centres during the winter months. By this time ten unemployed clubs had already been opened,³ and within the next few months more than twenty others were started, several being run by local churches without help from the Lord Mayor's Fund. Many of these were closed once more in the summer of 1933, however, when attendances fell as the weather improved, and for the remainder of the 1930's there were some fourteen men's clubs in Manchester, and one centre for women.⁴

1. The body responsible for the distribution of the fund had the title of 'The Lord Mayor of Manchester's Unemployment Relief Fund Committee.' For the purposes of this thesis, the title has generally been shortened to the 'Lord Mayor's Unemployment Committee' or 'Lord Mayor's Committee'. For details of the work done by this Committee, see below, Chapter 6.

2. Manchester Evening News, 8 December 1932.

3. Ibid.

4. See below, Appendix II; interview with Sir Harry Robertson Page, on 16 April 1969, at Manchester Town Hall. Born on 14 April 1911; appointed to the Manchester City Treasurer's Department in 1927, and soon after this, in 1929, placed in charge of the administration of

Likewise, in Salford, a meeting was held in November 1932 at the Royal Technical College, presided over by the Mayor, at which the formation of centres for the unemployed in the city was discussed. A committee was established, including representatives of the various church denominations, the City Council, employers of labour in Salford, and a number of unemployed, whose task it was to make plans for the establishment, management and control of the centres.¹ Three sub-committees were appointed to arrange details of the scheme: a finance committee to raise funds: a sites committee to select suitable premises: and an appeals committee, the purpose of which was to procure donations of sports or handicraft equipment. The Committee decided to call itself the Salford Council of Social Service.²

A similar meeting, attended by representatives of the Town Council, local churches, and social organisations in the borough, was held at Eccles towards the end of October 1932, at Brotherhood Hall, where, a short time later, the first unemployed centre in the borough was opened. In the local newspaper, the Eccles Journal, the Mayor of Eccles made an appeal for funds and donations of equipment. But he also warned

the Lord Mayor's Unemployment Committee, of which the City Treasurer was Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. Spent the years from 1929-33 in this capacity. In 1952 appointed Deputy Treasurer of the City of Manchester: City Treasurer since 1957.

1. Salford City Reporter, 11, 18 and 25 November 1932; B. McCarthy, 'The Salford Council of Social Service', Social Welfare, II (July 1933).
2. Salford City Reporter, 2 December 1932; B. McCarthy, loc. cit.

that, although arrangements were to be made 'for the delivery of suitable lectures and addresses', in connection 'I am to make it quite clear that nothing savouring of propaganda will be encouraged or permitted.'¹ In January 1933 a Town's Meeting was held at the Town Hall, Pendlebury, and a committee was formed to deal with the running of the occupational centres in the borough of Swinton and Pendlebury. The committee consisted of four clergymen, four members of the Town Council, three employers of labour in the borough, and four unemployed, together with three representatives of the Trades and Labour Council and the Chief Librarian.² At Bolton, an Unemployed Welfare Association was formed towards the end of 1932, which was responsible for the supervision of the unemployed centres in the town. The Association's Chairman was the Reverend C.H. Cleal, the young Minister of Claremont Baptist Church.³

By the end of 1932, therefore, the voluntary movement was under way in South-East Lancashire, and, in the course of the next few months, occupational centres were opened throughout the whole region. In most

1. Eccles Journal, 28 October 1932; also 4, 18 November 1932; at the meeting at Brotherhood Hall it was planned that there should be unemployed representatives on the governing committee of the occupational centre, when it was opened. The Journal reported that there was a certain amount of heckling from members of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement at this decision, since the organisation was demanding at the time that the unemployed be given complete control.
2. Swinton and Pendlebury Journal, 6, 20 January 1933.
3. Manchester Evening News, 23 November 1932; Bolton Evening News, 23 December 1932; see below, pp. 180-2.

districts the clergy played an important part. This was especially true in Salford, where it was partly as a result of the efforts of the clergy in this direction that the City Council took action, and decided to support the voluntary movement. Prior to the formation of the Salford Council of Social Service, in November 1932, five ministers of the church, all of different denominations, had acquired a disused factory which they planned to convert into an unemployed centre. On 18 November, the Salford City Reporter announced that:

'Several ministers in the Blackfriars district who are interested in the scheme of social centres for the unemployed have been negotiating for the acquisition of a disused factory in the Blackfriars district, and it is understood that this centre will be the first "fellowship home" to be opened in the city.'¹

The leading figure in the enterprise was the Reverend R.L. Hussey, Rector of Sacred Trinity, who, within a few days of this announcement, informed the newspaper that the negotiations had been completed and that the work of converting the premises would begin at once by the unemployed themselves. The Reporter noted that:

1. Salford City Reporter, 18 November 1932; clergy also played a notable part in the beginnings of the voluntary movement in Manchester. In October 1932, the Manchester Evening News reported that two churches within the city had established centres for the unemployed (Manchester Evening News, 22 October 1932). This was six weeks before the Lord Mayor's appeal.

'The scheme is non-political and no one religious sect can claim the credit, but behind the Blackfriars centre are five ministers of the Church, self-styled the "Blackfriars", who have by their practical sympathy and enthusiasm made it possible..'

Apart from the Reverend Hussey, the remaining four clergymen involved were the Reverend T. Cresswell, Vicar of St. Stephens; Reverend M. Coleman, Toc. H. Chaplain; Reverend H. Phelps, Minister of Gravel Lane Methodist Church; and the Reverend R. Mansfield, Minister of the Richmond Congregational Church.¹

This technique, that is, the gathering together of a small number of unemployed to help in altering and decorating the premises for use as occupational centres, was also used by the Salford Council of Social Service in the establishment of other unemployed centres in the city.² The men who helped in this way would otherwise have continued to spend their time in idleness: instead, they were able to occupy themselves purposefully, and to identify themselves far more closely with the development of their own centre than those who were simply invited to join one whose premises had been loaned, already suitably decorated, and, on occasion, fully equipped. They provide a loyal band of helpers around whom membership could be expanded, since they were often asked

1. Salford City Reporter, 25 November 1932: the emphasis on the 'non-political' nature of the voluntary centres for unemployed is referred to again in Chapter 7, pp. 254-5.

2. B. McCarthy, 'The Salford Council of Social Service', loc. cit.

to invite two or three friends to join once the premises were ready, and an atmosphere of good fellowship thus existed from the outset. They also set the tone of the centre and of the voluntary movement as a whole: not 'something for nothing', but a venture which had to be worked for, the success of which was that much more gratifying.

The Blackfriars Fellowship, in St. Stephens Street, Salford, a four-storey building with accomodation for about one hundred men, was opened on 12 December 1932. There were twelve rooms in the building, the ground floor of which had been converted into a gymnasium; the first floor was fitted out as a workshop, while a games room was on the second floor, and reading and mending rooms on the third. In all, thirty men had helped in the conversion of the premises, but twice as many had come forward to volunteer their services.¹ The opening of this centre was followed in January 1933 by the opening of a juvenile instruction centre at Mount-st. School, financed partly by the Rotary Club of Salford.²

On 17 February 1933, Salford's largest centre, 'The Emery Centre', named after the then Mayor of Salford, J.F. Emery, J.P., was opened at the St. Ambrose Mission, Joseph-st., in the Seedley district. Two

1. Salford City Reporter, 25 November, 9 December 1932.

2. Ibid; also 23 December 1932, 13 January 1933.

hundred unemployed attended the opening ceremony, and by March 1933 the centre had a membership of more than five hundred. The centre included a gymnasium, a boot and shoe repairing workshop, a woodwork section, library, and kitchen, the top floor being converted into a games room, containing three full-sized billiards tables. As at all the Salford centres, there was a governing committee, on which the unemployed themselves, together with the City Council and local churches were represented, but the day-to-day running of the centre was undertaken by a house committee, consisting mainly of the unemployed members.¹

In the same month, on two mornings a week in each case, physical training classes for the unemployed were held at drill halls on Cross Lane and on Great Clowes Street, Broughton. The halls were loaned by the East Lancashire Territorial Army, and the Salford Council of Social Service provided qualified instruction at both.² Towards the end of March 1933, a fourth occupational centre, the St. Cyprians Centre, was begun at Ordsall Hall, Salford, and, at the same time, the Regent Road Centre, mainly for middle-aged and elderly unemployed, was opened. The latter, which had its premises in Crowther-st. off Regent-rd, had been converted from two shops, and had a membership of around sixty. Provision

1. Ibid., 23 December 1932; 17, 24 February and 24 March 1933.

2. Ibid., 27 January, 10 February and 3 March 1933.

was made primarily for recreational purposes; there was a room with two small billiard tables, and cards and dominoes were also provided, and there was also a piano and a reading room. In April an occupational centre was opened in the Broughton District, in buildings which had formerly been a fire and police station. There was a canteen, and the unemployed were able to use the old parade ground for outdoor games: one of the cells in the police station was converted into a shower bath. By the middle of May, membership had reached 250.¹

The last centre to be opened in Salford, and one of the most unusual, was the Challenge Centre for Women. Its premises were an old public house in Hampson-st., on The Crescent, leased to the Salford Council of Social Service by the brewery involved. A canteen was opened, and the centre also had a small library.² The centre was intended chiefly for unmarried women over the age of twenty-five, but later married women were also admitted to membership, and were able to bring their children with them when they attended, a playroom being provided where the children were looked after. The main activity at the centre was the sewing of clothes by the members, which were then distributed among those who had made them on the basis of hours of work. The

1. Ibid., 9 December 1932; 17, 24 February, 10, 17, 24 March, 17 April and 12 May 1933.

2. Ibid., 5 May, 6 June 1933.

sewing was conducted under trained supervision, and instruction was also provided in cooking and jam-making. In 1935 and for four years after this, the centre received financial support from the Pilgrim Trust, and, as a result, was able to move to more suitable premises in 1936, when membership was opened on a family basis, craft-work classes being arranged for the men.¹

The unemployed centre at Brotherhood Hall, Eccles, was opened on 21 November 1932. Perhaps nowhere else was there a greater need waiting to be filled; two hundred and fifty unemployed attended on the afternoon of the second day on which the centre was open, and, when the first concert was held a fortnight later, it was attended by over four hundred unemployed men and youths. Thereafter, attendances at concerts often reached six or seven hundred. As was the case elsewhere, the clergy in Eccles took a prominent part in the voluntary movement, and the Reverend T. Cobbs was Chairman of the Brotherhood Hall management committee. By Christmas 1932 an orchestra had been begun. A second unemployed centre was opened in the borough in May 1933, by which time the original centre had a membership in excess of a thousand. The Bright Road centre was

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Reports 1935-7; wives of unemployed were also admitted.

equipped with a stage, orchestra pit, and dressing accomodation for the artists, together with a small library, reading room, and chess room. Both centres had house committees consisting mainly of unemployed members. From the beginning of 1933 physical training classes were held on two mornings a week at the Drill Hall, Patricroft.¹ In the summer months weekend camps for members were held at Prestbury.² In the neighbouring district of Swinton and Pendlebury, two unemployed centres were opened in February, 1933, at Trinity Congregational School, Swinton, and the Blue Ribbon Hall, Pendlebury.³

In the Bolton district, following the formation of the Unemployed Welfare Association at the end of 1932, eleven occupational centres were opened in the course of the next few months,⁴ including one for women, for which the premises of the Society of Friends in Bolton were made available. Most of the town's unemployed clubs had facilities for recreational purposes, and educational classes and wireless discussion groups formed part of the activities of many. Concerts were provided, football teams begun, and at the Claremont Baptist School Centre, and also that at the Bridge-st. Methodist School, lunchtime meals were

1. Eccles Journal, 18, 25 November and 9, 30 December 1932; 20 January, 10 February and 31 March 1933.

2. Ibid., 21 July 1933.

3. Swinton and Pendlebury Journal, 6, 20 January and 3 March 1933.

4. See below Appendix II.

provided for the members at low cost. The Horwich Unemployed Welfare Centre, which met at Lee Congregational School, formed its own band with twelve instrumentalists. However, since most of the centres in the Bolton District were opened in church halls or schoolrooms, the premises were usually only available for limited periods each week. For instance, the Claremont School was available only Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays, and Thursday mornings, while the centre which met at St. Paul's Church, Astley Bridge, could only meet in the afternoons. Overall supervision of the centres in the Bolton District, as has been stated, was provided by the Association, on which the unemployed were represented, but each club had its own house committee.¹ In the winter of 1933-4, modern drams classes were begun at a number of the centres, and, by this date, most of the clubs in the district had facilities for woodwork, leatherwork and gymnastics. A small orchestra was formed among unemployed musicians, and a football league was begun. By September 1933, the Bolton Evening News reported, a total of 1,226 pairs of boots and 267 pairs of clogs had been repaired by the members of occupational centres in the town.²

In 1934, the Unemployed Welfare Association was reorganised. On the new Committee, of which the Mayor of Bolton was President, were represented the Chief Librarian, the Director of Education, local branches

1. Bolton Evening News, 11 October, 23 November 1932; 26 January 1933.

2. Ibid., 19, 28 September 1933.

of the Workers' Educational Association, Rotary and Society of Friends, and the Committee also included five clergymen.¹ A Mayor's appeal for funds in February 1934 raised more than £500 inside two months, part of which was used to convert and equip a disused mill, which became the largest occupational centre in the town, enabling several of the smaller centres to be closed, including a number of those whose premises were only available for limited periods. Part of the money raised by the Mayor's appeal was used to provide a camping holiday for fifty unemployed men, at a cost of 5s. 6d. each, and the remainder to send six women on a course at The Beeches.² The new centre, known as Jackson House, which was for unemployed of both sexes, was officially opened on 23 October 1934, and was operated by a house committee which included four unemployed men and one woman. Educational classes were provided by the local authority and the Workers' Educational Association, and occupational classes included dressmaking, leatherwork, and motor mechanics. In later years a harmonica band was begun, together with a male voice choir, and a table tennis team entered the Bolton and District League. Physical training classes were held each year, and there was

1. Bolton Unemployed Welfare Association, Minute Book 1934-8.

2. Ibid.

also an allotments group.¹ In addition, several members attended the SELNEC camps each summer.²

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One of the earliest clubs to be formed in Manchester was the Pilgrim Club of the Manchester University Settlement, so named because it owed its foundation to monies donated by the Pilgrim Trust. The Settlement itself had been founded in 1895, and had come to play an active part in the life of the working classes in the Ancoats district of the City, where it had its premises. There was an active boys' club, as well as a club for men, with drama and handicraft groups. The Settlement also ran a Better Housing Council, to which working people could bring their grievances as to rents, dilapidations, etc., and the committee would try to take steps to ensure improvements.³ In the spring of 1931 the Executive Committee of the Settlement appealed to the Pilgrim Trust for money to sponsor a holiday camp for unemployed girls and boys, whose names would be supplied by the Juvenile Employment Bureau in Manchester. The Trustees responded generously, and the camp was held in May 1931, and again in the summer of 1932. Following this, it was decided to organise a club for the young people who had been on the camp, but the

1. See below, Chapter 6, p. 229.

2. Bolton Unemployed Welfare Association, Minute Book 1934-8.

3. M.D. Stocks, Fifty Years in Every Street: the Story of the Manchester University Settlement (1945): the records of only three occupational centres in the Manchester remain. The remaining two, the Collyhurst

club for girls did not materialise, although the boys' club, held in the basement of the Roundhouse, one of the Settlement's buildings, was highly successful.

The fund was, therefore, transferred to a club for unemployed men, which was started in September 1932.¹ This met with a far better response and within a short time had a membership of two hundred, with a daily average attendance of about seventy. The members paid subscription of two-pence per week.² By the end of the year, therefore, at which time the efforts of the National Council of Social Service in this direction were still at an early stage, the Pilgrim Club was thriving. The centre was able to open morning and afternoon five days a week, and there were classes in carpentry, cobbling, woodcarving, gardening and gymnastics, the latter being taken by a professional instructor. Recreational facilities included two badminton courts, table tennis, billiards and swimming.³ The men elected their own committee, which was responsible for the cleaning of the premises, the collection of subscriptions, suggestions and discipline. A full-time leader, Richard Heath, was appointed, who was responsible for the organisation of activities and

Lads' and Men's Club and the Fellowship and Service Club for Women, are described below, pp. 192-200.

1. M.D. Stocks, op. cit., p. 82; Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1931-2.
2. Ibid., Annual Report 1932-3; Social Welfare I (July 1932); the majority of the centres imposed a weekly subscription of between a penny and threepence.
3. Manchester University Settlement, Day Clubs for Men and Boys: an Experiment and an Appeal for Volunteers (Manchester, 1932).

and the keeping of the club accounts.¹ His enthusiasm, the Settlement Executive acknowledged, was largely responsible for the success of the club. The Settlement's Annual Report for 1932-3 recorded that without his:

'....constant care, unselfishness and guidance, the happy working of the club would have been impossible. His influence over the men has been very great, his tact has been never failing and he has assumed entire responsibility where necessary.'²

The club was also fortunate in that the Settlement already had a large number of helpers, who often provided the supervision or instruction for the classes.

The Pilgrim Club gave an important stimulus to the voluntary movement in the Manchester district. Since it was one of the first to open, had among the best facilities, and early established a wide range of classes, there were always a number of visitors who wished to open an unemployed centre themselves, and who sought the help and advice of the Pilgrim Club. Similarly, in the early years of the movement, a considerable number of visits were made by those involved in the work of the club to give talks and lectures to those interested in forming centres in other parts of Lancashire, and also in Yorkshire, Cheshire

1. Ibid.

2. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1932-3.

and Derbyshire.¹

The Pilgrim Boys' Club, which was for youths in the 14-17 age group, provided classes in carpentry, general repairs, cobbling, rug-making, first-aid and a number of useful handicrafts. Discussions were held on current affairs, and a class in office training was run. The boys made items such as coffee stools, oak trays, electric table lamps and ash-tray stands. The Settlement reported that firms in the neighbourhood made it their policy to give the boys of the club the first chance of any openings in their businesses, and the placing of youths in work was said to be quite successful. The Settlement felt that the training and instruction provided at the Club stood the boys in good stead. Recreational facilities included badminton, billiards, table tennis and netball, and gymnastics classes were held twice a week, as in the case of the men's club. The average daily attendance was about twenty-five.

In the summer of 1933 the holiday camp was held once more, this time lasting several weeks. The Settlement's Annual Report for that year noted:

'The exceptional weather during the stay in the camp had a marked effect on the health of the boys, their improved physique helping them to take up occupations which would not have been possible

1. Ibid.

before.'¹

Too often, it was found, there was a tendency for the club to become a kind of ambulance centre:

'The physique of many of the lads is very poor, and, of course, the poorer the physique, the less chance of work. We have had boys on our register that needed skilled hospital care...'

To these, as had been indicated, a period in camp was invaluable. Two Manchester medical officers gave their services to the Settlement free of charge, and were responsible for attending to the health of the Boys' Club members.²

Considerable difficulty was experienced in persuading boys to join the Club, however. The Settlement reported in 1934 that, if anything, the boys were more difficult to organise than the men in this respect:

'The fruit of a hundred visits to boys on the lists of the Juvenile Employment Bureau might be an actual appearance of ten boys. Some would fall off as the Club required an effort. Many were on odd jobs and newspaper rounds for two or three weeks at a time, and went; ..some had already slipped into late hours in bed in the morning, and sloping about the streets in the day-time.'

At first, 'the labour seemed unending, and the issue doubtful'.³ By the spring of 1933, however, the Club organisers were congratulating

1. Ibid.

2. Manchester University Settlement, Day Clubs for Men and Boys.

3. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1933-4.

themselves that, thanks to the persistency of their visits, this difficulty had been overcome. Far less visiting was necessary, and the boys came on receipt of notices, or on the invitation of those who were already members of the club. Just as the Boy's Club began to flourish, however, the Pilgrim Trustees found themselves unable to renew their grant, and the centre was forced to close in the autumn of 1933, provision being made for the boys within the unemployed men's club.¹

In contrast, the Men's Club continued to expand rapidly, its grant from the Pilgrim Trust having been renewed, and gradually it became the whole inspiration of the Settlement. From being allowed to use only the basement of the Roundhouse, the unemployed centre took over the whole of the Settlement's premises. In the summer of 1933 a camp was held at the Douglas Hut, Marple;² for two weeks, in July and August, family holidays were provided. The Annual Report stated that the Hut has been 'well and truly used throughout the year.' Parties of between sixteen and twenty men had travelled to Marple each fine weekend, and on some wet weekends, too. 'Some members walked both ways,' continued the Report. In August 1933, the Club Leader and six men took part on a camp in Edale, where they dammed a stream to make a swimming pool twelve yards by thirty yards in area, which campers from the Settlement were able to make use

1. See below, Appendix V for Time table of Boys' Club.

2. The Douglas Hut was presented by the parents of Douglas Todd, a student at Manchester University, who died before completing his studies, and was erected on a three-acre site acquired by the Settlement at Ludworth, near Marple. It was opened in May, 1930. (M.D.Stocks, op. cit., pp. 76-7.)

of in years to come.¹

During the winter months a football team was run, entering the Lord Mayor's League for unemployed centres, and also the knock-out cup. An elocution class was held, and concerts were given by the centre's brass band. In addition, a dram group was started, and several plays were performed, the actors giving special performances at hospitals and schools.² The most notable production was that of Martinez Sierra's 'Holy Night', produced at Christmas 1933, when, apart from the Madonna, played by a University girl, the remainder of the cast were members of the occupational centre or working people from the Ancoats district. The wives of unemployed club members helped with the costumes, and the Pilgrim Club also provided the back-stage crews. Three sets were arranged and painted by the woodwork class. The producer of the play felt that the venture had proved very valuable to those who had been involved:

'Nothing in the world gives a man or woman more confidence than doing things. There are too many watchers in the world.. It was amazing to see how changed all the men became. They felt they were pulling their weight again; they were necessary. Without them the play could not take place.'³

1. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1933-4.

2. Ibid.

3. K. Swinstead-Smith, 'Players in Ancoats', Social Service Review XV (October 1934); K. Swinstead-Smith was the producer.

A total of almost a thousand people watched the performances: after the last one a party was held at the Settlement, and each of the cast was given a photograph of a scene as a souvenir. In March 1934 it was decided to open a weekly 'Clothes Shop', instead of holding occasional jumble sales. The shop quickly became very popular, and the Settlement commented that, as a result of the obvious difficulties of maintaining a reasonable standard of dress on unemployment benefit, the clothes received were 'so quickly disposed of that a new parcel is welcomed with grateful relief by the helpers.' The demand was stated to be 'so constant', that 'only a regular supply' could enable stocks to be maintained.¹

The most active years for the Pilgrim Club were from 1935 to 1938. With the establishment of the South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Regional Council (SELNEC), new activities were begun and old ones extended. A canteen was opened, which served dinners to the men and boys at a cost of twopence or threepence for adults and one penny for children. At the holiday camp at Marple a wash-house was built by the unemployed club members, who also redecorated the premises in Ancoats.² By 1937 membership had reached 320, 'sharply divided between young men of 18-25 years, all of whom have had employment and are partly affected

1. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1933-4.

2. Ibid., Annual Report 1935-6; Annual Programme 1936-7; see below, Appendix V, for Timetable of the Pilgrim Club.

by seasonal occupations, and men of 40-55 years who have little hope of employment.' Such a division, it was commented, did not make the organisation of club life 'any easier.' By this date three discussion classes had been commenced, on social affairs, economics and wireless programmes. Twenty-six members attended courses at King's Standing, Wincham Hall and SELNEC House, on subjects as diverse as pipe-making, toy-making, weaving, metal-work, dramatics, and gardening, the courses themselves varying in length from one to six weeks.

The concerts given by the brass band were continued, and wood-work, cobbling and handicraft groups maintained. Football and baseball teams played in their respective leagues during the winter months, and physical training classes were held throughout the year. The drama group produced four plays, one of which had been written by a member of the club, and another member was appointed steward at the Douglas Hut. A service group was begun, which completed many jobs for the Settlement: a canteen larder and store-room were converted from a disused staircase, and a wall separating the garden and playground was built.¹ The Pilgrim Club continued in existence until after the outbreak of war, when in 1940, like many other centres which had retained sufficient membership to enable them to remain open until this date, it

1. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1936-7.

was forced to close through declining attendances.

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The Fellowship and Service Club for Women, which was held in St. James' School, Princess-st., in the centre of the city, and was opened in October 1933, rather later than most, was the only club for women in Manchester. Its governing committee included two representatives of the National Council of Women, two from the Manchester, Salford and District Union of Girls' Clubs, and two of the Women's Citizen's Association, together with one each from the Girl Guides, the Girls Friendly Society and the Y.W.C.A. The club was open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays. Within six months, membership had risen to 150, and classes were held in folk dancing, keep fit, elocution, singing, rug-making, knitting, dress-making and millinery. Dinners and teas were provided each day for the members at low cost. In addition, an evening social was held once a month, when a special point was made of inviting back to the club former members who had found employment.

The club was fortunate in that each year a number of its members were able to take a fortnight's holiday in North Wales, the Co-operative Holidays Association placing their guest house, Graiglwyd Hall, at Penmaenmawr, at the disposal of the Fellowship Club committee. Each woman paid a small part of the cost, the remainder being found by the centre. In 1933, 119 women were able to have a holiday of this kind.

Not all were members of the club, but a number were sent by the Manchester Employment Exchange and were interviewed by the Fellowship committee: most of these women became members of the centre on their return to Manchester. The same procedure was followed in later years: in the summer of 1934 forty women were given a holiday at Penmaenmawr, of whom seventeen were already club members, the remainder, whose names were supplied by the Employment Exchange as being 'those who most surely needed a holiday,' becoming club members on their return.¹

In the first year of its existence, the Club received a grant from the Lord Mayor's Committee of more than one hundred pounds, twenty-five pounds of which was to be used for the purchase of equipment for the handicraft groups. Members subscriptions of one penny per week totalled £6 3s. 2d. in the first twelve months. The first Annual Report for 1933-4 declared that already:

'... the club has become a large part of the life of many of the members. New interests and friendships have been formed and many have come to realise that though it seems impossible to get what they most desire - work - there are many ways of employing and enjoying leisure unknown to them before.'²

In the second year, further progress was made when a members' committee

1. Fellowship and Service Club, Annual Reports 1933-6.

2. Ibid., Annual Report 1933-4.

was formed to take charge of the day-to-day running of the centre. By the spring of 1935 the club had 294 members, and subscriptions for the year rose to £18 4s. 10d. A Manchester tennis club loaned its courts to the Fellowship Club members one afternoon a week during the summer of 1934, and in the winter months a drama group was started. The grant from the Lord Mayor's Committee totalled £181 in this year. The second Annual Report felt that:

'This club provides a warm cheerful room where women who are unemployed can meet, find friendship, learn useful handicrafts, get help and advice buy meals and clothing at a very low cost and obtain a little of the fun of live.'

Beyond this, however, the organisers felt that the club provided and opportunity for its members to restore their self-respect 'by enabling them to give something to the general good':

'The bitterness which many may feel towards a society which apparently has no use for them, their isolation from the economic system and from many of their fellow beings, the feeling that they are a burden on the community - these are spiritual wounds more severe than physical hardship. No one can restore to others their lost confidence....., but we can give them the opportunity to win it back by letting them do something they recognise is of value to themselves and the community..... A new attitude of mind must be built up..... loneliness must

be turned into fellowship, bitterness to self-respect and confidence, as they discover talents and capacities within themselves of service to others.¹

In the third year, in the winter of 1935-6, a library was begun. Subscriptions in this year rose to more than £22, and the Lord Mayor's Fund gave £168.² Members' subscriptions rose still higher in the years between 1936 and 1939 which were the most successful in the centre's existence, and, during which, from wool donated to the club, more than five hundred knitted garments per year were sent out to poor children in Newfoundland.³

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The Collyhurst Unemployed Centre was opened early in 1933 in rooms belonging to the Collyhurst Guild for Social Service, Rochdale-rd., Manchester. The centre was founded in 1892, and, like the University Settlement, had established a club for working men in the district, which had been in existence for many years, providing recreational facilities for its members. The General Report of the Collyhurst Guild for the year 1931-2 stated that the activities of this club had declined considerably in the previous eighteen months due to the high incidence of unemployment among members.⁴ The Committee,

1. Ibid., Annual Report 1934-5.

2. Ibid., Annual Report 1935-6.

3. Ibid., Annual Reports 1936-7, 1938-9.

4. Collyhurst Guild for Social Service, General Report 1931-2.

therefore, readily responded to a request from the Lord Mayor of Manchester's Unemployment Committee to make some of their rooms available for use as an unemployed centre, and a club for the unemployed was opened there in January, 1933, with a membership of 89 which rose rapidly to 150. Classes were started in cobbling, carpentry, rug-making, ambulance work and gymnastics. A football team was also begun. In addition, a canteen was opened which provided two-course lunches for the members at a cost of two-pence. A voluntary superintendent was appointed by the Guild's Committee at the end of the first month, and, at the same time, a house committee was organised from among the members.

The club experienced many set-backs at first, however. The General Report for 1932-3 noted that the organisation and running of an unemployed centre:

'..... was not an easy task. Apart from the practical difficulties which were many, there were psychological factors which acted as a continuous drag on the wheels of progress. The deep-rooted pessimism, the lack of enthusiasm for new suggestions, the refusal to accept any responsibility on the part of the great majority made smooth running very difficult.'

The superintendent resigned, and the Guild's Secretary, who took over, soon became ill, the centre thus being left for a time without adequate supervision. The physical training classes were discontinued, largely

due to inadequate instruction, which resulted in a loss of interest among the members. In the spring of 1933 the centre was closed due to lack of support.¹

However, in October 1933 it was decided to re-open the centre, and a new organiser, W.E. Lockwood, was appointed. Unlike the previous winter, members were now allowed to make use of the social facilities of the men's club in the evenings, and this provided a valuable link between employed and unemployed, which benefited the latter enormously. The Guild's General Report for 1933-4 felt that this had 'brought the two groups closer together', and 'helped to awaken new interest in the club, creating in some measure that spirit of fellowship which is so essential in any such undertaking.' In addition, a new games room was opened, with facilities for table tennis, darts and billiards, which was to prove very popular. A series of talks and lectures was given, and concerts were also arranged. The centre ran a football team, which was entered into the Lord Mayor's league, and a library was begun, containing some three hundred books donated by friends and also by the British Institute of Adult Education. An outhouse was white-washed and converted into a cobbling shop, over one hundred pairs of boots being repaired by the members during the winter period, and the cellar

1. Ibid., General Reports 1932-4.

was fitted out as a woodwork shop, several tasks such as painting and repairing being undertaken for the Guild. The woodwork shop built six beds and a cupboard for a local nursery school.¹

By March 1935 membership had risen to 110, with a daily average attendance of about fifty-five. In contrast to the sums granted to the Fellowship and Service Club, the Lord Mayor's Committee had provided less than £10 assistance to the Collyhurst centre in each of the first three years of its existence. Nonetheless, the General Report of the Guild for the year 1934-5 was of the opinion that:

'The centre has progressed steadily, both in members and in the variety of its activities, and is fulfilling a very real need under able supervision.'

During this year, several members were able to attend training courses at King's Standing, the National Council of Social Service contributing the major part of the expense involved, and, so the General Report stated, these men had returned to the centre determined to help to improve it. Particularly with regard to the handicraft instruction, the Guild organisers felt that the centre had 'gained much from the experience and knowledge of these men.' The club leader attended the Easter School of the National Council at Leeds. The centre received financial support from four business firms in the district, and, as a

1. Ibid., General Report 1933-4.

result of the money donated from this source, was able to hold two holiday camps for members at Flagg, near Buxton, in Derbyshire, in the summer of 1934.¹

In the following summer, eighteen men from the centre attended the Edale holiday camp, in the Peak District, run by the newly-formed SELNEC Regional Council. The Collyhurst centre also ran a cricket team for the first time. The Blackley factory of Imperial Chemicals Industries allowed the centre the use of its sports ground throughout this year, and members of the club were also entertained at the works, which donated more than one hundred books to the club library. The works was represented on the club committee. In the next winter, 1935-6, membership of the centre declined somewhat, due to the demolition of slum houses surrounding the Guild premises. The Lord Mayor's Committee grant was increased, however, to £48, donations from firms totalling £45 in this year, while membership subscriptions amounted to £5 11s. 2d.² By the spring of 1937, membership had recovered to about 125, with a daily attendance of between sixty and seventy. A keep fit class was begun once more, and this time, since a qualified instructor was provided by SELNEC, proved extremely successful. Four classes were held each week, two periods being devoted to gymnastics, and one each to swimming and

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., General Report 1935-6.

football training. A bamboo pipe class was started after five men from the centre had attended classes in pipe-making and playing given by SELNEC in September 1936.¹ The most active and successful years for the centre were those between 1937 and 1939, during which lectures and classes were begun in biology and psychology; dancing classes were started, and whist drives and social evenings were held regularly. The centre began to issue a duplicated programme each week giving a day-by-day list of events, and a rota of club stewards. In 1939 a baseball team was started. Soon after the outbreak of war, however, the club was brought to a close, attendances having declined to between twenty and thirty per day.²

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The three unemployed centres in Manchester, records of which remain and which have been described in this chapter, together with other centres in Salford, Eccles and elsewhere, to which reference has also been made, were typical in every way of the great majority of occupational centres established in the 1930's, both in the South-East Lancashire region, and, for the most part, in Britain as a whole. Although many were at first opened in premises provided by the local council concerned, such

1. Ibid., General Report 1936-7.

2. Ibid., General Reports 1937-40.

as schoolrooms, or by local churches, a number, including the Pilgrim Club and the Collyhurst Lads' and Men's Club, were begun by voluntary organisations with traditions of a kind entirely suited to the 'self-help' nature of the club movement. The activities of the centres described were also fairly typical: while in almost all clubs woodwork, metalwork and cobbling classes were among those facilities provided from the outset, and while such groups remained among the most popular, classes were held in a wide variety of subjects besides these. Physical training and football were the most popular recreational activities. In almost all cases a committee of the unemployed club members themselves was made responsible for the day-to-day running of the centres, and the unemployed were usually represented on the governing committees. Most centres had at least one full-time, paid organiser. In Manchester, the University Settlement, thanks to the generosity of the Pilgrim Trust, was able to begin an unemployed centre as early as September 1932, but the majority of the clubs in the South-East Lancashire region were started in the six months from December 1932 to May 1933, in other words, after the date (November 1932) at which the Minister of Labour had invited the National Council of Social Service to take responsibility for the direction of voluntary work of this nature among the unemployed. While this was so, however, the evidence available points to the conclusion

that, in at least some districts of South-East Lancashire, movements were already under way, among local councils and local churches, in October and November 1932, to begin occupational centres for the unemployed, independently of the plans of the National Government and of the National Council of Social Service.

Chapter Six:

THE SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE AND NORTH-EAST CHESHIRE UNEMPLOYMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SELNEC).

In the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire three regional bodies were established to be responsible for the development and guidance of the voluntary schemes on behalf of the unemployed. These were the Mid-Lancashire Unemployment Advisory Council, which was established in 1934, with the headquarters in Blackburn, and which was responsible for the clubs in the weaving district of North Lancashire; the South-West Lancashire and North-West Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council, founded in 1933, with headquarters at Wincham Hall, and responsible for clubs on Merseyside, in industrial Cheshire, and in part of the Lancashire Coalfield; and the South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council (SELNEC), with headquarters in Manchester, which was one of the last regional councils to be established in 1935. The Chairman of SELNEC was Councillor A.P. Simon, who was also the first Chairman of the Lord Mayor of Manchester's Unemployment Committee. The full Committee numbered forty, and included the Bishop of Manchester, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester, Professor J.B.S. Stopford, and a representative of the North-Western Division of the Ministry of Labour. Its Secretary was Albert Wallace Watson, a former journalist, and Labour Councillor for Stockport, who had been the organiser

of an unemployed centre in Ashton-under-Lyne since 1933.¹

Prior to the formation of the SELNEC Regional Council, a number of different bodies had been responsible for the direction of voluntary work among the unemployed in South-East Lancashire. These included the Salford Council of Social Service, and the Eccles Mayor's committee, and the Bolton and District Unemployed Welfare Association, and, in Manchester itself, the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service and the Lord Mayor's Unemployment Committee. Of the two Manchester organisations, by far the most active in the years between 1932 and 1935 was the Lord Mayor's Committee. Indeed the work of the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service on behalf of the unemployed was very limited. Occasional reports of club activities appeared in the Council's monthly magazine, Social Welfare, but there is no evidence of any work having been undertaken by members of the Council themselves. In part, this was no doubt due to the fact that the organisation was a purely advisory body with no executive powers before 1945. On the other hand, the Council was represented on the Lord Mayor's Committee, and was able to exert a certain amount of influence on the work of this organisation.²

1. Interview with Sir Harry Robertson Page, on 16 April 1969 (see above Chapter 5, p.171, note 4, for biographical details); the Chairman of the Mid-Lancashire Council was the Bishop of Blackburn. The Reverend T.A.E. Davey, Canon of Liverpool, was Chairman of the South-West Lancashire and North-West Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council, on the committee of which were co-opted representatives of Liverpool University, the Workers' Educational Association, the Educational Settlements Association, the Liverpool Education Committee, and the British Institute of Adult Education. (Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 58-9, 90-1)

2. Interview with F.D. Weeks, on 17 April 1969, at 6 Hatherley Rd., Manchester: Born in 1895 at Cardiff; worked in a shipyard after leaving

Following the Lord Mayor of Manchester's appeal for '50,000 shillings' in December 1932, the city's Unemployment Relief Fund Committee, under the new chairmanship of Sir William Davy, became the principal force behind the establishment of voluntary occupational centres for the unemployed in Manchester.¹ In the first winter of the scheme more than thirty unemployed centres were opened in the city, and the Committee must, therefore, be given most of the credit for initiating the voluntary response to the unemployed in Manchester. Help was forthcoming from many sources in reply to the Lord Mayor's appeal, and many tools, materials and other equipment for occupational work were donated. The ^oCommittee's report at the end of the first winter spoke of the 'remarkable assistance and co-operation' which had

school, but at the age of 17 his family moved to Bristol, where he became a wages clerk in a shipyard. Always a religious person, his English parents were members of the Free Church. In the late 1920's he became connected with the Bristol Council of Free Churches, a body already involved in a certain amount of work among the unemployed. In 1934 he became organising secretary of the Bristol Unemployed Welfare Association, established in October 1932, and the body responsible for the direction of the occupational centres in the city. He was engaged in this work until the outbreak of war, when he moved to London to take up a post with the London Council of Social Service. In 1942 became Deputy Director of the Tyneside Council of Social Service. In 1945 he was appointed Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service. Now retired, but still a member of the Council of Churches.

1. Sir William Davy was a long-serving Labour member of the Manchester City Council, who had been Lord Mayor of Manchester in 1927-8. The work of the Lord Mayor's Unemployment Committee has an important bearing on the later activities of the South-East Lancashire and North-East Cheshire Unemployment Advisory Council (SELNEC), and is, therefore, dealt with in this Chapter, rather than, as in the case of the local committees of Salford, Bolton, and elsewhere, in Chapter 5.

been received.¹

At seventeen of the thirty unemployed centres opened in the first winter boot and shoe repairing was undertaken, leather being purchased at wholesale prices by the Lord Mayor's Committee. The Report for 1932-3 stated that:

'A stringent rule which was at all times enforced was that a man who used this section of the Centre was only allowed to repair his own shoes and those of his immediate family. This was a necessary precaution and it is felt that through the procedure devised there was at no time any interference with the revenue of the ordinary trader.'²

At six centres timber and woodwork tools and facilities were available, and many articles of furniture were made for the clubs by the members, who were also allowed to repair their own household furniture. The Report also stated that:

'As will be readily understood in the scheme of so far-reaching a character, many of the Centres found themselves sadly lacking in essential furniture and equipment, and arrangements, therefore, were made to establish one large Centre which would devote the whole of its attention to remedying this deficiency.'

1. Lord Mayor of Manchester's Unemployment Relief Fund Committee, Report, 1932-3, quoted in Social Welfare II (July 1933).

2. Ibid.

This centre was fully provided with woodwork and metalwork equipment, and, attended by between one and two hundred unemployed men each day, who worked under the supervision of a skilled instructor, trestle tables, table tennis tables, and cupboards were constructed for other centres. The Committee felt that, although the personnel of this centre was constantly changing, and although no attempt was made to provide instruction of a vocational character, nonetheless the contact with working conditions, the handling of tools and 'the concerted effort of many men in one constructive project' did much to 're-imburse those who passed through this Centre with self-confidence and self-respect.'¹ A number of centres were begun in premises previously used as boys' clubs, which had the advantage of already being supplied with equipment of this kind.

Throughout the winter, lectures and concerts were arranged at many of the centres. Some 'excellent and unforeseen talent' from the ranks of the members themselves was discovered. One centre established its own concert party, which visited other clubs. Leading cinemas and theatres in the City provided more than 23,000 tickets for matinee shows to the unemployed club members. Arrangements were made by the Lord Mayor's Committee with the City Libraries Committee by which a weekly supply of literature was made available to all the clubs. At some centres, the Report stated, there were already fully equipped gymnasias, and here

1. Ibid; a similar regulation was enforced in all unemployed centres, and at no time were articles made in the clubs placed on sale to the general public.

special instruction in physical training was given, which resulted in 'a marked improvement' in the physique and carriage of the men who attended. On 25 April 1933 more than fifteen thousand spectators watched the final of the Grimes Cup (a knock-out football competition organised between the unemployed centres by the Lord Mayor's Committee) played at Maine-rd., the ground of Manchester City Football Club, between Ardwick Unemployed Centre and the Oldham-rd. Unitarian Church Social Centre.¹

Early in 1933 an orchestra was formed from among unemployed musicians in the city. To these men the occupational centres had little appeal, and the Lord Mayor's Committee decided to begin such a venture after a meeting had been held in the Town Hall, attended by eighty unemployed musicians. A local town hall was immediately placed at the disposal of the men, who elected their own director, and in a short time an orchestra of sixty-five instrumentalists had been formed. In March 1933 the first performance was given, and this proved so successful that an engagement was booked with the B.B.C., and a recital was given on the North Regional station on 1 May. A week-long contract at one of the main department stores in the city was arranged, and more than thirty towns throughout Britain were approached by the Lord Mayor's Committee with a view to securing engagements for the orchestra during the summer season.²

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

In the summer of 1933 a camp for unemployed youths between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one was arranged by the Committee at Carrington Barn, Marple, a site being placed in the hands of the Lord Mayor's Committee by a Manchester firm. A warden was appointed, and a camping fund was opened by the City Treasurer. The need for such a camp, as has already been indicated, was great: the Manchester and Salford Council of Social Service felt that no phase of the unemployment problem was more serious than the effect upon adolescents who were unable to find work after leaving school. In an article describing the camp in the Council's magazine, the writer considered that:

'At a time when the spirit of adventure ought to be calling them, they are shut off from the world in which this spirit can be developed..... Those of us who have worked in the Unemployment Centres during the past winter have been saddened by the complete absence of initiative displayed by the "Under twenty" generation. It has been difficult to develop in them a real interest in physical fitness. They have shown themselves more ready to look on than to play.'¹

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1. Social Welfare II (July 1933).

With the formation of SELNEC in 1935 the activities of the Lord Mayor's Committee declined sharply, although there is evidence to show that the Committee was still in existence in the summer of 1936,¹ and grants were made to the Collyhurst centre and to the Fellowship and Service Club each year until the outbreak of war.² The first meeting of the SELNEC Regional Council was held at Manchester Town Hall on 12 November 1934, when the constitution of the Council was decided upon. Membership was to be on the basis of one representative per hundred thousand or part hundred thousand population, up to a maximum of five, the representative to be nominated by the respective committee concerned with the work among the unemployed in the various districts, for one year at a time. The Council functioned within the following areas: the cities of Manchester and Salford; the county boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport and Wigan; the boroughs of Ashton-under-Lyne, Dukinfield, Hyde, Mossley, Stalybridge, Stretford, Eccles, Swinton and Pendlebury, Leigh, Heywood and Middleton.³ Thus Manchester had five representatives on the Council; Salford, Stockport and Oldham each had two, with Bolton, Bury, Eccles, Hyde, Heywood, Ashton, Wigan, Stalybridge,

1. See below, p. 213.

2. Collyhurst Guild for Social Service, General Reports 1936-40; Fellowship and Service, Annual Reports 1936-9.

3. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 17 December 1934.

Royton, Ince, Hindley, Radcliffe and Hazel Grove each having one member.¹

Like the National Council of Social Service, SELNEC's function was to give advice to the occupational centres within its region, and to develop and co-ordinate the voluntary work among the unemployed there. It had no control over the local unemployed centres. It merely circulated information to them, and made available its full-time officials to give advice on every aspect of club life. It provided instructors in handicrafts, music, drama and physical training, and organised non-residential schools and conferences of club members and leaders. In the summer, it organised camps at Edale and at its own hall, the Brentwood Holiday Home, in Derbyshire.² It also helped to enrol club members for the residential course at King's Standing, Wincham Hall and The Beeches. The Council provided a link between the clubs in its area and the National Council of Social Service, to which applications for grants on behalf of both individual centres and the region as a whole were made.³

Following the SELNEC Council's inaugural meeting at Manchester Town Hall, a grant of £450 in the first year was made by the National Council of Social Service in January 1935 as the salary of an organising secretary.

1. Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 89-90; in most of these towns, Mayor's Committees, similar to that at Eccles, or, as in the case of Oldham, local council's of social service, were responsible for the direction of voluntary work among the unemployed.

2. The Hall was acquired by the National Council of Social Service on behalf of SELNEC; see below, p. 226.

3. Windmill, February 1938; Windmill was a monthly newsheet published by SELNEC after January 1938.

and Albert Watson was appointed to the position.¹ In April 1935 a physical training instructor was appointed, and, in September, Miss Hilda M. Smith was appointed as women's organiser. This was followed in October by the appointment of Tom Quail as handicrafts' organiser, and two further physical training instructors were also engaged, making a full-time staff of six.² By December 1935 the physical training instructors were providing twenty classes per week at clubs in the SELNEC area, and five centres had classes run by instructors provided by the respective local education authority. This was in accordance with the National Council's encouragement of the development of physical training among the unemployed centres.³ By this date, too, Miss Frida Stewart of the Manchester University Settlement, who had been responsible for the commencement of the drama group at the Pilgrim Club, was giving her services on two days per week to the SELNEC Council, and had succeeded in establishing drama groups at three other centres within the Council's area.⁴ In February 1936 an Assistant Organiser was appointed to the staff of the Council. By this date forty-three classes for men and a further sixteen for women were being given each week in physical training, together with twelve classes in handicrafts, six in music and six in

1. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 12 November, 17 December 1934.

2. Ibid., 2 April, 12 August, 6 September and 25 October 1935; interview with Tom Quail, see above Chapter 4, p. 155, note 1, for biographical details.

3. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 2 December 1935; see above, Chapter 4, p. 159.

4. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 2 December 1935.

drama. An orchestra had been formed among clubs in the Royton area.¹

In April 1936, the Regional Council moved to new headquarters in a house in Fallowfield, Manchester, and, in May, an organiser for music, Richard Hall, was appointed. A district organiser for the Wigan area was engaged in June.² On 6 July, 1936, the Prince of Wales paid an official visit to the unemployed centres in Lancashire, including those at Leigh, Rochdale, Bury and Ashton, and then the Mulberry Bush Club, Hulme, Manchester, where Sir William Davy and other officials of the Lord Mayor of Manchester's Unemployment Committee were presented to him.³ In October, a fifth physical training instructor was added to the Council's staff, and two more handicraft instructors were appointed, while a drama adviser was appointed in November.⁴ At this point the following classes were being given each week in men's centres throughout the Council's area: twenty-two educational or study groups; twenty-one physical training classes; twenty-eight classes for out-door sports; thirteen music groups; twelve drama groups; thirty-five handicraft classes, and thirty-five cobbling classes. There were, in addition, thirty-two allotments sections and thirty-six canteens. For women,

1. Ibid., 6, 25 February 1936; see below, p. 216 ; also Appendix II.

2. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 31 March, 25 May and 25 June 1936.

3. Ibid., pp. 84-93; Manchester Guardian, 7 July 1936.

4. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 23 October and 5 November 1936.

fifteen classes were held each week in dress-making; there were five keep fit groups, four music groups, three cookery classes and seven drama groups; there were also fifteen various handicraft groups.¹

In January 1938, the Council published the first edition of a monthly newsheet, Windmill. One of the most important of the functions of a regional council was to circulate information to the centres within its area, particularly ideas on new activities and suggestions for the better running of the clubs, and the publication of a newspaper enabled SELNEC to improve its communication with the unemployed centres in its region. The second issue, in February, for example, gave details of a pamphlet recently issued by the National Council of Social Service on the subject of the duties of club officials and committees. The issue also announced that arrangements were being made to set up an insurance scheme for the centres, in case of fire. The scheme also afforded compensation for injury to persons using the club facilities, or taking part on camps. The newsheet, in addition, contained a good deal of information on various club activities in the SELNEC region, such as news of the formation of a debating group at the Mulberry Bush Club, Hulme, and news of a soccer match between a representative team of the clubs in Manchester and Manchester University.² The April edition announced an evening of films

1. Ibid., 10 November 1936; further details of the allotments sections are given below, pp. 228 et seq.

2. Windmill, February 1938.

to be held at the Mulberry Bush Club. The programme, which was free, included Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Thirty-Nine Steps', and two short films, one of which was to be the second of the National Council's films of club and community centre work, entitled 'Today and Tomorrow'.¹

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By the end of 1937, a merger of the three Lancashire and Cheshire regional councils was being considered. A provisional committee was established at a merger conference held at the Y.M.C.A., Manchester, in December of that year, at which representatives of the National Council, of SELNEC, the Wincham Hall Council, the Mid-Lancashire Council, and the Liverpool Occupational Centres Committee were present.² Six SELNEC representatives attended the meeting, including Councillor A.P. Simon and Albert Watson, and the Hyde and Stockport representatives on SELNEC. In February 1938, a joint memorandum was issued by the secretaries of the regional councils, which included details of the number of clubs in existence in each area at that time:

Table 1: Occupational centres in Lancashire and Cheshire, February 1938

	Men	Women	Total
SELNEC	53	20	73
Mid-Lancashire	13	17	30
South-West Lancashire and North- West Cheshire	21	7	28
Liverpool	10	15	25
TOTALS	<u>97</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>156</u>

(From SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, pp. 324-334.)

1. Ibid., April 1938; the first film was entitled 'Today We Live'.

2. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 23 December 1937, and Memorandum in Minute Book, pp. 324-334.

The issue of Windmill for March 1938 announced 'Goodbye SELNEC':

'The unemployed club movement has now been developing for some six years. During this time the National Council of Social Service has been building up the regional organisations for advisory purposes.... The National Council now feel that this time of slackening unemployment is an opportune moment for a further organisational development, and...it has been decided that the three regional advisory councils...should be combined into one... This merger should give an opportunity for a better planning of the services which have previously been available, and for the better building of new services.'¹

The merger was finally completed in December 1938, when a new body, the Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council (L.C.C.C.) was established, with headquarters at SELNEC House, Manchester. The constitution of the new body was similar to that of SELNEC: each district council sent two representatives to the monthly meetings, and quarterly meetings of the full Council was attended by one representative from each district.²

The newsheet, Windmill, was continued under the new organisation, its first issue appearing in October 1938. The last edition of that year gave details of the orchestra begun at the Royton Social Service

1. Windmill, March 1938.

2. Ibid., April 1938.

Centre. This venture had been begun in 1936 as a pipe-playing group. Towards the end of the following year, eight club members made viols, and taught themselves to play them. Each member, by the end of 1938, had a real instrument, there being two flautists, five violinists, one viola player, one cellist and two accordionists.¹ A general progress report issued by the Community Council in January 1939, showed that there were still more than seventy men's centres in existence in the two counties membership exceeding seven thousand, together with fifty-five centres for women, with a total membership of more than four thousand. There were also seven sports groups in existence, with nearly seven hundred members.² Under the new Council, seven district committees had been established, including one in the Royton district, one in the Manchester and Salford area, and one for the Wirral.³ Five more were proposed, including one for the North-East Cheshire district and another at Bolton.⁴

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One of the most important duties of the regional councils was to give help and advice on the everyday running of the clubs and their committees. The keeping of proper records, such as a diary of events, minutes of committee meetings, was encouraged, and it was suggested

1. Ibid., December 1938.

2. Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council (Provisional Committee), Minute Book, 24 January 1939.

3. Ibid., p. 362; the others were in the Wigan District, Westhoughton and District, Mid-Lancashire District, and the North-West Derbyshire Committee.

4. Ibid.

that one of the members of the club be given charge of this branch of the club's activities. SELNEC also encouraged the centres to open their membership to employed workers: the Council urged in March 1938 'open your club to unemployed and employed alike, and stop the idea that when a man gets work he is in a different class.'¹ A few months later, an article in Windmill asked 'Why don't you get down to it and organise the club properly?' It was suggested that a written constitution be composed by each centre, and that committee meetings should be organised to take place at regular intervals and established venues.² As if to encourage such developments in the clubs themselves, in July 1938 the Council announced the establishment of a new department at headquarters: Records, Intelligence and Finance (known as R.I.F.) Windmill commented that:

'In the hustle and bustle of the sudden development of SELNEC over the last few years, the regular collection of pictures and other data of the various activities of the Council and of the clubs in the area has not gone on systematically. On the eve of the unification of SELNEC with the other regional councils in Lancashire and Cheshire..... this omission has been remedied and a new department has come into being at SELNEC House.....'³

1. Windmill, March 1938.

2. Ibid., June 1938.

3. Ibid., July 1938.

The regular collection of photographs, appeals, reports, magazines and other publications was now made.¹ At the end of 1938, a holiday savings scheme was started by this department.²

In March 1939, a conference was held at the Y.M.C.A., Manchester, attended by more than one hundred officials of club governing committees and local councils of social service. One of the topics under discussion was the question of admitting employed men to the centres. Albert Watson, Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council, who led the discussion, felt that lower paid working people should be admitted to prevent the unemployed regarding themselves as a degraded class in society. Unemployment was not a permanent phenomenon in the lives of a group of men and women, and could not, therefore 'be accepted as the basis of an enduring movement.' The centres could not give help to those affected by casual unemployment, or those who had several spells of unemployment interspersed with periods in work, unless contact could be maintained with these people by the centres during periods of employment. A decision was reached by the meeting, which declared itself in favour

1. When the writer first visited the former SELNEC Headquarters in Fallowfield, now the offices of the Community Council of Lancashire, a large number of these records were still in existence, including many photographs. While waiting for permission to examine the SELNEC records to be granted, however, a fire occurred in the offices, and most of these were destroyed. Only the Minute Books of the SELNEC and L.C.C.C. bodies remained intact.

2. Windmill, December 1938.

of admitting lower paid men and women to the centres. The conference also decided to allow club members more control of their own centres. It was felt that those unemployed men and women who carried responsibility for the management of their own club gained 'a sense of personal value and preserved their self-respect.' 'If democracy was good for the national and the city it should be good for the clubs, too', was the general concensus of opinion among those who attended the conference. Windmill reported in its April edition that the discussion on the future of the club movement 'revealed a general support for democratic club management as the ideal to be pursued.'¹

It was also part of the task of regional councils to arrange one-day schools in both occupational and educational subjects for the members of the centres within their region. Those at SELNEC House, which were continued after the merger of the three regional bodies, usually lasted four days, and normally took place in the winter months. In February 1938, for instance, a school for unemployed men's club members was held in Home Decoration, while in the following month a course for women was held in Hat Crafts.² Fares were paid by the regional council and meals were provided. The club members travelled from their home towns each day. In November 1938, however, the Council's newsheet noted 'with

1. Ibid., April 1939.

2. Ibid., March 1938.

surprise' that in general women's clubs had been much slower than men's to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered both by the regional council, through its contact with the residential centres, and by the clubs themselves. It was true, the paper argued, that classes in home management, needlework and other crafts, were popular in the women's clubs, but, to compare with these, the men's clubs had well-attended classes in their own variety of handicrafts. But the men's clubs also ran a large number of what the newsheet termed 'general knowledge' classes: lantern lectures, talks and debates, and also wireless discussion groups, were a feature of all the most active men's clubs, but were absent from the programmes for the majority of the women's centres. The article stressed that a panel of speakers willing to give talks at the women's clubs had been arranged by the Council's organiser for women's work.¹

In June 1938, Windmill published the details of the courses to be given at Wincham Hall later that year. There were three 'terms', each of six weeks duration, the first beginning on 4 June, the second lasting from 1 October to 11 November, and the third ending on 23 December. The Hall, it was stated, had ten acres of grounds, including a sportsfield, while inside the building itself were woodwork, metalwork and cobbling shops, a craftroom, a library, common-room, billiards room and a small

1. Ibid., November 1938.

theatre. Each man was expected to take one or two main courses, and, one or more of the lighter crafts. The main courses included woodwork, metalwork, weaving (including rug-making), upholstery and decorating, in addition to a general 'handyman's' course. These classes were held each morning, with two hours' practical work and one hour's theory. Courses were also given in social and political science, English literature, philosophy, natural sciences and mathematics. Craft courses included book-binding and clay modelling, and were held in the afternoons. There were additional evening classes open to local residents in physical education, drama, history and economics. The weekly fee of ten shillings per adult included full board and residence. Arrangements were made for benefit to be drawn on Friday of each week in Northwich.¹ In March 1939, the newsheet reported that a Manchester and District Branch of the Old Winchamites Association had been formed, and was meeting each week at the Pilgrim Club. It had twenty-one members, and in February five of these had visited Warrington for a conference with members of the Liverpool and Wirral Branches of the Association.²

Shorter courses for the club members arranged by the regional councils in November and early December 1938 were as follows:

1. Ibid., June 1938.

2. Ibid., March, 1939.

Table 2: regional courses for the unemployed, November and December 1938

Dates	Place	Type of course or subjects	Male or Female	Number
November				
14-18	Accrington	Nursery furniture and toys	M	20
14	Burnley	Women's crafts	F	12
14-19	King's Standing	Club organisation	M	4
15	Sunshine Club, Blackburn	Women's crafts	F	12
21	Royton	Music	M & F	10
21	Bolton	Music	M & F	10
21-25	SELNEC House	Toy-making and Christmas presents in wood	M	20
22-23	South-West Lancashire	Women's crafts	F	15/20
28-30	SELNEC House	English Language	M	12/15
December				
5-6	SELNEC House	Make-up and properties for the small stage	M & F	12/15
5-6	Mid-Lancashire	Make-up and properties for the small stage	M & F	12/15

(From Windmill, November 1938.)

Table 3: Courses and Fees at The Beeches residential centre, 1939

Jan 16-28	1st General Course	Craftwork, patchwork, cushions and quilts. Italian weaving.
Jan 30- Feb 11	2nd General Course	Craftwork, weaving of looms, needle-weaving.
Feb 13-25	Special Course	Music, singing and country dancing.
Mar 6-18	3rd General Course	Craftwork, embroidery and applique for home furnishings.
Mar 20- 1 April	4th General Course	Craftwork, women's and childrens clothing

Fees: 6s. per week for single women or widows who receive unemployment insurance or assistance or widow's pensions;

3s. per week for club members whose husbands are unemployed;

5s. per week for club members whose husbands are working part time, or who have not been in full-time employment for more than six months;

15s. per week for club members not affected by unemployment;

at least 5s. from the student or her club towards the cost of rail fare.

(From Windmill, January 1939.)

SELNEC also organised a number of sporting events between the clubs within its area. The Lord Mayor of Manchester's Committee had begun a football league and knock-out cup among the centres in the city, as has already been indicated, and this was continued both by SELNEC after 1935 and by the Lancashire and Cheshire Community

Council. A sports group was begun in 1938, held in Platt Fields, near SELNEC House, Fallowfield, where football coaching was provided by the regional council's instructors for unemployed men who were not members of any centre. In the summer of 1937 and again in 1938, athletics meetings were arranged between clubs in the Manchester and Salford district. A baseball league was begun in 1938, and table tennis competitions were also held, while a number of centres began cricket teams. A rambling club, open to all members of the occupational centres in the region, was begun by the Council in 1938.²

The regional council was responsible for arranging holidays for the unemployed. The Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers Association in Manchester provided SELNEC with a camping site at Edale in the Peak District each year from 1935 onwards. The site included a large house, sportsfield and bathing pool. From Whit until September each year, between fifty and sixty men per week were given a holiday here, at a cost of five shillings for a married man, and seven shillings for a single man, inclusive of transport. This amount was made up to nine shillings per person by each man's local committee. Each week a committee was formed among the men to run the camp. The regional council also ran

1. Ibid., November 1938.

2. Ibid., March, May 1938; National Council of Social Service, Annual Report 1937-8.

3. Social Welfare, II (October 1935).

a holiday home for women at Brentwood, Marple, each year. Each woman was able to take with her two children between the ages of two and nine years, and the camp was open to wives of unemployed men. The cost was eight shillings per week per adult, and four shillings per child. From 1936 onwards, a camp was run by SELNEC at Borrowdale in the Lake District.¹

Under the Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council, holiday facilities were extended: camps previously available to unemployed club members in the SELNEC region were now opened to members of clubs in the two other Lancashire and Cheshire regions. Similarly, a number of men and women in South-East Lancashire were able to take holidays at the Lakeland Camp at Bowness and at the Greycourt Holiday Home near Morecambe, previously run by the Mid-Lancashire Council. Holidays were also provided at Wincham Hall. In the summer of 1939 a new and larger camp was begun at Ulverston near the Lake District, and the Bowness and Edale camps were discontinued. Camp activities at Ulverston included games and athletics, and there were also facilities for light handicrafts, drama and sketching. A number of talks and lectures were given each week to the campers, and debates were held. The Community Council was able to arrange for the camp staff to borrow a talkie film projector, and the local council provided a hall in which it could be used, in order

1. Windmill, May 1938.

to show travel and interest films in poor weather. Wennington Hall, in the Lune Valley, the property of the Mid-Lancashire Council, was also used for holidays in 1939.¹

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Several adoptions took place in the SELNEC area. The interest taken in the Collyhurst Lads' and Men's Club by Imperial Chemicals Industries (Blackley) Ltd. has already been referred to, as has the fact that this centre received financial assistance for a number of years from four local firms.² The Westminster Bank Guild adopted the whole SELNEC region in 1935, subscribing £1,000 per year, to be used wherever the need was greatest. The Guild was represented on the Council. Apart from this, four of Salford's occupational centres were adopted by the Diocese of Chichester, Sussex, in 1933. In this year, the St. Ambrose Centre received a donation of £30 towards the purchase of occupational and sports equipment, and the Diocese also donated £120 to the centre in the same year for management expenses. By way of thanks, the games room at the centre, which housed three full-sized billiards tables, was named 'The Chichester Billiards Saloon'. Also in 1933, the Diocese gave £180 towards running costs at the Emery Centre, and the people of Chichester sent many gifts of clothing

1. Ibid., May 1939.

2. See above, Chapter 5, pp. 198-9.

and gymnastic equipment. The St. Cyprians Centre at Ordsall Hall also received financial help, while the organisation of the Challenge Club for Women, Salford, was undertaken almost entirely by a committee of ladies from Chichester, one of whom remained as club organiser for the first few months of the centre's existence. A representative of the Diocese was appointed to the Salford Council of Social Service.¹ It was clearly of more value to the club movement as a whole if the adopting body, as did the Westminster Bank Guild, took over an area, rather than an individual centre, or even a group of centres, since this eliminated any uneven distribution of funds. Yet the personal service given by the people of Chichester to the four Salford clubs, as well as the financial help received, was very valuable. There is no evidence to show that any of the adoption schemes in South-East Lancashire had harmful effects upon the centres concerned.

Although Lancashire ranked fourth in the list of counties in England and Wales with allotment societies,² as far as South-East Lancashire was concerned, allotment activity among the unemployed was well below the average for the county as a whole, and there appears to have been a certain lack of interest in the keeping of allotments here. The Eccles Journal reported in November 1932 that, while in the years immediately after the first world war virtually all the vacant land in

1. Salford City Reporter, 3, 17, 24 February, 24 April and 2 June 1933; B. McCarthy, loc. cit.

2. See above, Chapter 4, p. 160 et seq.

the borough had been under cultivation, when, in 1930, the Labour Government had offered financial assistance to the Friends' scheme of allotments among the unemployed, less than twenty people had applied for plots in Eccles.¹ There was nothing like the interest in allotments among the unemployed in South-East Lancashire that there was in Bristol, for example; in a city with 19,000 unemployed at the height of the depression, compared with more than seventy thousand in the two cities of Manchester and Salford, more than one thousand unemployed had allotments and on one site of five hundred plots each holder had his own hut, and there were two community buildings, each with a canteen.² There was also a very poor response in Oldham, where in January 1932 it was reported that only two applications had been made for allotments to the Parks and Cemeteries Committee following advertisements that plots were available. Likewise, at Bolton interest in allotments sections among the unemployed begun in a number of centres in the town at the end of 1932, proved very limited. The Council had provided ninety plots of land, but by February 1933 less than half of these had been taken, when the Bolton Evening News declared 'Demand lags in Bolton':

'Although the working of an allotment is productive energy, the proposition seems to be a little unattractive. One cannot excuse

1. Eccles Journal, 18 November 1932.

2. Bristol Unemployed Welfare Association, Annual Reports 1933-6 (made available by F.D. Weeks, see above p. 204, note 2).

the unpopularity of allotments by saying that this is an industrial neighbourhood and the men are not used to the land, for in Sheffield thousands of unemployed men have taken them, and on one group of allotments there are eight hundred men.'¹

In January 1934 the town's Unemployed Welfare Committee were told that attendances at all classes at the occupational centres in Bolton were 'satisfactory', with the exception of the allotments group, and in April the allotments classes were discontinued for the summer.²

Arrangements for the holding of allotments by unemployed club members in Manchester were begun by the Lord Mayor's Committee in February 1933, when the Parks Committee placed at its disposal twelve and a half acres of land at four sites, including one of seven acres at Heaton Park, and three and a half acres at Boggart Hole Clough nearby.³ The purchase price for tools, seeds and other equipment was advanced by the Lord Mayor's Fund, the men paying fourpence per week in repayment. By the summer of 1933, it was reported that more than five hundred unemployed club members held their own plots.⁴ Thirty-seven men from the Pilgrim Club of the Manchester University Settlement had plots in the scheme, and the Settlement's Annual Report for the year 1932-3 stated that:

'The allotment section of the Pilgrim Club works in close co-

1. Bolton Evening News, 11 October 1932, 3 February 1933.

2. Bolton Unemployed Welfare Association, Minute Book 1934-8.

3. Manchester Evening News, 3 February 1933; the other two sites were at Newton Heath and Didsbury.

4. Social Welfare, II (July 1933).

operation with the other sections. For instance, the woodwork section built a hut which was taken up to Newton Heath in sections and erected by the carpenters who hope to enjoy some cabbages in return! The men help one another with digging and planting and are very keen. Quite a number of voluntary workers and amateur gardeners are helping to make this scheme a success.¹

With the formation of SELNEC, the supervision of the allotments schemes of the local committees was taken over by the Regional Council, and in December 1936 it was reported that thirty-two clubs within the Council's area had allotments sections,² including centres at Eccles, Swinton, Salford, and Bolton, where, in spite of the disappointing initial response to the scheme on the part of the unemployed in the town, by February 1937 sixty-two men had plots and the handicraft section of the Jackson House centre were constructing large cold frames and wheel barrows.³ By the end of 1936, however, even the small interest which had been aroused among the unemployed in South-East Lancashire for allotments was declining. Windmill, in November of that year, reported that:

'Our Chairman has written to us to express concern at the declining number of allotments held by unemployed men in Manchester under the Society of Friends Allotment Scheme for the unemployed. The

1. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Report 1932-3.

2. SELNEC Council and Executive, Minute Book, 17 December 1934.

3. Bolton Unemployed Welfare Association, Minute Book 1934-8; Windmill, December 1938; Salford City Reporter, 11 November 1932; Swinton and Pendlebury Journal, 25 November 1932.

extent of this decline is reflected roughly in the number of entries for the annual competition for the best-kept allotment. Entries have fallen steadily from 108 in 1934 to thirty-eight this year.¹

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The Pilgrim Trust, Workers' Educational Association, and many other organisations gave help both to individual centres in South-East Lancashire and also to the SELNEC Regional Council and the Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council. Reference has already been made, for example, to the fact that the Y.M.C.A. in Manchester loaned its premises to SELNEC for a merger conference in 1937, that the Manchester and Salford Women's Citizen's Association were represented on the governing committee of the Fellowship and Service Club for Women in Manchester, and that the Pilgrim Trust donated monies to the Manchester University Settlement to begin centres for unemployed men and youths, and also supported the Challenge Club for Women, Salford.² The Pilgrim Trust, in addition, provided sufficient funds for the Friends' Welfare Centre in Mount-st., Manchester, to appoint a salaried organiser, and in 1937 the Annual Report of the Trustees noted that:

1. Windmill, November 1938.

2. See above, Chapter 4, p.160 ; Chapter 6, p. 228.

'Over three hundred now use the centre regularly, and the premises have been redecorated and renovated. The members have started a benevolent fund of a penny a week to provide small grants in case of necessity, when for example one of their number is in hospital.....'¹

The North-West District of the Workers' Educational Association provided many classes for the unemployed in these years in conjunction with SELNEC and later the Community Council. The Bolton Branch was one of the first in the country to begin admitting unemployed men and women to its classes free of charge, in 1933, and, in the same year, four terminal classes were provided for the unemployed centre members in the town.² In September 1935 the North-West District held a school for unemployed at Slater Ing Hall, Hebden Bridge, attended by twenty-six men and women, and in 1936 the District raised funds to send seventeen men to the Bangor Summer School. In the summer of 1937 the Workers' Travel Association placed four of its holiday homes at the disposal of the Educational Association, and 335 unemployed men and women were given holidays, including a number of club members from the SELNEC region.³

The Public Libraries of South-East Lancashire also gave help to the movement. At Rochdale it was reported in 1934 that the Library

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1937.

2. Workers' Educational Association, North-West District, Annual Report 1932-3; the classes were in literature, history, social problems and industrial relations (Bolton Evening News, 19 September 1933).

3. Workers' Educational Association, Annual Reports 1935-8; North-West District, Annual Reports 1934-7.

Committee, in addition to the supply of withdrawn books and periodicals, had provided special collections of popular manuals and periodicals to the centres in the town by a special vote of £14 10s. 6d. About 275 books were made available by this vote.¹ In Swinton and Pendlebury, the Librarian, Frederick Cowles, began informal lantern lectures for the unemployed in 1933. In 1934 a 'study circle' for unemployed youths in the borough was begun at the library, held each Wednesday, on the historical literary associations of regions of England: in the following year, day trips were organised as part of the course, and a number of visiting lecturers gave their assistance. In 1936 the subjects of lectures given to the class included talks on aspects of historical plays, folklore and general travel.²

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Although, despite the general fall in unemployment after 1936, most centres retained their membership, and, indeed, experienced their most active years after this date, with the outbreak of war the club movement collapsed. Many centres were forced to close because their premises were commandeered by military or local authorities. Others closed because of an acute decline in attendances, and still others because their local

1. Social Service Review XV (March 1934).

2. Swinton and Pendlebury Libraries, Billetin, 1935-40; Annual Reports 1932-9.

committees were no longer able or prepared to finance them. The number of clubs still open in Lancashire and Cheshire in October 1940 was 103; fifty-two of these were men's clubs, but there had been sixty-six men's centres open in December 1939. The Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council reported at this date that, although a number of centres remained surprisingly active, the general tendency was for the men's clubs not to be used very much during the daytime. Little occupational work was being undertaken, and the main club activities were recreational. Canteens and allotment sections, it was alleged, were still flourishing at a number of centres. 'Membership has fallen but not, so far, catastrophically,' continued the report: employed men 'are retaining their membership of better clubs, but owing to the long hours of work do not use the clubs to any great extent.' Comparatively more women's centres remained open: there were fifty-one in existence in October 1940, compared with fifty-four in December 1939.¹

1. Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council, Minute Book, Appendix A, p. 139.

Chapter Seven

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS: CONCLUSIONS

The occupational centre movement reached its peak between the years of 1936 and 1938, at which time, as far as can be estimated, membership of the clubs throughout England and Wales was about two hundred thousand.¹ After this date, although unemployment was still only a little way short to two millions in Great Britain until mid-1939,² and in spite of the fact that, in many ways, the need for the centres was as great as ever, since the number of long-term unemployed remained very high, the activities and the numbers attending the centres, although not the most popular or best run ones, began to lessen.³ There are, however, no records of the history of the national movement after 1936, when the National Council of Social Service published its survey, Unemployment and Community Service. The only other study of the club movement, Men Without Work: A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust, was published in 1938, but its findings were limited to the centres in the five towns of Liverpool, Crook, Blackburn, Leicester

1. In Unemployment and Community Service, the National Council reported that, in the period January-March 1935, membership of 1,014 men's clubs totalled more than 142,000, and that of 320 clubs for women was almost 16,000 (see below, Appendix III). A number of clubs, however, failed to reply to the circular from which this survey was compiled. The National Council estimated that in 1936 the number of centres in existence in England and Wales was about 1,500 and that membership was in excess of 200,000. (Unemployment and Community Service, p. 8.)

2. See above, Appendix I.

3. The Pilgrim Club of the Manchester University Settlement was an example of a club which retained its membership and popularity until 1939.

and Deptford, and also the Rhondda Valley.¹ It is, therefore, difficult to provide satisfactory answers for many of the questions which remain to be asked about the occupational centres in general, and also the voluntary response to the unemployed in the 1930's.

Only a very small percentage of those out of work ever joined an occupational centre. Unemployment in Great Britain reached its peak in January 1933, and was highest in the period between December 1930 and June 1933.² Yet the voluntary response, as has been indicated, did not begin until the end of 1932. Most centres were opened in the period between December of that year and May, 1933: a large proportion did not open until after this date. Although the problem of the long-term unemployed grew worse after this, most, indeed almost all centres, were still building up their membership and activities in 1933 and 1934, and the movement as a whole, therefore, cannot be said to have had much impact until after the depression had reached its trough. Signs of recovery were apparent by the end of 1933. Moreover the fact that the voluntary response did not begin until 1932, with the Prince of Wales' speech at the Albert Hall in January 1932, is extremely significant.

1. Men Without Work: reference was also made in this study to the residential centres for unemployed, to the Lincoln People's Service Club, and the Upholland (Wigan) Subsistence Scheme.
2. See above Appendix I; unemployment in Great Britain passed the two million mark in August 1930, and exceeded 2.5 millions by December of that year, above which it remained until June 1933.

By this date, there had been four months of almost continuous unemployed demonstrations in all parts of Great Britain in protest against the introduction of the 'Means Test' and the ten per cent. reductions in unemployment benefit imposed by the National Government in the Budget of September 1931.¹ There was a considerable response to the Prince's appeal, and the National Council of Social Service reported that a large number of schemes were begun during the next few months, so that by the autumn of 1932 more than seven hundred were in operation in all parts of Great Britain.² Even so, the movement had not yet become a national one. It was not until the end of 1932 that the Special Unemployed Committee of the National Council was formed, and not until November of that year that the Government intervened. Immediately prior to these events, in September and October 1932, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement had organised its third national hunger march to London; for a fortnight in September there had been rioting among unemployed on Merseyside, while, in October, two men were killed in Belfast when police opened fire on unemployed demonstrators.³

The conclusion might be made, therefore, that the donations received by the National Council of Social Service, which reached a significant

1. See below Chapter 10, p. 401 et seq.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 11

3. See below Chapter 10, pp. 412-3.

total in the months after the formation of the Unemployed Committee, were made largely out of fear of further unemployed rioting, and, indeed, of the potential revolutionary threat posed by the unemployed at this time. The same motive could be said to be behind the Government's promise of financial support. For Great Britain, the year 1931 was one of crisis, not the least important aspect of which were the nation-wide demonstrations which began in September and continued until the start of the New Year. The Albert Hall meeting of January 1932 was an attempt to inaugurate a national voluntary social service movement on behalf of the unemployed. Although it evoked some response, by itself this was not sufficient to prevent a recurrence of the demonstrations in the winter of 1932, at which point, under severe pressure to do something for the unemployed, the Government was forced to intervene and come to the aid of the National Council of Social Service. Even so, the 'economy campaign' meant that the Government's financial support was kept to a minimum. The depressed areas, far away from Whitehall and Westminster, could be conveniently forgotten about, or so it appeared, until the hunger marchers arrived. Only then was the National Government forced into action, in an effort to keep the unemployed off the streets.

Some contemporary opinion saw it differently, however:

'It was some time before it began to be realised how great is the mental stress caused by involuntary idleness and how it tells on physical health...Recognition of this gave birth

to the occupational movement, which..... gave them opportunities they had never had before, to realise themselves and to find out for themselves that they possessed talents and interests that they had never suspected.¹

It was certainly true that a large part of the voluntary service given to the unemployed was given in a genuinely sympathetic manner, and with much understanding on the part of those who became involved in this way. Moreover, as has already been stated, it was not until the 1930's that it was fully realised that 'idleness' might be 'involuntary', that unemployment was not necessarily due to personal deficiencies, and that it might have far-reaching effects upon the health and minds of those who were out of work for long periods. Nonetheless, it was not solely as a result of this new understanding of the psychological aspects of unemployment that the voluntary response was made. Although it is very difficult to define these in any specific way, it would seem likely that there were political motives behind the voluntary response.

Nevertheless, although the numbers reached by the movement were limited, there can be no doubt that for some of their members the centres succeeded in their aim to provide good fellowship and useful occupation for the unemployed. To many thousands of men and women throughout

1. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

Great Britain the movement brought new life and hope in the comradeship provided by the clubs and in the opportunity to take part in the activities provided. For many, the occupational centres were the only chance to keep in touch with the rest of the world. The alternative, to which many of those out of work in these years resorted, was to hide away in conditions of poverty and squalor, contacts with the outside world limited to visits from the 'man from the Board', or to the corner shop. The occupational centres gave their members the chance to lead a fairly 'normal' life. In the Pilgrim Trust Annual Report for the year 1934, a Durham miner was quoted as saying of the club to which he belonged:

'The Settlement is a spirit in which each member can find himself - discover and exploit his own possibilities. I suppose its chief teaching is that of teaching us to believe in ourselves... For some of use, unemployment has given us an opportunity to find the Settlement. When we discover it, we find that we are no longer unemployed..'¹

Any centre that could help its members to feel that 'we are no longer unemployed' had, in many ways, fulfilled its purpose. In all the reports and articles of the time it was easy to discern a feeling of helplessness and inadequacy on the part of those connected with the running of the clubs. Yet, although the centres touched only the surface

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1934.

of the unemployment problem in terms of numbers, the contribution to the improved welfare of even a very small number of those out of work was sufficient to justify the existence of the clubs. It was the opinion of many of those who gave their services in this way, that:

'No one who has had experience of Voluntary Occupational Centres for men can have failed to notice the spiritual awakening, and even exhaltation, that comes to a man who, when he has made some simple article with his own hands, realises for the first time that he has it in him to create.'¹

The most important achievement of the occupational centres was, therefore, that they gave to at least a small number of their members a sense of personal worth, the satisfaction of knowing that they were needed once more, that without them such a project could not be completed.

In this respect, the instruction provided in various handicrafts by the clubs themselves and also by the residential centres was of the utmost importance.² From very rudimentary beginnings, such as furniture repair, or elementary cobbling, the crafts undertaken grew more and more sophisticated as the movement developed, although it was at no time the intention of the club movement to provide vocational training in these handicrafts. The physical training classes were also of great importance,

1. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., p. 31.

2. This was the opinion of Tom Quail, handicrafts instructor for SELNEC; see above, Chapter 4, p. 155, note 1, for biographical details.

as was recognised by the National Council of Social Service.¹ For the older men, often those who had little or no hope of ever finding employment, and for whom unemployment meant a forced premature retirement, the role of the centres was necessarily limited to providing interests and activities with which to fill otherwise empty days. For the younger men, however, one of the most important aims of the centres was to keep them physically fit for work, should the opportunity arise, and to stimulate in them the desire to keep themselves fit for such employment. On one occasion, therefore, the West Indian cricketer, Leary (later ^{Ld.} ~~Sir Leary~~) Constantine visited the SELNEC Council's Edale Camp to provide the men with instruction. Similarly, football personalities occasionally gave up their time to help the SELNEC instructors in Platt Fields.² The educational opportunities provided by the centres and the residential courses at Coleg Harlech and elsewhere were of equal importance for those who discovered capacities of this kind within themselves: but educational work also did much to raise the standards of living of many unemployed families, simply in the sense that the teaching of subjects such as needlework, cookery, woodwork, and thrift in general helped many homes to balance their budgets more easily. It was the opinion of many contemporaries that in all these respects the occupational centres uncovered

1. See above, Chapter 4, p. 159.

2. Interview with Tom Quail; see p. 155.

a 'vast reservoir of latent talent' which had 'only been waiting for opportunities for their development.' The centres had 'paved the way for the birth of a great movement for the useful utilisation of leisure.'¹ Although such emotive statements attached too much importance to the clubs and centres, in the sense that not as many unemployed were able to take as much benefit from them as their organisers, instructors and other helpers were wont to make out, there seems no reason to doubt the overall truth of this remark.

A great deal more could have been done in this respect for the unemployed. Given the fact that, once again the 1930's were a time of missed opportunities,² and that the social and psychological problems presented by unemployment, especially of a long-term nature, were little understood in 1930, nonetheless the Government grants to the movement, which had by 1936 amounted to almost £80,000 as compared with voluntary donations of more than £128,000,³ were not only very small (an average of £20,000 a year, when there were, say, two million unemployed per year, was equal, on a crude calculation, to less than threepence per unemployed person per year), but also limited by stringent conditions. There is no evidence to bear out the National Council's statement that

1. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., p. 119.

2. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 356.

3. See above, Chapter 4, p. 149.

the Ministry grant had made possible the formation of centres 'where the need for clubs is greatest and where, by reason of severe and prolonged unemployment, local resources are smallest', since neither Liverpool nor Manchester received aid from this source because their total population exceeded two hundred thousand, but their rate of unemployment was less than twenty per cent. in each case. It was not necessarily true, as Men Without Work pointed out, that the large cities possessed 'a wide variety of social institutions', while the smaller towns had fewer opportunities or facilities to be able to undertake work of this kind on behalf of the unemployed.¹ Indeed, the opposite was often the case. The large towns sometimes found it 'less easy' to give a 'sense of community life to the whole or to organise smaller institutions within it that are active and alive.'²

More help, too, might have been expected from the Church. The Quakers played a major role in the movement, especially in its beginnings, as has been indicated, and the Society of Friends was also concerned in many local schemes of subsistence and beautification, including the Eastern Valleys Production Society, the Upholland Experiment in the Wigan district, the Brynmawr Experiment, and work at Tow Law and in Cumberland. The Annual Report of the Society for 1936 declared that:

1. Men Without Work, p. 274.

2. Ibid., p. 275.

'It is the belief of those responsible for the starting of the subsistence production experiments in this country that the conventional proposals for the special areas - transference to other areas, establishment of new industries, inauguration of public utility schemes, rearmament programmes, etc. - can never touch the root of the problem, largely because those who propose them have little first hand knowledge of the conditions they seek to alleviate and still less appreciation of the circumstances that have gone before'¹

Such was all too often the case. Many local churches and clergymen gave help to the movement at its outset, but there was never any collective response on the part of the Church as a whole, or, apart from the Quakers, any one religious sect or denomination. The Church was far more parochial than today, of course, and its ministers tended not to look beyond their immediate parish in the field of welfare. There was also a fear in some quarters that the centres weakened the hold of the Church, although the opposite was just as easily true, since the occupational centres, in some instances, gave their members a wider conception of life and citizenship. The response of the Church of England was particularly lacking in regard to the centres: help from Methodist churches and ministers accounted for somewhat more. The Church as a whole was badly hit by

1. An Order of Friends, Annual Report 1936; see above Chapter 4, p. 140 note 1.

the depression, and the burden of finance loomed large: there was a tendency on the part of many ministers to feel satisfied if the balance sheets showed an excess of income over expenditure:

'The clergy in the slum districts are notoriously overworked, but it is strange how little sympathy some of them seem to have with social effort not directly associated with their own churches. This is particularly so in the case of the clubs....

..... It is equally disconcerting to find how out of touch are many of the clergy in prosperous districts with the problems of the very poor, how ignorant they are of the social service machinery of the country, and how incapable they are of finding men and women to give voluntary service to the less fortunate members of the community.'¹

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The voluntary movement was the subject of a good deal of opposition, not the least of which came from the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress. Except in a measure in Scotland the centres did not have the official backing of these two organisations. A large body of trade union opinion viewed all efforts to engage men and women in handicraft work by voluntary means with the greatest suspicion, not only on the grounds that they

1. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., p. 31.

were working without pay, but also out of a fear that the occupational centres would produce semi-trained craftsmen whose newly acquired skill would be used to under-cut existing wage-rates. If any centres had such effects, declared the T.U.C. in 1934, they should be 'ruthlessly opposed.'¹ In July 1933 a sub-committee appointed by the General Council to inquire into the occupational centres had urged that:

'No support should be given to training and vocational schemes which had for their object the supply of semi-skilled labour in competition with skilled workers, or for the training of men and women to take their places in industries in which there is already considerable unemployment.'²

There was no danger of such happenings, just as fears on the part of the T.U.C. of economic competition through the sale of goods made at the centres were also unfounded, since, as has been stated, stringent regulations in this respect were enforced in all centres.³ In addition, both the Labour Party and T.U.C. felt that work of this kind among the unemployed was merely palliative, and was made an excuse by the Government not to deal with the root causes of unemployment in any drastic fashion. So it was, but the efforts made by these two organisations themselves hardly placed them in a position to criticise the voluntary response,

1. Report of the 66th Trades Union Congress, 1924, p. 125.

2. Ibid., pp. 126-7.

3. See also Chapter 8, pp. 279-80.

let alone, as was stated at the time, think themselves able, in some districts, to put 'a good deal of pressure' on unemployed trade unionists 'not to join the unemployed clubs.'¹ Some shopkeepers also objected, saying that the cobbling and woodwork took away their custom. But the unemployed could neither afford to buy new articles of furniture, nor, in many cases, even to have their shoes repaired: such occupational facilities merely prevented the unemployed from having to walk round barefoot, or throw away what little furniture they possessed. There were, in addition, still objections that the men should be made to go out and look for work, but, in the case of older men particularly, such a quest was obviously useless. Finally, pacifists went so far as to object on the grounds that the physical training was a form of militarism, and that the men, who were sometimes provided with shorts and vests, were being put into uniform.²

The movement faced many problems, of which the most important and difficult to overcome was the widely held theory even in the early 1930's that unemployment was in some way the result of personal failings. In 1936 the Annual Report of the Society of Friends outlined the problem of recognition:

'There are in this country several hundred thousand older men -

1. H.A. Mess, op. cit., p. 48.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 21.

approximately one third of the total number of officially unemployed - who seem at present to be condemned to spend the remainder of their days in enforced idleness, as they have spent the past ten years or so. Their only hope - if it can be called hope - is the outbreak of another war, when they would almost certainly find occupation again. Meanwhile, their initiative quenched or turned into subterranean channels by the workings of the Means Test, they and their families are driven to eke out a meagre existence on the dole, frequently under conditions that are a disgrace to our times.

'Unfortunately, the problems of South Wales, of Durham, of Cumberland, and Lancashire, are little understood by the peoples of the Midlands and the South, whose immediate business they are not. For years these very problems have been shelved, whitewashed or obscured beneath a cloak of misleading statistics. Expressed in percentages, they may seem small, and to be growing smaller: in terms of human lives their repercussions are untold, their extent and their very depth appalling, their deep-rootedness in that other dimension - time - ignored by all but a few.'¹

The statement was accurate in every way. Even in 1936, although much

1. An Order of Friends, Annual Report 1936, p. 29.

had been done by the writers, the press, and the voluntary helpers themselves, there were still those whose idea of helping the unemployed did not extend beyond the provision of cards and billiards. Even in 1936 there were relatively few people in Great Britain who fully comprehended the mental and moral, as well as physical, degradations of long-term unemployment.

This had further repercussions. In his history of the Liverpool Council of Social Service, H.R. Poole has written that 'One of the problems of the unemployment situation on Merseyside was that it went on so long and people got used to it. The "unemployed" became part of the landscape.'¹ As the decade wore on, a level of unemployment of almost two million was accepted more and more as 'normal': after 1936, as the European situation grew worse, the problem of unemployment was thrust into the background. Yet the problem of the long unemployed remained as acute as ever, and the need for the clubs and residential centres increased, therefore, rather than lessened as unemployment gradually declined. The clubs and the voluntary movement disappeared from the public interest after 1938, at the very time when more help and more funds were needed. Often the men who first found employment were those who had attended courses at the residential centres, and who through the clubs had retained greater fitness, physical and mental,

1. H.R. Poole, The Liverpool Council of Social Service (1960), p. 52.

for work. Those who had been among the first to lose their employment were the last, in many cases, to be taken on again, since their condition had deteriorated further than most. The first men to find new jobs were the club leaders, and the movement, therefore, lost its best men first. The clubs and residential centres had to begin the work of training new leaders from those who were left behind, this task usually requiring more effort and patience on the part of the voluntary workers than had been the case with the first group of men to take part in club activities or attend residential courses, for those who were left were less interested or less able.

The club movement in Lancashire had problems of its own to deal with, in addition to those facing the rest of the movement. Whereas in Crook Town, the occupational centres quickly became 'obviously the most important social institutions in the neighbourhood', and while they were also popular in South Wales,¹ this was not the case in Lancashire, where, at first, there is evidence to show that the men regarded the centres with suspicion.² It took some time for the unemployed to realise:

'that the efforts made on their behalf were free from ulterior motives: they felt, as they put it, that there must be some catch somewhere, and agitators were only too ready to suggest that they were being exploited.'³

1. Men Without Work, pp. 313, 320-4.

2. Interview with Tom Quail; see above Chapter 4, p. 155, for biographical details.

3. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., pp. 117-8.

These suspicions were reinforced in Lancashire by the working man's strong conservatism, and a desire for 'respectability.'¹ Joining a centre, it was held, meant assuming the full status of an unemployed man, but many were ashamed to be out of work. This, and, in addition, the idea that the clubs offered 'something for nothing,' meant that the centres in Lancashire often had to struggle hard for their membership at first.

In Lancashire, too, there were larger numbers of both long-unemployed and temporarily out of work persons than elsewhere; there was also a large number of unemployed women.² None of these were likely to be active club members, even if they could be persuaded to join an unemployed centre. The long-term unemployed were usually in the older age group, and were often just content to sit and read or play cards all day: in Salford, one centre, the Regent Road Centre, was provided for middle-aged and elderly unemployed.³ The temporarily out-of-work joined a centre, they used it primarily as a place for recreation, and left again as soon as they found new employment. They were, therefore, unlikely to be interested in learning a craft, for example, or attending a residential centre. The women, too, because of family duties, were not usually inclined to enter fully into the life of the club which they joined. All these factors posed additional problems for the movement

1. This has already been referred to in Chapter 3, pp. 84, 92.

2. Re-adjustment in Lancashire, pp. 23-4, 27; see also Chapter 3, p. 103.

3. See above, Chapter 5, p. 177.

in Lancashire.

The question of unemployed suspicions as to the motives behind the club movement has been referred to. In 1947, H.A. Mess wrote:

'It was sometimes contended that the unemployed were doped by the clubs; that in the absence of them they would have agitated more strongly for better treatment. It seems unlikely. Membership of an unemployed club did not prevent any man from taking part in any protests. There is no reason to think that if the clubs had not existed there would have been more political opposition. It is more likely that the men would have sunk into deep lethargy as indeed many of them had done before the clubs were started.'¹

Such an argument is inaccurate. There can be no doubt that those who eventually became club members in most cases would otherwise have spent their time in idleness. Moreover, the type of man who joined the centres was not usually politically inclined. But Men Without Work discovered that at least some members of the clubs had previously been members of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, and that, although 'one or two' of those who spoke about the N.U.W.M. had 'dropped out because they did not think it any use', the majority 'evidently valued it.'² Although the centres might not have barred men from taking part in political

1. H.A. Mess, op. cit., pp. 52-3.

2. Men Without Work, p. 162; also pp. 55-6, 331.

protest, in South-East Lancashire two instances have been shown where emphasis was placed on the 'non-political' nature of the club movement, and the Mayor of Eccles, in his appeal for funds and donations in 1932 went so far as to state that 'nothing savouring of propaganda will be encouraged or permitted'.¹ It cannot, therefore, be stated with any accuracy that 'if the clubs had not existed there would have been more active political protests': the opposite is probably more correct, since the motives of the Government and middle class in beginning the centres, as has been suggested, were at least in part an attempt to prevent further unemployed demonstrations. Nevertheless, although it is impossible to assess, the increase in political action which might have occurred had the club movement not existed may not have been very great.

The National Unemployed Workers' Movement was strongly opposed to the occupational centres at first, and even after the communist proposals for a 'United Front' had been put forward in 1933 the attitude of the N.U.W.M. to the centres was little changed. In December 1932 the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. declared that the National Council for Social Service and the National Government were engaged in 'a campaign against the militant trend of the unemployed', with 'a view to

1. See above, Chapter 5, pp. 172-3, 175.

keeping the unemployed off the streets.'¹ The N.U.W.M.'s answer to the occupational centres was to attempt to develop a social life in its own branches through the organising of educational and study classes, sports teams, libraries, bands and even holiday camps.² In August 1933 the National Administrative Council issued a lengthy memorandum containing instructions for branch social activities.³ But the branches were also warned that, on no account, must these activities become 'predominant in the life of the N.U.W.M.' They must be regarded:

'only as a means for drawing wider masses of unemployed to our Movement and enabling us to extend our influences amongst the unemployed, and develop the mass struggles against Unemployment.'⁴

In other words, sporting and other activities would attract more members to the movement, and thus counteract the attractiveness of the occupational centres. In its support for the United Front campaign of the Communist Party after 1933, however, the attention of the N.U.W.M. was

1. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 3-4 December 1932; the continued opposition of the N.U.W.M. to the occupational centres in the years after 1933 contrasts with the change in attitude of the N.U.W.M. to the Unemployed Associations of the T.U.C. in these years (see below, Chapter 8, p. 310).
2. The idea of holiday camps for members of the N.U.W.M. was put forward in April 1934 (Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 7-8 April 1934).
3. Ibid., 26-27 August 1933; there is no evidence to show that the N.U.W.M. was successful in developing a social side to its branch activities on any comparable to the scale of the occupational centres.
4. Ibid., 25-26 February 1933.

directed far more towards winning the support of the T.U.C. Associations than that of the occupational centres.¹

Gradually, the suspicions of the unemployed in this direction were overcome. Yet it was often still difficult to persuade those who had finally joined the centre now to participate in its activities. It was the opinion of Tom Quail, the handicrafts organiser for the SELNEC Regional Council, that as few as two per cent of club members were interested in the facilities and activities of the clubs.² The remainder were in too poor a condition to join in, or were too old, and were merely content to sit by the fire and read, the centres merely acting as a place for them to go as an alternative to staying at home, or walking the streets. A much greater degree of participation from the unemployed was required, but this proved difficult to obtain. Games were the main interest, whether indoors for the older men, or outdoor sports for the younger element, although art and woodwork attracted many, and amateur dramatics, toy-making and music interested significant minorities. The response to educational classes was, as has been stated, apathetic. Many held allotments, which provided them with hours of interest.

Finance was always a major problem. The difficulties of finding men and women to act as supervisors for a wage of about £3 per week

1. See below, Chapter 9 , p.357.

2. Interview with Tom Quail; see above Chapter 4, p. 155 , note 1 , for biographical details.

were many. The staff of the regional councils and the clubs themselves were notoriously poorly paid, and yet often took voluntary wage reductions in times of extreme difficulty: such was the dedication and enthusiasm required on their part. The supervisors position was hardly enviable, for, in many ways, the success of a centre depended on his efforts, and ability to work among the unemployed. 'The supervisor was the servant of the trustees and the leader of the men. The success of a club depended in no small measure on his initiative, his tact, his popularity, his firmness.'¹ Premises also presented problems: as has been stated, many were not available for more than afternoons each week, few were available in the evenings. Many centres were begun in unsuitable buildings, but, at least in these cases, in spite of the repairs needed, the unemployed could feel that the club was 'their own'.² Finally, there was always a significant fall in attendances in the summer months. In clubs in which financial stability depended on a regular income, however small, being maintained, this was a serious matter. SELNEC's Windmill urged that 'it is better to save our energies and any ideas we may have for the more active months.'³ The holiday schemes enabled centres to retain the interest of members in the summer months.

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1. H.A. Mess, op. cit., p. 48.

2. Unemployment and Community Service, p. 21.

3. Windmill, June-July-August edition, 1939.

It is, unfortunately, impossible to give an accurate and detailed account of the age-groups of the men and women who joined the occupational centres. There is no evidence to show that the National Council of Social Service ever compiled such records, or that either SELNEC, the Lancashire and Cheshire Community Council or any of the centres to which reference has been made in South-East Lancashire were concerned with such facts. As far as the clubs themselves were concerned only in the case of the Pilgrim Club was even passing reference to be found of the age groups of the members:¹ In the Manchester University Settlement's Annual Report for 1936-7 it was stated that club membership was 'sharply divided' between young men of 18-25 years, and men in the 40-55 age group. Only the Report Men Without Work studied in some detail the ages of the club members within the six towns and districts with which it was concerned: but little can be determined from even these figures, so small were the samples involved in each case, and so

Table 1: Age groups of occupational centre members in 3 towns.

Town or district number of men in sample	Rhondda 33	Crook 48	Leicester 18
under 25 years	4	1	1
25-34	7	12	7
35-44	6	14	3
45-54	6	10	3
55 and over	10	11	4

(From Men Without Work: A Report made to the Pilgrim Trust)

1. See above Chapter 5, pp. 191-2.

much did the club membership vary from region to region, and also club to club within one town.

There were distinct groups of men outside the realms of the centres. These included those who were already members of established social institutions, such as churches or trade unions, and who retained their membership of these establishments, and whose contact, therefore, with the world at large was not significantly reduced by unemployment. There were those, mostly in the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups, whose family connections were their main social life, and whose need for contacts elsewhere were also less, and those men who had hobbies or other interests in life. In addition, there were always many men who had depended exclusively on employment for their social contacts, and who were completely lost when thrown out of work. They thought only in terms of getting back to work, and could not be persuaded to take an interest in anything else. Finally, there were a number of 'unemployable' men, lacking interests of any kind, who had settled down to existence on the dole.

In contrast to the statement made by the Manchester University Settlement as to the ages of the Pilgrim Club members, Men Without Work reported that 'one of the big tasks ahead of the voluntary movement is to find some institutional expression which will win the loyalty of

the younger men.'¹ There is no evidence to show that, in the short space of time between the publication of this Report in 1938 and the outbreak of war, anything was achieved in this direction. It would seem likely that few young men in the 18-25 age group ever joined an occupational centre. Probably their need for the centres was less than that of older men. Those that did join, however, were likely to become among the most active club members. A large number of those who joined the centres were long-term unemployed, in the 45-54 and over age groups, and it was among these men that the voluntary movement did its most valuable work. The feeling of uselessness weighed heavily on the minds of these men. It was felt that:

'The spirit of community service, the sense of being able to do something for others without payment, and in ways that do not conflict with trade or reduce the opportunities for paid jobs, can provide real happiness and contentment for those men who had come to think that they could be of no use, and that nobody wanted or cared for them'.²

Many had lost confidence in themselves, and watched others, often less competent than themselves, getting back into work, simply because they did not consider themselves good enough. This added to their sense of inferiority, and unemployment became something of a vicious circle,

1. Men Without Work, p. 279.

2. J.Q. Henriques, op. cit., p. 126.

eventually reducing them to the level of the unemployables. The centres rendered considerable help to these men in many cases; the fact that such men were able to try their hand at handicrafts and other activities which they had never before attempted, or suspected they could do, went a long way towards restoring their self-confidence, and also their self-respect. Finally there were those men, who, having always had one type of employment, never dreamed of being able to take up work of a different kind. Again the clubs did much to combat this lack of initiative and imagination, in providing this type of man with new interests.

The final verdict on the occupational centres can only be a mixed one, however. There can be no doubt that, throughout Great Britain, many thousands of unemployed men and women were provided with interests, and given some sort of purpose in life by which they were protected from the worst effects of unemployment. For these people the 1930's would have been much worse years had it not been for the existence of the centres, and for the work of the regional organisations and of the National Council of Social Service in directing a considerable amount of help from outside, and self-help from within, the areas worst hit by unemployment. The major response was undoubtedly made from sincere motives. However, the meanness and parsimony of the Government in its attitude towards the occupational centres contrasted strongly with the magnitude of the problem. The real problems of the unemployed were

partially alleviated but in no way solved by the centres. It was left to the Labour Party in Parliament, whose contribution was by no means an inconsiderable one, and also to the National Unemployed Workers' Movement to attempt to put political pressure on the National Government to bring about an improvement in the conditions in which the unemployed were being forced to live.

Chapter Eight

THE RESPONSE OF THE T.U.C. AND LABOUR PARTY

Between the wars, to the British Labour Party unemployment was anathema. Vaguely, Labour held that Socialism would remove unemployment along with all other evils of the capitalist system. But Labour theorists had no prepared answer either in 1924 or 1929-31, and in both cases the Party failed to find any solution in practice. In office, Labour followed the orthodox policies of its Conservative predecessors with only minor modifications. In 1929 the incidence of unemployment in Great Britain was even higher than it had been in 1924, the Labour Party and Government proved only more ready to accept the failure of its efforts. As early as May 1930 Hugh Dalton felt that 'there was a terrible and growing defeatism' within the Party about the possibility of reducing the number of unemployed. He recorded in his diary that J.H. Thomas, Lord Privy Seal in the Labour Government, and Minister with special responsibility for unemployment, had spoken to him to the effect that 'we can do nothing: we are in the hands of Providence. In America they have five millions unemployed, while we have only one and three-quarter millions.'¹ At the Party Conference in 1929, only a few months after it had taken office, J.R. Clynes had been among the first to set the apologetic tone of the Government in its failure to deal with

1. H. Dalton, Call Back Yesterday (1953), pp. 261-2.

the problem: in face of an attack on the Executive's statement in the Report that there had so far been 'no opportunity' for the Minister to deal with administrative injustices, let alone produce plans for new legislation, he insisted that 'Everything we can possibly do we are trying to do.'¹ J.H. Thomas, just returned from Canada, with vague promises that that nation would now buy its goods from 'the Old Country', took up what became a familiar defence when he remarked that the Labour Government held office 'on sufferance'. Any attempt to introduce 'a Socialist measure', and they would be told by the Liberals and Conservatives 'out you go'.² Yet it was not the lack of a parliamentary majority which prevented the Labour Government of 1929-31 from adopting a radical unemployment policy, but rather that the Party was as a whole firmly committed to the principles of orthodox finance throughout the 1920's and early 1930's. The majority of the members of the Labour Party accepted the prevailing arguments that a public works programme was no solution to the problem.³ Indeed, unemployment was a subject to which little reference was made by the Labour leaders. It was given only limited time at the Annual Party Conferences, when few, if any, members of the Executive volunteered their opinions. Moreover, in spite of a considerable number of publications, on a wide variety of topics, the Labour Party put out only six pamphlets on the problem of

1. Report of the 29th. Labour Party Conference, 1929, p. 175.

2. Ibid., p. 177.

3. See above, Chapter 2.

unemployment in the six years between 1929 and 1935, and one of these, Who Imposed the Means Test (1935) was only three pages long.¹

In many ways the response of the Labour Party and T.U.C. to the problem of unemployment was severely limited. Having failed to reduce the number of unemployed during the years 1929-31, the number of Labour M.P.'s after this date was too few to make anything other than a marginal impression on the Government, although the very small numbers of the Independent Labour Party group, ^{JAMES} John Maxton, John McGovern and company, were always more vociferous than most of their Labour Party colleagues. Aneurin Bevan, J.J. Lawson, Labour M.P. for Chester-le-Street, and a small number of other Labour M.P.'s were consistent advocates for the unemployed, both in the House of Commons and at the Party Conference. In general, however, as Michael Foot has pointed out, it was not the case that the Labour Party and T.U.C., 'inspired by their anger at the MacDonald betrayal', turned with renewed energy 'to lead and guide the passion of revolt.'² Although trade union membership had shrunk to less than four million, the lowest figure recorded between the two wars, the T.U.C. was still primarily concerned with the employed, and devoted little

1. The others were: Conservative Attacks on the Unemployed (1929) 12pp; How to Conquer Unemployment: Labour's Reply to Lloyd George (1929) 30pp; Smashing the Unemployed (1932) 10pp; A. Greenwood, Unemployment and the Distressed Areas (1935) 16pp; and The Iniquitous Means Test (1933), 12pp. In 1937, the Labour Party's Commission of Enquiry into the distressed areas produced five reports, dealing with Central Scotland, West Cumberland, Lancashire, South Wales and Durham and the North-East coast.
2. M. Foot, Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, I (1966 ed.), p. 136.

attention to those out of work. The attacks of the communists on Party and union leaders had aroused a distrust and dislike of the Communist Party among the Labour and trade union leaders, only very partially dispelled after 1933 with the events in Germany and the change in the Communist Party 'line'.¹ As a result, the Labour leaders refused to associate in any way with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, which they viewed as a satellite organisation of the Communist Party, nor, indeed, with anything that smacked of militancy or 'revolution'.

It was not until February 1933, therefore, that the Labour movement organised its first major demonstration against unemployment. Towards the end of the previous year, the National Joint Council, representing the T.U.C. General Council and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, had set up a Committee to organise a National Demonstration against Unemployment, to be followed by a series of similar demonstrations in provincial towns and cities. The assistance of the London Trades Council was secured, and the Co-operative Union was also associated with the demonstrations from the outset. In London, the various constituency Labour parties, Trades Councils and District Committees of the major Unions combined, and with E.P. Harries of the T.U.C. Organisation Department as Secretary of the Committee, the demonstration, which was held in Hyde Park on Sunday, 5th. February 1933, proved to be

1. See below, Chapter 9, p. 343 et seq.

one of the largest to be held in the 1930's.¹

The Times reported next morning that the procession from the Victoria Embankment to Hyde Park was 'the longest of a political character seen in London for many years.' Two hours after the first section had entered the Park, contingents with their banners were still marching through Piccadilly, and before many thousands of marchers had reached Hyde Park, a meeting at which speeches were made from eight separate platforms had come to an end.² The speakers included Walter Citrine, Herbert Morrison, C.R. Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps, John Bromley, George Lansbury, C.T. Cramp, George Hicks and Will Thorne, M.P. 'Mr. Lansbury drew the largest audience', reported the Times, 'which he led in singing "The Red Flag" and "The International".'

More than 1,600 police were on duty, but there was no suggestion of disorder during the march or meeting.³ Although attempts had been made to exclude them, Communists and members of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement took part in the demonstration, 'working their way into the main procession so astutely that any attempt to remove the groups would have presented great difficulty', said the Times. Their policy was to join up with the rear of each of the sections of the

1. Report of the 33rd., Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 20.

2. Times, 6 February 1933.

3. Mepol 2, 3037, 'Meetings, Processions and Demonstrations', Pts. IV and V, 1934-5.

demonstration as these moved away from their area places of assembly. When the separate processions converged on the Embankment, the Communists 'retained their places, and with five or six concentrations were able to give the impression that they were an integral part in the demonstration.'¹ As the majority marched in silence, the Communists and N.U.W.M. supporters advertised their presence by the shouting of slogans. There were many bands, and two long lines of decorated Co-operative vans also accompanied the marchers, who were led by a 'picturesque mounted detachment of farriers', wearing top hats and gaily coloured sashes.² Large numbers of banners were carried, but the high wind blew many of them to shreds early in the march. Thousands of onlookers lined the pavements as the procession made its way along Northumberland Avenue, Trafalgar Square, Lower Regent-st., and Piccadilly. Once in Hyde Park, the communists withdrew from the rest and gathered round their own speakers, and, for the benefit of latecomers, some of whom had been on the road since morning, prolonged their meeting for some time after the demonstration was nominally over.

At a quarter to five, the speeches were brought to a close, and a long Resolution was read out, which was adopted by a show of hands.

1. Times, 6 February 1933.

2. Ibid.

This declared:

'This National Demonstration... emphatically condemns the Government's handling of the problems of unemployment. It calls for an immediate reversal of the policy of alleged "Economy" which has resulted in a drastic reduction of public expenditure on national and local schemes of useful work....

'The Demonstration protests against the Government's action in reducing wages and salaries in the public services, and its encouragement of a wage-cutting policy by employers generally.....

'The Demonstration enters its strong protest against the changes made by the Government in the Unemployment Insurance Scheme and against the further changes proposed 'in the Majority Report of the Royal Commission. These changes are calculated to increase destitution and vagrancy, and to reduce to starvation levels the already inadequate allowances to the unemployed and their dependants.

'The Demonstration demands the abolition of the Means Test and the complete removal of unemployed persons from the area of the Poor Law. It calls upon the Government to put a stop to the objectionable policy of Public Assistance Committees in administering the Test and lowering the scales of relief: and asserts once more the claim for adequate maintenance of the unemployed from national funds.....

'The Demonstration calls upon the Government to give full support to the movement towards the establishment of the 40-hour week, without reduction of wages, by international agreement.....'¹

Subsequently, the Resolution, signed on behalf of the General Council, Labour Party and Co-operative Union, was presented in the form of a Petition to the House of Commons by George Lansbury, Leader of the Opposition. It had been hoped that the Chairman of the General Council, supported by a number of unemployed workers, would be allowed to present the petition at the Bar of the House, but this was found to be impossible.²

The Daily Worker pointed to the demonstration as evidence of what it called the 'splitting policy' of the Labour Party and T.U.C. and called it 'a demonstration against unemployment with the majority of the unemployed left out.'³ The paper quoted several instances where Labour parties and trades unions in provincial towns had invited the N.U.W.M. to join in the local demonstrations, in spite of the attitude of the national leadership.⁴ In fact, during the next week, supporting demon-

1. National Joint Council, Official Programme of the National Demonstration on Unemployment. (1933), 8pp; Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933.

2. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933; Report of the 65th Trades Union Congress, 1933, pp. 98, 122-3.

3. Daily Worker, 30 January 1933.

4. Ibid., 21 January 1933; there is no evidence to support these claims. The West Ham Trades Council divided equally (19 votes to 19) on a proposal to allow the N.U.W.M. to participate in the demonstration, but the Chairman's casting vote was opposed (Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council Demonstration, 5 February 1933).

strations were held in more than twenty towns and cities in Britain, including Swansea, Birmingham, Leeds, Hull, Manchester, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Edinburgh and Glasgow.¹

The success of this demonstration prompted the Committee responsible for its organisation to propose that the National Joint Council should take in hand the planning of a May Day Demonstration on similar lines.² This, too, was a success, attended as it was by a mass crowd.³ But the demonstration on 5th February was to remain the only major demonstration against unemployment held under the official auspices of the Labour movement in the 1930's. The remainder of the efforts made on behalf of the unemployed were restricted to protest resolutions. For example, on November 3rd., 1932, the General Council addressed a letter to the Prime Minister expressing the opinion that the underlying cause of public disorder and unemployed demonstrations and disturbances was the policy of the Government with regard to the administration of the Means Test and the 'economy' campaign. The General Council strongly urged the Prime Minister to withdraw the Test, and to review the reductions made in unemployment allowances and benefits. In his reply, the Prime

1. Report of the 65th. Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 122.

2. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 21.

3. Mepol 2, 3051, May Day Demonstration, 7 May 1933.

Minister's Private Secretary expressed surprise that it had been suggested that these disorders were the result of Government policy, and claimed that they were 'deliberately engineered' by 'Communist elements.'¹

More significant was the letter of protest forwarded from the National Joint Council in December 1932 to the Government concerning the arrests and committal of Tom Mann and Emrhys Llewellyn on charges of being:

'disturbers of the peace and inciters of persons to take part in mass demonstrations which were calculated to involve a contravention of the provisions of the Seditious Meetings Act, 1817.'²

In the absence of an undertaking to enter into personal sureties of £200 to keep the peace for 12 months and to find sureties of £100 each, the two men had each been sentenced to two months imprisonment. George Lansbury, Leader of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, raised the matter with the Home Secretary, and travelled to Lossiemouth to present a Memorial in person to the Prime Minister on behalf of the National Joint Council.³ He also visited Tom Mann in prison.⁴ 'There

1. Report of the 65th. Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 123.

2. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 21; Times, 22 December 1932.

3. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 21.

4. Times, 9 January 1933.

was a widespread feeling that extended to circles outside the Labour Movement', said the Labour Party Report for 1933, 'that this case was a notable example of the vindictive treatment meted out to political opponents on account of their pronounced and extreme opinions.'¹

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In 1932 the T.U.C. General Council began to consider a scheme for Unemployed Associations, in an attempt to ensure that at least some of those who had lost their employment were given the opportunity to keep in touch with their unions and work-mates. The organisation of these Associations, however, was left entirely to local trades councils, who could, if they wished, take steps to form such an organisation in their district, although the decision to do so was to be entirely voluntary, and they were in no way compelled to set about such work. The T.U.C. had first considered such a scheme in 1927, but the idea had been dropped. However, the Report of 1932 stated briefly that:

'Towards the end of last year, a combination of circumstances caused the General Council to reconsider the whole question.

In a number of instances, political parties, religious bodies and philanthropic institutions were forming such Associations, in other cases the local Trade Unionists were active in forming unofficial bodies independent of the local Trades Council,

1. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 21.

while it was found that the great needs of the unemployed were exercising the minds of national philanthropic institutions, who were considering national organisation with local branches.¹

In fact, prior to the General Council scheme being considered, approximately thirty associations had been formed, as a result of local agitation, by trade unionists. 'The growth of unemployment', the Report continued, 'together with the real necessity for a determined and organised attempt further to cater for the needs of the unemployed', had 'influenced' the Council in its decision to recommend the formation of unemployed associations under the auspices of Trades Councils.² The decision as to whether or not an association should be formed was left to the Trades Council in each area. The associations were to remain closely linked with the trade union movement, and were to be represented on local trades councils federations. In order that they might become organising subsidiaries of the trade union movement as a whole, it was made a condition of membership that those who joined should pledge themselves, on taking up new employment, to join the appropriate trade union.

The response, so the General Council alleged, was heavy: 'few proposals', stated the 1932 Report, 'had excited more interest' among trades councils than circulars on this subject. More than five thousand

1. Report of the 64th. Trades Union Congress, 1932, p. 121.

2. Ibid., p. 122.

copies of a Model Constitution were printed, but these had been exhausted by the time of the Congress, and a reprint had been necessary. At the time of writing, fifty-eight Unemployed Associations had been formed, with an enrolled membership varying between fifty and one thousand; in addition, 'in fifty-two cases the matter is under active discussion.' On the other hand, thirty-one trades councils had informed the General Council 'that they do not propose to take any action in the matter, principally due to local circumstances.' It was also noted that those associations formed before the announcement of the General Council scheme were considering the adoption of the Model Rules and Constitution.¹

For its part, the Labour Party decided to 'leave responsibility in the matter' of organising the unemployed to the General Council. During the year, the Conference Report of 1933 stated, 'Constituency Parties where no Trades Council exists have asked for permission to organise unemployed workpeople in association with the Party'. The National Executive had decided, after consultation with the T.U.C. General Council, 'to offer no objection', provided that the rules approved by the General Council were adopted in all cases, with one or two 'slight adjustments'.² The Associations would not be allowed to affiliate with the Party. The Report also stated that the Executive was of the opinion that 'great advantages are to be found in the organisation of unemployed workers by

1. Ibid.

2. Report of the 33rd. Labour Party Conference, 1933, p. 30; the Report did not explain what these 'slight adjustments' were to be.

the industrial side of the Labour Movement', and that it had only taken action in areas where no suitable industrial organisations were in existence.

The General Council regarded the associations as having great value in future recruitment to the trade union movement. With a large and growing number of young persons unemployed, many of whom had been unable to find work since leaving school, and who were, therefore, in their present situation ineligible for Trade Union membership, the Associations were obviously in a position not only to demonstrate the value of trade union organisation, but were also able to put these young people in touch with the organiser of the appropriate Trade Union once they had been able to find work. Similarly, as far as older persons were concerned, the Association brought the non-unionist into contact with the Trade Union Movement, and could again, by local co-operation, put the organiser of the Trade Union concerned in touch with him for recruitment purposes when he obtained fresh employment. In this connection, the 1932 Report to Congress stated that the Bristol Unemployed Association had turned over more than seven hundred members to local trades union branches, while, in one or two cases, the publicity given to the General Council's scheme had resulted in preliminary steps being taken to form a Trades Council where such did not exist before, in order that an Association

might be established.¹

The main purpose of these Associations, however, unlike those established under the auspices of the National Council of Social Service, was recreational, and under no circumstances were the organisers of the T.U.C. Unemployed Associations allowed to provide occupational activities such as shoe-mending, furniture repair, for the Association members.² Where trades union working men's clubs were already in existence, the Association members were allowed to use these premises and facilities at certain times. On other cases, the local trades council provided accomodation, sometimes hiring halls for the purpose. The main activities were, therefore, cards, billiards and table tennis. Where possible, physical training classes were held, and football teams begun, but rarely did the activities of the Unemployed Associations have the scope of those of the occupational centres, with whom contact was minimal.

By the end of 1933 some 109 Associations were stated to be in existence, fifty-seven of which had a total of 26,267 members. The T.U.C. reported that it had distributed 13,700 copies of the Model Rules and Constitution, and sold 37,500 membership cards to the Associations, although many organisations were said to have had their cards printed locally.³ In July 1933 a conference of representatives of Unemployed

1. Report of the 64th. Trades Union Congress, 1932, p. 123.

2. See below, pp. 279-80, 294-5.

2. Report of the 65th. Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 126.

Associations was held, presided over by A. Conley, Chairman of the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee, which was attended by members of that Committee, in addition to the Chairman, General Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the T.U.C. General Council.

At the invitation of the Workers' Educational Association, a deputation appointed by the General Council visited the Lincoln People's Service Club, run by the W.E.A., in August 1932. The deputation included A.B. Swales and F. Wolstencroft of the General Council, A. Conley, and A. Odell, Trades Council Representative for Lincoln. It was decided, however, that the T.U.C. General Council should not become associated with the Lincoln scheme.¹ Similarly, in November 1932, the General Council was invited to co-operate with the British Institute of Adult Education in the formation of a National Joint Consultative Committee for the purpose of co-ordinating educational, recreational and social facilities for the unemployed. The General Council decided, however, that they would co-operate only as far as educational and recreational facilities for the unemployed were concerned, and that they would have no share in schemes involving the production of goods. A conference was also held with representatives of the National Council of Social Service, but the T.U.C. General Council again decided that 'they could not see their way to associate with' the National Council in this manner. The 1933 T.U.C.

1. Report of the 66th. Trades Union Congress, 1934, p. 123.

Report stated that:

'This decision was taken on the grounds of national policy, the General Council feeling that they could not in any way be regarded as condoning the action of the Government in attempting to shelve their responsibility for the welfare of unemployed workers by placing it upon the shoulders of a voluntary organisation with a paltry grant of £10,000.'¹

However, the General Council also felt that their decision should not in any way encroach upon the rights of Trades Councils or individual Trade Unionists to co-operate in local schemes of this kind if they so wished. The Report noted that a considerable amount of correspondence had resulted from the Council's decision, from which it appeared that several Trades Councils were working in close co-operation with local Councils of social service and Mayors' Funds Committees.² The General Council did encourage Trades Councils to take advantage of the Society of Friends' scheme for allotments and cheap seeds, and of the educational classes organised by the W.E.A. and the National Council of Labour Colleges.³

An appeal, on behalf of the General Council, was issued by the National Playing Fields Association, for gifts of Footballs, cricket, hockey and boxing equipment. The response was limited, however, but

1. Report of the 65th. Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 120.

2. Ibid., pp. 120-1.

3. Ibid., p. 121.

the Pilgrim Trust made a grant of £250 for the purchase of equipment.¹ As a result, the General Council was able to distribute to Unemployed Associations 262 association and rugby footballs: 72 dozen football jerseys; 74 dozen pairs of football shorts; 50 dozen pairs of football socks; 43 sets of boxing gloves, hockey sticks, golf clubs, and steel quoits; 50 sets indoor games (dominoes, darts, table-tennis, hook-it, and draughts); and sixty sets of cricket equipment (bats, balls and stumps).²

By the time of the Weymouth Congress in 1934 the number of Unemployed Associations in existence had risen to 123. The Report stated that 'This number has remained more or less stationary for some months'; a few new associations had been formed it was stated, but others had lapsed, or, in some cases, broken away from the auspices of the Trades Council concerned.³ 54,000 membership cards had been sold. The Report also noted that 'the diversity of Trade Union rules has made it impracticable to evolve any general system of free entry of members of Unemployed Associations into Trade Unions', but it was understood that in a number of cases where entrance fees were charged, those had been paid by instalments over a number of weeks.

The Annual Report of the Workers' Educational Association for 1934-5 stated that, as a result of a conference between representatives of the

1. Pilgrim Trust, Annual Report 1932, p. 13.

2. Report of the 65th. Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 122.

3. Report of the 66th. Trades Union Congress, 1934, pp. 123, 125.

Association and the T.U.C. Education Committee, contact had been established with some of the Unemployed Associations, and a number of special classes for unemployed had been held. In addition, a week-end school for unemployed had been held at Lyme Regis, and members of the T.U.C. Associations had attended. The Report continued:

'While holding strongly that we preferred to provide for the unemployed student to join the normal W.E.A. class, we have seized the opportunity of co-operating with organisations which which desired to utilise our educational machinery for special classes for unemployed groups, and we have organised scores of such groups in our own Districts.'¹

Prior to the 1935 Trades Union Congress, a questionnaire was sent out by the General Council to all the Unemployed Associations. 57 replies indicated a total of 22,420 members in these cases, which the 1935 Report estimated was not more than half of the grand total membership. The Report noted 'with regret, that the majority of trades councils prefer to leave the organisation of unemployed workers to non-union bodies.' This was as near an admission of the failure of the General Council scheme as was likely to be made: it had become clear that the Associations would never cater for more than a very small percentage of the total unemployed, and that they were by no means as attractive to the out-of-work

1. Workers' Educational Association, Annual Report 1934-5, p. 28; for further details of the work of the Association in relation to the unemployed see above Chapter 4, p. 166 et seq.

as the comparable occupational centres run by philanthropic institutions. In an effort to ensure their greater success, the General Council decided to give some organisational help, and a list of suggested activities was sent out together with proposals for co-ordinating the activities of the associations within a Federation area. This met with some success: Federation representatives were given financial support to visit trades councils and unemployed associations in order to advise them, and the 1935 Report noted that active steps towards the co-ordination of association activities had been taken by the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation, the Yorkshire Federation, and by the Monmouthshire Federation.¹

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Some mention has already been made of the way in which the Unemployed Associations were run. As in the case of the Voluntary Occupational Centres, where a subscription was charged, it was no more than a penny or two-pence per week. The activities of the Associations were also comparable with those of the Occupational Centres, though less well developed and wide-ranging. Indeed, the social and educational side of the movement was neglected in favour of the protective side, that is, ensuring the members legal rights. The 1935 T.U.C. Report stated:

1. Report of the 67th. Trades Union Congress, 1935, p. 122; no other evidence was found to substantiate the claim made with regard to the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation.

'In a large number of areas, club-rooms were placed at the disposal of the unemployed, and the necessary work in connection with the Courts of Referees, Public Assistance and their many difficulties were willingly undertaken by the union officials... in every particular they (i.e. the associations members) were treated in the same way as full-benefit members and were thus assisted to maintain their self-confidence and morale.'¹

In this respect, because of the official recognition given to the Associations in many cases by the local Courts of Referees and other awarding bodies, the members of the Unemployed Associations were better off than those who joined the N.U.W.M. In many areas, however, the Associations were left to find their own premises, and although, as has been stated, some Associations co-operated with the local council of social service and Mayor's Fund Committee, these were the exception rather than the rule.

The objections raised by the General Council to the Voluntary Occupational Centres, however, meant that anything other than the provision of games or educational classes for members of the Associations was frowned upon. On the question of what work or pastime could be provided for unemployed men and women, a considerable amount of prejudice existed. A large body of trade union opinion viewed all efforts to

1. Ibid., pp. 123-4, 127.

engage men and women in handicrafts by voluntary means with the gravest suspicion, fearing that the occupational centres would produce semi-trained craftsmen who would be used to undercut existing wage rates, so carefully built up by trade union effort. The 1935 T.U.C. Report stated categorically that if any such centre had this effect, it should be 'ruthlessly opposed.'¹ At a time when membership was declining, when funds were low, and when the main direction of trade union activity was in fighting wage reductions, this attitude was, in many ways, understandable and excusable.

On December 19th., 1932, the Scottish T.U.C. General Council issued a statement saying that it would oppose any movement in which goods were produced by the unemployed and sold to the public, but that it would be prepared to assist efforts designed primarily for the purpose of occupying the unemployed by methods which might include the production of articles, and the supply of services, by the unemployed for their own immediate personal use, provided that no payments were made for such articles and services, and that no organised system of exchange was worked.² Similarly, a Committee appointed by the English T.U.C. in 1934 decided that certain safeguards must be made before the General Council should support any schemes of this nature: the occupational

1. Ibid., p. 125.

2. Ibid., pp. 125-8.

centres must not act as training centres, and the goods produced must not be for public sale.¹

This Committee was appointed to consider 'the whole of the services' which the General Council 'render to the unemployed', as well as those services provided by other bodies, 'and to report on what extensions or alterations, if any, are necessary so far as the General Council are concerned.' Its Chairman was George Hicks, M.P., and it included A.A. Purcell, Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council,² A.M. Wall, Secretary of the London Trades Council, J.J. Mallon,³ H.H. Elvin and Mrs. C.D. Rackham.⁴ The Committee decided that there should be no curtailment of efforts to form Unemployed Associations, or to extend the influence and activity of those which had already been formed. The Committee also recommended that any unions affiliated to Congress, with a large number of unemployed members, should investigate the possibility of providing facilities whereby such members may retain their employability.

1. Social Service Review, XVI (September 1935).

2. See below, p. 297 et seq; also Appendix VI for biographical details.

3. See above, Chapter 4, p. 144, note 1.

4. Mrs. Clara Rackham, J.P., M.A., was a member of the Cambridgeshire County Council, and had been temporary Inspector of Factories at the Home Office from 1915-19. (Labour Research Department, Monthly Circular, XX (January 1931).) She was one of the two Labour members of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 1930-32 (see below, Chapter 10, p. 396 et seq).

Herbert Henry Elvin (1874-1949), General Secretary, National Union of Clerks and Administrative Workers, 1910-41; member, National Playing Fields Association. Engaged for many years in social and religious activity in the East End of London; member, National Whitley Council; Governor, Ruskin College, Oxford.

There should, in addition, be 'the fullest possible development of social, recreational and educational facilities' under the auspices of the whole trade union and Labour movement.¹ The Committee reached the conclusion that the Unemployed Association 'performed an extremely useful purpose in protecting their members and ensuring existing rights under legislation.' They also conducted local agitations regarding the provision of works schemes for the unemployed, and were 'a useful auxiliary to the trade union movement in the locality.' The Associations 'represented a body of unemployed workers far exceeding those catered for by any other voluntary organisation.'² This latter statement was clearly incorrect: the membership of the occupational centre movement was obviously far higher. The lack of evidence available both nationally and locally as to the extent and nature of the Unemployed Associations, compared with the records which are still in existence relating to the occupational centres, points to the conclusion that the T.U.C. scheme was of lesser importance, although in the case of both movements it is difficult to assess membership with any accuracy.

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1. Report of the 67th. Trades Union Congress, 1935, pp. 123-4; Social Service Review, XVI (September 1935).
 2. Ibid.
 3. In Harry McShane's opinion, the Unemployed Association 'never got off the ground': McShane was Scottish organiser of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (see below, Appendix VI, for biographical details).

According to the T.U.C., at the peak of the movement, in the years between 1934 to 1936, there were about one hundred and thirty Unemployed Associations in existence, and around fifty of these were in the two counties of Lancashire and Cheshire. The 1936 Report of the T.U.C. stated:

'In three areas, Lancashire and Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Monmouthshire, a considerable amount of success had been attained, the Federations in these areas having devoted a considerable amount of time and energy towards the establishment of Unemployed Associations, and having succeeded in building up a network of these bodies in their areas.....

'The Lancashire and Cheshire experiment is being watched with interest. In Yorkshire and Monmouthshire the work is being done directly through the Federation of Trades Councils, but in Lancashire and Cheshire a separate Sub-Federation of Unemployed Associations has been formed with its own secretary and Committee. It is recognised that there is the danger of the separate Federation losing touch with the Trades Council Federation, and the necessity for avoiding this difficulty has been repeatedly emphasised, but the new Federation is producing results, and is working in the closest contact with the Federation of Trades Councils. It is gaining strength and

at present consists of thirty-seven Associations.¹

The 1939 Report estimated that almost fifty Associations were in existence in Lancashire and Cheshire.²

There is, unfortunately, no local evidence to confirm these statements, or even to show that the formation and encouragement of Unemployed Associations figured to any great extent in the work of the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation. Very few records still exist: most certainly, while in Yorkshire and Monmouth the Federation Annual Reports might show evidence of the formation of such Associations, as far as Lancashire and Cheshire were concerned, no records of the Sub-Federation have been kept, if any existed, and those of the main Federation make little or no reference to unemployment. It would appear from the evidence available that the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation did little more than pass resolutions condemning the Means Test, economy cuts and so on, and, therefore, that the Unemployed Associations that were formed were very small organisations, which did not, like the voluntary occupational centres, keep records of their own. Only one piece of evidence, with relation to the efforts of the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation, has been found: a special conference on unemployment was held in September 1938 to discuss the resolutions passed at the Trades Union Congress of that year. These were, firstly, on the question of unemployment benefits,

1. Report of the 68th. Trades Union Congress, 1936, p. 56.

2. Report of the 71st. Trades Union Congress, 1939.

'This Conference affirms that the time has arrived when a substantial increase in all benefits and allowances should be made to all applicants and their dependants', and, secondly, a demand for the abolition of the 'vicious and inequitable' Means Test:

'The whole question of the Household Means Test is an impossible proposition. It cannot be equitably applied, and, apart from that, it is wrong that an unemployed person should be forced to exist by the kindness of relatives and friends..... The responsibility is a national one, and the unemployed are entitled to look to the nation to provide them with employment or maintenance.'¹

Similarly, the evidence to show that there were fifty (or even thirty-seven) Unemployed Associations in existence in the area is very limited. In February 1932, such an Association was formed at Rochdale, under the auspices of the local Trades and Labour Council, but it met with little success and no reports of its activities by the local press are to be found after mid-April of that year.² In November, 1932, an Unemployed Association was begun by the Heywood and District Trades Council, but this, too, received little mention in the local press,

1. Report of the 70th. Trades Union Congress, 1938, p. 452; Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Trades Councils and Trades and Labour Councils, Resolution for a Special Conference on Unemployment (Manchester, 1938), 2pp.

2. Rochdale Observer, 13 February 1932; 20 February 1932; 27 February 1932; 16 April 1932.

although the weekly meetings of the N.U.W.M. in the town were given very full coverage.¹ In August of the following year, the Association was referred to in a letter to the Heywood Advertiser from the chairman, E. Brierley, of the local branch of the N.U.W.M. He wrote:

'I wonder how many people of Heywood knew of the meeting as to the reorganisation of the local Trades Council's Unemployed Organisation. There are over one thousand unemployed trade unionists in Heywood, but a mere hundred were notified to attend by an invitation by post. One would think on receiving an invitation in this manner that instead of a meeting to organise the unemployed, it was just another attempt to split the ranks of the unemployed I am sure it was not done to save expense, as by an insertion in your paper the expense would have been less and the meeting would have been brought to the notice of all the unemployed.....

'All who attended the meeting were a mere forty, including members of the Trades Council I, by chance, attended, along with four comrades, as I had a proposition to place before the meeting The meeting opened with these remarks: "Comrades, I am disappointed with the attendance tonight, as we desired a large audience"; but it transpired that there were four or

1. Heywood Advertiser, 25 November 1932; the conclusion must be drawn that the Unemployed Associations in Rochdale and Heywood were only small bodies. In the case of the former Association, there is no evidence to show that it remained in existence after April 1932.

five too many in the room, in spite of the fact that there were rows of vacant chairs, and I, along with four comrades, was ordered from the meeting.¹

Although the question of the formation of an Unemployed Association was discussed at a meeting of the local Trades Council in March 1932, no such organisation was ever formed in Oldham where the efforts of the Trades Council on behalf of the unemployed in the 1930's were very limited.² Only two people, it was reported at the time, spoke in favour of the formation of an Unemployed Association in the town. One local councillor said 'He did not see why they should be called upon to bother their heads about the organisation of the unemployed'; there would have been no need for such an organisation, in his opinion, if, 'when these people were in industry, they had joined a trade union, for it would have looked after them.' Another member felt that the trade union leaders 'could find something better to do in looking after the organised workers than trying to get the unemployed organised'. Still another said that 'They should tell the General Council that adequate provision was made for the unemployed trade unionists and that the unemployed non-unionist could

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1. Ibid., 18 August 1933; the letter also alleged that the Trades Council had refused to help the unemployed Association to find premises in which to meet and conduct its business, but there is no evidence to support this claim.
 2. Interview with Mr. Arnold Tweedale, on 19 August 1969, at the offices of the Oldham Trades and Labour Council; b. 1908 in Oldham; left school at 14 and studied at evening classes to become a solicitor's clerk. In 1927, became Assistant Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council. Has been Secretary from 1934 onwards. Mayor of Oldham, 1957-8.

go to'. A resolution was moved that such an organisation in Oldham would serve no useful purpose, but it was decided to defer the matter for a fortnight.¹ However, at a second meeting later that month, following the receipt of a letter from the T.U.C. stating that the associations were entirely optional and should depend on local circumstances, a resolution was passed, stating 'That in view of the large number of Trade Unions adequately catering for the unemployed, we do not form an unemployed association.'² The Oldham Trades and Labour Council spent most of the rest of the depression years pressing the local Council to provide more work schemes for the unemployed, and passing protest resolutions against the Means Test, the low rates of unemployment benefit, and the attitude of the government towards the unemployed.³

Unemployed Associations were begun in both Chadderton and Middleton, small districts, situated within a few miles of Oldham, but both organisations were probably very small. The Oldham Evening Chronicle of 22 April 1932 reported that the first meeting of the Chadderton Unemployed and Employed Workers' Association had been held at the Central Labour Club on the previous evening, although the attendance, composed almost

1. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 9 March 1932.

2. Ibid., 25 March 1932.

3. Oldham Labour Gazette, June 1932; August 1933; October 1934; Oldham Trades and Labour Council, Centenary 1867-1967 (Oldham, 1967).

wholly of unemployed persons, had been poor.¹ The subscription was one penny a week for employed workers, and one penny a month for the unemployed. The same report made a reference to a similar organisation having recently been formed in Middleton.

In the mining area of Worsley, near Manchester, an Unemployed Association was formed in 1935, and a letter to the Eccles Journal in March of that year, signed by the President of the Association, James Hennesey, and also the Secretary, Thomas Owen, and James Harrison, Assistant Secretary, appealed for help in the form of donations of chairs, tables, crockery, and so on, to enable the organisers to equip the premises which had been secured as a meeting place for the organisation. In addition, they appealed for gifts such as an old piano, gramophone or wireless.² At Eccles itself, however, no Association was ever formed, although the Trades and Labour Council, whose Secretary was Ellis Smith,³ was particularly active and did a good deal of work on behalf of the unemployed. The Eccles Trades and Labour Council organised several local demonstrations to protest against the conditions of unemployment during these years. This was, of course, rather unusual, in view of the attitude of the T.U.C. towards militant unemployed demonstrations. The first of these was held in June 1931 as a protest against the Interim Report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance: at the same

1. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 22 April 1932.

2. Eccles Journal, 2 March 1934; also 16 March 1934.

3. See below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.

time, the Council published a pamphlet denouncing the Commission's Report.¹ The Eccles Trades Council organised a number of deputations to the Barton Board of Guardians or the Eccles Town Council during the 1930's. In March 1934 the Council were responsible for the calling of a Town's Meeting to discuss the provisions of the Unemployment Bill then before Parliament.² The local branches of the A.E.U., in 1931, organised an Unemployed Members Christmas Fund, and a Christmas Concert and Draw were held at the Town Hall in the same year.³

In the same way, there is little evidence of any Unemployed Associations being formed in Manchester. In December, 1931, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council had 'decided to take the opinion of the Trade Union Branches regarding the setting up of an Unemployed Workers' Organisation.' When it was learned that the General Council was considering a scheme for the organisation of the unemployed on a wider scale, no further action was taken by the Manchester Council, pending the announcement of the T.U.C. proposals.⁴ Not until March 1933, however, did the Manchester and Salford Trades Council convene a meeting

1. Eccles Trades and Labour Council, Unemployment Expenditure: Some facts not considered by the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance (Eccles, 1931), 12pp., also Eccles Trades and Labour Council, 35th. Annual Report and Memorial Souvenir, in memory of Albert Green and A.J. Cook (Eccles, 1931), 9pp: (both made available by J.B. Smethurst).

2. Eccles Journal, 16 March 1934; see below, Chapter 13, p. 524.

3. Concert Programme (Eccles, 1931); made available by J.B. Smethurst.

4. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report 1931-2, p. 14.

of union officers to consider the formation of Associations under the T.U.C. scheme. But it was unanimously decided that the Unions already provided adequately for their unemployed members, and, therefore, that it was inadvisable to set up any special organisations for the unemployed.¹

In spite of this, a number of Unemployed Associations were formed in the area, since the 1934-5 Annual Report of the Council declared that in September 1934 it was agreed to set up a joint committee of the Trades Council and the Unemployed Associations under the T.U.C. scheme, and that a delegate from each be allowed to attend the council's meetings, although such delegates would not be permitted to vote on matters of finance.² The same Report contained a further reference to Unemployed Associations in the area, and also to the work of local trades councils on behalf of the unemployed. It was stated that the British Institute for Adult Education had supplied to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council more than seven hundred books, which had been distributed among those trades unions in the district which had centres for the regular meeting of their unemployed members. Two proportions of these books had been given to Unemployed Associations.³ The 1935-6 Report referred to the existence of five Unemployed Associations in the area

1. Ibid., Annual Report, 1933-4, pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid., Annual Report, 1934-5, pp. 9.

3. Ibid., p. 8.

in February 1935.¹

x x x x x x x x x

The main reason for the absence of Unemployed Associations in Manchester itself, however, seems to have been due to the efforts on behalf of the local unemployment of the Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, A.A. Purcell.² Not only did Purcell himself devote much time to the unemployed of the so-called 'Twin Cities' of Manchester and Salford, but his was also the leading influence behind the response of the Trades Council as a whole to the situation. Trades council representatives on the Courts of Referees, and later the Public Assistance Committees, in Manchester and Salford did much valuable work on behalf of the unemployed whose cases they defended before these bodies. Throughout the 1930's, the Trades Council passed numerous resolutions which were sent to the Manchester and Salford City Council's demanding more work schemes for the unemployed, higher unemployment allowances, lower rents, and so on.

The most important work was done by Purcell himself, however. In 1931 the Manchester and Salford Trades Council published a pamphlet which he had written, entitled 'Onward to Socialism.'³ It began: 'And

1. Ibid., Annual Report, 1935-6, p. 7.

2. See below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.

3. A.A. Purcell, Onward to Socialism (Manchester, 1931), 12pp; made available by R. & E. Frow.,

here am I, John Smith, of Oldham, unemployed....' It went on:

'Wherever I turn I find myself up against a blank wall.... Here am I, a grown man. I am in full possession of all my faculties. There is intelligence in my brain. There is strength in my body. I possess the power to labour. There is a stick in my fingers..... Yet here I am prevented from working by some mysterious power in society.

'Idleness has been thrust upon me..... I can only really live by working. I must be employed by someone in order to earn wages with which to buy food and clothes and boots, to pay rent, to obtain just what is necessary to make life tolerable and decent. My wife and children also depend upon my having work. Here am I, held, as in a vice, in this helpless, hopeless position.'¹

It was said of A.A. Purcell that his whole life revolved round the theme of working class unity. In the 1920's all his work was directed towards the establishment of a single Trade Union International. Along with J.T. Murphy, Willie Gallacher, Jack Tanner and others, he visited the Soviet Union to attend the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920, which resulted in the formation of the Red International of Labour Unions.²

1. Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

2. R. Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions, 1924-1933: a study of the National Minority Movement (1969), p. 6.

His refusal to accept the Russian hostility to the 'Amsterdam International' (the Social-Democratic International Federation of Trade Unions) resulted in his becoming President of the latter organisation from 1924-7. He returned to Russia in 1924, however, following the establishment of an alliance between the British and Russian Trade Unions, when he was Chairman of the T.U.C. delegation to that country. In 1925 he attended the Atlantic City Congress of the American Federation of Labour at which he was a speaker, and in 1926 he visited Mexico to assist the work of trade unions there. In 1927 he was a member of a T.U.C. delegation to India.¹

From 1929, in which year he became Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, much of his work was directed towards improving the conditions in which the unemployed were being forced to live. In May 1931, he organised a People's Congress, which was held at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on Saturday 9th. It was attended by 2,167 delegates from trade unions, Labour parties, and co-operative organisations. The Manchester Guardian called it 'in many respects an extraordinary demonstration.'² On the platform were seven Lancashire Labour M.P.'s, and the large array of appointed speakers included Arthur Greenwood, Ernest Bevin, A.J. Cook, J.R. Clynes, George Hicks, General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, Ben Tillet, and

1. See below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.

2. Manchester Guardian, 11 May 1931.

Walter Citrine.¹ The President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Arthur Moss,² opened the Congress by saying that this was the first concerted effort to establish the effective unity of the different sections of the working class movement. 'Our great trade union, co-operative and political movements have each developed in their respective spheres more or less independent of the other. The pressing need now is to bring them into the closest operative unity.....'

Resolutions and declarations passed by the Congress included such topics as 'Economy and the Social Services', 'The War Danger', 'The Building and strengthening of the Labour Movement'. The most lengthy discussions, however, concerned the problem of unemployment. A resolution was passed which began:

'This People's Congress, knowing that unemployment is the outcome of the present economic system, in which the means of wealth production are kept in the hands of the small owning class, who use those means solely for the purpose of private profit, realises that there cannot be a complete solution to the problem of unemployment so long as capitalism exists.'

It went on 'unemployment is world-wide'; there were 2.5 million unemployed in Britain, more than four million in Germany, more than

1. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1931-2.
2. Arthur Moss, J.P., President, Manchester and Salford Trades Council: Chairman, Railway Clerks Association; b. 1883 at Chirk, Denbighshire; Acting-Chairman, North West Regional Strike Committee in 1926. (Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1929-30.)

six million in the United States, in France more than one million, in Japan half a million, and so on:

'Under these circumstances, this People's Congress welcomes the demand for a 5-day week formulated by the Joint Commission on Unemployment set up by the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour and Socialist International: and the demand for a permanent reduction in the hours of labour to 40 hours per week.....'

It concluded with a resolute demand for increased unemployment benefits and allowances, asserting the right of the unemployed to full maintenance until work could be provided for them, and insisting that families suffering from the effects of unemployment should be provided with 'the means of a proper living.'¹

2?

In April 1931, Purcell was responsible for the organisation of a major demonstration of unemployed in Manchester and Salford, which demanded the immediate opening out of relief schemes in the two cities. Several thousands of Manchester's unemployed men and women assembled at Ardwick Green in the afternoon of April 25th., and marched by way of Aytoun-st., where the Employment Exchange is situated, Portland-st., and Chopstow-st., to Whitworth-st. West, where they were joined by many hundreds of others from Salford. In all, the two groups numbered more than six thousand.

1. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, The People's Congress (Manchester, 1931), 7pp; made available by R. & E. Frow.

Thousands more lined the pavements to watch, and an estimated ten thousand were gathered at the meeting place in Whitworth-st. West. From here a deputation of five A.E.U. and E.T.U. representatives made their way to Manchester Town Hall to interview the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Mayor of Salford.¹

The Manchester Guardian declared: 'It was probably the most impressive demonstration of unemployed men that has ever taken place in either city.'² The demonstration touched 'even sluggish imaginations and blunt sympathies with some sense of the tragedy which unemployment today means.' Most of the demonstrators were 'rather poorly clad, some with a kind of reckless slovenliness, others with a pathetic effort after tidiness..... Medical knowledge was not required to detect instances of under-feeding.' The report continued:

'It was a crowd very much subdued in spirit. Two brass bands played lilting, martial music, but could not inspire any rhythm in the marching or any militancy in demeanour. The two columns just trudged along. They were singularly unvocal. Even a little band of Communists who joined the Manchester contingent at Ardwick Green failed to move the mass to sing or defiant shouting.'

All this was in contrast to the noisy, ebullient N.U.W.M. demonstrations.

While the deputation was seeing the two Mayors, A.A. Purcell read

1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 25 April 1932.

2. Manchester Guardian, 26 April 1932.

to the crowd the text of the memorandum the deputation had taken with them. A 'trenchantly worded statement', in the Guardian's view, it pointed out that there were more than seventy thousand unemployed men and women in Manchester and Salford, and more than three hundred thousand men, women and children 'suffering the most frightful distress in consequence.'¹ In challenging terms it insisted 'You are here to safeguard, to maintain, and to foster the well-being, life and happiness of the citizens of our community': and it demanded the starting of major schemes of public works in the two cities:

'We tell you that hundreds of thousands of the people whose interests you were elected to care for are in desperate straits. We tell you that men, women and children are going hungry. We tell you that great numbers of your fellow citizens, as good as you, as worthy as the best of us, and as industrious as any of us, have been and are being reduced to utter destitution..

'And really, we want to know what you are going to do about it all. We want to know in what manner, and when, you are going to face up to this responsibility.'²

In February 1933 a delegation of one hundred and eighty men and women from Manchester and Salford were organised by the Trades Council to attend the Labour demonstration in London on 5 February. A special

1. A.A. Purcell, Our Poverty: Your Responsibility (Manchester, 1932), 12pp; made available by R. & E. Frow.
2. Ibid; the text of the replies of the two Mayors was included in the pamphlet.

train was provided to take them down to London in time to join the demonstration on the Victoria Embankment at 2.15 p.m. They were brought home the same evening. The majority of those who took part were unemployed, and their fares and expenses were paid from a fund for which an appeal had been launched by Purcell in January. Several employed workers also took part, however, and paid their own fares. A demonstration was held in Manchester that evening in support of the National Joint Council demonstration.¹

In January of the following year a conference was organised by the Council, attended by more than four hundred delegates, to protest against the Government's Unemployment Insurance Bill.² A resolution was adopted opposing the Bill, and together with the London Trades Council an appeal was issued in February to all Trades Councils urging them to press the Government and local authorities to plan and carry through local and national schemes of public works in relation to housing, roads, bridges, and the conservation of water, in order to provide useful work for the unemployed. In the same month, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council began a campaign against high rents, in which particular attention was paid to the housing of the unemployed.³

1. Manchester Evening News, 11 January 1933; 14 January 1933.

2. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1934-5, p. 7.

3. Ibid., p. 3.

In April, a resolution was adopted by the Council demanding the adoption of a minimum allowance of three shillings per child for all unemployed workers, and the restoration of the 1931 economy cuts, as an integral part of the new Unemployment Insurance measure. In June, this was followed by three demonstrations in Manchester and Salford, each protesting against the Incitement to Disaffection Bill. One was held in Salford, and one at Platt Fields, Manchester: the third was at Queen's Park, Manchester.¹ The agitation against the Bill was continued when the Council, at its delegate meeting in October, heard an address by Ronald Kidd, Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties. On October 21st., a further demonstration against the Bill was held at Platt Fields, after a procession from All Saints.²

Finally, on Monday March 4th., 1935, a similar demonstration to that of April 1932 was held in Manchester. More than one thousand unemployed men and women took part, and a petition was again presented to the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Mayor of Salford, demanding that schemes for slum clearance and improved roads be put in hand without delay. Entitled Work for the Unemployed, and written, as before, by Purcell, it stated:

1. Ibid., p. 8.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

'On the previous occasion, we presented a statement, set forth in as plain and as emphatic a language as we could command, dealing with the plight of the unemployed, and the need for the provision of work..... What was stated therein could be repeated today with as much point and purpose as when originally expressed..... We will leave this statement with you, with the challenge to you to tell us what really has been done for unfortunate fellow citizens and their families, from then till now.'¹

The Lord Mayor of Manchester's reply referred to the work of the Mayor's Unemployment Relief Fund,² which had been instrumental in finding useful and interesting occupation for a large number of unemployed. In addition, the Lord Mayor estimated that almost two and a half million pounds had been spent on the provision of houses since that date, and that schemes worth a further five and a half million pounds were in hand.³ In addition, he stated that the city's unemployed figures had been reduced as follows:

	<u>men</u>	<u>women</u>	<u>total</u>
April 1932	43,315	12,998	56,313
January 1935	37,173	12,924	50,097

When Purcell died, on Christmas Eve 1935, at the age of sixty-three, the work of the Trades Council on behalf of the unemployed in Manchester and Salford declined. During his years as Secretary, the Council had

1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 4 March 1935.

2. See above, Chapter 6, p.

3. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1934-5, pp. 43-9.

done much for the unemployed, although Purcell himself saw this work as 'hardly a fraction of what we should like to have done had means and opportunities permitted.' 'We were cursed by our limitations', he declared in 1934,¹ a statement which reflected not only his belief that the problem of the unemployed required a more militant approach than either the T.U.C. General Council or the Labour Party Executive were prepared to adopt, but also his sympathy with the aims and methods of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement.² Purcell's successor as Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council was W.J. Munro, who wrote:

'Is there a man in the country who has striven so sincerely, so urgently and so belligerently for the unemployed as Purcell did for those in Manchester and Salford? By pamphlet, platform and demonstration, and by every means in his power, he constantly fought their desperate battles.'³

In many ways the Manchester and Salford Trades Council's response to unemployment under Purcell was unique. No doubt it was repeated in some measure in other places, but without Purcell's personality it is

1. Ibid., Annual Report, 1933-4.

2. Ibid., Annual Report, 1935-6; early in 1935, the Manchester and Salford Trades Council and the N.U.W.M. formed a Unity Council (See below, Chapter 13, p. 536). Edmund Frow (see below, Appendix VI for biographical details) felt that Purcell sympathised with the N.U.W.M., 'but could not go too far; only as far as the General Council of the T.U.C. would allow.'

3. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1935-6, p. 13.

unlikely that the issues of unemployment would have been taken up in quite the same way or to the same extent as was in fact the case. The Council was certainly less active in this respect after his death. In May 1936, a resolution protesting against the Means Test was adopted, and sent to the Prime Minister,¹ and in November of that year a conference was held in the Memorial Hall, Manchester, to discuss the new Unemployment Assistance Board Regulations. This meeting was addressed by J.L. Smythe, Secretary of the T.U.C. Social Insurance Committee. Four public meetings were held in Manchester the following day.² Finally, in July 1937, a conference of workpeople's representatives serving on Unemployment Assistance Boards and Courts of Referees in the district was held at Houldsworth Hall, Manchester to discuss the future of this work.³ There is nothing, however, in these later years to match the dynamic of Purcell's leadership, although to be fair to his successors, the point must be made once more that the agitation in the country as a whole declined quite sharply after 1935.

x x x x x x x x x

1. Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Annual Report, 1936-7, p. 6.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. Ibid., Annual Report, 1937-8, p. 11.

The unemployed might have expected the Labour Party and the T.U.C. to regard their needs as urgent. Yet the reaction of these two bodies to this need for help was one of neutrality: while the Labour Party decided to 'leave responsibility in the matter' to the General Council, the Council, for its part, 'noted with pleasure' that in some areas steps had been taken to organise the unemployed, 'suggested' a list of activities, 'suggested', too, that unions with a large number of unemployed find some means of helping such members to 'retain their employability', but most of all regarded the Unemployed Association as being 'useful auxiliaries' in the field of recruitment. The formation and administration of the Unemployed Associations were left almost entirely to local initiative and inclination. Their success in any one district depended on the attitude of the local trades council, and its willingness to devote time and energy to organising the unemployed. No national organisation was ever undertaken by the General Council: no appeal, for example, for premises was ever launched. The only attempt at official guidance came in 1935 by which time recovery was on the way, with the promise by the General Council that it would 'defray the out of pocket expenses' of Federation officials who visited the Associations within their area to 'stimulate and advise' them.¹ In no way did the Associations develop

1. Report of the 67th. Trades Union Congress, 1935, p. 122.

to the extent of the occupational centres. Since the attitude of the Labour Party and T.U.C. towards the National Unemployed Workers' Movement was one of antagonism, it is unlikely that Unemployed Association members were encouraged to take part on demonstrations or hunger marches: rather the opposite was probably true. Association members would not be allowed to take part. The only hunger march which received the official support of the Labour Party and T.U.C. was the Jarrow March of 1936.¹ Likewise, only one national demonstration, in February 1933, was organised by the official Labour movement against unemployment. For its part, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement at first condemned the T.U.C. Associations as 'splitting schemes',² designed to keep the unemployed 'away from the influence of the N.U.W.M.'³ However, as early as February 1933, a month prior to the United Front proposals of the Communist Party, the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. instructed its branches to 'make United Front approaches to the rank-and-file' membership of the Unemployed Associations, although this was to be done in an attempt to 'bring out sharply the contrast in the leadership of the N.U.W.M. and the leadership of the local associations of the T.U.C.'⁴

1. See below, Chapter 10, p. 437.

2. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 25-26 February 1933.

3. Ibid., 3-4 December 1932.

4. Ibid., 25-26 February 1933.

After this date, in spite of the T.U.C. rejection of both the Communist Party's, and, in April, the N.U.W.M.'s own 'United Front' approaches,¹ the latter made strong and continuous efforts to win over the Unemployed Associations to a more militant policy. There is no evidence to show that these attempts met with any real success, although at the local level there may well have been some improvement in understanding and contacts.

1. See below, Chapter 9, pp. 343, 354; also pp. 341, 353, and, Chapter 10, p. 422.

OCCUPATIONAL CENTRES IN SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE1. MANCHESTER (14 centres for men and 1 for women)

Men: Ancoats Lads' Unemployment Centre
 Ardwick Lads' Unemployment Centre
 Mulberry Bush Club, Hulme
 Welcome Hall Club, Collyhurst
 Levenshulme and District Unemployed Association
 Friends' Welfare Centre, Mount-st.
 Alexandra Park Unemployed Social Club
 Clayton Victoria Lads' Club Unemployed Centre
 Longsight Unemployed Club
 Collyhurst Guild for Social Service
 Pilgrim Club, Manchester University Settlement
 Oldham-rd. Unitarian Church Centre
 St. James' Centre, Moss Side
 Club for Elderley Men, Rose Grove, Ardwick

Women: Fellowship and Service Club for Women, Major-st.

2. SALFORD (5 centres for men and 2 for women)

Men: Blackfriars Fellowship, St. Stephen's-st.
 Emery Centre, Joseph-st., Seedley
 Regent-rd. Centre
 Broughton Centre
 St. Cyprians' Fellowship, Ordsall Hall

Women: Challenge Club, Bull's Head Hotel, The Crescent
 Leaf Square

3. WEST MANCHESTER DISTRICT (8 centres for men and 1 for women)

Men: Eccles: Brotherhood Hall, Liverpool-rd.
 Market Hall, Bright-st.
 Swinton and Pendlebury: Trinity Congregational School, Swinton
 Blue Ribbon Hall, Pendlebury
 Whitefield
 Prestwich
 Middleton
 Stretford

Women: Prestwich

4. NORTH & EAST of MANCHESTER (11 centres for men and 2 for women)

Men: Oldham: Oldham Fellowship and Service Club
 Oldham League of Service
 Three Owls Club, Y.M.C.A.
 Rochdale People's Service Guild
 Heywood
 Failsworth
 Chadderton
 Dukinfield
 Hollinwood
 Ashton-under-Lyne (2 clubs)

Women: Rochdale People's Service Guild
 Ashton-under-Lyne

5. ROYTON DISTRICT (6 centres for men and 5 for women)

Men: Royton Divisional League of Social Service
 Milnrow
 Shaw
 Littleborough
 Whitworth
 Wardle

Women: Royton Divisional League of Social Service
 Milnrow
 Shaw
 Littleborough
 Whitworth

6. BOLTON DISTRICT (19 centres for men and 4 for women)

Men: Bolton: Claremont Baptist School
 Y.M.C.A.
 Chesham House
 Cable-st. Mission
 Daubhill Methodist Church
 St. Paul's Church (Astley Bridge)
 Bolton Lads' Club
 Bridge-st. Methodist Church School
 Park-rd. School
 Jackson House
 Bury (2 clubs run by the Salvation Army)
 Farnworth
 Horwich Unemployed Welfare Centre
 Blackrod
 Westhoughton Social Service Club
 Leigh Leisure Club
 Coffee Pot Club, Atherton
 Tyldesley Association of Unemployed

Women: Bolton: Friends' Meeting House
Girls' Recreation Club
Leigh
Westhoughton

7. WIGAN DISTRICT (9 centres for men and 2 for women)

Men: Wigan: Wigan Social Centre
Wigan Service Club
Wigan Men's Occupational Centre
St. Mary's

Ince
Aspull
New Springs
Standish
Hindley

Women: Wigan
Hindley

<u>TOTAL</u>	Men's centres	72
	Women's centres	<u>17</u>
		89

Appendix III

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT:
INCOME AND MEMBERSHIP (1)

MEN'S CLUBS

	no. of members	no. of clubs	income from 1 April 1934 - 31 March 1935 (in £'s)		income from formation to 31 March 1935 (in £'s)	
			members subs.	other sources	members subs.	other sources
North:						
Northumb.	2,085	17	33	489	78	3,954
Durham	5,767	49	460	5,401	687	7,776
Tyneside	3,038	28	466	3,734	943	14,431
Teeside	1,265	10	170	986	200	3,908
Cleveland	268	3	5	155	5	986
W. Yorks.	3,845	29	262	2,008	496	7,402
S. Yorks.	3,687	33	324	1,015	432	5,539
Yorkshire	2,615	29	138	1,208	213	6,932
Cumberland	2,202	18	460	1,697	702	2,774
Mid-Lancs.	2,976	19	199	2,022	344	4,057
SELNEC.	13,281	65	738	5,083	796	68,893
S.W.Lancs. & N.W. Ches.	3,640	27	405	3,630	794	23,813
Lancashire	499	3	39	513	39	974
TOTAL	45,168	330	3,699	27,941	5,729	151,439
Midlands:						
N.Staffs.	1,119	13	103	1,151	155	2,321
S.Staffs.	2,486	16	125	396	326	2,890
Derbys.	3,815	25	250	2,511	1,546	7,718
Notts.	4,428	17	130	1,234	355	6,612
Salop.	664	8	63	204	90	968
Warwicks.	2,106	21	98	590	154	10,135
Leics.	1,409	7	28	1,685	33	1,913
Lincs.	742	4	42	535	77	2,194
Gloucs.	5,686	29	207	3,362	384	7,648
Worcs.	260	3	6	225	6	343
Hereford	220	1	21	204	58	636
Northants.	104	1	7	316	9	610
TOTAL	23,039	145	1,080	12,413	3,193	43,988

1. Compiled from Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 60-63, 66-68.

	no. of members	no. of clubs	income from 1 April 1934 - 31 March 1935 (in £'s)		income from formation to 31 March 1935 (in £'s)	
			members subs.	other sources	members subs.	other sources
South & East:						
Bedford	683	2	12	145	23	527
Bucks.	140	2	5	33	5	625
Cambridge	935	4	32	297	32	881
Cornwall	734	9	15	463	45	944
Devon	850	7	37	110	100	1,432
Dorset	503	3	13	34	17	239
Hampshire	1,456	9	7	480	12	11,687
Herts.	316	4	-	89	-	867
Kent	2,151	13	27	3,433	44	9,872
London Area	15,014	107	559	14,343	872	42,208
Somerset	746	8	17	390	45	1,248
Suffolk	1,667	7	-	-	132	-
Sussex	575	4	39	686	45	1,312
Wiltshire	30	2	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	25,800	181	763	20,503	1,372	71,842
Wales:						
Glamorgan	15,845	123	2,627	10,092	4,898	14,577
Monmouth.	5,500	43	665	2,573	1,263	6,760
South Wales (additional)	420	4	22	251	32	1,174
North Wales	2,438	19	79	1,995	232	4,430
TOTAL	24,203	189	3,393	14,911	6,425	26,941
Scotland ¹	24,000	169	1,840	-	1,840	39,128
GRAND TOTAL	142,210	1,014	10,775	75,768	18,559	333,338

1. The figures for income in Scotland include that of the women's clubs.

WOMEN'S CLUBS

	no. of members	no. of clubs	income from 1 April 1934 - 31 March 1935 (in £'s)		income from formation to 31 March 1935 (in £'s)		
			members subs.	other sources	members subs.	other sources	
North:							
Northumb.	404	6	43	766	43	766	
Durham	563	16	24	56	31	59	
Tyneside	613	15	37	132	56	171	
Teeside	204	5	-	60	-	60	
Cleveland	88	2	-	3	-	3	
W. Yorks.	635	13	42	48	47	59	
S. Yorks.	819	17	56	120	61	250	
Yorkshire	200	4	16	137	21	185	
Cumberland	278	9	14	70	23	79	
Mid-Lancs.	1,494	14	98	362	123	952	
SELNEC.	491	9	32	13	32	13	
S.W. Lancs & N.W. Ches.	621	12	6	6	9	7	
TOTAL	6,407	122	368	1,773	446	2,604	
Midlands:							
N. Staffs.	221	5	23	17	40	24	
S. Staffs.	343	7	22	138	24	222	
Derbys.	229	8	3	19	3	31	
Notts.	233	7	10	76	10	76	
Salop.	187	4	8	27	10	29	
Warwicks.	490	13	31	302	87	600	
Leics.	} - 160	} 6	-	-	-	5	
Lincs.			-	2	8	2	8
Gloucs.			-	1	8	1	8
Worcs.			-	-	7	-	7
Northants.							
TOTAL	1,863	50	100	612	177	1,031	
South & East							
London Area	} 1,242	} 24	(27	480	33	892	
Somerset			(7	70	7	70	
TOTAL			34	550	40	962	
Wales:							
South Wales	3,759	73	237	370	280	478	
Scotland	2,500	51					
GRAND TOTAL	15,771	320	739	3,305	943	5,075	

Appendix IV

THE SPECIAL UNEMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ¹

First Chairman: Sir Benjamin Gott

Chairman after February 1933: A.D. Lindsay, Master of Balliol

Vice-Chairman: Sir Edward Peacock (G.C., V.C.?)

Committee:

The Warden of All Souls	Col. E.C. Heath C.V.O., D.S.O.
Sir Percy Arden	H.E.R. Highton
Sir Alan Anderson G.B.E.	J.E. Highton C.B.
Miss A. Cameron	Professor J. Jones
Col. G.R. Crosfield C.B.E., D.S.O., T.D.	Dr. Thomas Jones C.H.
Canon T.A.E. Davey	Sir Bob Kindersley Bt., C.B.E.
E. Salter Davies C.B.E.	Dr. J.J. Mallon
L. Twiston Davis	Sir Charles Mander
The Lady Denman C.B.E.	Miss Violet Markham C.H.
The Earl of Elgin	G.F. Hall
Philip Fleming	Lt. Col. J.M. Mitchell C.B.E.
Sir Harold Goschen Bt., K.B.E.	R.C. Norman
Capt. J. Griffyth Fairfax	H.N. Penlington
	The Hon. Arthur Villiers

Representatives of Government Departments included one each from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Board of Education, and, after its formation, the Commissioner for Special Areas Department.

1. From National Council of Social Service, Unemployment and Community Service, pp. 16-17, and Annual Report 1932-3.

Appendix V

THE PILGRIM CLUB OF THE MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY
SETTLEMENT: TIMETABLES

1. Pilgrim Boys' Club¹

			afternoon
Monday	10.00-11.30	handicrafts	
Tuesday	10.00-11.30	electricity	gymnastics
	10.00-11.30	library	
	10.00-11.30	cobbling	
Wednesday	10.00-11.30	rug-making	music
	10.00-11.30	office training	
Thursday	9.30-10.30	bulb growing	
	10.30-11.30	first aid	
Friday	10.00-11.30	handicrafts	swimming
		office training	

2. Pilgrim Men's Club²

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9.30	Club (2½ hours)	Club (2½ hours)	Club (2½ hours)	Club (2½ hours)	Club (2½ hours)	
10.00		Pipe- making (2 hours)		Pipe-mkg. or drama (2 hours)	Drama Group (2 hours)	Occupal. Classes (3 hours)
12.00	Canteen (1½ hours)	Canteen (1½ hours)	Canteen (1½ hours)	Canteen (1½ hours)	Canteen (1½ hours)	Canteen (1½ hours)
2.00	Club (3 hours)	Club (3 hours)	Club (3 hours)	Club (3 hours)	Club (3 hours)	Club (3 hours)
2.30		Economics (2 hours)		Drama Group (2 hours)		
7.30			Toy- making	Billiards		
8.00				Cobbling		

1. Manchester University Settlement, Day Clubs for Men and Boys: An Experiment and an Appeal for volunteers (Manchester, 1932).

2. Manchester University Settlement, Annual Programme 1936-7.

PART III

THE RESPONSE TO UNEMPLOYMENT:

THE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT, 1929-36

Chapter Nine

THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE LEFT,
1929-1936

From early 1927, the Conservative Government, headed by Stanley Baldwin, was in a state of decline, and all parties began to look towards the next general election. The Labour Party began to draft a new programme: written by R. H. Tawney, and approved at the Party Conference at Birmingham in 1928, Labour and the Nation was a revised and longer version of Sidney Webb's Labour and the New Social Order of 1918. It declared the party to be a socialist party, the aim of which was to be the re-organisation of industry in the interest

'of all who bring their contribution of useful service to the common stock.'¹

The Liberal Party, in meetings throughout the country, showed considerable activity: the famous 'yellow book', Britain's Industrial Future, was published in 1928, and became the basis of the party's programme in election which followed, We Can Conquer Unemployment. As it was, the Conservative Government hung on until May 1929, and, with hope running high in Labour circles, the long-awaited election took place on 30 May.

The result was ambiguous, however. Labour won 287 seats, and for the first time was the largest party; the Tories won 261 seats, and the Liberals fifty-nine. Hence Labour was once more in a minority should the Conservatives and Liberals decide to vote together. The Party also had to face an over-

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 350.

whelming majority in the House of Lords. Nonetheless, there was high optimism in Labour circles at the prospect of the adoption of genuinely Socialist policies. 'This Labour Cabinet of 1929,' wrote Beatrice Webb,

'unlike the one of 1924, is a "pukka" Cabinet resting on a firm foundation in the country.'

In the same radical mood, George Lansbury declared in the New Leader:

'At long last England has arisen and the day is here - the new day when the people of Britain shall come into their own.'¹

In fact, the Cabinet of 1929 was much the same as in 1924. MacDonald was Prime Minister; Philip Snowden was again Chancellor of the Exchequer; J. H. Thomas was Lord Privy Seal, in charge of schemes for employment; Henderson was Foreign Secretary, and Clynes was Home Secretary. John Wheatley and F. W. Jowett were omitted, because of their strong support of the I.L.P.'s programme Socialism in Our Time, in face of the adopted Labour and the Nation.² The resulting tone of the Government was that of the right wing of the Labour Party. Although the King's Speech promised that the Government would 'deal effectively' with unemployment, even in the Debate MacDonald expressed the wish that the three political Parties might consider themselves more as a Council of State, and less as

'....arrayed regiments facing each other in battle.'³

There was to be no Socialism.

1. Quoted in M. Foot, op. cit., p. 85.

2. In the 1924 Cabinet, Arthur Henderson had been at the Home Office; Clynes was Privy Seal; Thomas was Secretary for the Colonies; Wheatley had been Minister of Health; and Jowett had been First Commissioner. (C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 667.)

3. G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party from 1914 (1948), pp. 226-9; Hansard, 5th. Ser. CCXXIX.

The Government had the choice to live dangerously, and to risk being defeated on radical policies, or seek the help of the other parties to stay in office. It chose the latter. Although at the first Parliamentary Party meeting Wheatley predicted an economic crisis, and urged that the Government press for decisive measures and let the other parties take the responsibility for 'throwing it out', MacDonald announced that the Labour Party would show it was fit to govern. The only hazard was, as he put it, 'sniping from within.'¹ Thus the attacks made by the I.L.P. group on the Labour Government were very much resented. At the Party Conference in October 1929, Campbell Stephen, George Buchanan and W. J. Brown all criticised the failure of the Government to take immediate steps to remove some of the 'administrative persecutions' with regard to unemployment insurance.² In the Debate on the Second Reading of the Government's Bill to deal with Unemployment Insurance, in November, Maxton led a fierce attack, and was supported by Fenner Brockway. Arthur Hayday regretted that the Bill

'....falls far short of what we have a right to expect from a Labour Government',

and urged that something greater, not just a patchwork measure, be submitted.

'There are words in the Bill',

he said,

'that can be turned and twisted, if the inclination is there to use them, into a form of interrogation which will be not less

1. M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 88-9; Wheatley, in Foot's words, 'prophesied economic crisis' and 'foresaw a Labour Government subjected to successive humiliations as it permitted itself to become the instrument for cutting the standards of wage-earners and the unemployed.'
2. Report of the 29th. Labour Party Conference, 1929; see above., p. 265.

acute than that which has operated under the not-genuinely-seeking-work provision.'

In the Committee Stage, David Kirkwood and Bevan both joined in the criticism of the Government's measure.¹

Equally resented by MacDonald and the Labour leadership were the events which surrounded Oswald Mosley's plans to deal with unemployment, submitted to the Cabinet in February 1930, and rejected in May of that year.² At a Party meeting soon after Mosley's resignation, Aneurin Bevan, who had joined some sixty others in presenting a demand for Thomas' dismissal to the Prime Minister, obtained a hundred signatures for a resolution which he put to the meeting, declaring that:

'..the Party is of the opinion that the present unprecedented volume of unemployment in Great Britain in relation to the world crisis in capitalist production necessitates a restatement of the Government's policy and urges upon the Government the necessity of outlining new proposals within the framework of Labour and the Nation.'³

MacDonald was furious, but succeeded in quelling the revolt.

1. Hansard, 5th. Ser. CCXXXII; see below, Chapter 10, p. 392.

2. See above, Chapter 2, p. 59.

3. Quoted M. Foot, op. cit., p. 105.

This incident, however, together with the Conservative and Liberal assaults in the House of Commons prompted MacDonald to seek the closer co-operation of the other parties. When the Liberals agreed, the defeat of 1931 was brought several steps closer. Defeatism within the Party was increased. The majority of M.P.'s became more eager than ever to respect calls to loyalty and unity, of their leaders. At the Nottingham T.U.C. in September 1930, Ben Turner called on the delegates to give at least 'some credit' to the Government for the attempts to deal with unemployment. 'In recent days', he said,

'there have been a number of our own people both in the Trade Union and the political world who have been decrying the present Labour Government for their alleged inefficiency'.

The unemployment problem was, however,

'so vast that no Government can deal with it successfully in a short time.'¹

The hopes of twelve months previous had gone. In that time unemployment had almost doubled. In August 1930 it passed the two million mark: in August 1929 it had been 1,190,000.²

The Executive Report to the Labour Party Conference at Llandudno a month later opened with the sentence:

1. Report of the 62nd. Trades Union Congress, 1930.
2. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVIII (September 1930), XXXVIII (September 1929); see above Appendix I.

'The Party has always taken the view that within the limits of capitalist society it was impossible completely to eliminate unemployment.'

Such was the mood. Maxton, prepared for a full-scale attack, moved an amendment to the resolution on the Government's unemployment policy, which declared

'This Conference views with alarm the failure of the Government to apply the bold Unemployment Policy outlined in Labour and the Nation.'

A resolution calling for a full report on the Mosley proposals was only just defeated, after Lansbury's defence of the Executive. MacDonald returned to a previous theme: the threat to the Government, he said, came not from economic crisis or bad management, but from

'internal criticisms blazoned abroad'.¹

During 1930 the conflict between the I.L.P. and the Labour Party served to convince Labour leaders that still closer unity was necessary. In July, during the debate on the Second Reading of a Bill to extend the Treasury's contribution to the Unemployment Fund from £50 to £60 millions, the I.L.P. again attacked the Government's handling of the unemployed. All the time, declared Campbell Stephen,

1. Report of the 30th Labour Party Conference, 1930; M. Foot, op. cit., p. 106.

'the question has not been the maintenance of the unemployed... all the tendency has been to forget the need of the human beings and to think rather of the financial commitments.'

McGovern also joined the debate.¹ MacDonald seemed to reach the conclusion that the Government could do little for the unemployed, and that there would always be unemployment under capitalism. He did not propose to risk his office in the pursuit of socialism. In the King's Speech of October 1930 there was no mention of any Government plans to deal with unemployment.

When, in April 1931, the Conservatives moved a motion of censure against the Government in their handling of the unemployed, the I.L.P. once more joined in the criticism. Campbell Stephen moved an amendment that the Government should increase the demand for labour by raising pensions and unemployment allowances, and also that it should introduce a shorter working week, raise the school-leaving age, and press ahead with a wide programme of nationalisation and a national housing scheme. Fenner Brockway declared that the I.L.P. Members were:

'as profoundly disappointed with the policy of the Government in relation to unemployment as can be any Members who sit on the benches opposite.'

If they, the I.L.P. group, voted against the censure motion it would only be because they did not feel that the Tories would deal any more effectively with the unemployed, he said.²

1. Hansard, 5th. Ser. CCXXXI.

2. Ibid., CCLI.

In the event, Wheatley's predictions proved to be correct.

'Few governments have entered office with higher hopes and wider goodwill,'

wrote Professor Mowat;

'few have fallen less lamented by friends as well as foes.'¹

A large number of projects were put forward for the development of public works, including £50 millions for road works, £47 millions to be spent through the Unemployment Grants Committee, and a further £28 millions for other home developments. While these might have been effective in reducing unemployment in more normal times, however, in the developing world crisis of 1929-31 they were totally inadequate.² In view of its leaders, perhaps more, as Wheatley did, should have been able to predict the failure of the Labour Government at the outset. It was afterwards argued that the lack of a parliamentary majority prevented the government from following a more radical unemployment policy. Margaret Bondfield, the Minister of Labour, wrote

'our majority was insufficient to give us liberty of action.'³

Yet the Labour Party in these years did not possess a more radical policy or

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 356.

2. G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party from 1914, pp. 230-1; 235, 245.

3. M. Bondfield, A Life's Work (1948), p. 246.

spirit. Since the defeat of 1926 it had been moving towards and making more precise its 'gradualist' philosophy. The adoption of Labour and the Nation at the 1928 Conference was just one step in this process. Moreover, the leaders of the Party could scarcely be called 'radicals'. By far the strongest personality in the Cabinet was Philip Snowden. 'With him at the Exchequer,' Skidelsky has written, 'no Government stood much chance in the circumstances of 1929.'¹ Completely inflexible, he had three sacred convictions; the need to maintain strict economy, Free Trade, and the Gold Standard. His deflationary policies placed a heavy strain on the British economy.²

Equally to blame was MacDonald, who appeared to the left-wing of the Party to be more anxious to uphold capitalism than to bring about its demise.³ J.T. Murphy wrote:

'Had Labour secured a working majority on this occasion, he (MacDonald) would have been robbed of all his means of manœuvring for the national front so dear to his philosophy. He stood for a very gradual, Conservative Socialism.. If Labour had secured a good majority he would have been at the head of an assault on capitalism which he never wanted to lead.'

1. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 393.

2. See above, Chapter 2, p. 58 et seq.

3. See J.T. Murphy, New Horizons (1941), p. 294.

MacDonald was a lover of the society of people of taste and breeding; his lowly birth made his ambition greater. After his wife's death he withdrew into himself, a solitary and remote figure. He was committed to constitutionalism, to parliamentary process, and could not provide his Government with the radical lead it required, since he always had an affinity for a national government.¹

Furthermore, both MacDonald and Snowden, as well as the trade union leaders, expected loyalty from the rank-and-file. At the Labour Party Conference in 1928 the Executive had brought up this question, when it asked delegates to endorse that:

'affiliation to the Labour Party implies general loyalty to the decisions of the Party Conferences',

and debar affiliated organisations and their branches from:

'promoting or associating in the promotion of candidates for Public Authorities in opposition to those of the Labour Party.'²

When the new Unemployment Bill was announced in 1929, a special Party meeting was called to discuss the series of amendments put down by the I.L.P. Members and a large number of trade union M.P.'s. Snowden, says Foot, 'came in person to quash the revolt.' 'I told them quite frankly', wrote Snowden in his Autobiography;

1. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 393; C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 297.

2. G. D. H. Cole, op. cit., pp. 213-4.

'that I could not be responsible for finding the money which would be required to finance the proposed amendments.'

Though others drew back, the I.L.P. pressed some of its amendments in the House: 'It was' thought Snowden;

'an exhibition of disloyalty and of the lack of team spirit which has so often exposed the Labour Party to the jeers of its opponents and caused dismay among its supporters in the country.'¹

The Labour Party from 1929-1931, therefore, was a Party committed to constitutionalism by its leaders. The Liberals were used as an excuse for the Government's failure to introduce radical measures to deal with unemployment. What was lacking was courage. The Cabinet's policy was, in fact, to remain in office for as long as possible with Liberal support. As time passed, and the economic situation became worse and worse, an air of defeatism overcame the leadership. Not prepared to risk his office for the cause of Socialism, MacDonald came to the convenient conclusion that the Government could do nothing about unemployment, and that the people would have to wait for the trade cycle to run its course.

A radical policy with regard to unemployment might have done much to bring about the 'day of the people' as Lansbury had hoped. Instead, the failure of the Labour Government put a break on the further advancement of

1. Quoted M. Foot, op. cit., p. 95.

socialism for the remainder of the inter-war period. The election of 1931 damaged for a long time the long-term growing power of the Labour Party. The Labour leaders remained far less dogmatic and doctrinaire than their continental counterparts. Although there was an immediate swing to the left after the defeat, this did not last very long. At the first Party meeting following the election, Dalton appealed for unity for the purpose of putting a real Labour Government into office, in place of 'the sham thing we have known for the past two years.'¹ At the Party Conference a few weeks later a robust left-wing programme was rushed through with little dissent. Any signs that the gradualist philosophy had been abandoned, however, were diminished with Henderson's demand that the M.P.'s conform to the Standing Orders of the Party, on which the I.L.P. was defeated by an overwhelming majority.² Although at the Leicester Conference the following year, a spokesman for the newly-formed Socialist League succeeding in bringing about the defeat of the Executive on its proposals for currency and banking, the move to the left among many of the delegates, in reaction to 'MacDonaldism', was by no means paralleled by a corresponding leftward turn on the part of the leadership, which remained gradualist, though not to the extent of the previous era.

At Southport in 1934, the Socialist League's seventy-five amendments to the new statement of Labour's policy, For Socialism and Peace, were all heavily

1. Ibid., pp. 127-8.

2. Ibid., p. 128.

defeated. Although 'gradualism' did not return in the same form as in the last years of MacDonald's leadership, the leftward surge in the Party in the immediate post-1931 period was subsiding.¹ Whereas Cripps and the Socialist League drew the conclusion that 1931 was the result of compromise and that the Labour movement should, in future, stick to its socialist principles,² Bevin and other reached the opposite conclusion, that the movement had been split by the individualism of its leaders. There should be no more 'great men' for the time, felt Morrison:³ instead, the only way to proceed was through unity and loyalty to majority decisions. If the individual disagreed he could leave the movement, but he had no right to repudiate a decision or attack it in public.⁴

x x x x x x x x x

In this situation it might have been expected that the Communist Party would be able to make a good deal of headway. The failure of the Labour leadership to introduce when in office radical socialist legislation, particularly with regard to unemployment, could have meant a move to the Left in the country from which the Communist Party would have benefited. Here was the paradox of Britain in the 1930's, however. With capitalism facing its most serious crisis in Great Britain in

1. G.D.H. Cole, op. cit., p. 282.

2. C.A. Cooke, The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps (1957), p. 130.

3. H. Morrison, My Autobiography (1960), p. 131.

4. A. Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, I (1960), pp. 522-4;
C.A. Cooke, op. cit., pp. 141-2.

the years between 1929 and 1933, and at a time of mass unemployment, no such swing to the Left occurred. That this was so was due in part to the pacifism of the Labour leaders and of the Labour Government; partly it was because of the political situation of the Labour movement after the defeat of 1926. It was also due to what has been termed the 'non-revolutionary' character of the British working man. In analysing the lack of success of the Communist Party in British politics in the inter-war period, Pelling has reached the following conclusion. The main reason, he says, is that throughout these years the British people have never been in a 'revolutionary mood'. The Communist Party of Great Britain (C.P.G.B.) has been 'a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary situation.'¹ MacFarlane draws much the same conclusion: the history of the Party, he has written, is the story of

'the struggle to forge a revolutionary party in a non-revolutionary situation'.²

The same could be written of the British Union of Fascists, which had its beginnings in the distress of 1931-2, and reached its height of menace in 1934. Robert Benewick suggests that the B.U.F. failed because, unlike its continental counterparts, it attacked a

'political system the legitimacy of which had been established'.

1. H. Pelling, The British Communist Party (1958), p. 182.

2. L. J. MacFarlane, The British Communist Party (1966), p. 275.

In Britain, political forms were accepted, leaders respected: the Fascist political style,

'with its emphasis on revolution or counter-revolution, rather than continuity and evolution, and its search for order through political violence was alien to the traditions of British political life.'¹

The history of National Unemployed Workers' Movement (N.U.W.M.) falls into this pattern, both in the sense that it failed to bring sufficient workers 'onto the streets' in its campaign for increased unemployment benefit and generally improved conditions for the unemployed, and also in its wider aims to achieve a Socialist revolution. Despite the wide suffering and the severity of the depression in the early thirties there was nothing to show that a large percentage of the population of Great Britain were ready to join extreme political movements. The numbers involved in unemployed agitation were always restricted, as were the numbers joining the Communist Party or the Fascist Party. It was one thing to draw attention to the plight of the unemployed, but a very different and totally unacceptable thing to the majority of the British public, including the working class, to challenge seriously the long-established forms of parliamentary government and parliamentary procedure. The whole tradition and historical experience of Great Britain, unlike France or Ireland, was a non-revolutionary one. The British

1. R. Benewick, Political Violence and Public Order (1969), p. 13.

working people had a strong dislike for violence, aggression and war, a deference to authority, a respect for rules and established procedure.¹ This was a powerful barrier, which did not exist on the continent, to the success of extreme political movements in the 1930's. Just as the British public was outraged at the violence displayed by the Fascists at the Olympia Demonstration in 1934, the aggression displayed by the unemployed in the protests against the Means Test and 'Economies' of 1931, and in the demonstrations on Merseyside the following year, was likely to turn people away from the N.U.W.M., rather than induce them to join. A distinction can also be drawn between the occasional outbreaks of violence in the hunger marches organised by the N.U.W.M., and the legitimacy attached to the Jarrow March of 1936.

While the British working class held an unquestioning respect for their political leaders, and for parliamentary procedure, equally, the socialist leaders were not disposed to think in terms of a class struggle, one that could only be resolved successfully for the working class by force. To the British Labour leaders, writes Skidelsky,

'the doctrine of a bloody revolution was quite alien'.

Convinced that socialism was superior, they tried to persuade the capitalists that this was so:

'The revolution was to be one of reason not violence'.²

1. See E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (1964), p. 371 et seq; compare France, V. R. Lorwin, The French Labour Movement (Massachusetts, 1954), p. 36 et seq; until the Sixth National Conference of 1929, the movement was called the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement.

2. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 29.

The socialism of MacDonald and others was a very conservative socialism; a romantic vision of a better life. The revolutionary unemployed movement, with its angry and provocative 'calls to action', had no place in their philosophy, and hence little chance of being allowed to attach itself to the official British Labour movement. Similarly, MacDonald, Citrine and many others were not prepared to accord any favour to the Communist Party. The unemployed movement won a larger measure of success in the districts, but the Labour leadership was always able to exert sufficient control over the rank-and-file to prevent the working class going over entirely to the communists, as the Communist Party and N.U.W.M. leadership demanded they should. There is no doubt that the majority of unemployed involved in the agitations of the thirties still looked towards the Labour Party for political guidance.

The Communist Party of Great Britain had first been refused affiliation to the Labour Party as early as September of the year in which it was founded, 1920. It was rejected again by the Labour Party Conference at Edinburgh in 1922. The 1925 Conference passed two motions, one declaring communists ineligible for membership, the second requesting trade unions not to send communists as their delegates to the annual or local conferences of the Labour Party.¹ Following the General Strike, the Communist Party began to denounce the Labour leaders for what it called their 'betrayal' of the miners. Similar attacks came from Moscow. The General Council replied to these by imposing a

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 285-6.

ban on Trades Councils which had relationships with the Communist-controlled Minority Movement, in February 1927, and the Labour Party Executive disaffiliated a number of branches which maintained Communist connections.¹ At the Edinburgh T.U.C. in September 1927, the General Council condemned the Communist Party and its ancilliary organisations such as the Minority Movement and the National Left-Wing Movement.²

Towards the end of 1927, a new 'line' began to evolve in Moscow, a policy of extreme sectarianism in which Communist parties were expected to attack the Social Democratic and Labour Parties as 'Social Facists', and to regard them as enemies, in the same way as members of the capitalist parties. At the Ninth Plenum of the Comintern in February 1928, it was accepted that the C.P.G.B. should adopt 'clearer and sharper tactics of opposition' to the Labour and trade union leadership.³ During the course of 1928 two Communist unions were established, one in the East End of London, the United Clothing Workers, and the other in Fife, the United Mineworkers of Scotland. When Labour and the Nation was adopted by the Labour Party as its programme, this was bitterly attacked by the Communist Party as 'reformist', though MacFarlane points out that it was in fact no more 'reformist' than the programmes on which the Labour Party had fought previous elections with Communist support.

1. G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party from 1914, p. 197.

2. Report of the 59th Trades Union Congress, 1927, pp. 358-9.

3. H. Pelling, op. cit., pp. 46-8; L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 195 et seq.

It was the policy of the Communist Party which had changed, not that of the Labour Party.¹

At the General Election of 1929, twenty-five Communist candidates were nominated against leading Labour and Conservative figures. The new 'line' was put forward in a special election programme entitled 'Class against Class', which declared that the Labour Party had 'chosen' the capitalist class, and hence become a 'third capitalist party'.² Wal Hannington, the leader of the N.U.W.M. who was elected to the Central Committee of the C.P.G.B. at its Seventh Congress in November, stood against Margaret Bondfield at Wallsend-on-Tyne but lost his deposit.³ J. T. Murphy opposed Herbert Morrison in South Hackney but polled only 331 votes.⁴ The other candidates fared equally badly. The election of a Labour Government, writes MacFarlane,

'brought none of the elation which had been felt by the Communist Party in 1924'.⁵

On the contrary, in pursuance of the 'Class against Class' policy, the Government was attacked by every available means, especially in the Communist Party press.⁶

1. Ibid., p. 214.

2. Ibid., p. 229.

3. M. Bondfield, op. cit., p. 275.

4. J. T. Murphy, op. cit., p. 293.

5. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 230.

6. Inprecorr, Communist Review, and the Communist newspapers, such as the Worker and Sunday Worker, all contained such attacks. From its very first issue in January 1930, the Daily Worker added to them. Labour Monthly carried similar articles.

The emergence of the new 'line' increased the resentment which MacDonald and other Labour and trade union leaders felt to 'attacks from within'. Even by the end of 1927, Communist influence in the unions had reached sufficient proportions for Walter Citrine, the T.U.C. General Secretary, to publish a series of articles in the T.U.C. Journal, Labour Magazine, in which he quoted from official publications of the Communist Party and Comintern and from Minority Movement instructions to show that the communists were intent on using the trade unions for their own ends.¹ Citrine regarded the Communist Party as

'determined to use every available means to undermine the faith of trade unionists in their elected officers, and to convert the trade union movement into a revolutionary force.'

The laws of libel and slander, he asserted, were powerless to prevent their attacks.² In February 1930, the Labour Party Executive issued the first of its 'Black Circulars', declaring ineligible for affiliation to the Party a number of organisations stated to be under communist control. These included the Minority Soviet Russia, Workers' International Relief, and others. Members were requested to cease all connections with the bodies named

'as a condition of their continued membership of the Labour Party.'

1. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 243; W. M. Citrine, Men and Work: An Autobiography (1964), pp. 253-4.

2. Ibid., pp. 253-4.

Local Labour parties were warned not to affiliate or to support them or others declared to be ineligible.¹

However, as a result of the 'new line', communist influence in British politics declined rapidly during the course of 1930 and 1931. In the General Election of 1931 the Party fared even worse than it had done in 1929. Not one Communist was elected to Parliament. Even Willie Gallacher at West Fife came bottom of the poll, and Harry Politt and Arthur Horner were both heavily defeated.² By the end of the year it had been accepted even in Moscow that the policy of sectarianism had failed. In Britain Communist Party membership was dropping away. The same was true in France and Germany. Far from meaning the advancement of communism in Europe, 'Class against Class' had resulted in the alienation of the communist parties from any general influence among the European working class. As far as Britain was concerned, the party's influence in the trade union movement, which had in 1927 been quite substantial, had almost completely disappeared. The 'line' of independence had to be abandoned in favour of a more successful policy.

At the Eighth Session of the Central Council of the Profintern in December 1931, the emphasis was once more placed on the need for work in the existing trade union branches, and on the need for supporting spontaneous rank-and-file movements in the unions.³ This shift in policy went almost unnoticed

1. Report of the 30th Labour Party Conference, 1930, p. 29.

2. G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party from 1914, p. 263.

3. H. Pelling, op. cit., pp. 65-9.

among Labour leaders, however, for whom, as has been seen, the defeat of 1931 meant an even greater need for unity and loyalty. Above all, this meant the continued exclusion of the Communist Party and of the organisations declared to be its subsidiaries, including the N.U.W.M. Thus when the latter body organised a march of unemployed to the T.U.C. at Newcastle in September 1932, the General Council refused to allow a deputation to put their case before Congress, although several delegates protested. Sir Ben Turner moved that the unemployed marchers be allowed to speak to Congress for ten minutes. Citrine, however, quashed the proposal by reminding the delegates that the unemployed movement and Hannington in particular had close links with the Communist Party.¹ In a discussion at the Congress on the progress of the T.U.C. Unemployed Associations,² one delegate objected that they were 'a stab in the back' at the N.U.W.M. Whereas the General Council, he claimed, had only just woken to the fact that something had to be done for the unemployed, the N.U.W.M. had been dealing with the problem for years. He advocated that the trades councils and trade union branches should help in the creation of broad Unemployed Councils around the branches of the N.U.W.M.³ In a later

1. Report of the 64th Trades Union Congress, 1932.

2. See above, Chapter 8.

3. This was in line with the N.U.W.M.'s attempt to create Unemployed Councils, whose members would be drawn from the wider masses of the unemployed than the movement had so far reached; see below, Chapter 10, p. 380.

session of the Congress, ^{he} moved a resolution declaring that the time had come for a renewed united front between the General Council and the N.U.W.M. There was no seconder for the resolution, however, and it fell.¹

Throughout 1932 the Communist Party continued to attack the Labour leadership. John Strachey wrote:

'those very organisations of working class revolt, which the workers have painfully created over nearly half a century, have now passed over almost completely to the side of capitalism. Far from being an assistance to the workers in their life-and-death struggle, they are today by far the most formidable obstacle in the way of an early victory.'²

There was still no sign that the Communist Party, although steps had been taken to end hostilities, would come round to courting the favour of the Labour Party and trade unions. For their part, the General Council and the Party Executive were in no mood to tolerate the Communists.

The coming to power of Hitler in 1933, and the events which followed, brought a sharp change in Communist tactics, however. In March the Comintern Executive instructed its sections to

'refrain from making attacks on Social Democratic organisations'.³

1. Report of the 64th Trade Union Congress, 1932.

2. Quoted M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 136-7.

3. H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 76; Daily Worker, 8 March 1933.

A few days later, the C.P.G.B. invited the Executives of the Labour Party, the T.U.C., the I.L.P., and the Co-operative Party to consider plans for a 'United Front'.¹ It was hardly surprising, however, in view of the previous defamations, when the Labour Party and Trade Unions refused and once more took steps to prevent communist infiltration. On 24 March 1933, the National Joint Council issued a circular, Democracy versus Dictatorship, which stated that the political events at home and abroad forced the British Labour movement to

're-affirm its beliefs upon the fundamental principles of Government.'

In Germany, Poland, Italy and elsewhere, it stated,

'Reaction of "Left" is displaced by the triumphant Reaction of the "Right".'

Communism, by its attacks on the Social Democratic Parties, had divided the working class. The British Labour movement placed its faith in democracy and Socialism. 'If the British Working-class', it declared,

'hesitate now between majority and minority rule and toy with the idea of Dictatorship, Fascist or Communist, they will go down to servitude such as they have never suffered.'²

1. H. Pelling, loc. cit.

2. Report of the 33rd Labour Party Conference, 1933, pp. 18, 30, Appendix IX; A. Bullock, op. cit., p. 527; H. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism (1969, Penguin ed.), p. 198.

This was followed in June 1933 by a pamphlet entitled The Communist Solar System, issued by the Labour Party Executive, which outlined Communist methods of establishing and controlling subsidiary organisations. The pamphlet insisted that no real distinction could be drawn between the Soviet and Nazi forms of totalitarianism.¹ In the same month the General Council of the T.U.C. issued a circular to unions and trades councils on the same topic. This asserted that the unions must constantly be on their guard against communist infiltration. Many people did not realise that the principle of dictatorship was the same whether of the right or left.

'There is some confusion of thought on these matters which has created a tolerant attitude to the dictatorship of the Left,' it stated.

'Communism stands for a dictatorship just as ruthless to minority opinion as Fascism.'²

This was written by Citrine. The Co-operative Party also rejected the Communist proposals for a United Front outright.

At the T.U.C. in September, Citrine reiterated his statements in a summary analysis of the events in Germany.³ A resolution calling for a United

1. M. Foot, op. cit., p. 145.

2. Dictatorships and the Trade Union Movement, in Report of the 65th Trades Union Congress, 1933, pp. 425-435.

3. M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 146-7.

Front with the Communists was overwhelmingly defeated. At the Labour Party Conference at Hastings, an attempt to refer back the Report on Democracy versus Dictatorship was defeated after a speech by Herbert Morrison.¹ With reference to the Communist proposals he declared

'We could not accept that because we had found in the past that co-operation with the Communists was an impossible thing'.

They were asking for trouble. They would place themselves in difficulty in fighting Fascist dictatorship by associating with the Communists. The moderates among the Labour leaders were content to lay the blame for the events in Germany squarely on the shoulders of the Communists, whose tactics, they alleged, had divided and weakened the German working class, and thus cleared the road for Hitler's revolution. The same might happen in Britain if they aligned themselves with the Communists.

While this was the attitude of the leadership, however, many of the rank-and-file held different opinions. Stirred by the events in Germany many local Labour parties were ready to join in the demands for a United Front. In April 1933 the Left-wing organisations held a big United Front Demonstration in Hyde Park. The following month the Communist Party and the I.L.P. came to an agreement for joint action against Fascism. The first Fascist demonstrations were held in London.² In the autumn of 1933 the Government introduced its new

1. The motion was seconded by Ellis Smith (United Pattern Makers' Association), see below Appendix VI for biographical details; Report of the 33rd Labour Party Conference, 1933, pp. 218-221.

2. G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party from 1914, pp. 286-7.



measures for Unemployment Insurance. Under the new scheme, which retained the Means Test, an Unemployment Assistance Board was established to look after the unemployed who had exhausted their benefit rights. This was regarded by many as splitting the unemployed into two camps. Equally important, the individual no longer had the right to have his case raised in Parliament by his M.P., and the right of appeal to an Umpire was limited to those who had been union members at the time of their last job, and who had retained their membership. Bevan, a few Liberal M.P.'s, and the I.L.P. Members objected. At the precise time that union membership had fallen to its lowest point between the wars,¹ those workers outside the unions were to be denied the rights and protection accorded to others. The excuse for differentiation, said Bevan, was absurd.

'If you close the avenues of appeal between the Citizen and the State', he protested, 'then you must realise that human beings are not going to have the patience to sit down in resignation for five years until they have another chance.'²

There remained plenty of opposition to the leadership's attitude to the Communist proposal for a United Front, and their habit of comparing Communism with Fascism. At the T.U.C. in September 1933, Bevan attacked Citrine's statement on the events in Germany as the 'most dangerous' he had 'ever heard.'

1. A. Bullock, op. cit., p. 504.

2. M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

He was sure that as unemployment continued to remain widespread there was a danger that the people would become cynical about democracy.¹ At the Labour Party Conference, similar dissention was expressed by a number of delegates. Alex Gossip, a delegate from the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association, thought that all trade unions, like his own, should be affiliated to the Anti-Fascist Movement and the League against Imperialism. Shinwell and Morrison defended the Executive. Certain delegates were 'coquetting with Communism' said Morrison. Referring to the proved disruptive tactics of the communists in the past, he declared

'We are expected to be mugs enough to make it easier for them.'

Another delegate, Ellis Smith, declared

'We want to take Hitlerism and the Fascist organisation seriously, and adopt a policy that is going to rally round this movement all the best elements that will enable us to withstand this new form of organised capitalism.'

Ellen Wilkinson argued that the pamphlet The Communist Solar System was

'a magnificent advertisement of the energy and drive of the Communist Party in this country.'

The Labour Party and T.U.C. had not acted quickly enough and in such a way

'as to appeal to the imagination.'

1. Ibid., p. 146.

Once again, however, Morrison rose to defend the Executive. The Communists were a 'negligible quantity' he declared. What was there to unite with compared with the great Labour and Trade Union movement? They were already a united front and did not need the communists.¹

The political events in Germany and on the continent during 1934 strengthened the feeling in the districts. In May the dictatorship was installed in Bulgaria. In June came the Nazi purge in Germany. In July, Dollfuss was assassinated and replaced by Schuschnigg: Hitler became President of the Reich. In France, in July, the Socialists and Communists agreed to the formation of a United Front, and in September a United Front was formed in Spain. In London, Mosley's Fascist marches increased in violence, and anti-semitism was preached openly in the East End. Throughout the year in Great Britain, the Communists went on actively pursuing the campaign for a United Front of all working class parties. Early in the year the N.U.W.M. organised its fifth national hunger march to London, which received more support from trades councils and local trade union and Labour party branches than any of its predecessors. It was followed by a National Unity Congress held in Bermondsey Town Hall in February 1934.

In the same month, the Communist Party and the I.L.P. again made approaches to the Labour Party on the question of the United Front, and were again rejected. The Labour Executive refused to consult at all with the Communist Party, asserting that it did not believe in Parliamentary Democracy, was controlled

1. Report of the 33rd Labour Party Conference, 1933, pp. 114-5, 218, 221.

from outside by the Comintern, and was pursuing disruptive policies towards the Trade Union and Labour movement. Consultations did, however, take place between the Labour Party and the I.L.P., but no agreement was reached. The Executive followed up its refusal to negotiate with a circular to branches designed to check the ad hoc activities between Labour Party members and Communist Party and I.L.P. members, springing up in many parts of the country. The circular declared that:

'loose association with the Communist Party is just as dangerous to the interests of the Labour Party as is Communist membership itself,'

and it gave warning that the Executive would seek authority at the next Party Conference for disciplinary measures to deal with any cases of members or branches involved in united action with the Communist Party or its ancilliary organisations.¹ The Labour Party's hostility to any compromise with the Left was further strengthened by its victory in the London County Council elections in March 1934, when for the first time the London Labour Party won a clear majority. This appeared to be a result for the policies of patience and moderation preached by the Executive.²

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1. G. D. H. Cole, op. cit., pp. 291-301.
2. H. Morrison, op. cit., p. 114 et seq; G. D. H. Cole, History of the Labour Party, p. 293; A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement (1948), p. 442.

Nonetheless, by 1935 many socialists, deeply moved by the events on the continent where their comrades were often the first victims, were in favour of a united front of working class parties. To them the real enemy was British capitalism. Far from seeing that Germany was the result of lack of discipline, it appeared to many that it was the consequence of a lack of firmness on the part of the Social Democratic Parties. The question was not how Germany could be thwarted, but rather how soon and in what form would the pattern be repeated in Great Britain, and how might that be resisted. In South Wales, the Miners' Federation played a leading role in the demonstrations of protest against the Unemployment Assistance Board scales, announced in December 1934. It demanded and secured united action. In the summer of 1935 the Comintern's switch to the United Front was completed at the Seventh World Congress, and the C.P.G.B. began to work harder than ever to achieve this end.¹ At the Election, held in November, it withdrew all but two candidates in favour of the Labour Party as a gesture in support of the United Front.

The N.U.W.M. derived considerable benefits from the United Front campaign from its outset in March 1933, although, like the Communist Party, the Labour leaders refused to have anything to do with it. It was undoubtedly, as they asserted, closely linked with the Communist Party. A leading part in all its activities was played by the Party leaders. For several months in 1924

1. H. Pelling, The British Communist Party, p. 87.

and 1925 a Joint Advisory Council had been established between the movement and the T.U.C. General Council, but the unemployed movement had broken off this relationship when its representatives found themselves unable to persuade the unions to join in some of their more violent demonstrations.¹ From this date onwards the General Council and the Executive of the Labour Party issued the first of its 'Black Circulars', declaring ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party a number of organisations stated to be under Communist control, the N.U.W.M. was among those prescribed.

It is not strictly correct, however, to say that the N.U.W.M. was an ancilliary organisation of the C.P.G.B. in the way, for example, that the Minority Movement was. Certainly from its beginnings in 1920 the N.U.W.M. had always received considerable support from the Communist Party. The leaders of the N.U.W.M., both nationally and locally, were usually Party members, though this was only to be expected, since in the 1920's most of the Communist Party's membership was unemployed. The Party also hoped to divert the movement into a revolutionary working class organisation, although, while the Communist leadership flattered itself that the movement was completely under their control, in fact the N.U.W.M. was always able to retain a large degree of day-to-day autonomy.²

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1. Interview with Harry McShane at the University of Hull, on 12 March 1969; Harry McShane was the Scottish Organiser of the N.U.W.M.; see below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.
 2. See below, Chapter 10, p. 378 .

At no time in the years between 1929 and 1936 did the N.U.W.M. receive the official support of the Labour Party or T.U.C. Its policies followed the line of the Communist Party fairly closely. Between 1929 and 1931, the unemployed leaders joined in the demunciation of the General Council and Labour Executive. At the Sixth National Conference of the Movement at Sheffield a resolution was carried which condemned the General Council as being in

'open collaboration with the capitalist class'

since 1926. The Daily Herald, continued the resolution,

'suppresses all news of N.U.W.C.M. activities and in the periods of intense agitation it exceeds by far any of the capitalist class in its scurrilous denunciations.'

Another resolution was carried which condemned the appointment of Margaret Bondfield as Minister of Labour, and that of J. H. Thomas as responsible for the Government's employment policy. The Labour Government, it said, was a

'Government in the interests of capitalism, more dangerous even than the Baldwin's Government because of its ability to deceive the workers.'¹

A similar resolution was carried at the Seventh Conference in February 1931, when Hannington accused the leaders of the unions and of the Labour Party as

'openly siding with the capitalists in their attack on the working classes.'²

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1. Report of the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., 1929, 28pp.
 2. Report of the Seventh National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1931, 24pp.

Hannington also contributed articles to the Labour Monthly on the same lines.¹

This policy was continued throughout 1931 and into 1932. At the meeting of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. in January 1932, it was urged that the movement 'should not cease in any way' its criticisms of the leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions, and those local leaders who support them.² During the course of 1932, however, a gradual change in policy is noticeable, in line with that of the Communist Party. The language in which the attacks were made became much less severe. In place of the previous denunciations, in December 1932 the N.A.C. merely directed the attention of its branches to the fact that the recreational activities of the T.U.C. Unemployed Associations 'call for the most serious attention'.³ Like the Communist Party, instead of attacking the Labour leadership, there was now a return to the 'united front from below' policy. In February 1933, a month before the Communist Party proposals for a United Front, the N.A.C. declared:

1. See, for example, Labour Monthly, XIV (May 1932).

2. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 23-24 January 1932.

3. Ibid., 3-4 December 1932.

'Our Branches must develop agitation inside the Trade Unions, Labour Parties, Trades Councils and Co-operative Guilds. A census should be taken of the members of the N.U.W.M. in respect of their Trade Union membership, and they should be grouped according to their trades and industries and an organised drive made for agitation in their respective Trade Union Branches. In our agitation inside the Trade Union Branches our spokesmen should show up the splitting policy of the T.U.C., show the need for united struggle of employed and unemployed against the attacks of the Government and the ruling class, encourage the militant employed workers from Trade Union Branches to come on to the Branch Committees and Councils of our Movement.'¹

Following the appeal of the Communist Party in March 1933, the N.U.W.M. proposed a United Front for action on behalf of the unemployed to the General Council, but was refused. However, agreement was reached with the I.L.P. for joint action.²

The end of the sectarianism of the N.U.W.M., together with the rise of Fascism on the continent, gradually won the unemployed movement increasing support in the districts. An increased readiness to participate in unemployed

1. Ibid., 25-26 February 1933.

2. Ibid., 27-28 May 1933.

agitation was noticeable on the part of trades councils, who themselves began to organise local demonstrations in 1933 and 1934. As has been stated in Chapter Eight, in February 1933 the T.U.C., Labour Party and Co-operative Union combined to hold a big demonstration in Hyde Park against unemployment. Although the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party were excluded officially, they nonetheless managed to take part in the demonstration.¹ In 1934, despite being advised against this by Transport House, many militant socialists, including Aneurin Bevan, became involved in the N.U.W.M.'s hunger march, and in the agitation against the U.A.B. scales in the winter of 1934-5. Bevan spoke frequently on N.U.W.M. platforms at this time and put his name to petitions presented to the House of Commons and at Downing Street.

The agitations against the U.A.B. scales were the biggest step forward for the N.U.W.M. in its unity campaign. Foot has called them

'the biggest explosion of popular anger in the whole inter-war period, second only to the General Strike itself.'²

The South Wales Miners' Federation played a leading part in the demonstrations which resulted in the issue of a standstill order within a few days of their

1. Times, 6 February 1933; see above Chapter 8, p. 267; the Scotland Yard file on the demonstration contains the minutes of an interview between Chief Constable F. W. Abbott and the two National Joint Council Chief marshalls for the demonstration, R. T. Windle and E. P. Harries. During the course of the interview, the Labour representatives state categorically that the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party have not been invited to take part, and that the T.U.C. and Labour Party have no desire to be associated with them. (Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council demonstration, 5 February 1933.)

2. M. Foot, op. cit., p. 174.

coming into operation. Elsewhere, the N.U.W.M. strongly supported by the Communist Party took the lead. However, this was no Communist plot: all other considerations were forgotten and put aside in a spontaneous wave of protest. Many socialists believed that the same could be achieved on a much broader front. The Labour Executive and General Council continued to maintain their stand against the Communists, however. The Trade Union leaders, in particular, remained strongly anti-Communist. Bevan's attack on the Executive's proposals for disciplinary powers to deal with members associating with pre-^{o?}scribed organisations at the 1934 Conference, and his own support for the Hunger March of that year brought an immediate reaction from Ernest Bevin.¹

The leadership of the British Labour movement continued to oppose any association with the Communist Party or the N.U.W.M. largely on the grounds that the communists were incapable of sincere co-operation since they took their orders from Moscow. In September 1935, the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. issued a restatement of its policy with regard to the official movement. The N.U.W.M. was not opposed to the Trade Unions and Labour Party it declared. On the contrary;

'the N.U.W.M. will assist in every way possible in all campaigns of the Labour Party directed towards defeating the National Government and the forwarding of working class interests.'

1. A. Bullock, op. cit., p. 552.

This was in line with the Communist Party's tactic of withdrawing its election candidates. The N.U.W.M., said the Council, believes that all workers, employed or unemployed should belong to their respective trade unions. The movement welcomed the decisions of the Margate T.U.C. with regard to the 40-hour week, pensions at sixty, schemes of public works, and the raising of the school-leaving age. Branches of the N.U.W.M. were instructed that

'....it is particularly necessary to approach in the most comradely manner the Unemployed Associations which are organised under the T.U.C. All tendencies to regard these organisations, or to refer to them as "scab" organisations, must be ended if we are to develop united action.'¹

At the General Election, held on 14 November, the N.U.W.M. branches were told to urge the unemployed to vote for the Labour Party candidates. In some cases, the N.A.C. reported afterwards, this resulted in N.U.W.M. leaders being invited to speak on the Labour Party platforms. As a result, in the districts at any rate, the movement could claim that an atmosphere of 'friendly co-operation' had been reached with many local representatives of Labour parties, and a much improved relationship established with many trades councils.²

It was not true to anything like the same extent, however, that the Left had succeeded in winning over to its side the leadership of the British Labour movement. As soon as the General Election was over, in November 1935 the

1. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 28-29 September 1935.

2. Ibid., 8-9 February 1936.

Communist Party made a further attempt at affiliation with the Labour Party, basing their claim on the need 'to work loyally with the Labour Party', not as a 'manoeuvre' or for any 'concealed aims', but because it believed that this would unite the working class in the 'fight' against the National Government and Fascism.¹ The application was rejected by the Executive in January 1936 for the reason that the growth of Fascism in Europe was partly the result of the Communists having divided the working class. They remained:

'as firmly convinced as were their predecessors that any weakening in the Labour Party's defence of political democracy, such as the affiliation of the Communist Party would imply, would inevitably assist the forces of reaction.'

This was followed by a lengthy manifesto, British Labour and Communism, published by the National Council of Labour, in which the previous Communist vilifications of the union and Labour Party leadership were recalled.

The Communists were now prepared to go to great lengths, however, to win the favour of the same men who, just a few years before, they had branded as 'social fascists'. Abandoning any forms of sectarianism, Pollitt declared, early in 1936, that the Daily Worker should be transformed:

'from a narrow party organ into the fighting daily newspaper of the united front.'

Non-party people should be brought onto the editorial board, he urged.² In

1. H. Pelling, The British Communist Party, p. 88; G. D. H. Cole, History of Labour Party from 1914, pp. 339-40.

2. H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 88.

May 1935, the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. had similarly declared: that the movement must 'root out all forms of sectarianism'.

'Any conduct', said the N.A.C.

'on the part of our branches which discourages the widest masses of the workers from joining our movement, and which creates the belief that the N.U.W.M. is simply an organisation of unemployed revolutionaries is harmful to our Movement in the extreme.'¹

There had been a complete reversal of policy on the part of both the N.U.W.M. and the Communist Party since 1931. Few new recruits to the C.P.G.B., says Pelling, had any knowledge of what the Party had been saying five years before, and the Party leadership was doing its best to conceal its past.²

This change in policy, together with the events in 1935 and 1936 in foreign affairs, increased the demand for united action in many sections of the British Labour movement. The Communist proposals for a United Front gained more and more support in the districts, and, similarly, the N.U.W.M. activities, although the movement was beginning to decline as unemployment fell, received much wider help from trades councils, trade union branches and local Labour parties than previously. The Socialist League joined the demands for unity, which were reinforced in the spring of 1936, when the French Front Populaire, embracing the Communists, Socialists and Radicals won a sweeping

1. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 25-26 May 1935.

2. H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 89.

election victory, which brought Leon Blum to power.¹

Immediately before the summer parliamentary recess in Britain, the Unemployment Assistance Board produced its new scales, fourteen months after the uprisings of 1935. Unemployment was declining, but the inadequacy of the scales nonetheless produced a strong reaction. In the House of Commons, Aneurin Bevan once more attacked the Government's treatment of the unemployed. The Government had reduced the people to impotence, he said. He hoped that the people of his district would 'behave in such a manner' in protest against the new regulations, that the Government

'will require to send a regular army to keep order'.

Conservative M.P.'s were showing little interest in the plight of South Wales:

'If income tax is under consideration, those benches are packed. If electricity is under consideration, those benches are packed. If there is some opposition to a little Municipal Bill, for which hon. Members opposite have been subsidised by private concerns, those benches are packed. If it is a sugar subsidy, those benches are packed. If it is swag, those benches are packed, but if it is the poor, they are empty. I am filled with contempt and disgust for the House of Commons.'²

1. G. D. H. Cole, op. cit., pp. 338-9.

2. M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 205-6:

The only way to attract the attention of the Government was to create trouble outside Parliament.

With this, perhaps, in mind, the N.U.W.M. organised a sixth national hunger march to London. Many trade unionists and Labourites apart from Aneurin Bevan were strongly in favour, and became closely involved, despite instructions to the contrary from the Party Executive and the General Council. On Sunday 8 November 1936, a crowd estimated at 200,000 welcomed the marchers into Hyde Park. Six platforms were erected, and the speakers included not only Bevan and Wal Hannington, but also Clement Attlee, leader of the Opposition. On 12 November, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, received a deputation from the unemployed in the Lobby of the House of Commons. On 15 November, Armistice Sunday, Aneurin Bevan, Ben Tillet, Tom Mann, Pollitt, and others addressed a farewell demonstration given for the marchers in Trafalgar Square.¹

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Thus by the end of 1936, a considerable body of opinion had declared itself in favour of united action, and the events in Spain added weight to their demands. In January 1937, the Unity Campaign was launched at a meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. A 'Unity Manifesto' was published which advocated the 'return of a Labour Government as the next stage in the advance to working class power.' Once more, however, the National Executive of the Labour Party refused to be drawn. Although

1. Ibid., pp. 206-7; see below, Chapter 10, p. 435 et seq.

the Unity Campaign in fact aroused much enthusiasm on the part of Local Labour parties and trades councils, the leadership remained unimpressed. On 27 January, just three days after the Manchester meeting, the Socialist League was expelled from the Labour Party, and the Executive issued a circular 'Party Loyalty' condemning collaboration with the Communists.¹

It would be foolish to suggest that there would have been a revolution in Britain in the 1930's had the nation possessed a revolutionary rather than a parliamentary tradition. Nonetheless, the constant stand of the leadership of the British Labour movement, and its refusal to succumb to the appeals of the communists for a United Front, did much to prevent the occurrence of a polarisation of politics in Great Britain in these years. Perhaps, the failure, or refusal, of the Labour Government of 1929-31 to introduce radical socialist legislation, especially with regard to unemployment, was an even greater block to the communists, and hence to the rise of Fascism as well. The Labour Party remained committed to constitutional process, and the great majority of its followers responded to the leaderships calls for patience and moderation. Had they not done so, and had the leaders not remained on the right of the Party, many more might have joined in the struggles of the N.U.W.M., in the Fascist and anti-Fascist demonstrations.

In the Daily Herald in April 1933, Stafford Cripps had suggested that, when the next Labour Government was returned to power, they should go about

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 581.

the abolition of the House of Lords. Citrine, Bevin and other trades union leaders, as well as politicians in the Labour camp, were quick to deny that any form of dictatorship might come into being with the next Labour Government.

In the New Clarion in June, Citrine wrote that

'phrases of this kind, when used by prominent people, may convey the impression that Labour is turning its back upon democracy.'

No such policy had been devised, he continued,

'but such advocacy places a weapon in the hands of Labour's enemies which they are only too willing to use.'¹

Such was the pattern. Although the defeat of 1931 produced an immediate leftward turn on the part of the rank-and-file, the leadership of the British Labour movement remained right-wing, even in the face of the advance of Fascism. Between 1932 and 1935, while the Communist Party was moving towards closer collaboration with the Trade Unions and Labour Party, the Labour Party was in fact moving back steadily to the 'gradualist' philosophy it had held before 1931. Its leaders remained convinced that their chances of winning a majority at the next election depended on their offering a moderate policy. The London election of 1934 strengthened this view. With this in mind they were equally as determined as before to dissociate themselves from the communists, and this determination was reinforced by the strongly anti-communist attitude of the trade union leaders.²

1. C. A. Cooke, op. cit., pp. 155-6.

2. G. D. H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement, p. 448.

Chapter Ten

THE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT
1929-1936.

'It was the breakdown of capitalism itself, a crisis in the whole of the economic structure which had developed during the previous two centuries.'

So wrote David Thomson of the years between 1929 and 1936. Should his words appear rather to over-dramatise the issue, then it should be remembered that in the world as a whole there were thirty million unemployed men and women. Perhaps three times this number, the wives and children of unemployed men, were living on unemployment payments. In the United States there were ten million unemployed, and the nation's steel industry was working at only one tenth of its capacity.¹ Similar conditions prevailed in most western European countries. The worst years were those after 1929: but since the early 1920's mass unemployment had been a feature of all capitalist countries. In Great Britain, with the collapse of the post-war boom in the spring and summer of 1920, unemployment suddenly became the most important question of the day, as it was to remain, almost continuously, for the next twenty years. Unemployment rose from 274,000 in September 1920 to more than half a million by the end of October. In January 1921, it passed the million mark, a point below which it was never to fall again until the outbreak of the Second World War. By May 1921, the figure was more than two million.²

1. D. Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon (2nd. edition, 1962), p. 646.

2. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVIII (October 1920; November 1920); (January 1921; May 1921).

It was the policy of successive governments in Great Britain to try to maintain the unemployed at subsistence level by payments of one sort or another from public funds, in the hope that things would soon take a turn for the better. The improvement was a long time coming. Before recovery was complete, in 1936, the provisions of the unemployment insurance Acts had been altered many times, improved when Parliament was alarmed at the protests of the unemployed, and 'worsened when it considered the cost'.¹ Unemployment was appreciably higher in the export industries than in other industries: ship-building (36.1% of insured workers unemployed in December 1921); iron and steel (36.7%); engineering (27.2%). The districts worst affected were Northern Ireland (25%); Scotland (21%); the Midlands and North-East (both 18%).² Among the towns hardest hit were Barrow-in-Furness, with 49% of insured persons unemployed in August 1922; Hartlepool (60%); Stockton (49%); Jarrow (43%); Brynmawr (47%). In several districts of Glasgow, the percentage ranged from 28% to 59%.³

By the end of 1920, in London in particular, the first signs of organisation among the unemployed were to be seen in the formation of local Unemployed Ex-Servicemen's Organisations. Of an entirely local character lacking any conscious working-class policy, the men were organised to march the streets for the sole purpose of begging charity as a means of relieving distress.⁴

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1. G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People 1746-1946 (1948), p. 561.
 2. See C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 126.
 3. Ibid.,
 4. W. Hannington, Unemployed Struggles, 1919-1936 (1936), p. 13.

At the end of October 1920 a conference of delegates representing the Ex-Servicemen's Organisations of eleven different London boroughs was held in the Bookbinders' Hall, Clerkenwell, and a London District Council of Unemployed was established, with Wal Hannington as organiser, Percy Hays as secretary, and Jack Holt as chairman. They received great support: within a month, wrote Hannington, the whole of London was organised under the Council, with delegates from thirty-one boroughs meeting twice weekly.¹ In April 1921 a further conference was held at the International Socialist Club in Hoxton, attended by more than fifty delegates representing unemployed organisations in towns throughout England and Wales.² The conference agreed to the formation of a national movement of unemployed organisations

'to co-ordinate the policy and activities of the unemployed in a united struggle against the Government.'³

Towards the end of November 1921 the Second National Conference of the movement took place at Gorton Town Hall, Manchester.⁴ It was here that the structure, rules and policy of the movement were decided upon. Twelve demands

1. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p. 83.
2. Scotland was not yet involved.
3. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 83, 88-9: their demand was 'Work at Trade Union rates or full maintenance', and they asked for a weekly relief scales as follows:
 36s. for a man and wife;
 5s. for each dependent child up to 16 years of age;
 rent allowance of up to 15s. per week;
 30s. for single persons over 18 years;
 15s. for single persons between 16 and 18 years;
 one hundredweight of coal per week for unemployed families.
4. Daily Herald, 21 November 1921.

were laid down as a programme, including three meals a day, weekends and holidays included, to children of school-age whose parents were out of work, extra grants for expectant mothers, and the temporary cessation of overtime to prevent unnecessary unemployment. Hannington was elected National Organiser: Haye became the national secretary and Holt the national chairman.¹ For some time the London Council had been issuing a fortnightly newspaper, Out-of-work, and this was now taken over by the executive body, the National Administrative Council, and issued as the official organ of the national movement.² Although publication came to an end later in the 1920's, the paper was at first fairly successful, and it has been estimated that circulation reached as many as 60,000 per issue.³

Following the Manchester conference rapid progress was made, many new branches being formed up and down the country. An important breakthrough was made in Scotland where a well organised movement led by John MacLean and Harry McShane, both engineers, had been established, but, largely on the former's insistence, had remained independent of the national movement. McShane had concurred in this, but in 1922, while MacLean was in gaol,⁴

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1. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 43-4.
 2. Ibid., p. 118; Out-of-Work had been in publication since March 1921.
 3. T. Bell, Pioneering Days (1941), p. 271: there is no further evidence to support this statement. The British Museum (Colindale) has the first two editions of a newspaper, the Unemployed Worker, produced by the N.U.W.C.M. at the end of 1923, and also the first two editions of Unemployed News, published in December 1928. There is no evidence to suggest that there were any further editions of either newspaper.
 4. T. Bell, John MacLean: A Fighter for Freedom (Scotland, 1944).

McShane joined the Communist Party and his views on national organisation altered. The Scottish movement, which had a considerable following in Glasgow and the West, joined forces with the national movement.¹ In the autumn of 1922 a national hunger march to London was held. More than one thousand unemployed men took part, coming from South Wales, the South West, the Midlands, Lancashire and elsewhere. Three hundred and fifty men marched in stages all the way from Glasgow to the Capital, a journey which lasted more than a month.² On their arrival in London, on 17 November, they were welcomed into Hyde Park by thousands of Londoners.³

After joint consultations with the General Council of the T.U.C., towards the end of 1923, a Joint Advisory Council was set up, with four representatives of the Unions (John Bromley, A. A. Findlay, Ben Tillet, and Fred Bramley), and four members of the N.A.C. of the unemployed movement. The first meeting of the Council took place on 10 January 1924, and for a while regular meetings were held and a number of joint activities arranged. Gradually, however, as the unemployed members found themselves unable to persuade the General Council to join in some of their left-wing and occasionally violent demonstrations, the goodwill disappeared. The General Council began to regard the unemployed movement with some suspicion, and eventually branded it as Communist-controlled. In 1925, the unemployed broke off the relationship.⁴

1. Interview with Harry McShane at the University of Hull on 12 March 1969; see below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.

2. W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, p. 112.

3. T. Regan, The Hunger March of 1922, by one who was on it (Manchester, n.d.), 20pp; W. Hannington, The Insurgents in London (1923) 32pp; H.O. 45, Unemployed Marchers, November 1922 and February 1923.

4. Interview with Harry McShane.

The N.A.C. later alleged that the establishing of the Joint Council was a pretence of interest on the part of the T.U.C., which in fact regarded the unemployed movement as a nuisance to be quietly curbed. In left-wing circles at the time, it was felt that the unemployed had been deceived, and that the General Council had not entered into the relationship with any intention of undertaking the bold steps on behalf of the unemployed thought to be necessary, but simply to meet pressures from union members who felt that something should be done for the unemployed. This was only one side of the story, however. The 1920's were a time of great difficulty for the British Labour movement as a whole, and the unemployed leaders were being unduly optimistic in expecting any great help from the unions in their often violent political struggles. The unions had their own battles to fight, and, at a time of declining membership and funds, the General Council had little inclination to become involved in unemployed agitation of a political nature.

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One of the most fascinating aspects of the unemployed movement was its connection with the engineering industry. With few exceptions, South Wales being the most important, the movement was led in the districts by unemployed skilled engineers. Most of the national leaders, too, were unemployed engineers; for example, Wal Hannington, the Organiser, Percy Haye, Harry McShane and also Tom Mann, the movement's

treasurer for much of the thirties.¹ The influence of the engineers is not difficult to account for, in spite of the fact that for much of the latter half of the nineteenth century, from the Amalgamation of 1851 onwards, both the skilled engineering workers themselves, and also their union, had been among the more cautious and conservative sections of the trade union movement.²

1. J. B. Jeffery's, The Story of the Engineers, 1800-1945 (1945); in addition, the N.U.W.M. reached its peak of activity and membership in the years between 1931 and 1933 when employment in the engineering industry was at its height (see Britain in Recovery). Most of the unemployment in the industry was of a long-term nature so that, with little hope of finding new employment, skilled engineers were able to devote their full attention to organising the unemployed. By the 1930's long years without work had forced many of the early leaders of the movement into premature retirement, but their places were taken by a 'second generation' of unemployed engineers, who had in many cases inherited the militancy of their predecessors through contact and discussion on the shop floor, and, also like those before them, were often victimised for their political activities.
2. Entrance to skilled work in engineering was in most cases only possible through full apprenticeship. It had been one of the principal concerns of the skilled workers to restrict entry to the minimum, in order to strengthen their own position in the labour market. It was also trade policy to restrict overtime. Furthermore, under leaders such as William Allan and John Burnett, the A.S.E. had achieved a reputation for caution, members showing less interest in trade disputes than in the friendly benefit side. Thus, R.O. Clarke, writing of the 1897-8 Lock-Out, is able to say that 'The engineering workers had a sober record, rather than a militant one, for nearly forty years'. One of the few exceptions was the Nine-Hour Movement of 1871-2. (R. O. Clarke, 'The Dispute in the British Engineering Industry 1897-8: An Evaluation', Economica, XXIV, 1957; also J. B. Jeffery's, op. cit., B. Pribicevic, The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control (1959)).

The slump of 1920 and 1921 quickly affected the engineering industry: in December 1920 there were 19,926 unemployed Union members, but by July of the following year this number had leapt to 114,684.¹ Many of the first victims were militant shop stewards from the Clyde, Coventry, London and elsewhere, who had been involved in the wartime Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement. These were men with an inclination and talent for leadership, as proved by their wartime experiences.² They were, in addition, good organisers: largely as a result of their activities, membership of the A.S.E. had increased from 170,000 at the outbreak of war, to almost 300,000 at the close.³ More important, they were politically conscious.

The twenty-five years between 1890 and 1915, particularly after 1900, had witnessed a major revolution in the engineering industry. The introduction of mass production techniques, and the tremendous growth in the numbers employed in the industry,⁴ confronted the unions with new problems. The most important of these were 'the machine question' (or 'dilution'), that is, the threat to the livelihood of the skilled workers by the introduction of new machines operated by semi-skilled men⁵, and, secondly, 'demarcation disputes',

1. J. B. Jeffery's, op. cit., p. 218.

2. Ibid., p. 176 et seq.

3. Ibid., p. 191.

4. Ibid., p. 118; numbers employed in the engineering, shipbuilding and kindred trades rose from:

1891	1,094,000
1901	1,447,000
1911	1,713,000
1921	2,491,000

5. Before the First World War, the appearance of the semi-skilled was one of the main characteristics of labour in the industry; they were easier to train, and their labour was cheaper. B. Pribicevic, op. cit. p. 25.

the struggle for jobs between similar crafts and trades. The First World War intensified these problems: the numbers employed in engineering and kindred trades grew even faster, and almost all the workers brought into the industry were semi- or unskilled. The War affected the industry more profoundly than any other. It was an engineers' war; to wage it successfully the out-put of munitions had to be vastly increased, and needed also to be uninterrupted by strikes. In the workshop everything had to be subordinated to the demand for arms.

At the same time as the technical revolution increased the importance of the engineering industry, there was a parallel growth of socialist and syndicalist ideas among engineering workers.¹ The failure of the 1897-8 Lock-Out was regarded by many as a great defeat, and, seeing no possibility of turning the tables industrially, they turned instead to political action.²

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1. This was a European phenomenon; between 1900 and 1945 there was a sizeable proportion of revolutionary socialists among the metal workers in all European countries. In France after 1900 syndicalism became the prevailing doctrine of the trade union movement. The outbreak of War in 1914 'shattered overnight' the ideology of the Confederation Generale du Travail (C.G.T.); in the first few hours, anti-militarist and class struggle doctrines disappeared. By early 1918, however, the immense losses in what seemed a 'hopelessly inconclusive struggle' revived old sentiments. There was a big munitions strike in Paris in the first months of the year. The semi- and unskilled workers in the munitions factories became increasingly dissatisfied with the war effort, and, as in England, the impact of the Russian Revolution and the peace negotiations of the Bolshevik Government, created a demand for the ending of the war. A left-wing minority in the C.G.T., with its strongest base among the Paris metal workers, became increasingly vociferous. Immediately after the war had ended, a rank-and-file movement, against the terms of an agreement on the 8-Hour Day, ended in a strike involving 200,000 Paris metal-workers. (V. R. Lorwin, op. cit.).
 2. D.W. Crowley, Origins of the Revolt of the British Labour Movement from Liberalism (unpublished University of London Ph.D. Thesis, 1952). 'The main immediate factor in the creation of the Labour Representation

By 1910, however, as a result of the failure of the handful of Labour M.P.'s to achieve any startling results, opinion among the rank-and-file members had swung back in favour of industrial action. In Scotland, the Socialist Labour Party had found its most ardent advocates among the moulders in engineering establishments by this date, and had become well-known for its intensive educational work, and propaganda in favour of workers' control.¹ The Syndicalist Movement, launched by Tom Mann early in 1910, which called for industrial unity, and aggressive industrial policy, and the setting-up of a new society controlled by the unions, won friends among the radical members of the A.S.E. in England, as did the Guild Socialist movement after 1913, although the Amalgamation Committee Movement was the main vehicle of workers' control propaganda among engineers in England in the pre-war years.²

The wartime Shop Stewards' Movement replaced all of these, however. 'Dilution', in particular, created problems which could only be dealt with at workshop level, and the situation, therefore, called for an 'effective representation' for skilled and later all workers in the shops to take up with

Committee in 1900 was the decisive defeat of the A.S.E. in their lock-out of 1897, which destroyed the confidence of the unions in their industrial strength.' Quoted R.O. Clarke, 'The Dispute in the British Engineering Industry of 1897-8', Economica XXIV, 1957. See also J.B. Jeffery's, op. cit., pp. 144, 160-1.

1. B. Fribicevic, op. cit., p. 65.

2. Ibid., pp. 2, 65; the skilled engineering workers were among the best educated. 'Although a fairly large proportion of the engineering

the management grievances arising from the wartime conditions.¹ The rise of the Shop Stewards Movement had been called by G. D. H. Cole:

'the most important single development in the trade union world during the war period;'²

it played an extremely important role in the development of engineering trade unionism and of the radical socialist movement in general, and was by far the most important factor in the struggle for workers' control in the engineering industry. The growth of the movement was a direct result of wartime labour conditions, as has been indicated, and of the weakened position of the unions after the Treasury Agreement of 1915.³ It was 'revolutionary' in the sense that most of its leading members held that the overthrow of capitalism was one of its principle objectives. The movement began on the Clyde in 1915 with the formation by stewards from the eight leading firms of the Clyde Workers' Committee, which became the model on which unofficial bodies in other important engineering centres, representative of the shop stewards, was based. The

... craftsmen were conservative in outlook, there had always been a minority which took a prominent part in various progressive and radical movements, sometimes providing these movements with outstanding leaders.' (B. Pribicevic, op. cit., p. 165.)

1. Ibid., p. 35.

2. Quoted, B. Pribicevic, op. cit., p. 83.

3. Under this agreement, which was given legal force by the Munitions Act of the same year, the unions gave up the right to strike, agreed to 'dilution' on government work, and agreed to relax all customs which restricted the output of munitions.

importance before 1914 of the S.L.P. on the Clyde has already been noted; all the leading members of the Clyde Workers' Committee were members of the S.L.P., with the exceptions of Willie Gallacher (British Socialist Party) and David Kirkwood (I.L.P.).

By the end of the war the militancy of the engineers was running at a high pitch.¹ As a result of the activities of the Shop Stewards' Movement, the majority of the engineering workers had become politically conscious, and in favour of socialism by 'direct action'. The impact of the Russian Revolution on the engineering workers was the first clear indication of the growing interest in political matters of the rank-and-file membership. State intervention had engendered unrest; the State was associated with the employers and it was held that little could be expected from any government. However, the peace, the consequent contraction in the industry, the victimisation of the most prominent leaders, and union resumption of the initiative in dealing with the shop floor grievances, together with the official union recognition of the role of shop stewards, all undermined the unofficial movement's support.²

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1. J. B. Jeffery's, op. cit., p. 185; underlying the militancy was the fear of unemployment.
 2. R. Martin, Communism and the British Trade Unions, 1924-1933: A Study of the National Minority Movement (Oxford, 1969), p. 16; an indication of the new militancy in the Society was the election to the Secretaryship of Tom Mann in 1919. Although the General Secretary had a relatively small influence on decisions and policy-making, he was also editor of the official journal, at that time one of the largest trade unions journals in the country, and thus Mann had the opportunity to address himself to the rank-and-file membership. He paid great attention to his duties as editor, and hardly an edition passed without reference to workers' control, direct action, or the need for industrial solidarity. The A.E.U. accepted Workers' Control as one of its objectives at a special conference in

The need for the Shop Stewards' Movement declined sharply, therefore. There was a noticeable shift in activity from the workshops to the trade union branches.

'As unemployment and other unfavourable conditions made unofficial activity almost impossible, the members (i.e. of the Shop Stewards' Movement) were instructed to concentrate on work in the branches and to capture official positions.'¹

The Workers' Committees

'ceased to function as co-ordinating organs of the powerful workshop committees.'²

Whereas in the war,

'their affiliates were mostly workshop committees,' now they were groups of militant shop stewards, and even individual supporters. Nor did the movement remain exclusively for engineers. There was an attempt to bring together all rank-and-file movements, wherever they existed; but although the miners' reform committees joined the movement, they were the only important non-engineering group to do so. The National Workers' Committee

November 1922. Mann was succeeded by the 'moderate' A. H. Smethurst (see below Appendix VI, biography of J. B. Smethurst) whose main interest was in the friendly benefit side of the union's work. The Society also refused to take part in the Industrial Conference (February 1919), rejected the Whitley Reports, and took an active part in the Council of Action formed in 1920 to prevent war with Soviet Russia; these were further instances of the increased militancy (B. Pribicevic, op. cit., pp. 38, 50-2).

1. B. Pribicevic, op. cit., pp. 105.
2. Ibid., p. 104.

Movement, as it was renamed at a Conference of all unofficial trade union organisations at Sheffield in April 1921, was

'dominated by the engineers in every respect.'¹

These changes mark the close connection of the wartime Shop Stewards Movement with the post-war unemployed movement. Pribicevic has noted that 'Unemployed Workers' Committees also became a form of activity in 1921-2.'² The governing body of both movements was named the National Administrative Council, and the comparison of names (National Workers' Committee Movement and National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, as the unemployed movement was known until 1929) is obvious. The emphasis on work in trade union branches, and the attempts to end sectarianism are also comparable. In the unemployed movement, too, the miners were the only important non-engineering element to join. Similarly, the unemployed movement's First National Conference was held in April 1921, the same month as the Sheffield Conference at which the National Workers' Committee Movement was held. Finally, Wal Hannington, the leader of the N.U.W.M., had himself been a prominent shop steward during the war, and had joined the St. Pancras Unemployed Ex-Servicemen's Organisation in September 1920, soon after losing his job.³ The origins of the unem-

1. Ibid., p. 105; see also R. Martin, op. cit., p. 19. The Sheffield Conference was attended by Shop Stewards' groups, Workers' Committees representatives, Miners' Reform Committees and Railway Vigilance Committees.
2. B. Pribicevic, op. cit., p. 167.
3. W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, pp. 79-80; Hannington was a member of the Toolmakers' union. He had joined the British Socialist Party at the end of 1915. Soon after the war had ended, he was dismissed from employment at the London engineering factory where he had worked for four years, and where he had, for the last eighteen months been a shop steward.

ployed movement were also comparable to those of the National Minority Movement, with the important difference, as will be seen, that, whereas at the Sheffield Conference to which reference has already been made, the National Workers' Committee Movement was 'committed' to the Communist Party,¹ the unemployed movement retained some independence of the C.P.G.B.²

The connection of the unemployed movement with the Communist Party has already been referred to in the preceding chapter.³ The leaders of the N.U.W.M. were in almost all cases party members, and the influence of the communists grew as employers weeded out more and more militants from the factories in 1921 and 1922. The communist aim was to gain control of the unemployed movement and divert its activities into a political class movement directed to the overthrow of capitalism.⁴ In this way the party hoped that its own membership would be increased, although it is doubtful if this ever happened on any notable scale: the unemployed struggles with their constant emphasis on higher scales of unemployment benefit and assistance and the ending of the means test, were a poor 'front' for the spread of

He had several jobs after this, but none lasted for very long, and in September 1920 he turned his full-time attention to work among the unemployed. (See Never on Our Knees).

1. R. Martin, op. cit., p. 19.
2. See below, p. 379.
3. See above, Chapter 9, p. 351.
4. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 112; T. Bell, Pioneering Days, p. 270; Hannington, Haye, McShane, Mann and Sid Elias, the unemployed movement's chairman, were all well-known Communists.

communist revolutionary doctrine, and since of the tens of thousands drawn into the agitation very few actually joined the N.U.W.M., it is likely that even fewer went on from here to join the Communist Party. The majority of the unemployed still looked towards the Labour Party for political guidance.

While the C.P.G.B. liked to think that it exercised more or less complete control over the affairs of the unemployed movement, the N.U.W.M. was always able to retain a fair degree of independence. In April 1923 the Third National Conference of the movement rejected a resolution calling for a united front with the communists.¹ The Ninth Conference in 1934 passed a resolution repudiating any suggestion that the movement was an 'ancilliary' or 'auxilliary' of the Communist Party.² Wal Hannington, who tended to regard the N.U.W.M. as his own 'child' was particularly adamant in regard to remaining independent of the Party.³ From the Party point of view the trouble with the unemployed movement was that its leadership, though members of the party, tended to look upon the problems of unemployment as their first task, instead of striving, as the Party wished them, to build a mass movement for political ends. The leaders of the N.U.W.M. became involved in the technicalities of unemployment benefit, and in local battles with courts of referees and other boards over individual cases of relief.

1. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 126.

2. N.U.W.M., The Fight Against Unemployment and Poverty: Our Plan for Action, (1934).

3. F. Copeman, Reason in Revolt, (1948); Copeman was the London organiser of the N.U.W.M. for several years in the 1930's.

At times the leadership of the N.U.W.M. was subjected to pressures from Moscow. In 1930 the Fifth World Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions¹ condemned the N.A.C. for 'opposing the development of the N.U.W.M. into a mass organisation', and the movement was ordered to begin a more active recruitment campaign.² Hannington and his colleagues responded to this call and by the end of 1931, as a result of the activities against the means test, membership had increased to 37,000. Six months previously it had been only 20,000. Early in 1931 Margaret McCarthy, for a time secretary of the Burnley Branch of the N.U.W.M., went to Moscow to work in the Anglo-American section of the Red International of Labour Unions, and drew up a report dealing with the weaknesses of the unemployed movement in Britain.³ Following this report, at the annual conference of the R.I.L.U. in Prague in July 1931, a resolution was carried calling for the

'development of mass activities and the building up of united front organisations on the broadest possible basis at the labour exchanges.'⁴

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1. In 1920, on the initiative of the Communist International, a Provisional International Council of Trade and Industrial Unions (P.I.C.T.I.U.) was formed in Moscow, with the aim, on an international scale, of establishing an alternative centre to the Amsterdam International. A number of prominent British trade unionists, including A. A. Purcell (see below, Appendix VI biographical details) associated themselves with the scheme. In January 1921 this council issued a manifesto calling all British unions to withdraw from Amsterdam, and in June and July of that year a World Trade Union Congress was held, when the Red International of Labour Unions was formally established.
 2. H. Pelling, The British Communist Party, p. 64.
 3. M. McCarthy, Generation in Revolt (1953), pp. 151, 163.
 4. Communist Review, I (December 1931).

On 29 August 1931 the N.A.C. issued a circular on these lines instructing the branches to establish unemployed councils to which the unemployed as a whole could belong without needing to become members of the N.U.W.M. The N.A.C. devoted much time to the building of these councils, but with little success. In April 1932, as a result, Sid Elias, the Chairman of the N.U.W.M., was called to Moscow, where he stayed for six months as an 'adviser' to the Anglo-American section of the R.I.L.U. Virtually a hostage, it was simply his task to demand reports from his colleagues in London and to give them instructions to organise bigger and more imposing demonstrations involving larger numbers of unemployed.¹

1. H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 65; it was as a result of the police seizing a letter written by Elias from Moscow, and containing such instructions, that Elias was gaoled in November 1932 (see below, p. 419). Elias was charged with incitement to cause discontent, dissatisfaction and ill-will. The letter, which was read out in Court, declared that 'Some proposals must be made to our comrades in Birkenhead and Liverpool on the methods of fighting the police terror. First, the agitation must be continued in the streets. The N.U.W.M. branches there must organise on a street group basis. Get out leaflets, organise meetings where possible to keep the agitation going....'

'This rising wave is taking on the same form as the one last autumn, and the Movement is doing two things - it is allowing the struggle to become just an unemployed struggle, and, secondly, the hunger march seems to be the one big aim and the hunger march is not presented as a means of developing the widest strength throughout the country.'

'The N.A.C. should issue a national call in which we call upon the rest of the country to come into the struggle alongside the others, and it is very important that we raise the issue of employed workers taking strike action in favour of abolishing the means test. Such strike action could be one hour one day strike. For example, we could concentrate on the anthracite area, the Bristol builders, or the Liverpool dockers to secure such action....' (Bolton Evening News, 4 November 1932).

In view of this it is understandable that the leaders of the British Labour movement withheld their support of the N.U.W.M.'s activities. It is probable that both the N.U.W.M. and the Communist Party sought affiliation with the official movement for their own ends, since this was the most obvious and indeed probably the only way in which either of them could hope to increase substantially their membership. Even left-wing historians have accepted that the unemployed leaders deliberately concealed the movement's connections with the communists in order to gain recognition from the T.U.C. and Labour Party.¹ It has also been alleged that the unemployed movement had a number of figure-heads, both on a national and local level, among its leaders, representatives from the Labour Party, trade unions, and no political party at all, thus hiding still further any connection with the communists.²

It was one thing, however, for the Labour Party Executive and the General Council to withhold their active support of the unemployed movement: it was a somewhat different matter positively to obstruct the work of the N.U.W.M. To have connived at any help local branches cared to give those taking part in the various hunger marches organised by the N.U.W.M. would have caused no detriment to the British Labour movement in these years. On the contrary, a sign of compassionate interest in their affairs would have been eagerly welcomed by the unemployed as proof of the direction in which the sympathies of the

1. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 127.

2. J. McGovern, Neither Fear Nor Favour (1960), p. 81.

Labour leaders genuinely lay, for many had doubts at this time. By urging the trades councils and Labour party branches in towns through which the men passed on their way to London not to render the marchers any assistance - though in many cases help was in fact given - and by endeavouring in every way possible to prevent the marches taking place, the Labour leaders were only adding to the hardships of the men on the road, men who had in many cases been union members while they were in employment.

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The N.U.W.M. was organised on the basis of local branches, like any other political movement, membership of which was open to all unemployed workers who wished to join. The membership fee was two-pence, and there was a weekly subscription of one penny. For this purpose, red stamps were sold to the branches by headquarters at the rate of 3s. per hundred. For every hundred issued by a branch to its members, therefore, a profit of 5s. 4d. was made. Membership cards were supplied to the branches at the rate of 1s. per dozen. Until 1931 an associate membership section by which employed workers could join the movement for a fee of sixpence, plus the weekly subscription, existed.¹ The affairs of each branch were conducted by a small committee elected annually at a meeting of all branch members. No member was entitled to be elected to the committee until he had

1. This was discontinued in 1931, and henceforth the membership fee for employed workers was two-pence, the same as for unemployed members.

been a member of the movement for at least five weeks. The committee consisted of a chairman, organiser, secretary and treasurer, and eight ordinary members. Sub-committees were to be appointed, and were to include an organising committee, a finance committee, and a literature committee, to be responsible for the sale of the movement's literature. There was also to be a complaints or legal sub-committee which had the important task of examining cases of hardship among members and bringing these cases to the attention of the local board of guardians or public assistance committee (P.A.C.).¹

Where four or more branches existed within a suitable area, they were entitled to form among themselves a District Council for the purpose of consultation and co-ordination of activities. Each branch was to send representatives to the meetings of the council, which were to be held monthly. The council had powers to instruct all branches within its jurisdiction to participate in joint work. Where a district council was in existence, headquarters supplied the red contribution stamps to this body at the rate of 1s.9d. per hundred, the council then selling the stamps to the branches within its control at the higher rate. In this way district councils obtained an income, chiefly used to send a representative to the quarterly meetings of the N.A.C.

1. In practice the committee of each branch was usually less than twelve in number, and, with the important exception of the legal sub-committee, it is doubtful if any but the largest of branches had specifically defined sub-committees. There is no evidence of this in South-East Lancashire.

in London.¹ Where practicable, an Area Council might be established, to co-ordinate the activities of the movement throughout a wider region.

The Executive Committee of the movement was the National Administrative Council,² which met quarterly in London. A Headquarters Advisory Committee (H.A.C.), meeting weekly, and consisting of the movement's chairman, organiser, secretary, treasurer and women's organiser, together with a small number of others residing in the London area, was responsible for the supervision of the work of the National Headquarters in between meetings of the N.A.C. Until the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., held at Salford in April 1933,³ the movement's national officials were elected by the Conference: after this date they were appointed on a permanent basis.⁴

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The years between 1924 and 1927 were comparatively quiet ones for the N.U.W.C.M. There were several reasons for this. In the first case, from January to November 1924 the first Labour Government had held office. A minority Government, like that of 1929-1931, it was, therefore, largely

1. Again, this did not always happen, since the revenue obtained by the councils from the sale of stamps was often insufficient to enable the councils to pay for representatives to attend each N.A.C. meeting. In 1931 it was decided that, in future, headquarters would supply stamps to the district councils at 1s. 8d. per hundred, for sale to the branches at 4s. 4d. per hundred. Thus the income of the district councils was raised from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 8d. per hundred. (Report of the Seventh National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1931).
2. The N.A.C. consisted of the six central officials of the N.U.W.M. (organiser, chairman, secretary, treasurer, Scottish organiser and women's organiser), and one representative from each district council.
3. For financial reasons, and lack of agitation between 1926 and 1929, and after 1936, only nine national conferences were ever held.
4. The information in this section was taken from the two pamphlets

dependent for its continued existence on Liberal support. Nonetheless, its achievements were only meagre. It is remembered chiefly for Wheatley's Housing Act, which was by far its most important success. There was also an important amendment to the unemployment insurance scheme. The 'gap' between periods of 'covenanted' benefit, which the insured worker had a right to claim for a limited period, dependent on the contributions he had paid, and 'uncovenanted' benefit, granted solely at the discretion of the Ministry of Labour, was abolished. Apart from this, however, the government failed to find any positive means for lowering unemployment. Finally, in July 1924, Snowden announced government support, amounting to about £28m., for a limited programme of public works.¹

The most important reason for the lack of unemployed activity, however, was, of course, the General Strike, in which all the militants were involved. With the trade union movement as a whole at a low ebb after the defeat, the communists through the Minority Movement turned their attentions to attacking the leaders of the General Council and of the major unions, and demanding a more militant policy.² Wal Hannington, on whom the unemployed movement depended for so much, was himself engaged in work with the Minority Movement

N.U.W.M., Rules and Constitution (1929), made available by R. & E. Frow; Report of the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., 1929.

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 175-6; G. D. H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People, pp. 570-1.
2. A. Bullock, op. cit., p. 377.

at this period, and, therefore, had little time to devote to the affairs of the N.U.W.C.M.¹ By January 1927, however, when the General Council made its report on the conduct of the strike to a conference of trade union executives, opinion was turning against the Left. Most trade unionists had reached the conclusion that the weapon of the General Strike itself was at fault, rather than the leaders. The Trade Disputes Act of the year served to strengthen the 'somewhat battered relationship' between the unions and the Labour Party, at the expense of the communists.²

The last months of 1927 saw a revival of unemployed agitation.³ Following the Report of the Blanesburgh Committee⁴, the Baldwin Government introduced a new Bill to deal with unemployment insurance. Both the Report and the Bill aroused considerable opposition in Labour circles, because of the emphasis placed on ensuring that the applicant was 'genuinely seeking work', and because neither made any suggestions in regard to finding work for the unemployed.⁵ In particular, the two Labour members of the Blanesburgh Committee, Frank Hodges and Margaret Bondfield, both of whom signed the Report, were

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1. L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 240(n); Hannington had been jailed for twelve months in December 1925.
 2. H. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, pp. 186-8.
 3. Report of the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., 1929; W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, p. 203 et seq.
 4. Report of the Blanesburgh Committee on Unemployment Insurance, 1927.
 5. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 340; G. D. H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working-Class Movement, p. 429.

heavily criticised.¹ The Act, which came into force from April 1928, was applied in such a way that in the course of the months which followed, tens of thousands of unemployed were disqualified from benefit, or discouraged from applying. Many more had their payments reduced. There was also the threat that the Government would end the transitional provisions of the Act on the day they were in fact due to expire, in April 1929, thus disqualifying thousands more.

In protest against these disqualifications, in October 1928 the N.U.W.C.M. began to organise a second national hunger march to London.² Twice as many volunteers came forward as were needed, and on 23 January 1929 almost two hundred men, led by Wal Hannington and George Middleton left Blythwood Square, Glasgow after a send-off demonstration given by thousands of supporters.³ Other contingents marched from Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham, Cardiff, and elsewhere. In addition to bitterly cold weather - 1929 was to be remembered as the 'year of the great frost'⁴ - the marchers had to contend with opposition from the Government and from the T.U.C. Although in Scotland and the North-East local trades councils gave help to the men, in general the T.U.C. disclaim-

1. M. Bondfield, op. cit., pp. 271-4; the Act placed the onus of proof on the applicants, who were refused benefit unless they could give Labour Exchanges detailed reports, including in many cases signed documents, of how they had gone from place to place in search of employment. It was commonly alleged that men were walking up to thirty miles daily in search of work they knew did not exist. In the year ending 6 May 1929, benefit was refused or stopped to more than 340,000 applicants on the grounds that they were not 'genuinely seeking work'.
2. Unemployed News, 3 December 1928; 17 December 1928.
3. W. Gallacher, The Rolling of the Thunder (1947), p. 110.
4. Times, 13, 20, and 23 February 1929.

ed any association with the march. Trades councils on the various routes were instructed not to render any assistance to the men on the road.¹ The Minister of Health, Hannington alleged afterwards, issued instructions to all poor law authorities to the effect that where the marchers sought shelter in their workhouses, they were to be treated as casuals.²

In spite of this, however, the marchers reached the outskirts of London as planned on Saturday, 23 February. Altogether they numbered about nine hundred. On the following day thousands of Londoners, many of whom were unemployed themselves, turned out to welcome the men in Trafalgar Square. Tom Mann and A. J. Cook were among those who made speeches to the crowd.³ On 25 February, the Central Marchers Council, a body set up by the N.U.W.M. to organise activities for the marchers during their stay in London, accompanied

1. Report of the 61st Trades Union Congress, 1929; the General Council had 'no evidence' that the march had the support of affiliated unions. They were of the opinion that no impression would be made on the Government by the march, and that the 'already insufficient' funds of local councils would be further depleted should help be given. In addition, it was felt that since the march was taking place in mid-winter, it would cause unnecessary hardship to the men taking part whose physical condition was already likely to have deteriorated as a result of long unemployment.
2. This meant that each man was to be searched on entering, that once he had entered he was not allowed to leave again until the following morning, there was to be no smoking, and that each man had to perform a task before leaving. Furthermore, the men were to receive only the usual diet of two slices of bread and margarine and a cup of tea for supper and breakfast. On at least one occasion during the march attempts to enforce such conditions led to disturbances from the marchers, but in many cases the instruction from the Ministry appears to have been ignored.
3. Times, 25 February 1929.

by a large crowd of unemployed visited No. 10 Downing Street in an attempt to present a petition to the Prime Minister and to interview him on the question of the new Unemployment Insurance Act. They were unable to see him on this occasion, however, and for the whole of time the marchers were in London. Elsewhere in the City the marchers went about the organisation of a 'Mile o'Pennies' collection in order that they might be able to return home by train.¹ On Wednesday, 27 February, while most of the marchers were taking part in a demonstration through the docks area, a selected group of men succeeded in gaining admittance to the public gallery of the House of Commons. When they interrupted the debate in progress, with cries of 'Capitalism! Capitalism!', they were promptly ejected.² Following this disturbance, several Members tried to press Baldwin and leading ministers into receiving a deputation of unemployed, but they were unsuccessful.³

On Saturday, 2 March, the hunger marchers were given a farewell dance held at Hoxton Baths, before they left for home the next morning. It appeared that all their efforts to improve the conditions of unemployment had achieved little, although they had at least brought the attention of the general public to their plight. The final story of the march was one of success, however; within a few weeks of the men returning home, the Conservative Government extended the transitional provisions of the 1928 Act for a further twelve months.⁴

1. Sunday Worker, 24 February 1929.

2. Times, 28 February 1929.

3. Hansard, 5th. Ser. CCXXV.

4. Unemployment Insurance (Transitional Provisions Amendment) Act, 1929 (19 & 20 Geo. 5 c19).

In July 1929 the Morris Committee was appointed by the new Labour Government to examine the type of evidence required by the insurance officers and courts of referees in assessing applications for benefit.¹

In May 1929, the long-awaited General Election took place, and on 4 June, as leader of the predominant party, Ramsay MacDonald accepted the call to form a Government, although, as in 1924, Labour was in a minority should the Conservatives and Liberals combine. Hoping for a more sympathetic deal for the unemployed under Labour Government, the N.U.W.C.M. drew up a charter of demands in July 1929,² which included higher scales of benefit, the restoration to benefit of all those disqualified under the administration of the previous government, and the abolition of the genuinely seeking work clause. On Sunday, 21 July, demonstrations were held in towns and cities up and down the country in support of the charter.³ The unemployment situation continued to grow worse, however; there were 1,165,000 persons out of work in May 1929; 1,217,000 in September; 1,552,000 by December.⁴ The Labour Government showed few signs of putting into effect any of its election promises to deal with unemployment. Quite the contrary: test and task work, a condition for the

1. Report of the Committee on Procedure and Evidence for the Determination of Claims for Unemployment Insurance Benefit (Morris Report), Cmd. 3415 (1929); its terms of reference were 'to examine the procedure of the statutory authorities performing the functions of Insurance Officers and Courts of Referees under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, and the nature of the evidence to be required as to the fulfilment of conditions or the absence of disqualifications...'
2. See Appendix VII.
3. W. Hannington, Unemployed Struggles, 1919-1936, pp. 202-5.
4. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXVII (June 1929, October 1929); XXXVIII (January 1930).

receipt of transitional benefit which was detested by the unemployed, was maintained, although several Labour-controlled local authorities had refused to operate it. Bitter resentment was caused in unemployed circles when the new Minister of Health, Arthur Greenwood, called to order Boards of Guardians which were not imposing any task work on recipients. The appointment of Margaret Bondfield as Minister of Labour aroused widespread indignation on the part of the unemployed, who remembered that she had signed the Blanesburgh Report which had resulted in the 1927 Unemployment Insurance Act together with its thousands of disqualifications.¹ At the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., held at Sheffield in September, the Labour Government's failure to improve the conditions of unemployment was severely attacked.²

In October the Morris Committee published its Report on the workings of the unemployment insurance scheme. The Report was not unanimous, and the two Labour representatives, one of whom was Arthur Hayday M.P., signed a minority report. The Government further aroused the anger of the unemployed when it announced that it accepted the majority report and introduced legislation on the lines of its recommendations. The Bill fell short of what had been expected: many others besides the I.L.P.'ers were extremely disappointed. Although the 'genuinely seeking work' clause had been withdrawn, that which replaced it was

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1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 354, 362; G. McAllister, James Maxton: Portrait of a Rebel (1935), pp. 211-2; J. McNair, James Maxton: Beloved Rebel (1955), pp. 190-1.
 2. Report of the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., 1929; see above Chapter 9, p. 352; also Chapter 11, p. 459.

felt to be suspiciously like the old clause in a new disguise. At the Party Conference in Brighton an attempt to stage a protest against the Bondfield Bill was only narrowly defeated.¹ In November, in the Debate on the Second Reading the I.L.P. staged a further attack.² Eventually Miss Bondfield gave way: on 5 December she announced that the Government would accept the Hayday formula as the sole test of disqualification. Hence in the new Act the burden of proof of having sought work was removed from the unemployed, and it became the responsibility of the local officials to ascertain that the applicant had refused a reasonable offer of work before benefit could be denied.

By the early months of 1930 it was clear that the Labour Government had failed to stem the rise in unemployment. The customary winter increase in the numbers out of work showed no sign of declining as the spring approached. The N.U.W.M. began to grow fairly rapidly, many new branches being formed up and down the country. At the call of the Communist International,³ preparations were made for a day of national demonstrations on 6 March, to be known as 'International Fighting Day Against Unemployment'. In London, the Daily Worker alleged, about four thousand unemployed took part in a march to Tower Hill, contingents coming from Tottenham, St. Pancras, Islington, Poplar, Bethnal Green and elsewhere. The paper also reported demonstrations in Glasgow, Newcastle, Bradford, Leeds, Coventry, and a number of towns in South Wales.⁴

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1. Report of the 29th Labour Party Conference, 1929; R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 122 et seq.
 2. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCXXXII.
 3. Interview with E. Frow, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 4. Daily Worker, 7 and 8 March 1930; these reports are unsupported by any further evidence.

At the same time, the movement began to organise a further hunger march to London, as a protest against the failure of the Labour Government to 'deal effectively' with unemployment, as it had promised. On this march, eleven contingents took part, including men from Scotland, the North-East, Lancashire, Yorkshire and South Wales. For the first time there was also a women's contingent, twenty-two women from Lancashire and Yorkshire taking part. The men again had to contend with the official opposition from the T.U.C. and Labour Party, and the Daily Worker published a number of letters alleged to have been received from local Labour parties and trades councils stating, in response to requests for help, that they were unable to give any assistance to the marchers. The newspaper also alleged that, in some cases, help was refused in towns where considerable aid had been given to the marchers only a year before.¹ As in 1929, the Minister of Health gave instructions to local authorities that where the marchers sought shelter in the workhouse they were to be treated as casuals.

The march began from Glasgow on 31 March 1930. London was reached on 30 April, and, numbering about one thousand in all, the hunger marchers were welcomed into Hyde Park on the following day by many thousands of sympathisers, as the climax to the 1930 May Day celebrations, organised by the London First of May Committee. Harrington

1. Ibid., 31 March 1930; it was reported at the time by the Daily Worker that an agent of the Women's Advisory Council of the Scottish Labour Party systematically preceded the Scottish marchers along the route they were to take, in an effort to ensure that no help was given to the men. This statement was confirmed by Harry McShane during an interview at the University of Hull, but there is no other evidence to support the claim. It is important to realise, however, that the marchers themselves believed this to be true.

estimated the crowd as numbering around fifty thousand. The men remained in London until 8 May, and on each day were engaged in activities planned by the Marchers' Central Control Council, of which Hannington was chairman.¹ On the morning of 6 May, an attempt was made to interview the Prime Minister at Downing Street, but this was unsuccessful. In the afternoon, however, while the majority of the marchers were on their way to Hyde Park for a further demonstration, a small raiding party of unemployed forced their way into the Ministry of Health building, and took charge of the inquiry room which they held for a short time before being ejected by police. Eight other marchers, including Cyril Walsh of Bolton, and Albert Hardman of Bury, both leading figures in the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire, attempted to force their way into the Inner Lobby of the House of Commons. About twenty men and women had entered the Central Hall, and sent in requests for interviews with M.P.'s. At a given signal the eight men rushed down the corridor to the Inner Lobby, but the police were quick to stop them, and they were escorted from the building.²

On 7 May a final demonstration was held on Tower Hill, where a number of prominent speakers, including Tom Bell, Tom Mann, Harry Pollitt, S. Saklatval and Margaret McCarthy, addressed the crowd.³ Next day the men left for home.

1. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 228-9.

2. Bury Times, 10 May 1930; W. Hannington, op. cit., pp. 229-30. Hannington alleged that the men broke through to the Inner Lobby before police were able to reach them, and the Daily Worker reported at the time that this was the case. It is unlikely that these reports were correct, however, and there is no other evidence to support them.

3. Daily Worker, 8 May 1930.

The unemployed agitation had been carried into twenty-seven counties in England, Scotland and Wales during the course of the march, which was regarded by the N.U.W.M. as the most successful to date,¹ in spite of its failure to achieve anything concrete in terms of Government legislation to improve the conditions of unemployment beyond that already undertaken. Unemployment continued to rise throughout the year, and by December it had reached 2,643,000.² For its failure, the Government was attacked on all sides, yet its response, largely the result of Snowden's insistence on economy, and MacDonald's conviction that some form of national government was needed to solve the problem, was not to adopt a radical socialist policy, but simply to give way to Conservative accusations of extravagance by the appointment in December of a Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance. A criminal court judge, Holman Gregory, was appointed Chairman, and of the eight remaining members, only two were known to have sympathies with the Labour movement. In unemployed circles dismay and astonishment was expressed at this. The General Council, which was not consulted, also raised strong objections, both to the personnel of the commission, and also to its terms of reference which precluded any new approach to the problem since the Commission was only to examine the means by which the present scheme might be made solvent and self-supporting.³ It was only under protest that the General Council agreed to give evidence.

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1. W. Hannington, The Achievements of the Hunger March (1930); made available by R. & E. Frow.
 2. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIX (January 1931); W. Hannington, op. cit., p. 381.
 3. Report of the 63rd Trades Union Congress, 1931; R. Skidelsky, op. cit., p. 246; A. Bullock, op. cit., p. 471.

In anticipation of large numbers being deprived of benefit as a result of its recommendations, the unemployed quickly nicknamed it the 'knocking-off Commission'. Throughout the first weeks of the New Year the N.U.W.M. organised widespread protest demonstrations against its appointment. The London District Council arranged an All-London demonstration in Trafalgar Square on Sunday, 1 February, when the Daily Worker estimated that more than two thousand unemployed attended to hear speeches from Sid Elias, Chairman of the N.U.W.M., Mann, the Treasurer, and Hannington. On the same day five hundred unemployed attended a meeting in the Bull Ring, Birmingham, in protest against the Commission's appointment.¹ At the Seventh National Conference of the unemployed movement held at Bradford in February, Hannington made a lengthy attack on the Commission which he called the 'most outstanding issue confronting the unemployed'.² The Commission was the main object of protest on International Fighting Day on 23 February.³

On 1 June, the Commission issued an Interim Report in order that changes might be effected as soon as possible to put the Unemployment Insurance Fund on a solvent basis.⁴ The Report recommended that benefit payments be limited to twenty-six weeks in a period of twelve months, that contributions be raised,

1. Daily Worker, 2 February 1931.

2. Report of the Seventh National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1931.

3. Daily Worker, 26 February 1931; 27 February 1931.

4. During the life of the second Labour Government, the Treasury's borrowing powers with respect to the Fund were increased by five stages, each requiring a separate Act of Parliament, from £40m. (the last increase under the Conservatives in November 1928) to £115m. (June 1931).

and that the scales of benefit be reduced as follows (figures in parenthesis represent the amount of the reduction):

	Males	Females
Over 21	15s. (2s.)	13s. (2s.)
18-20 years	12s. (2s.)	10s. (2s.)
17 years of age	7s. (2s.)	6s. (1s. 6d.)
16 years of age	5s. (1s.)	5s.

The rate for adult dependents was to be reduced by one shilling to eight shillings. In addition, the Report proposed 'some kind of test' for certain classes of applicant for transitional benefit, those classes to include married women with working husbands, and single persons living with parents or relatives who could be expected to support them. Other suggestions were made to end certain abuses in the system, notably with regard to married women and seasonal workers.¹

Although the two Labour members produced a Minority Report which expressed dissent on several fundamental issues, it was once again on the basis of the Majority Report that the Government hurried through Parliament an Act (which became known as the Anomalies Act) to end the abuses which the Report had suggested, depriving some classes of unemployed, mainly married women, of benefit. The Bill was bitterly contested by the I.L.P. during its passage. George Buchanan declared that the Labour Party 'is changing its colour' and joining with the other parties in 'their attack on working class people'.

1. Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance (Interim Report), Cmd. 3872 (1931); the reductions amounted to approximately 11.5% in each case.

Maxton and Fenner Brockway protested that there was not one part of the Bill that they could defend or even feel satisfied with.¹ But the Act was passed, nonetheless.²

The Government's debility, and, no doubt because of this, the increasingly precarious nature of its office, together with the inertia of dozens of well-intentioned backbenchers who would do nothing without MacDonald's approval, allowed Snowden almost free rein for his orthodox financial policy.³ As early as 11 February 1931, in a censure debate, he had declared:

'...with all the seriousness that I can command that the national position is so grave that drastic and disagreeable measures will have to be taken if Budget equilibrium is to be maintained... It is no secret that I shall have a heavy deficit at the end of this year. No Budget in the world could stand such an excessive strain as that which has been placed upon it by the increase of unemployment during the last twelve months... It will involve some temporary sacrifices from all...'⁴

The I.L.P. protested strongly. W. J. Brown M.P. declared this could mean nothing else than an attack on the social services. It was a 'deliberate

1. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLIV.

2. Unemployment Insurance (No. 3) Act, 1931.

3. M. Foot, op. cit., p. 112.

4. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCXLVIII.

preparation of the mind of this House' for reductions in unemployment expenditure. The Government avoided defeat in the debate mainly by accepting a Liberal amendment proposing that an independent committee be established to make proposals for immediate reductions in public expenditure. Sir George May, a former secretary of the Prudential Assurance Company, was appointed chairman: of the six other members, four represented the business community.¹

While the country awaited the Committee's Report, unemployment rose still higher. The May Report was, in fact, published on 31 July, 1931, the day after Parliament had risen for the summer recess.² A government deficit of £120m. was estimated by April 1932, and to meet this new taxation totalling £24m. and economies amounting to £96m. were proposed. Of the economies, £66.5m. were to be met by reductions in unemployment expenditure, including a twenty per cent. reduction in benefit payments, and the introduction of a means test for all applicants for transitional benefit.³ The Report at once brought the centre of the world financial crisis to England. Its timing was, to say the least, unfortunate, since it was issued without any statement of reassurance from Snowden. Confidence in the pound was severely impaired.

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 379.

2. Report of the Committee on National Expenditure (May Report), Cmd. 3920 (1931); the Report known as the May Report was a majority report, the two Labour members of the Committee producing a dissenting report, which was almost completely ignored.

3. Ibid.; the deficit was largely a matter of accounting.

There followed the great August crisis of 1931; the long wranglings in the Cabinet as to the extent of 'economies' they would or would not accept; the consultations with the Opposition parties; talks between the Cabinet Economy Committee and the General Council and Labour Party Executive. Rumours of splits in the Cabinet, and of resignations, blown up by the Press to make every hours' delay seem vital, added to the pressure on the Pound, and further credits became necessary. The Government resigned, and on 24 August MacDonald became Prime Minister of a National Government. Baldwin was Lord President; four Conservatives, two Liberals and three Labour men, Snowden, J. H. Thomas and Lord Sankey, were the other members of the small Cabinet.¹

On 10 September Snowden produced his Budget. Direct and indirect taxation was increased to meet the estimated deficit, now placed at £74m. in the current year, and £170m. in the next full year. The balance was to come from economies, which were to be the subject of a separate Bill; there were to be reductions in the salaries of ministers, M.P.'s, and teachers, in the pay of the police and armed forces, and in the allowances of the unemployed. The latter would average ten per cent.

Throughout all the rumours of reductions in unemployment allowances and of a means test, as the proposals of the Royal Commission were followed by those of the May Report, the numbers joining the N.U.W.M. had swelled consider-

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 379 et seq.

ably. In July the N.A.C. reported a steady increase in membership.¹ By the end of September 294 branches of the movement were in existence, an increase of more than fifty in the previous three months, and there were twenty-four district councils in operation. By the end of the year there were 330 branches and thirty-one councils.² In addition, the movement had been organising demonstrations of protest against any reductions. At the beginning of September a march of unemployed Welsh miners was held to the T.U.C. at Bristol, to call for a lead from the Congress against any reductions. The men remained in Bristol for a week, during which time several demonstrations were held. On 9 September a deputation, which included Wal Hannington, marched to the Congress Hall and made a formal request to be allowed to speak to Congress. They were refused permission to enter, however, and the police were called: blows were exchanged, and Hannington received a severe cut on the right temple.³

In London on the previous night, a large crowd of unemployed, estimated at more than two thousand, gathered in Montague Place, where a deputation of twelve was elected to interview the Prime Minister at the House of Commons. They were allowed inside the buildings, but were unable to see MacDonald.

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1. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 11-12 July 1931.
 2. Ibid., 3-4 October 1931; 23-24 January 1932.
 3. Manchester Evening News, 9 September 1931; Times, 9 September 1931; Report of the 63rd Trades Union Congress, 1931; W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 235-7.

The remainder of the unemployed staged a demonstration outside, in which sixteen men and one woman were arrested.¹ In the Commons next day questions were asked about the conduct of the police during the protest, and more than one Member made allegations of police brutality. One M.P. expressed the opinion that the police had taken:

'provocative and unnecessary action against a body of peaceable and ordinary citizens.'

He understood that there had been the greatest aggregation of police ever known in the vicinity of the House during the demonstration, and he stated that he had seen one man at least:

'being brought back, with blood streaming down his face, and with two hefty policemen holding his arms and the back of his neck.'

Another M.P. declared:

'In my life I have not seen so many foot and horse police sent out to deal with a comparatively small crowd.'

There had been, he alleged,

'an extraordinary display of force'

although there had been no attempt at violence by the crowd. Fenner Brockway added his voice to the protests. He felt that the Government had decided that the unemployed were to be 'sacrificed to the national crisis', but if this was

1. Times, 9 September 1931; Manchester Evening News, 9 September 1931.

so the Home Secretary

'ought to have an added determination that in the administration of his office he will not treat them with harshness and rigour in the event of protests which must inevitably arise against those hardships.'

He expressed the hope that the temper revealed by the police in the demonstration was not going to be the temper of the Home Office

'in its attitude towards the unemployed in this coming winter.'

Sir Herbert Samuel denied, however, that orders had been issued to the police that no unemployed demonstrations were to be held, or that the unemployed were to be treated with severity.¹ After further requests from Maxton and David Kirkwood, MacDonald eventually agreed to meet a deputation of unemployed at Downing Street on the morning of 14 September, and five members of the National Administrative Council, including one woman, were able to interview him.²

When the reductions were confirmed in the Budget, the demonstrations quickly became more widespread, and also more violent. In the course of the weeks following 10 September there were disturbances in Liverpool, Birmingham,

1. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLVI.

2. Times, 15 September 1931; W. Hannington, op. cit., pp. 237-8. Hannington alleged that was a member of the deputation, but that MacDonald, who had not expected to see only representatives of the N.U.W.M., refused to see him, and that he had to remain in the lobby while the others talked with MacDonald. There is no further evidence to support his allegation, however.

Glasgow, London and elsewhere.¹ On at least two nights in the week of 21-28 September several thousand unemployed took part in demonstrations in Dundee. On 25 September more than twenty people were arrested and charged with rioting; more arrests were made the following night, when shop windows were smashed and the police had to use batons to clear the demonstrators. Magistrates placed a ban on all further outdoor meetings or public processions in the town.² On the same night police were called to a meeting of the Urban District Council at Dagenham, Essex, which had to be suspended for almost an hour while unemployed demonstrators were removed from the council chamber.³ On the night of 29 September a large number of unemployed marched from Hyde Park to Parliament Square and Whitehall in support of a deputation who carried a petition to the House of Commons protesting about the reductions in benefit. Some sections of the crowd came into conflict with the police, and batons were used and a number of arrests were made. Only six of the deputation of twelve men and two women were allowed to enter the building, where the petition, which contained twenty thousand signatures, was received by a number of M.P.'s including David Kirkwood, George Buchanan and W. J. Brown. Outside, the crowd was cleared by mounted and foot police, but reassembled in Gt. George Street where a baton charge was made.⁴

1. At the N.A.C. meeting on 3 October, it was reported that more than 50,000 had been involved in the demonstration in Glasgow, and 10,000 in both Liverpool and Birmingham. It was also estimated that 20,000 took part in a demonstration in Manchester, but no demonstration of this size was ever held in the city until 7 October. It is likely, therefore, that the the figures given for other demonstrations are equally exaggerated.

2. Times, 26 September 1931.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 30 September 1931.

More than fifty thousand unemployed took part in a demonstration on Glasgow Green on the night of 30 September. Twelve arrests were made, including John McGovern, the Labour M.P. for Shettleston. At least one baton charge was made as mounted police attempted to clear the crowd. Many people were injured, including several police, and a number of shop windows were broken by stones. A fresh outburst of rioting broke out after midnight, and a further demonstration was held next day.¹ In the House of Commons, a few days later, David Kirkwood declared:

'If something is not done we will all go down to Glasgow and defy law and order, and you will get a chance of putting every one of us in gaol. If we are, we shall not be satisfied because you will have to take our lives or we will take yours. That is my challenge to you. You can do anything you like. You can fling me out of here this morning, but we are not going to stand by and see our people battered and not be allowed to raise the matter here.'

On 1 October the new rates of benefit were announced. Effective from 8 October they were as follows:

	Males	Females
Over 21	15s. 3d.	13s. 6d.
18-20 years	12s. 6d.	10s. 9d.
17 years of age	8s. 0d.	6s. 9d.
16 and under	5s. 6d.	4s. 6d.

1. Ibid., 2 October 1931; Oldham Evening Chronicle, 2 October 1931; Hansard, 5th. Ser. CCLVII: the figure of 50,000 was that given in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Scotland, who denied that any baton charges had been made, although the Times reported that several had been made.

The allowance for adult dependents was reduced from nine shillings to eight shillings.¹ A few days later it was announced that the test of needs for applicants for transitional benefit would come into effect on 12 November.²

The protests immediately became even more intense. In London, during the afternoon of 6 October, in a demonstration outside Bow Street Police Station, a shot was fired into the air, and for several minutes there was pandemonium, one newspaper reported, men and women rushing in all directions. Mounted police were summoned and set about breaking up the assembly. Fireworks were thrown at the police, causing the horses to stampede, and a number of sticks and other missiles were thrown. Several arrests were made. At the sight of twelve cars each containing four constables which had been rushed to the scene, the demonstrators dispersed.³ In the next few days, the Daily Worker reported another huge demonstration in Glasgow, involving an estimated 150,000, and a demonstration in Hyde Park in which more than one thousand took part.⁴ In spite of the General Election campaign, the demonstrations continued throughout the whole of October.

1. Unemployment Insurance (National Economy) (No. 1) Order, 1931.
2. Unemployment Insurance (National Economy) (No. 2) Order, 1931.
3. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 6 October 1931.
4. Daily Worker, 10 October 1931; 12 October 1931; there is no further evidence to support these claims and the numbers are probably highly exaggerated.

Almost as soon as the National Government was formed, the Conservatives began to press for an election. Their demands increased as time went on, and MacDonald and the Liberal leader, Samuel, were forced to give way.¹ Parliament was dissolved on 7 October, the General Election to take place on 27 October. The National Government appealed to the country for support, each of the three parties which formed it issuing their own manifesto. Lloyd George announced the election as the

'most wanton and unpatriotic'

ever imposed on the country: it was, he said, a Tory ramp

'to smash the political influence of organised Labour'.

The only issue on which all three parties united was in their abuse of the previous Labour administration, and here even Snowden joined in the denunciation of his former colleagues, though not himself standing for re-election. Everything was done to create panic, including a Post Office Savings scare, in which it was suggested that if a Labour Government were returned the savings of the working-class would be used to pay for the dole. A landslide victory for the National Government was the outcome. All the former Labour ministers were defeated, except Lansbury, and the Labour Party won only forty-six seats as compared with 287 in 1929. The Tories won 472: the National Government had the enormous majority of 497 in the House of Commons. Five I.L.P.'ers also survived.²

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 406-8.

2. Ibid., pp. 408-12.

The protest demonstrations continued to occur in November, as the full extent and meaning of the reductions and the means test, introduced following Snowden's budget, was realised. Towards the end of the month, after a long series of demonstrations in all parts of the City, Lord Trenchard, the Police Commissioner, ordered a ban on all unemployed meetings outside Labour Exchanges. The ban had little effect, however; on 28 November the Times reported that fourteen men and one woman had been arrested in protests outside the Exchanges in Fulham, Kentish Town, Shepherd's Bush and Hackney.¹ On 1 December similar incidents occurred again at the Shepherd's Bush, Fulham and Hammersmith Exchanges.² At Stoke-on-Trent, on 17 December, the City Council refused to operate the Means Test or impose any reductions

'until such time as definite regulations and instructions have been defined by the Ministry of Labour.'³

This was, of course, a great success for the N.U.W.M., although it was not repeated elsewhere. In Glasgow, early in January, John McGovern M.P., and Harry McShane appeared in Court on charges relating to the October demonstrations. Both were discharged, but three arrests were made in the riots that took place outside the Court during the trial.⁴

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1. Times, 28 November 1931.
2. Ibid., 2 December 1931.
3. Ibid., 18 December 1931.
4. Manchester Evening News, 18 January 1932.

Unemployment remained high throughout the whole of 1932. In January of that year over 2,726,000 were out of work, and although this fell to just over 2.5m. in March, by August it had risen one more to almost 2,860,000. Following the usual pattern, as summer drew nearer, unemployed activity slackened. The hardships of unemployment always diminished slightly in the warmer months, if only because less money was required each week for fuel, and there was correspondingly more available for a few small luxuries, though the difference was to be counted in terms of pennies rather than shillings. Nonetheless, the unemployed leaders attempted to continue the pressure on the Government to improve the conditions of unemployment, and, in addition, following the instruction of the previous summer from the R.I.L.U., attempted to build broad unemployed councils using the branches as a basis for their development. In May the movement held a National United Front Conference in the Shoreditch Town Hall, London, attended by 679 delegates from many working class organisations, to protest against the Means Test. The main discussion revolved round the importance of bringing many more unemployed into the struggles, and Hannington called upon the Conference to support the N.U.W.M. in its organisation of unemployed councils.¹ In July the unemployed movement launched its own newspaper, the Unemployed Special.²

1. N.U.W.M., How to Fight the Means Test; Report of the National United Front Conference (1932).

2. The first edition appeared in July and 15,626 copies were sold at one penny each. The August edition sold 15,561. The paper was in financial difficulties from the start, however. The August edition reported that over £28 had been lost on the first issue, although £15 of this was owed from the branches. After the first few editions, the name was changed to Unemployed Leader.

Unemployed agitation began to increase once more as winter approached. The N.U.W.M. laid plans for a march of unemployed to the T.U.C., to be held at Newcastle in early September. On 29 August, however, the Times carried a report alleging that the communists had circulated forged and duplicated visitors' tickets for the Congress. The local reception committee, it was stated, had withdrawn the entire issue of visitors' tickets, and had made plans to deal with the situation accordingly.¹ On 6 September, the second day of the Congress, more than five hundred local unemployed took part in the march to the conference hall, and requested that a deputation be allowed to address Congress. This was refused, however, as on a number of previous occasions. Inside the hall, several delegates protested. Sir Benjamin Turner proposed that the unemployed be allowed ten minutes to make their statement. Another delegate called the request

'perfectly proper and perfectly reasonable.'

He asked:

'What harm can be done by receiving a deputation of ordinary working men of Tyneside, who are suffering from all the horrors that this Congress will spend endless words to talk about this week, and allowing them to say exactly what they want to say...? There is no loss of prestige, there is no loss of good feeling: but personally I would like a gesture to be made in this matter showing that the Congress is going to get back to that real working class spirit that was its foundation.'

1. Times, 29 August 1932; a 'special bank' of stewards was to be employed at the Congress.

Other delegates joined the demands for the unemployed to be given a hearing, but after a speech by Walter Citrine, in which the General Secretary pointed out that the march and deputation had been organised by the N.U.W.M., a body which they had previously agreed was a subsidiary of the C.P.G.B., a card vote was taken and the proposal to allow the unemployed to speak defeated by some 600,000 votes, although almost one million votes were cast in favour of admitting the deputation.¹

In the same month a series of brutal clashes between unemployed and police took place on Merseyside. With the exception of the riots taking place in Belfast and elsewhere in Ireland at the same time, in which the police fired on the unemployed, and two were killed,² these were the most

1. Report of the 64th Trades Union Congress, 1932.
2. On 2 October 1932, more than five hundred men engaged on relief work in Belfast went on strike for increased benefit. Within a few days the strike had spread to more than two thousand men, and a march through the centre of the City was held to bring to the attention of the public the situation of the strikers. It was planned to hold a further demonstration on in October, but this was banned by the Northern Ireland Government and by the Police. On the day, however, the unemployed demonstration went ahead as planned. In anticipation of this, the police had drafted in large numbers of reinforcements to patrol the half-dozen districts where the unemployed were to assemble, before marching to the central rallying point at Frederick Street. In each case, clashes between the police and the unemployed followed. Police baton charges were met in several cases by a hail of stones thrown by the unemployed. A number of shop windows and street-lamps were smashed. The unemployed dug trenches and put up barricades to fight back. In a number of instances the police were forced to open fire, and one man, said to be an onlooker, was shot and killed. Some 18 people were detained overnight in hospital suffering from bullet wounds, cuts by stones, and other injuries, in addition to which many more were treated and allowed home. Forty-eight arrests were made. That night, a curfew was imposed, a cordon was thrown round the outskirts of the City, and armoured cars patrolled the streets. The police were issued with rifles in addition to revolvers.

The riots continued the following day. There were more baton charges by the police, who again opened fire. The number of arrests made exceeded

vicious of the whole period. The demonstrations began in Birkenhead on 12 September, and lasted until 19 September. All were broken up by police using batons, and throughout the week large numbers of men and women, and also many police, were treated in hospital for injuries sustained in the fighting. The riots reached their climax at the weekend, beginning on Saturday night, 17 September, and lasting right through until Monday morning. During this time almost twenty arrests were made. The Times reported that large numbers of shop windows were broken, and the shops were rifled: the ground floor windows of a public house were smashed and a mob helped themselves to liquor. The police were the targets for all sorts of missiles, bottles, stones, bricks and even hammer-heads.¹ In the next week the riots spread to Liverpool. On 21 September more than twenty arrests were made and mounted police and fire-engines were called to various parts of the city to break up demonstrations, and at night cordons of police were thrown round the troubled areas.²

one hundred, as police visited the homes of people allegedly concerned in the previous days' trouble. On 13 October, a second man died in hospital as a result of a bullet-wound sustained in the fighting.

Next day, the Belfast Trades Council announced that a General Strike would take place in the City in the event of failure by the Government and Poor Law authorities to grant the full demands of the strikers. The authorities gave way. Tom Mann visited Ireland, and acted as a pall-bearer at the funeral of one of the men killed. The Times reported that 'remarkable scenes' were witnessed at the funeral; 'vast crowds' lined the streets for several hours before the time fixed for the burial, and more than two thousand people joined the funeral cortege. (Times, 4, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17 October 1932).

1. Times, 19 September 1932.

2. Ibid., 22 September 1932.

The demonstrations on Merseyside had their final sequel at the Labour Party Conference in October. One delegate, having noted the press reports of baton charges, moved a resolution calling on the Home Secretary to institute an immediate inquiry into the police conduct during the outbursts, and urging him to issue instructions to the police to grant full facilities for unemployed demonstrations. From North to South, he declared,

'there appears to be a definite instruction to the police, or a definite determination on the part of the police, that the unemployed shall not be permitted to demonstrate'.

The resolution was seconded by a delegate from Liverpool who expressed the opinion that the troubles were entirely due to the action of the police.

'Nothing so abominable was ever done as has been done recently in Liverpool and Birkenhead',

he declared. He had seen the most terrible treatment of men, women and children by Liverpool City Police:

'I have seen men and women standing in the side streets looking on when they have been batoned by the police...

I have seen in Liverpool the use of motor-cycle combinations by the police, four or five constables per combination, racing down the streets at twenty to forty miles an hour, knocking down people and running over them as they went down the street...'

Every time there had been a baton charge it was because the police had insisted on the demonstrators using a different street from the one they

would have preferred, but

'invariably the street they were made to go up has been as busy, so far as traffic is concerned, as the one they wanted to go by.'

He agreed with the previous speaker that it appeared as though

'some instructions have been issued from headquarters whereby the police look upon the unemployed as their enemies.'¹

With the National Government showing no signs of taking any steps to improve the situation of the unemployed, the N.U.W.M. decided to hold a further national hunger march. On 26 September Hannington and McShane led the Scottish contingent out of Glasgow to begin the march. Eighteen contingents took part, including, as in 1930, a group of women from Lancashire and Yorkshire; and by the time London was reached the marchers had slept in 188 major towns. The September and October editions of the movement's newspaper devoted much space to the preparation and progress of the march, and in October a special edition was brought out containing a large number of photographs of the men on the road.² Once again the Ministry of Health attempted

1. Report of the 32nd Labour Party Conference, 1932.

2. National Hunger March Souvenir, October 1932; in all, the marchers numbered 1,008:

Yorkshire, Notts & Derby	150 (approx.)	Norwich	50
Kent	70	Women's	32
Southern contingent	50	Southampton &	
Lancashire	220	Plymouth	36
Glasgow and Dundee	250	South Wales	150

1,008

(Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932).

to impose 'casual' restrictions on the marchers, and the Labour Party Executive and the General Council opposed the march, although Hannington alleged afterwards that many local Labour Parties and trades councils gave help to the men.¹

On 27 October the marchers were given a warm welcome in Hyde Park by thousands of Londoners. Estimates of the size of the crowd varied from 20,000 (given by the Times)² to over 100,000.³ The marchers proceeded to the Park in their contingents having assembled at different points all over the City. Speakers held the platform until nightfall, when police marshalled the thousands who had stayed until the end into a procession and led them away along the Bayswater Road.⁴ During the course of the demonstration, however, police discovered in a lorry accompanying the Lancashire contingent to the Park some 154 ash sticks, many with nails protruding from the head, hidden under foodstuffs. These were confiscated. In addition, a van that had somehow got into the Park was found by police to have sixty sticks and pieces of wood inside it.⁵ In the House of Commons the Home Secretary told M.P.'s

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1. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 258-9; see below, Appendix VIII for routes of the march.
 2. Times, 28 October 1932.
 3. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 3-4 December 1932; W. Hannington, op. cit., p. 262; the Manchester Guardian, 28 October 1932, put the figure at between twenty and fifty thousand; the Manchester Evening News, 27 October 1932, estimated that 70,000 people took part. More than 2,500 police were on duty at the demonstration, including over 750 'Specials' (Mepol 2, 3037, 'Meetings, Processions and demonstrations', Pts. IV and V, 1934-1935; see below, Chapter 14, p. 549
 4. Manchester Guardian, 28 October 1932.
 5. Manchester Evening News, 28 October 1932.

'I have seen these weapons and I desire the House to take note that the presence of such weapons could only be by deliberate intent and for one purpose only.'¹

On 1 November it had been arranged that the marchers would try to present a huge petition, demanding the abolition of the Means Test, the Anomalies Act, and the restoration of the ten per cent. benefit cuts, to the House of Commons. During that afternoon, however, Hannington, who was to have led the deputation, was arrested at the N.U.W.M. offices, and charged with incitement. As was intended, the arrest of the movement's leaders completely disorganised the N.U.W.M. The petition was left in bundles in a waiting room at Charing Cross Station, where it was to be collected in the evening to be taken to Parliament, but the police confiscated it from here.² Since the main object of the march was the presentation of the petition, the whole march was ruined. Disappointed marchers began to leave the Capital well before the intended time: it had not been planned for the men to return home until Saturday, 5 November, but as early as 2 November one newspaper reported that the Brighton contingent had left London.³ Thus the march ended in

1. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLXIX.

2. More than 3,100 police were on duty on this occasion, evidence that the authorities were expecting serious trouble from the demonstrators (see below Chapter 14, p. 549; Mepol 2, 3037, 'Meetings, Processions and demonstrations, Pts. IV and V, 1934-1935'); the police file on the demonstration includes a report from an Inspector of the events leading to the Police taking possession of the petition, together with a receipt dated 3 November 1932, signed by James Connolly for its return (Mepol 2, 3066, 'Demonstration to the House of Commons, 1 November 1932').

3. Bolton Evening News, 2 November 1932.

failure, although in many ways it was more successful than it appeared to have been. Press coverage of the march, for example, was far better than on any previous occasion, and the attention of the general public was focused on the unemployed to a much wider degree than the mere passing of marchers' through a town or city could otherwise have done. In addition, more help from local Labour parties and trades councils was forthcoming than in 1930. Gradually the unemployed were winning their battle for recognition.

Soon after the march had ended, however, the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, appointed in December 1930, published its final report. In the 1931 legislation, the responsibility of deciding applicants' needs under the means test had been placed upon the public assistance committees of the local authorities, already experienced in assessing the needs of those applying for outdoor relief as successors to the old Poor Law. The funds used for transitional payments came, however, from the Treasury, not from the local authority itself. The scales of payment varied from place to place, although the Ministry of Labour had only found it necessary to supercede two of the committees out of many dominated by Labour, namely those at Rotherham and in Co. Durham.¹ The main recommendation of the Final Report, embodied in the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1934, was to remove these powers from the P.A.C.'s. The Report suggested two separate schemes for the unemployed. All persons who had exhausted their benefit rights were to be transferred to the authority of an Unemployment Assistance Board (U.A.B.), a body of six members independent of

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 470-1.

the Ministry of Labour, which would have its own offices throughout the country, and its own staff. The cost of maintaining this section of the unemployed would be met by a new Unemployment Assistance Fund, provided by the Treasury, but with a contribution from the local authorities, in return for their savings on public assistance. Once again the two Labour members signed a separate report which differed on many issues, but which was ignored in the legislation of 1924.¹ Soon after the publication of the Report, the N.U.W.M. issued a pamphlet attacking its proposals and calling for the united action of the unemployed to prevent any further lowering of the scales of benefit.²

Unemployment reached its peak in January 1933, when it rose to almost three millions.³ In spite of this, however, the first few months of the year were comparatively quiet for the N.U.W.M. A major reason for this was the fact that the year began with four of the seven members of the central committee in gaol. In November 1932 Sid Elias was given a two-year prison sentence for incitement.⁴ In the same month, Hannington was sentenced to three months

1. Report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, 1930, Cmd. 4185 (1932); the main report proposed the same scale of benefit as it had recommended in the Interim Report, namely

	Males	Females
Over 21 years	15s.	13s.
18-20 years of age	12s.	10s.
17 years	7s.	6s.
16 years and under	5s.	5s.

2. N.U.W.M., The Royal Commission's Final Attack on the Unemployed (1932).

3. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLI (February 1933); the official figure for January 1933 was 2,903,065: this did not include, however, the estimated quarter of a million removed from the registers since 1931 by the operation of the Means Test, nor many thousands of others deterred from applying because of the inquisitorial nature of the Test.

4. Bolton Evening News, 4 November 1932; see above, p. 381, note 1 .

imprisonment on charges of attempting to cause disaffection among the police.¹ On 17 December 1932, Tom Mann, the N.U.W.M.'s treasurer, and Emrhys Llewellyn, the secretary, were both imprisoned for two months on charges of incitement and disturbing the peace. The Seditious Meetings Act of 1817 and an Act of Edward III were invoked to bring about the sentences, which the Magistrate himself admitted were largely preventive. A storm of protest followed the latter sentences. Even the General Council of the T.U.C. and the Parliamentary Labour Party sent a letter to the Prime Minister: the National Joint Council protested to the Government. There appeared to have been no other reason for their sentence than to keep them from organising activity among the unemployed. The Labour Party discussed the sentences at the next Party Conference, when the Executive Report expressed the opinion that the sentences of Mann and Llewellyn were examples of the:

'vindictive treatment meted out to political opponents on account of their pronounced and extreme opinions.'²

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1. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p. 269: the Scot, Bob McLennan, was appointed national organiser in his place for the duration of the sentence.
 2. Report of the 32nd Labour Party Conference, 1932, p. 21; Mann and Llewellyn were arrested on a charge of being: 'disturbers of the peace and inciters of persons to take part in mass demonstrations which were calculated to involve a contravention of the provisions of the Seditious Meetings Act, 1817'. In the absence of an undertaking to enter into personal sureties of £200 to keep the peace for twelve months and find sureties of £100 each, they were both sentenced to two months' imprisonment. George Lansbury raised the matter in the House of Commons on 19 December, when the Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour, stated: 'Whatever the origin of the magistrates' jurisdiction might be, whether it be derived from the common law or from the Statue 34 of Edward the Third passed in the year 1360, or otherwise, it has been the established law in this country for a period of years too long to be called into question that magistrates are empowered to require a person to enter into recognisances and to find sureties when there are reasonable grounds for apprehending a breach of the peace for which they might in some way be responsible. The whole law on this subject was considered by the High Court in 1913.'

The international situation was also responsible to some extent for the lack of activity among the unemployed in the first months of the New Year. The coming to power of Hitler in January 1933, and the events which followed, such as the Reichstag fire and the persecution of the Jews, overshadowed all else. Unemployment was pushed into the background. In March the C.P.G.B. made its proposal for a 'United Front', which was quickly rejected by the Labour Party and the T.U.C. Undeterred, the N.U.W.M. made a similar proposal in April which was equally firmly rejected.¹ Yet although the Labour leaders remained adamant in their refusal to align with either the Communist Party or the N.U.W.M., many of the rank-and-file held different opinions, and, stirred by the events in Germany, were ready to join in the demands for a United Front. In the preceding months the 'line' of the Communist Party had been undergoing a significant change, away from the sectarian 'class against class' policy. Immediately prior to the United Front proposals, the Comintern Executive had instructed the C.P.G.B., and its other sections, to

'refrain from making attacks of Social Democratic organisations.'

The unemployed movement followed the change: in February 1933 the N.A.C. had ordered the branches to return to the 'united front from below' policy, and develop agitation inside the trade unions, trades councils and local Labour parties.

1. This followed a resolution carried at the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., held in the Caxton Hall, Salford, from 15-17 April, 1933.

Although the change in attitude towards the official movement had not yet developed into a deliberate courtship, the ending of the sectarian line won more supporters for the communist proposals. The same was true of the N.U.W.M., support from trades councils and local Labour parties for the unemployed movement's activities gradually increasing in 1933. The change in policy of the N.U.W.M. was reflected in its leadership's attitude towards the unemployed associations of the T.U.C. In the past these had been denounced off-hand. However, the October edition of the Communist Review contained an article on the unemployed movement in Yorkshire which reported a new co-operation between the unemployed associations and the local branches of the N.U.W.M.

'At one time we called such organisations "scab" movements,' the article declared:

'we criminally failed to distinguish the role of some of the sponsors of this movement with the honest aims of the members.'

It was reported that delegates from a number of trades councils and unemployed associations in the country were regularly attending meetings of district councils of the N.U.W.M., and also becoming involved in joint activities.¹

The new spirit of co-operation was more noticeable in the Hunger March of 1934, on which occasion, despite the continued opposition of the General Council and the National Executive of the Labour Party, many more trades

1. Communist Review, VI (October 1933); in 1934, however, the movement issued a pamphlet, Crimes Against the Unemployed (1934), attacking the T.U.C. scheme for unemployed associations, and the General Council's refusal to join in the activities of the N.U.W.M. (Made available by R. & E. Frow).

councils and local Labour parties gave help to the men on the road than had been the case in previous marches. In addition, the British Labour leaders were unable to prevent many prominent persons becoming associated with the march. The N.U.W.M. was able to form an influential joint committee, known as the Congress and March Council, which publicly issued the call for the March, and for delegates to a National Congress which was held during the marchers stay in London. Among the prominent trade union and Labour leaders on this Council were Ted Hill, Frank Rowlands, Alex Gossip, Ellen Wilkinson, Aneurin Bevan M.P., James Maxton M.P., and George Buchanan M.P. Although a certain amount of opposition was still encountered, from those who remembered the previous communist denunciations of the men they now called upon to lead a united front movement, in the main this march rallied the working-class in all its sections in far more active support than on any previous march.

The occasion for the march was the announcement by the Government in the autumn of 1933 of its new measures for unemployment insurance. Based on the Final Report of the Royal Commission, it was intended to establish an Unemployment Assistance Board to take charge of all unemployed persons who had exhausted their statutory benefit rights. This was regarded by many as an attempt to split the unemployed into two sections. The N.U.W.M. strongly opposed the new measures from the outset.¹ In particular, the movement objected to the proposal to limit the right of final appeal to an umpire to

1. W. Hannington, 'The Meaning of the New Unemployed Bill', Labour Monthly, XVI (January 1934).

those persons who had retained their union membership since last employment; this was held to be a direct attack on the unemployed movement.¹

The march also had the support of the newly formed National Council for Civil Liberties. On the day prior to the marchers welcome in Hyde Park, 24 February 1934, the Manchester Guardian published the following letter from the Council:

'Sir - The arrival of the "hunger marchers" in London next Sunday revives memories of disquieting incidents in the autumn of 1932. We have followed with close attention the progress of charges of police irregularities on that occasion; charges made on oath by independent witnesses and of a character sufficiently serious to engage the personal attention of the Police Commissioner.'

'The present hunger march has been preceded by public statements by the Home Secretary and the Attorney General (who has already hinted at the possibility of bloodshed), which we feel justify apprehension. Furthermore, certain features of the police preparations for the present march, for example, instructions to shopkeepers to barricade their windows, cannot but create an atmosphere of misgiving, not only dangerous but unjustified by the facts.'

1. M. Foot, op. cit., p. 140.

'All reports bear witness to the excellent discipline of the marchers. From their own leaders they have received repeated instructions of the strictest character warning them against any breach of the peace, even under extreme provocation.'

'In view of the general and alarming tendency to encroachment on the liberty of the citizen, there has recently been formed a Council for Civil Liberties. One of the special duties of the Council will be to maintain a vigilant observation of the proceedings of the next few days. Relevant and well-authenticated reports by responsible persons will be welcomed and investigated by the Council.'

The letter was signed by, among others, H. G. Wells, Edith Summerskill, Harold Laski, Clement Attlee, and Ronald Kidd, the Secretary of the Council.¹ Hannington declared that the Council:

'rendered considerable service to the marchers in so far that the authorities, knowing of the existence of such an influential body, were restrained in their conduct towards the marchers.'²

The march began from Glasgow on 22 January, when the Scottish contingent of 396 men was led out of the city by John McGovern, M.P., and Harry McShane,

1. Manchester Guardian, 24 February 1934.

2. W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p. 295.

after a send-off demonstration by thousands of supporters.¹ The seventeen contingents arrived on the outskirts of London on 23 February. Next day, a Saturday, the National Congress of Action opened in the Bermondsey Town Hall, attended by 1,494 delegates representing all sections of the trade union and political working-class movement. Speakers included Hannington, Maxton, McGovern, Mann and Pollitt. A large number of resolutions were passed, including opposition to the new Unemployment Insurance Bill, and demands for the abolition of the means test and the restoration of the 1931 benefit reductions. The delegates pledged themselves to strive for the unity of the unemployed and employed in the campaign for these demands. A deputation of thirty was elected, including Maxton, Campbell Stephen, Ellen Wilkinson and Willie Gallacher, to serve with twenty representatives of the marchers on a joint deputation to the Government.²

1. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLXXXVI; Inprecorr, XIV (March 1934); W. Hannington, Ten Lean Years (1940), p. 278. In a Special Branch Bulletin dated 20 February, 1934, the number of marchers was given as follows:

Scottish	398;	Women	47;
Tyneside	110;	Yorkshire, Notts & Derby	189;
Norfolk	23;	Devon, Cornwall & Hants	48;
South Coast	17;	Lancashire, Merseyside,	
South Wales & Bristol		Staffs & Midlands	290
(including 18 women)	280;		

Total: 1402

(Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March, 1934).

2. National Congress and March Council, The Workers' United Front: A Challenge to the Ruling Class (1934), made available by R. & E. Frow; Times, 26 February 1934; W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p. 297; the deputation were unable to see the P. M. The Scotland Yard file, Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934, contains a letter written by Maud Brown and John Aplin to Ramsay MacDonald, stating that the Congress had elected a deputation to meet him on 27 February. When the deputation arrived at No. 10 Downing Street, however, they were told the Prime Minister was visiting the British Industries Fair. Other members of the deputation were John Jagger, President of the National Union of Distributive and

On 25 February, the marchers were welcomed into Hyde Park. The Times reported that more than three thousand 'Special Constables' were on duty for the occasion.¹ Speakers on the eight platforms erected in the Park included Fenner Brockway, Aneurin Bevan, Ellen Wilkinson, and from the N.U.W.M., Hannington and McShane.² Next day, John McGovern presented a petition on behalf of the marchers to the House of Commons. It read:

'To the Honorable Commons of the United Kingdom...'

'The humble petition of Harry McShane, Philip Neville Harker, and John Samuel Williams showeth:

'The petitioners as representatives of the unemployed men and women of the country and of the thousands of hunger marchers who have now arrived in London humbly desire to present that great suffering has been caused to the unemployed and their dependents by the means test, Anomalies Act and the cuts in unemployment benefit, and the declared intention of the Government to continue these hardships through the Unemployment Bill at present before Parliament and even to worsen the present miseries of the working classes thereby.

Allied Workers, Alex Gossip, General Secretary, National Amalgamated of Furnishing Trades' Association, and J. B. Figgins, a member of the Executive of the National Union of Railwaymen. Pollitt's speech to the Congress was later published as a pamphlet, entitled The Way Forward (1934).

1. Times, 26 February 1934; in fact, 1,202 'Specials' were on traffic duty in the City, 924 on beats and patrols, and a further 1,572, making a total of 3,698 in all, were held on reserve, during the afternoon and evening; more than 1,700 regular police were employed in controlling the demonstrators. (Mepol 2, 3037, Meetings, Processions and demonstrations', Pts. IV and V, 1934-1935; see below, Chapter 14, p. 549, 550.
2. Times, 24, 26 February 1934.

'Whereby your petitioners pray that they or some of their number should be heard at the Bar of this honourable House as representatives of the unemployed, to set forth their grievances and to urge on behalf of the unemployed men and women the withdrawal of the Unemployment Bill, and in its stead the introduction of a Bill to give decent maintenance or provide employment at trade union rates for the unemployed who are enduring such great hardships...'

The request to be heard at the Bar was refused, however, by MacDonald, who was heavily criticised in the House later that day by the I.L.P.'ers for his refusal. Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party, and even Sir Herbert Samuel, the Liberal leader, spoke in favour of the marchers.¹ McShane and Williams were allowed to sit in the Stranger's Gallery and listen to the debate, but permission was refused to Harker, who came from Bolton, since he had been ejected from the Gallery for a disturbance on the 1932 March.²

The march of 1934 was unquestionably the most successful the N.U.W.M. had yet held. After it had ended the movement continued its pressures on the Government to do something for the unemployed - in particular withdraw its new Unemployment Bill. A new pamphlet, written by Hannington, attacking the

1. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLXXXVI; Bolton Evening News, 26 February 1934; W. Hannington, Ten Lean Years, p. 114.
2. Bolton Evening News, 28 February 1934; Bolton Journal, 2 March 1934; Times, 28 February 1934; for biographical details of Philip Harker, see below, Appendix VI.

Bill was published.¹ The N.A.C. announced that 15 April was to be 'Budget Sunday', and demonstrations were held up and down the country on this day.² Two days later the Budget was introduced, and it brought the most notable achievement so far for the unemployed movement. From 1 July the cuts of 1931 were to be restored. The new scales were to be:³

	Males	Females
Over 21	17s.	15s.
18-21 years	14s.	12s.
17 years	9s.	7s. 6d.
16 years and under	6s.	5s.

The N.U.W.M. leaders were delighted, although it was recognised that the Government had only given ground under pressure: the unemployed were not to think that it had undergone a change of heart.

Further success for the N.U.W.M. followed almost immediately. On 3 May 1934, the Times reported that the newly elected Labour majority on the London County Council was prepared to recognise the N.U.W.M. to the extent of formally receiving a deputation from the movement.⁴ At the same time, unemployment was showing a steady decline. From almost 2.5m. in January 1934, the figures dropped to 2,090,000 in May, the lowest since August 1930.⁵ In

1. W. Hannington, The New Unemployed Bill (1934), made available by R. & E. Frow.
2. Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 7-8 April 1934.
3. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCLXXXVIII.
4. Times, 3 May 1934.
5. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLII (February 1934; June 1934).

the movement's campaign against Part Two of the new Unemployment Insurance Act, due to come into force from the beginning of 1935, further evidence was seen of the increased readiness to participate in unemployed agitation on the part of trades councils, unemployed associations and local Labour parties. The campaign was directed in particular against the retention of the means test, and against any reductions of the transitional allowances, since the new rates had not yet been announced.

At the Ninth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., however, held in the Keir Hardie Hall, Derby, in December 1934, a resolution was passed calling for the united front of employed and unemployed workers to fight against Part Two of the Act, and a copy forwarded to the T.U.C., together with a letter proposing a meeting between representatives of the N.U.W.M. and of the General Council. The resolution addressed itself to the General Council on the need for united working-class action to secure the withdrawal of the Act. Citrine's reply, a few days later, briefly stated that he could not, in future, answer communications from the N.U.W.M.¹

This was something of a set-back for the movement in its campaign for a united front. But it was short-lived. If this was the attitude of the Labour leaders, many of the rank-and-file thought differently. On 11 December (the day after the Derby Conference had ended) the Government published a White Paper announcing the new U.A.B. scales, which were to come into operation

1. Report of the Ninth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1934 (made available by R. & E. Frow); Unemployed Leader, January 1935.

on 5 January.¹ In many cases they represented a reduction in allowances. The Manchester Guardian felt that the Ministry of Labour and the U.A.B. had not 'taken the public into their confidence as completely as they might have done.' The scales were 'rough and ready', and the newspaper urged that the Minister give a 'firm assurance' that, since they were almost entirely experimental, the Board would reconsider them within a short

1. Unemployment Assistance (Determination of Need and Assessment of Needs) Regulations, 1934; the scales were as follows:

Part One: where application is made by a person living as a member of a household of two or more persons

- (a) for the householder and wife/husband 24s. per week
 (b) where this is not applicable, male householder 16s; female 14s;
 (c) for each member of the household to whom the above rates do not apply if aged 21 or over

	for the first such member:	male	10s.	female	8s.
	for each subsequent member:	male	8s.	female	7s.
	if aged 18-20 years	male	8s.	female	7s.
	14-17				6s.
	11-13				4s. 6d.
	8-10				4s.
	5-7				3s. 6d.
	under 5				3s.

- (d) where the household consist of only one child in addition to not more than two adults, the amount allowed in respect of that child to be not less than 4s. per week;
 (e) where the household has more than five members, the total allowance for that household to be reduced by 1s. in respect of each member in excess of five.

Part Two: (i) rent allowance, a sum ascertained by reference to the total amount of allowances

- (a) 24s.-30s. : allowance of 7s. 6d.
 (b) under 24s. : 7s. 6d. reduced by one quarter of the amount less than 24s.
 (c) over 30s. : 7s. 6d. increased by one quarter of the amount over 30s.

period.¹

There followed a nation-wide wave of protest against the regulations. The protests were strongest in South Wales, where the Miners' Federation, ignoring the restraints of the Labour Party Executive and T.U.C. General Council, demanded and secured united action. Demonstrations were held in almost every town in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire in the first weeks of 1935. The Federation was responsible for the organisation of a conference held at Cardiff, attended by more than 1,600 delegates from all sections of the working class movement, at which a resolution was carried from South Wales Durham and Scotland to present the resolution to the Minister of Labour.² Elsewhere, the N.U.W.M. strongly supported by the Communist Party took the lead. The revolt spread to almost every industrial town and city in Great Britain. Marches, demonstrations, deputations, baton charges and arrests were the news everywhere. In Parliament Labour M.P.'s also voiced their support for the demands of the unemployed.³

In addition, if the rent is greater than the basic rent allowance, the allowance might be increased by one third of the basic rent allowance or by the excess, whichever is the less

Or, if the rent is less than the basic allowance, the allowance to be reduced by the excess (in special cases, the applicants might be allowed 1s. 6d. of the reduction).

- (ii) Where application for assistance made by a person living otherwise than as a member of a household of two or more persons
- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) | if 18 or over: | male 15s. per week; | female 14s. per week; |
| (b) | if under 18: | male 13s. " " ; | female 12s. " " . |

1. Manchester Guardian, 17 December 1934.
2. Ibid., 26 January 1935.
3. Hansard, 5th Ser. CCXCVII.

The Government were forced to back down. On 5 February, Oliver Stanley, the Minister of Labour, announced in the Commons that the Board had decided in cases where the new assessment was lower than the old one, the former payments were to be restored. In addition, where reductions had taken place, repayments would be made. This was the greatest victory the unemployed were to have. Although the scales were never in fact repealed, and in the summer of the following year a new attempt was made to introduce them in a revised form, the protests represented a significant step forward for the N.U.W.M. in its unity campaign. The N.U.W.M. claimed the glory, and probably deserved it. Officially, neither the Labour Party nor the T.U.C. had any share in the agitation, and it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that had the unemployed relied solely on the efforts of the British Labour leaders, the Government would not have been quite so ready to withdraw the regulations.

The remainder of 1935 was fairly quiet as far as the unemployed were concerned. The international situation replaced unemployment as the centre of public attention. In any case, unemployment was steadily falling: in July 1935 the figure fell below two millions for the first time for more than five years. As usual, there was an increase in the winter months, but after January 1936 the fall continued. By the summer, the figures were down to 1.6m.¹ The N.U.W.M. began to decline as the need for a militant body to fight unemployment decreased. As men returned to work, membership fell, and interest in

1. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XLII (1934); XLIII (1935).

unemployed struggles waned. Throughout the country branches were left with just a hard core of members, not necessarily the most active or militant.

In November 1935 the General Election was held, Baldwin having replaced MacDonald as Prime Minister in June. The Communist Party, which soon afterwards renewed its application for affiliation to the Labour Party, withdrew all but two of its candidates in favour of Labour as a gesture towards the united front. In a similar manner, during the election campaign, the N.U.W.M. urged its members to vote for Labour candidates. This resulted in a number of instances in the movement's leaders being invited to speak on the Labour Party platforms. The National Government again appealed for support, but even more than in 1931 its campaign was that of the Tories, who, in fact, won 387 seats, to the Labour Party's 154. The Government was returned with a majority of 247 over the opposition, although Labour's debating strength was substantially improved with the return to Parliament of Morrison, Clynes, Dalton and other ex-ministers. Liberal numbers fell from twenty-six to only seventeen: the I.L.P. had four members, and the Communists one, Willie Gallacher being returned at West Fife.¹

A month before the Election, Italy had invaded Abyssinia. In March 1936, German troops marched into the demilitarised zone in the Rhineland. The issues of foreign policy superimposed themselves on all others, as a new era began, one in which the British people began to face the imminence of war.

1. C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 553-4.

It was still hoped that war might be avoided, but it was also felt that this was increasingly less likely to happen. The developments in foreign affairs increased the demand for united action in many sections, including, on the one hand, the Communists, and, at the other end, many Liberals. The Communists came forward with demands for a 'Popular Front' to include all who favoured a stronger international policy to oppose Fascism, and a 'progressive' home policy in such matters as the treatment of the unemployed, and the improvement of the social services.¹

Hence, when the new U.A.B. scales were announced just before the summer recess, and it was found that they meant only a slight improvement on the original scales, in spite of the decline in unemployment, and the international situation, their inadequacy produced nonetheless a strong reaction in Labour circles.² The N.U.W.M. began to organise another hunger march, its sixth and

1. G. D. H. Cole, A History of the Labour Party from 1914, pp. 338-9.

2. Unemployment Assistance (Determination of Need and Assessment of Needs) Regulations, 1936: (see above, p. 431); they were to come into force on 16 November, and this time were not withdrawn, in spite of the hunger march. The scales were as before, with the following changes:

Part One:

- (b) female 15s;
- (c) all members over 21: male 10s female 9s.
16-20 years: 8s.
14-15 years: 6s.
(13 years and under as before);
- (e) withdrawn

Part Two:

- (i) rent allowance: the sliding scale withdrawn. Instead, if the rent paid is greater or less than one quarter of the total of the allowances for the household, the allowances might be increased or reduced by a sum which appeared to the officer as reasonable in the circumstances.
- (ii) (a) female 15s. per week.

final march. This was to be highly successful, both in terms of the successes of the men during their stay in London, and also in view of the considerable support given to the march from the official Labour movement. Although the leadership again withheld its support, the number of local Labour parties and trades councils which openly associated themselves with the march exceeded all expectations of the N.U.W.M. The South Wales Miners' Federation officially supported the march, and took responsibility for organising the South Wales contingent. The London Trades and Labour Council joined in the work of the London Reception Committee.¹ The Daily Worker reported on 14 September that the Durham miners were demanding that their Association be officially represented on the march, and that between forty and fifty men had been recruited to take part from among them. The paper also alleged that the Edinburgh Trades and Labour Council had taken responsibility for organising a contingent of men from the city.²

1. W. Hannington, A Short History of the Unemployed (1938), p. 87.

2. Daily Worker, 14 September 1936; there is not further evidence to support these claims. As on all previous occasions, the Ministry of Health issued instructions to its General Inspectors to the effect that the marchers were to be treated as casuals. A copy of the memorandum, dated September 1936, sent by the Ministry to its officials is to be found in the Scotland Yard file, Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936. The instructions gave details of the assembly points and dates of starting for each of the contingents. It continued 'General Inspectors should use every effort to prevent any action likely to encourage this march or a repetition of it.' On the question of providing accommodation for the hunger marchers, the memorandum stated: 'Advice to be given to authorities who may be approached should be to urge them to refuse to promise in advance that facilities not provided for by the law will be afforded. Experience shows that where a local authority refuse accommodation beyond that legally available other resources are often found.' On the question of benefit being payable, the statement noted: 'The Board (i.e. the Unemployment Assistance Board) take the view, following previous rulings by the Umpire, under the Unemployment Insurance Acts, that as soon as a man joins the march he is no longer available for work, and that in consequence, he ceases to be within their scope and to be eligible for unemployment assistance allowances.' However, the circular continued,

The march began on 5 October. On this occasion, two Scottish contingents took part, one, as usual, from Glasgow, and the other from Edinburgh, including a group of men from Aberdeen.¹ On the same day, the Jarrow March began.² At the same time, an entirely independent march of

'The fact that the march is organised does not prevent such of the men as are unable to obtain lodging from being casual wayfarers, and, as such entitled to relief from the Council.' The Council 'are bound, upon application, to provide accomodation for such of the men as have not the means, or are otherwise unable, to obtain a lodging, in so far as room for the men can be found...'

1. Ibid; W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, p. 315; Times, 6 October 1936. Estimates as to the numbers taking part on the March are confused. Hannington wrote later that the two Scottish contingents each numbered five hundred. This is probably an exaggeration. The Bolton Evening News, 21 October 1936, stated that the West of Scotland contingent numbered just over 350. However, the police estimate was less than 300, with about 180 for the East of Scotland marchers. (Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park Demonstration, 8 November 1936, and Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936)

Both these files have details of the numbers of each contingent: the earlier (3091) was made soon after the contingents had set off. That in Mepol 2, 3053, was dated 4 November 1936, just before the marchers reached London. Thus:

Scottish (West)	276	(294)
Scottish (East)	185	(180)
North-East	130	(130)
Lancashire	225	(230)
Yorks., Notts., Derby.,	116	(100)
South Wales	500	(370)
Women	32	(43)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	<u>1,464</u>	<u>1,347</u>

Figures in brackets are those given in Mepol 2, 3091. The differences can be accounted for by the fact that some marchers (e.g. the women's contingent) dropped out on the way, while other contingents increased in numbers as new groups joined. The major increase in the numbers of the South Wales marchers was probably due to the fact that the Monmouth contingent joined at Newport, while Bristol and Swindon provided further groups.

2. The Jarrow marchers, who had the official backing of the Labour Party and T.U.C. were much better equipped than the N.U.W.M. marchers. They had, for one thing, better medical treatment. This was a 'blessing',

blind unemployed was taking place.¹ During the weeks that the N.U.W.M. marchers were on the road, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, through Press and wireless statements, urged them to return home. On 14 October, for example, the following statement was issued from Downing Street, announcing the refusal of the Cabinet to meet a deputation from the N.U.W.M. marchers:

'The Ministers have had under consideration the fact that a number of marches on London are in progress or in contemplation. In the opinion of His Majesty's Government, such marches can do no good to the causes for which they are represented to be undertaken, are liable to cause unnecessary hardship to those taking part in them, and are altogether undesirable. In this country, governed by a Parliamentary system, where every adult has a vote, and every area has its representative in the House of Commons to put forward grievances and suggest remedies, processions to London cannot claim to have any constitutional influence on policy. The

wrote Ellen Wilkinson, later. 'I only understood to the full, when, the Jarrow men having returned home, I went to help the men who had marched from Durham without such skilled assistance. I had to cut socks that had become embedded in broken blisters, and bandage the feet of men who must have walked in agony.' (E. Wilkinson, The Town that was murdered (1939), p. 203.)

1. H.O. 45, 16545, National League of the Blind: March to London 1936; 140 members of the League took part on this March, in four contingents from Leeds, Manchester, Leicester and Swansea. They arrived in London on 31 October 1936, and a number of demonstrations and processions were held during the next few days, before they left for home on 2 November. The aim of the March was to bring the notice of the general public to the situation of Blind persons in England and Wales.

Ministers have, therefore, decided that encouragement cannot be given to such marches, whatever their particular purpose, and Ministers cannot consent to receive any deputation of marchers, although, of course, they are always prepared to meet Members of Parliament.¹

In spite of such opposition, the N.U.W.M. marchers reached London on Saturday, 7 November, 1936, as planned.² On the following day, they were given the now almost traditional welcome in Hyde Park. Speakers from the platforms included Clement Attlee, Aneurin Bevan, and seven other Labour M.P.'s. Bevan summarised the achievements of the march. He said:

'The hunger marchers have achieved one thing. They have for the first time in the history of the national Labour movement achieved a united platform. Communists, I.L.P.ers., Socialists, members of the Labour Party and Co-operators for the first time have joined hands together, and we are not going to unclasp them. This demonstration proves to the country that Labour needs a united leadership.'³

1. Times, 15 October 1936.

2. See below, Appendix XII for routes of the march.

3. Quoted M. Foot, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

Chapter Eleven

THE UNEMPLOYED MOVEMENT IN SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE,
1929-1931

On Wednesday, 7 October 1931, a crowd of unemployed numbering more than 20,000 fought with police in the centre of Manchester.¹ Six days before, on 1 October, several thousand unemployed, including many women, demonstrated outside the Town Hall, Salford,² while on the previous evening an estimated 50,000 men and women were involved in clashes with the authorities in Glasgow.³ The demonstrations were part of a nation-wide protest campaign against the introduction of the 'Means Test' for transitional benefit, and at the same time, a ten per cent. reduction in unemployment benefit, imposed by the National Government on 10 September.

On this particular Wednesday, hundreds of unemployed gathered at Ardwick Green, Manchester, at about half-past two, in preparation for a march to the Town Hall. Their object was to send a deputation to interview the Manchester City Council, which was then in session, in the hope that the Council would refuse to adopt the cuts in benefit or implement the Test in the City.⁴ The march had been carefully planned, but before it could begin, the organisers

1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 7 October 1931; Manchester Evening News, 7 October 1931; Daily Worker, 9 October 1931. Accurate estimates of crowd numbers have always posed problems for the historian. A case in point is the 1848 Chartist demonstration on Kensington Common, around which much controversy has centred as to the numbers involved. Similarly, on many occasions in the demonstrations of the 1930's, there are various different estimates of the size of the crowd. In this case, the Manchester Evening Chronicle estimated that 10,000 men and women gathered at the starting point, but thousands more joined in on the way.
2. Manchester Evening News, 1 October 1931; Salford City Reporter, 2 October, 1931.
3. Manchester Evening News, 1 October 1931; Times, 2 October 1931.
4. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 7 October 1931.

were given word that they would not be allowed to march into the Town Hall Square. Instead, they were told that the Chief Constable had granted permission for them to march along an alternative route, ending at All Saints.¹ While the crowd were still gathering, therefore, Arthur Jackson, one of the leaders of the unemployed movement in the city, and one of the organisers of the demonstration, climbed onto a wall and spoke to those assembled. 'I have been asked by the Chief Constable to put before you an alternative route to that which we proposed to take,' he said. His announcement, it was reported at the time, was met with cat calls and laughter, and cries of 'He would', and 'We thought so'. It was unanimously decided to proceed by the original route to the Town Hall.

The crowd was then marshalled into order by stewards wearing red armbands with a silver star attached,² and the procession moved off, led by the Gorton Labour Party brass band.³ At its head walked nine members of the Manchester City Council, who had left the Council Chamber early to join the march. Scores of placards were displayed, and hundreds of women, many of whom carried children in their arms, also took part.⁴

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1. Interview with Bill Dutson; see below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.
 2. Interview with Arthur Jackson, at his shop in Plymouth Grove, Manchester, 24 May 1968.
 3. Interview with Bill Abbott; see below, Appendix VI, for biographical details.
 4. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 7 October 1931.

For the first time since 1926 the Special Constabulary had been called upon for duty, these men being placed on traffic control at points throughout the City to enable the regular force to be released to marshall the procession and exercise supervision over the route to be followed.¹

At the junction of London Road and Whitworth Street trouble began. The marchers had intended to continue along London Road and into Piccadilly. The route suggested by the police, however, involved the demonstrators turning left at this point down Whitworth Street, and the police now formed a line, two or three deep, across London Road. This was re-inforced by mounted police.² One newspaper report commented,

'It was at once obvious that this move on the part of the police was likely to arouse the anger of the crowd.'³

On being confronted by the line of police, the marchers sat down in the road, stretching back hundreds of yards. Here they remained for several minutes, until, with many becoming restless and impatient, several of those at the front began to urge their fellows to charge the police,⁴ while others tried to persuade the demonstrators to do as the police requested, and march along Whitworth Street to All Saints. After some fifteen minutes or so, the police

1. Manchester Evening News, 7 October 1931.
2. Several of those taking part, including Bill Dutson, have alleged that the police had also ordered London Road to be blocked with tramcars, lorries and other vehicles at this point, in order to prevent the demonstrators from marching up the hill to Piccadilly. This is unsupported by any other evidence, however.
3. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 7 October 1931.
4. Bill Dutson has alleged that there were a number of agents provocateurs in the crowd, and that it was these men who urged the others to charge the police. There is no other evidence to support this allegation, however.

drew their batons and charged the crowd, intent on breaking up the demonstration, and, at the same time, hoses from the adjacent fire-station were brought out and turned on the demonstrators.¹

A tremendous fight ensued. By this time the City Councillors were nowhere to be seen. The unemployed fought back using their banners, and men from both sides were knocked down and trampled underfoot in the mêlée. Windows of tramcars were broken by stones thrown by the demonstrators. The screams of women and children added to the noise and confusion. Slowly the marchers were forced down Whitworth Street in the direction of Oxford Road. At this point another line of police prevented them from turning to the right towards the Town Hall. Instead the demonstrators were forced to turn left towards All Saints, where they slowly regrouped.² Many of the leaders of the unemployed movement in the City were arrested. Most of these men had been acting as marshalls, and the bright red arm-bands they wore made them easily distinguishable. In all twenty-six arrests were made. At All Saints Church, the Vicar, the Reverend Etienne Watts, opened his church to those of the leaders who managed to escape arrest, and refused to let in the police.³

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1. Mr. Dutson also alleged during the course of the interview that this, too, was pre-planned. As the police charged, one constable put his baton through a shop window, and, at this signal, the doors of the fire-station opened, and hoses were brought out. Again, there is no further evidence to support this.
 2. Manchester Evening News, 7 October 1931.
 3. This is a famous story often spoken of in Manchester, and referred to by both Bill Abbott and Bill Duston. The details were confirmed by Edmund Frow and Audrey Ainley (see below, Appendix VI for biographical details).

A few short speeches were then made to those who had gathered outside the church, and when these were finished, the demonstrators quietly dispersed. The incident became known as the 'Second Battle of Peterloo'.

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The organisational structure of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire in the years between 1929 and 1936 varied considerably, and is at times difficult to follow, since the leadership of the branches changed hands frequently. There were active branches of the movement throughout the period at Bolton, Rochdale, Heywood, Oldham, Swinton and Pendlebury, Bury, Eccles and Salford. Two others, at Ashton-under-Lyne and Radcliffe, were formed in the early thirties, but were both only very small. Within Manchester itself there were two branches in existence throughout these years, namely Manchester Central and Openshaw, but there is evidence of other small branches being formed at different times in other parts of the city, including Newton Heath, Failsworth, Collyhurst, Miles Platting and also at Prestwich. In Cheshire, but still within the Manchester conurbation, there were branches at Hyde, Stockport, Stalybridge and a small branch at Altrincham.

Prior to the expansion of the movement in 1930 and 1931, control of the affairs of the N.U.W.M. in Lancashire was formally exercised by a committee meeting quarterly in Manchester. There were branches of the N.U.W.M. in the Liverpool area, at Wigan, St. Helens and Leigh, and, further north, at Blackpool, Preston, Lancaster and Barrow. It is doubtful for financial reasons if many of these branches sent representatives with any regularity to meetings of the county committee, and, as a result, few activities were held on a county basis before 1930. Probably only the South-East Lanca-

shire branches regularly sent members to attend the meetings of this committee. More or less the same committee, therefore, met monthly in Manchester to co-ordinate the activities of the N.U.W.M. for the South-East area of the county, although in the main before 1931 the organisation of joint activities was confined to the branches in Manchester and its immediate suburbs. In the autumn of 1931, however, a major re-organisation of the structure of the movement in Lancashire was undertaken. A number of district councils were formed to replace the old county committee. The branches were grouped into one of five district councils, the South-West, Merseyside, Fylde, the South-East, and the North-East. A new body, the All-Lancashire Bureau, which again met quarterly, was responsible for the affairs of the N.U.W.M. as a whole in Lancashire, and a Lancashire organiser, Philip Harker of Bolton, appointed in 1933.¹ The Bureau was renamed the Lancashire Council in 1934.

Manchester Central was the largest branch in terms of membership in the South-East of the county. Its meetings were held weekly in the Church Hall or school-rooms of the church school at All Saints, lent free of charge by the Vicar, the Reverend Etienne Watts, who gave much help over the years to the movement in the City and to the unemployed of Manchester as a whole.² The branch did not have a separate section for women, but good numbers of women attended the meetings and took part in branch activities.³ The most active

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1. Philip Neville Harker; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 2. The Reverend Watts organised many garden parties, jumble sales, etc., to raise money for the unemployed.
 3. Interview with Audrey Ainley.

branch in the area, however, was at Openshaw, whose secretary for a long period was Bill Abbott an unemployed engineer. Here, as in many other branches, the most important work was the taking up of cases of hardship among members with the local courts of referees, and later public assistance committees. The Openshaw branch, which did have a separate section for women, was one of the few branches in the region fortunate enough to have premises in which to meet for almost all of its existence. Since the early 1920's, the Manchester City Council had allowed the branch to use Whitworth Public Hall as its headquarters. In 1929, however, the unemployed moved from here to the rooms of the local branch of the Communist Party in Openshaw, and thereafter had various premises in Gorton Brook and Bradford, Manchester.¹

The Salford branch was also extremely active, continuing the left-wing political traditions of a city in which both the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.) and the British Socialist Party (B.S.P.) had thrived in earlier decades. Formed at a meeting on Leaf Square in 1921, unemployed engineers were closely associated with the local branch of the N.U.W.M. from the outset, and the first Chairman of the Salford Branch, Harry Williams, later a Labour Councillor in the city, was a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers until he lost his job at the end of the first world war.² By 1924 the branch had its own history of militant demonstrations, although its activities were

1. Interview with Bill Abbott.

2. Interview with Harry Williams; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

largely social - they had a band and also ran physical training classes. The branch applied to the City Council for premises soon after its formation, and was granted the use of Hope Chapel, Liverpool Street, next door to Hyndman Hall, the political centre of Salford, which had been the headquarters of the S.D.F., and B.S.P. in the City, and at that time, until the split over the resolutions of the Second International in 1922, was the meeting-place also of the Communist Party. The branch had a huge banner, made out of black cloth, with a white skull-and-cross-bones painted on it, carrying the slogan of the unemployed movement, 'Work or Maintenance'. The banner was lost to the police after a demonstration in 1922, however, at which time the branch was asked to leave the Chapel and moved into Hyndman Hall, where it remained until 1933. The leadership also remained in the hands of unemployed engineers until this date, and open-air meetings were held on Sunday mornings on Broadway, Trafford Road. After the demonstration of 1 October 1931 the movement almost collapsed in the City, many of the leaders being arrested. By 1933 it had revived somewhat, and moved its premises to a room above a shop in Broadway, near the entrance to the Manchester Docks. At this time its members were almost entirely unemployed seamen.¹

As elsewhere, at Eccles membership was always difficult to assess in exact numbers, for although several hundreds could always be relied upon to attend demonstrations, the active paying membership was much smaller, rarely exceeding fifty or sixty. The branch had a number of active leaders who

1. Interview with Wilfred Gray; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details; see below, p. 468 et seq., for details of 1 October demonstration.

worked very hard on behalf of the local unemployed. These included Billy Flanagan, a communist and a founder member of the branch in the early 1920's, who retained his connections with the movement until the middle of the thirties. His son, also named Billy, played a prominent part in the affairs of the branch from 1930 onwards, and took part on many deputations. The branch secretary for a number of years was Fred Dodd, who in 1934 became a Labour councillor, although he was still very much involved with the unemployed after this date. Several members were engineers, including Billy Benson, the chairman for a time, Wally Wood, secretary until 1930, and Tommy O'Donnell.¹ In 1933 Austin Coghlan became secretary. The branch held open-air meetings at the Cross in the centre of the town each week, and also had a very active womens' section and legal department.² In 1933 the engineering factories in the town and in nearby Trafford Park began to win orders once more; some of the more active branch members were among the first to find new employment, and in the general rush for work interest in unemployed agitations began to decline, and the branch began to decline quite rapidly.

The people of Swinton and Pendlebury, as has already been stated, have a predilection for ascribing nicknames to people and places in their district, and, during the years of its existence, the local branch of the N.U.W.M. did not escape this peculiar tradition.

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1. Interview with Tommy O'Donnell; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 2. Interview with Austin Coghlan; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

The most active member of the branch during the years 1929 to 1936 was Jimmy Crawshaw, a local barber, and a member of the Communist Party, and the branch had as its premises a room above a corner shop next to his own on Bolton Road, Pendlebury. A large red flag flew from a pole by the upstairs window, across the junction of Bolton Road and Union Street. The branch became known as the 'Daggers Club', so-called by the locals because of the popular image of 'communists' as men who wore cloaks and carried a dagger beneath.¹

The branch at Oldham was fairly small and had a much shorter life than the other branches in South-East Lancashire. James Brierley, an engineer, became local organiser in 1930 at a time when the movement in the town was beginning to attract attention.² Open-air meetings were held twice weekly on 'signing-on' days, when marches of unemployed took place from the Labour Exchange to The Green in the centre of the town, or to other parts of the town. Branch meetings were held on Monday nights in whatever premises the branch were using at the time. For a time the branch had rooms above those of the Christadelphian Society, but had to move because the political discussions were frequently too noisy. From here they moved to the back room of a public house. Even at its peak in 1931, however the branch had only about seventy paying members. Oldham was particularly badly hit by the depression

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1. Interview with Mary Davies; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 2. Interview with James Brierley; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

of the 1930's, and it is difficult to understand why the N.U.W.M. did not meet with more success in the town. One reason was probably because the local Trades and Labour Council was particularly strong, and followed a policy of admitting communists and left-wingers to its meetings and activities. It is likely that this undermined any local influence these groups might otherwise have had, since they were less able to denounce the official Labour leadership in the town. More important perhaps, it was the cotton industry, as opposed to the engineering trades, which suffered most in Oldham. This was an industry whose unions were far less militant by tradition than the A.E.U., and since the percentage of unemployed women was higher in the town than elsewhere, it was perhaps to be expected that the N.U.W.M. would make little progress. Most women, in times of unemployment, devoted their attentions to their families. The Oldham branch began to decline as early as 1932.

At Farnworth a branch of the N.U.W.M. was founded in 1930, one of the latest in the South-East Lancashire region, with about one hundred members. By October 1931 this had more than doubled, but many hundreds more always turned out at demonstrations. At first the branch met in premises provided by the local council, two cottages in Albert Street, knocked into one, but scheduled for demolition. When these were pulled down in 1932 the branch had to meet for a time in the local park, or at the home of one of the members. Later a room above a shop in Market Street was acquired. The women's side of the movement was somewhat neglected in the town, but the branch had notably high literature sales: again, legal work in taking up cases of hardship was

always the most important aspect of the branch activities. Open-air meetings were held frequently on the Market Ground, and attracted large attendances on occasions, especially when visits from guest speakers were arranged. By 1935, however, the activities and membership of the branch at Farnworth were in decline.¹

One of the most active branches in the region was that at Bolton. For many years the leaders were Harold Shaw, an optician and a prominent member of the local Communist Party, and Philip Harker. The branch held regular open-air meetings on Victoria Square in the centre of the town, and membership was high. The Rochdale branch, led by Albert Matthews, an unemployed engineer and a member of the C.P.G.B., was also strong. Heywood, although only a small town, had an active branch, with a separate section for women, but at Bury, where the population was more than double that of Heywood, the branch was one of the smallest in the region. In November 1931 a branch was formed at Ashton-under-Lyne, but failed to flourish. Probably the last branch to be formed in the area was at Radcliffe, which was begun as late as February 1932, but this was also very small.

The presence of unemployed skilled engineers among the leadership, of the movement in South-East Lancashire was of the greatest importance. The most active branches in the area were in almost every case led by engineers: the only exceptions were Bolton and Farnworth. Both branches in Manchester,

1. Interview with Tommy Abbott; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

together with the branches at Salford, Eccles, Rochdale, and also Oldham were led by groups of engineers. Reference has already been made to the fact that the national leaders were mostly unemployed engineers, and that, with the exception of South Wales, the unemployed movement began and was strongest in centres of engineering, and, in particular, in districts where the wartime Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement had been most powerful. It is likely, since the Openshaw and Salford Branches were formed by unemployed engineers, that this was the case also with other branches in South-East Lancashire. It would, therefore, seem reasonable to suggest that the movement was begun in the region as a whole by the same men involved in the wartime engineering struggles, and who, as a result of the political activities, had immediately lost their jobs in the post-War slump.

The Openshaw Branch was begun largely as a result of the efforts of Bill Abbott, its first secretary, and Bill Dutson,¹ both of whom were unemployed engineers, as were Les and Wally Wood, Austin Coghlan and Tommy O'Donnell of the Eccles Branch. Albert Matthews, the leader at Rochdale, and James Brierley, the organiser of the Oldham branch were also unemployed engineers. In 1931 no less than five of the most prominent men in the Salford Branch were engineers, four having worked for a time at the factory of Metropolitan-Vickers in Trafford Park.² These were Edmund Frow, now District Secretary of

1. Interview with Bill Dutson.

2. Not at the same date, it should be noted.

the A.E.F. for Manchester, George Watson, Arthur Walmsley, and the first secretary of the branch, Harry Williams. In addition, the branch organiser in the early thirties, Dick France, was also an engineer.¹

The N.U.W.M. in Lancashire reached its peak in the years between 1931 and 1933 when unemployment in the engineering trades was at its height. Engineering in South-East Lancashire was particularly badly hit by the depression. One survey put the figure of unemployed engineers in these districts at 43% in 1931, when unemployment as a whole was still rising.² After 1933 the engineering industry began to recover, and the skilled engineers, often the most active workers in the unemployed branches, were among the first to be taken back into employment. Thus the branches lost their most able leaders at once, and since these were replaced by less experienced men, like the Chartist movement and other political movements which have depended to a large degree for their vitality and continued existence on a small number of leaders, the N.U.W.M. began to decline. In the 1931 agitation against the Means Test and the reductions in unemployment benefit, South-East Lancashire played an important role: in the even more widespread protests against the U.A.B. regulations in early 1935, there was considerably less activity in the region.

As well as being engineers, the leaders of the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire were almost always Communists. Bill Dutson, of Openshaw,

1. Interview with Dick France; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2. An Industrial Survey of Lancashire, p. 147.

had joined the Minority Movement in 1925, and following this became a Party member in 1929. Except for short spells of employment he was out of work continuously from 1929 to 1938, being almost certainly politically victimised.¹ Bill Abbott, also of Openshaw, had been a member of the C.P.G.B. and Minority Movement since 1925 when he helped in the founding of the Openshaw branch in 1928. In Salford, both George Watson and Dick France were founder members of the South Salford Branch of the Communist Party. Elsewhere, Albert Matthews of Rochdale, Tommy O'Donnell of Eccles, James Brierley of Oldham and Edmund Frow of Salford were also communists, as well as being unemployed engineers.² The Party played an important role in the affairs of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire from the earliest days, and retained its influence, through the leaders, during the 1930's. In 1929 a resolution presented to the Manchester and District Communist Party Conference demanded that the party members in the area give special attention to the development of the N.U.W.M. as an important way in which the party might extend its influence in British politics.³ The Communists were also influential in Liverpool during the early life of the N.U.W.M. in that city.⁴ The Communists were in almost all cases the most active branch members, although there were never more than a very

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1. Interview with Bill Dutson; during the course of the interview, Mr. Dutson alleged that police interference had prevented him from holding down any job for very long. There is no further evidence to support this statement, however.
 2. See below, Appendix VI.
 3. Communist Review, I (December 1929).
 4. J. & E. M. Braddock, The Braddocks, (1963), p. 32 et seq.

small number of them in each branch. As at the national level, however, it is doubtful that more than the smallest few of the thousands of unemployed workers in South-East Lancashire who became involved in the struggles of the N.U.W.M. went on to join the Communist Party; very few ever joined the unemployed movement.

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As elsewhere, the years after 1924 saw little activity on the part of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire. The revival of interest in the last months of 1927, the Welsh march to London, and the demonstration to the Swansea T.U.C. in 1928, had no repercussions in South-East Lancashire. It was not until the hunger march of 1929 that the branches of the unemployed movement in this region renewed their activities on any notable scale, and even the response to the call for the march from the district was somewhat limited. As has already been indicated, the march was held in protest against the workings of the 1927 Unemployment Insurance Act, under which many thousands of unemployed had been disqualified from benefit. The march began from Glasgow on 23 January 1929. Marching by way of Annan, Penrith, Kendal and Preston, the Scottish contingent reached Rochdale in South-East Lancashire, where they spent the night of 7 February. Next day they continued to Bury and then to Bolton, arriving on the outskirts of the latter town in the early evening

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1. This was the long way round; the normal route from Preston to Bolton is along the A6 via Chorley. However, since one of the objects of the march was to publicise the N.U.W.M. and its efforts on behalf of the unemployed, the men did not always take the most direct route, but one which involved passing through as many major towns as possible.

of 8 February, and were met by a reception committee, which included a town councillor, P. Greaves, as well as Harold Shaw, secretary of the local branch of the unemployed movement. This committee had obtained permission from the Mayor for street collections to be taken as the marchers arrived, and had also arranged accomodation for the men, some of whom were billeted at the West Ward Labour Club, and others in an old mission hall owned by the corporation in Howell Croft South. In the evening the marchers were fed at the Borough Hall and given the use of the public baths.¹ Two local unemployed men joined the march here, equipped with boots and clothing for their journey by the local branch of the N.U.W.M. They were Daniel Smith, unemployed for eighteen months, and Percy Crook, who had been out of work for two years. Eleven men from Wigan also joined at Bolton, both groups leaving the Scots to join the Lancashire contingent at Manchester.²

Next day, the men left Bolton on their way to Manchester via Farnworth, Swinton, and Pendleton. 'A depressing company they made', wrote one local reporter:

'Clad in every conceivable variety of raggedness, they scarcely needed the banners they carried to call attention to their plight'.

Led by a group of Fifeshire miners, with their pit-lamps pinned in their caps,

1. Bolton Journal, 8 February 1929.

2. Ibid., 8, 15 February 1929; Bolton Evening News, 8, 9 February 1929.

and accompanied by their own field kitchen and five first-aid men, they were met by the Farnworth reception committee soon after leaving Bolton, and escorted to the Co-operative Hall, where they were given coffee and an apple and orange each by the Co-operative Society. At Pendleton Town Hall they were met by other groups of marchers, including six men from St. Helens and twenty-three from Liverpool, who had spent the previous night at Leigh. They were also joined here by the Salford contingent, a small group of men organised by Dick France. At Manchester they were housed for the night at the New Islington Hall. In the morning the two contingents left the City by separate routes for London.¹

For this march, and also on the occasion of every other national hunger march organised by the N.U.W.M., the Minister of Health had issued instructions to all poor law authorities to the effect that where the men sought shelter in a workhouse they were to be treated as casuals. This meant that they were to be searched on entering, and that they were only to receive the regulation diet of two slices of bread and margarine and a cup of tea for supper and breakfast. In most cases, the reception committees organised by the N.U.W.M. were able to arrange for accommodation for the men, sometimes with the help of the local council, the local Labour party, Co-operative party, or trades council, and, more often, with the help of the local Communist party branch. On the few occasions where this was not possible, the workhouse regulations were usually relaxed. One occasion when this did not happen, however,

1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 8 February 1929; interview with Dick France.

was when the Lancashire men reached Birmingham on Saturday, 16 February, one week after leaving Manchester. Having been served with bread and margarine for supper, the men objected to the same the following morning. The police were called, a fight broke out, and several men, including the leader of the contingent, George Staunton of Manchester, were arrested.¹ The marchers were then escorted by the police out of the City. The Sunday Worker alleged that as a result of the incident, two men had to be left behind to receive hospital treatment for injuries sustained.² Elsewhere, the men were accorded better treatment, however, and the Lancashire contingent succeeded in reaching London as planned on 23 February. The men were involved in all the activities organised by the Central Marchers' Council, including the march into Trafalgar Square on 24 February, and the attempt to present a petition to the Prime Minister at Downing Street on the following day. On Sunday, 3 March, along with the other contingents, the Lancashire men returned home by special train.³

The hunger march of 1929 was successful in a limited way. Considerable attention was paid to the march by the press, and soon after it had ended the Conservative Government announced that it would continue the provisions of the Unemployment Act of 1927 for a further twelve months. In May 1929 as has been stated, a Labour Government was returned to power, and one of its first acts was to appoint a Committee to examine the workings of the Unemployment Insurance Scheme, and in particular the effects of the 'genuinely seeking work' clause.

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1. George Staunton was one of the most prominent figures in the unemployed movement in these years, being the South-East Lancashire representative on the National Administrative Council; see below, pp. 459-461, Appendix XI.
 2. Sunday Worker, 24 February 1929; there is no further evidence to support this statement, however.
 3. See above, Chapter 9, p. 388-90.

In July the National Administrative Council drew up a charter of demands, calling for higher scales of benefit, the restoration to benefit of all those disqualified under the previous Government, and the abolition of the 'genuinely seeking work' clause. The response to the charter by the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire was very limited, however; the unemployed preferred to wait for the Labour Government to put into effect its election promises, or so it appeared.

In September 1929, delegates from the Oldham and Swinton branches, and two representatives from each of the branches at Heywood and Bolton, together with George Staunton, attended the Sixth National Conference of the movement held at Sheffield. In all, 73 delegates were present, representing forty-six branches and other organisations, so that the attendance as far as South-East Lancashire was concerned was promising. Resolutions were passed condemning the new Labour Government and also the T.U.C. General Council in their attitude towards the unemployed. This was in line with the new policy of the C.P.G.B., 'Class against Class'. However, the leaders of the movement found it necessary to exaggerate the problems facing the unemployed, and the N.U.W.M. in particular, in order to arouse enthusiasm on the part of the delegates.¹ The MacDonald Government, as far as most were concerned, had been in office too short a time either to produce evidence of achievement or to warrant severe criticism.

1. Report of the Sixth National Conference of the N.U.W.C.M., 1929.

Within the space of the next few months, however, the position had begun to change. Unemployment was rising steadily: from 1,190,000 in August 1929, the national figures had risen to 1,534,000 by January 1930.¹ The Labour Government's new Unemployment Bill, announced in November 1929, and based on the Majority Report of the Morris Committee, had provoked widespread criticism, and, although the Government later gave way in accepting the Hayday formula,² nonetheless, by its attitude to the problem the Government had merely succeeded in arousing the anger of the unemployed, among whom it was widely held that the administration of the insurance scheme had become stricter rather than more humane since Labour had taken office.³ In protest against the failure of the Labour Government to 'deal effectively' with unemployment, as it had promised, at the call of the Communist International the N.U.W.M. began to make preparations for a day of national demonstrations on 6 March, International Fighting Day against Unemployment, and also for a further national hunger march to London. In Manchester a number of arrests were made in two small incidents on 6 March. In one, several of the leaders of the movement and of the Communist Party in Manchester attempted to make speeches to the unemployed queueing outside the Labour Exchange in Aytoun Street, just off Piccadilly. The police requested them to 'move on', and when they refused a struggle ensued and six

1. See above, Appendix I.

2. See above, Chapter 10, p. 392.

3. F. Brockway, Socialism Over Sixty Years (1946), p. 261.

arrests were made. Later in the day at Manchester Police Court, William Allen and George Noon were each fined four pounds for assault; George Staunton, Frank Bright, District Organiser of the Communist Party in Manchester, and John Flanagan, another well-known Communist, were each fined two pounds, and the sixth person one pound, for causing an obstruction.¹

A second incident occurred outside the works of Metropolitan-Vickers in Trafford Park, Manchester. Some fifty or so unemployed, including a contingent from Bolton led by Harold Shaw, met at Trafford Bar near the entrance to the Park, and marched to the gates of the works. Here Edmund Frow, who was to become one of the leaders of the Salford Branch of the N.U.W.M., began to speak to the demonstrators, but before he had been speaking for very long, the police moved in and he was arrested. Next day he was fined forty shillings for conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. On the same day, 7 March, a woman, Jean Gallacher, was arrested outside the Aytoun Street Labour Exchange after trying to take a collection to pay the fines of the men arrested on the previous day. She, too, was fined, ten shillings, for disorderly behaviour.²

The third national hunger march organised by the N.U.W.M. began, as the other two had done, from Scotland, when Wal Hannington and R. Page Arnot led eighty men out of Glasgow on 31 March 1930. For the first time, as well as

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1. Manchester Evening News, 6 March 1930; interview with Edmund Frow, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details. The sixth man was not named in the newspaper report.
 2. Ibid., 7 March 1930; Manchester Evening Chronicle, 8 March 1930. Frow was still in employment at this date, but lost his job soon afterwards.

ten contingents of men, there was also a women's contingent led by Rose Smith, who was in charge of the Lancashire group, and Mrs. Youle, a mother of four, in charge of the women from Yorkshire, with Maud Brown, the national women's organiser of the N.U.W.M. as the national leader. The Lancashire women assembled in Burnley on 20 April 1930, and, after a demonstration through the centre of the town, journeyed by rail to Bradford, from where they marched to Leeds to join the Yorkshire section. The whole contingent then marched by way of Batley, Wakefield and Barnsley to Sheffield, where they arrived on 25 April. From here they travelled by coach to Luton, marching the remaining distance to join the other contingents in London.¹

The Scottish contingent, having taken a similar route to that of the 1929 march, but having met generally with much cooler receptions in the towns through which they passed, arrived in South-East Lancashire on Monday, 14 April, when they spent the night at Rochdale, housed in the Birch Hill Institute at Dearnley.² From Preston they had marched by way of Blackburn, Burnley and Todmorden, and on their arrival in Rochdale, in the evening, they were given a warm welcome by a large crowd of local unemployed and sympathisers gathered in the Town Hall Square. Speeches were made by Albert Matthews, leaders of the Rochdale Branch of the N.U.W.M., Margaret McCarthy, secretary of the Burnley Branch, and George Teesdale, leader of a group of young unem-

1. M. McCarthy, Generation in Revolt, pp. 152-5.

2. Rochdale Observer, 16 April 1930.

ployed who had formed part of the Scottish contingent. On the following morning the men left for Bolton. Here they spent the night of 15 April, at Queen Street Mission, a supper having been provided by the reception committee organised by the local branch of the unemployed movement.

Accompanied by a number of men from the town who would join the Lancashire contingent at Manchester, and marching to the skirl of bagpipes, the marchers left for Farnworth next morning, headed by a banner which proclaimed

'Underclad, Underfed, Under a Labour Government.'¹

When they reached Farnworth they were met at Moses Gate by a group of local unemployed, who escorted them to the Co-operative Hall where a meal was provided. Afterwards, a demonstration was held on the Market Ground, presided over by Joseph Goodram, Chairman of the Farnworth and District Trades Council, and one of the founder members of the N.U.W.M. branch in the town.² Three men from Farnworth accompanied the marchers when they left for Manchester. Here the night was spent in a disused police station in Cannel Street, Amcoats, after the men had been welcomed to the city at an open-air meeting in Stevenson Square. One local reporter, who visited the men at their temporary headquarters, found Wal Hannington sitting on the floor, having his feet painted with iodine by one of his fellow-marchers. On the morning of 17 April both the Scottish and Lancashire contingents left Manchester on the next stage of their

1. Bolton Evening News, 15, 16 April 1930; Bolton Journal, 17 April 1930; about one quarter of the men were married, and most of them were receiving no unemployment benefit at all.

2. Farnworth Journal, 18 April 1930; interview with Tommy Abbott.

journey. The latter contingent numbered about seventy, and, like the Scots, included a group of about twenty young unemployed organised by the Young Communist League.¹

The marchers arrived on the outskirts of London on 30 April, and remained in the capital until 8 May. The Government remained unmoved, however, despite the fact that unemployment continued to rise. In August 1930 unemployment in Great Britain passed the two million mark: by December of that year it had reached 2.5m.² Yet the King's Speech in October 1930 made little reference to unemployment. By this time, it seemed, the Prime Minister had reached the conclusion that the Government could do nothing to stem the rise in the number out of work: the unemployed must simply wait for the trade cycle to run its course. The Government found a temporary solution to the pressures being brought to bear upon it with the appointment in December 1930 of a Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance, a delaying measure which enabled a postponement of legislation to some future date, while satisfying Conservative demands for economy and further deflation. The personnel of the Commission, however, whose Chairman was a criminal court judge, gave rise to considerable ill-feeling in Labour circles. Its appointment and terms of reference, which were to make recommendations by which the Unemployment Insurance Scheme might be made self-supporting, were widely regarded as a plot on the part of the Government to strengthen support for reductions in unemployment pay.³ In the

1. Manchester Evening News, 17 April 1930; Manchester Evening Chronicle, 17 April 1930.

2. See above, Appendix I.

3. R. Skidelsky, op. cit., pp. 262-3.

first weeks of the New Year the N.U.W.M. held demonstrations in protest against the appointment of the Commission, although there was little activity in South-East Lancashire.

In February, only three delegates from branches in South-East Lancashire, one each from Bolton, Farnworth and Openshaw, attended the Seventh National Conference of the N.U.W.M. at Bradford. The Conference was much more of a success than its predecessor, over one hundred and twenty delegates being present, with sixty-two branches being represented.¹ On 23 February, International Fighting Day, demonstrations were held in many towns and cities. In London, an estimated five thousand unemployed listened to speeches from Hannington, Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher and others on Tower Hill. In Glasgow, the Scottish leader, Harry McShane, was arrested at a demonstration involving 1,500 unemployed, and demonstrations were also reported from Birmingham, Bristol, Plymouth and elsewhere.² The only town in the South-East Lancashire region in which a demonstration was held on this day, however, was Bolton, and even here only a handful of demonstrators took part in a march round the town, led by Harold Shaw.³

The lack of activity among the unemployed in South-East Lancashire at this date was giving rise to some concern on the part of the N.A.C. At its

1. Report of the Seventh National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1931.
2. Daily Worker, 26, 27 February 1931; there is no further evidence to support this, however, and it is possible that some of the demonstrations were very small.
3. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 25 February 1931.

quarterly meeting in April 1931, it was decided to undertake an organising campaign in the county as a whole, with a view to increasing the movement's membership and improving its organisation there. In fact, Emrhys Llewellyn, the National Secretary, and Sid Elias, Chairman, toured Lancashire in the fortnight between 10 and 24 May, and at the next N.A.C. meeting it was reported that 'very good work was done' assisting the branches in the planning of activities and the development of the branch committees. In June, Maud Brown, the National Women's Organiser, visited the county on a campaign for the recruitment of women, but met with only limited success.¹ There followed a large-scale re-organisation of the movement in the county, with the establishment of five district councils to replace the old county committee.

On 1 June 1931, with unemployment standing at 2,506,000,² the Royal Commission published its Interim Report, which recommended, among other changes, a reduction in the scales of unemployment benefit amounting on average to 11.5 per cent. Despite strong objections from the I.L.P. members, and, outside Parliament from the Labour movement generally, and the unemployed in particular, the Government yielded to Tory demands for further retrenchment by the introduction of an 'Anomalies Bill' in July 1931, which was hurried through Parliament, and received the Royal Assent before the month was out. In attempting to correct real abuses in the system, this Act simply

'opened the door to wholesale deprivation of benefit of consider-

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1. Reports of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 11 April, and 11-12 July 1931.
 2. Ministry of Labour Gazette, XXXIX (June 1931); see above Appendix I.

able classes of unemployed workers, especially married women.¹

The Commission's Report was followed by the Report of the May Committee on Economy, published on 31 July, which recommended a twenty per cent reduction in benefit, and the introduction of a Means Test for applicants for transitional benefit. The May Report brought the centre of the world financial crisis to Britain, resulting in the fall of the Labour Government, and the formation, in August, of a National Government, headed by Ramsay MacDonald. In September, the Chancellor, Philip Snowden, introduced a Budget in which announced that the allowances of the unemployed were to be reduced by ten per cent.

The reorganisation and campaigns of the summer months, combined with the increasing gravity of the unemployment situation, had their effects. The N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire began to grow rapidly, and agitation increased. At its weekly meeting on 12 August the Heywood branch reported a large increase in numbers within recent weeks.² In the last few weeks of September there were a number of demonstrations in the area, as the likelihood of reductions in the dole and of the introduction of a means test increased. At Farnworth, on 22 September, following a meeting of unemployed a charter of demands was placed before the Town Council. These included the abolition of task work as a condition of the receipt of transitional benefit, no reduction in the dole,

1. G. D. H. Cole, A History of the Labour Party from 1914, p. 245.

2. Heywood Advertiser, 14 August 1931.

a twenty per cent. reduction in council rents, and more work schemes on a rota system for those out of work.¹

In the afternoon of 28 September, some three hundred unemployed marched from Green Lane, Particroft, where they had gathered, near the offices of the Barton Guardians Committee, to the Town Hall at Eccles, where a deputation of six, including Billy Flanagan and Fred Dodd, attempted to interview the Mayor, but were unsuccessful.² In Manchester, on the following day, several hundred unemployed took part in the largest demonstration organised by the N.U.W.M. in the city until that date. The demonstrators assembled at Ardwick Green at 2.30 p.m., and marched by way of Brunswick Street and Oxford Road to All Saints, and from here to Quay Street where the leaders, one of whom was Arthur Jackson, formed a deputation to the Divisional Controller of the Ministry of Labour at the New Sunlight^E Building. Their demands included the raising of unemployment allowances, and that the Controller protest to the Minister of Labour against the introduction of a means test.³

On 24 September, the Finance Committee of Salford City Council announced that, among other economies, the reductions in benefit and the means test would be applied in the city. The local branch of the N.U.W.M. began to prepare a protest demonstration, to be held on Thursday, 1 October, the date

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1. Farnworth Journal, 25 September 1931; many towns operated a rota system on public works schemes, the unemployed being given work for six weeks at a time, in order that they might qualify for benefit or transitional allowances.
 2. Eccles Journal, 2 October 1931.
 3. Manchester Evening News, 29 September 1931.

on which the full City Council was to meet to discuss the Finance Committee's report. The object of the demonstration was to send a deputation to the Council to protest against the application of the test and reductions. As the councillors arrived at the Town Hall, two members of the local branch of the N.U.W.M. issued them with circulars containing the demands of the unemployed. These included:

- '1. That the proposal of the Finance Committee for "economy" be rejected by the City Council.
2. That the City Council protest to the National Government against its economy proposals and demand no wage cuts, no dole cuts, not one worker off benefit, not a penny more tax on food.
3. That the scale of relief be 20s. for all unemployed over 18 years of age, 5s. for each dependent child, 15s. per week for young persons 16-18 years of age, 10s. for wife or other adult dependent, 10s. for those between 14 and 16.
4. That disablement pension, Health Insurance benefit and earnings of wife and children be not taken into account when assessing the amount of relief.
5. Every householder applicant for relief to receive one hundredweight of coal per week during the winter.
6. One pint of free milk per day for all children under five years of age.
7. Abolition of all test schemes, educational classes, and

training centres.'

The circular was signed by George Watson, secretary of the Salford Branch of the unemployed movement.¹

About 10.30 a.m. on 1 October, therefore, a crowd of some four hundred unemployed assembled on Liverpool Street Croft, and marched in procession to Cross Lane and along Regent Road. The numbers taking part grew rapidly, according to reports, as onlookers accepted invitations to join the array of persons already involved. Many of the demonstrators carried banners, bearing such inscriptions as 'Down with the National Government', and 'We don't want to starve'. At the head of the procession one man carried a standard bearing a representation of a hammer and sickle. Behind him, two other men carried the official banner of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., while another beat out a steady rhythm on a bass drum. They continued along Oldfield Road, and then turned to the right along Chapel Street to Bexley Square, where the Town Hall is situated. Here, a crowd of several hundred had gathered to wait their arrival, and a large crowd of police, including many mounted, had been assembled.²

When the demonstrators reached the Town Hall square they were refused permission to gather in support of the deputation in front of the Town Hall: the deputation itself were unable to persuade the police to let them through.

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1. Salford City Reporter, 2 October 1931; interview with George Watson, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 2. Salford City Reporter, 2 October 1931.

At this point various struggles broke out between unemployed and the police. One newspaper reported that

'banners were used as weapons and wielded vigorously by their bearers in an effort to get through.'

Traffic on Chapel Street, the A6, was blocked completely in either direction. People were swept off their feet and trampled underfoot by the crowd, which, according to one report, 'periodically advanced and receded' like a wave, and also by the police horses.¹ By this time the crowd had reached many thousands. The whole area resounded with booing, hissing and shouting, it was reported, and on the fringes of the crowd many women were weeping. Bexley Square was a 'seething mass of people'.² When the police drew their batons and charged, the Square became a mass of running fights: dozens of women had fainted, and the screams of others added to the confusion.³ Reinforcements of mounted police were rushed to the area, and charged the crowd with their batons drawn.⁴

It was some considerable time before the police were able to bring the situation under control, and even longer before the Square was finally cleared of people. Twelve arrests were completed, but many others taken in charge by the police were rescued en route to the police station, situated at the back of the Town Hall. One report stated that it took eight policemen to arrest

1. Ibid.
2. Manchester Evening News, 1 October 1931.
3. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 1 October 1931.
4. Bolton Evening News, 1 October 1931.

one of the demonstrators: another flung himself across the tramlines, and it required the efforts of four police to get him to the station.¹ Another newspaper reported that one man was carried spreadeagled by five police, one holding each arm and leg and another holding his body, through the main entrance to the Town Hall.²

On the following day the twelve men arrested during the demonstration appeared in Court on charges of assault and of conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. Ten were remanded on bail for a week, and two others remanded in custody. The arrested included George Watson, the secretary of the N.U.W.M. branch in Salford, and Edmund Frow, also one of the leaders of the unemployed movement in the city. The latter, it was reported, appeared in Court with his heavily bandaged.³ About two thousand people gathered in the vicinity of the Square, which was barricaded and heavily guarded by police, but there was no disorder.⁴ After the proceedings hundreds of unemployed marched along Chapel Street and circled the Town Hall, but they were kept moving by the police, and slowly dispersed.⁵

In addition to the Salford demonstration, there were sizeable demonstrations at Bury and Rochdale on 1 October. At Bury, more than two thousand

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1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 1 October 1931.
 2. Manchester Evening News, 1 October 1931.
 3. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 2 October 1931; interview with Edmund Frow.
 4. Manchester Evening News, 2 October 1931.
 5. Bolton Evening News, 2 October 1931.

unemployed marched to the Municipal Offices and demanded that a deputation be received by the Town Council, which was then in session. Eight unemployed, including two women, were admitted to the Council Chamber, where local leader, Albert Hardman,¹ presented a series of demands, among which was a request for the calling of a Town's Meeting to demand the resignation of the National Government. They also asked that the local Public Assistance Committee make no reduction in the allowances of the local unemployed, and that the Town Council provide a room where the N.U.W.M. might meet.²

At Rochdale, on the morning of 1 October 1931, more than one thousand unemployed assembled in the Town Hall Square, where they were addressed by John Hilton, Chairman of the local branch of the N.U.W.M. When he had finished speaking, they marched to the offices of the local P.A.C. at Townsend, and a deputation of four were received by Alderman J.T. Dawson, Chairman of the Committee, and one of his officials. In the afternoon there was a further demonstration, this time to the Employment Exchange, where a deputation interviewed the Chairman of the employment committee, and the Manager of the Exchange. Later that day, however, both Hilton and Albert Matthews, Secretary of the N.U.W.M., were arrested, the allegation being that, as the organisers of the march, they had failed to

1. See above, Chapter 10, p. 395.

2. Bury Times, 3 October 1931.

conform to the route agreed upon at a meeting with the Chief Constable of Rochdale. They were each fined one pound at the Police Court a few days later, after refusing to give an undertaking to the Bench that in future processions an arranged plan of route would be strictly adhered to.¹

Following the announcement of the new scales of benefit on 1 October, and a few days later the introduction of a Means Test for applicants for transitional benefit, the demonstrations in South-East Lancashire, as elsewhere, quickly became more widespread and more intense. On 5 October, after a march to the Town Hall, a deputation of unemployed at Oldham, led by local N.U.W.M. organiser, James Brierley, had a lengthy interview with the Town Clerk, in which the unemployed presented a list of suggestions for the improvement of the position of the out-of-work in Oldham.² On the night of 6 October more than seven thousand unemployed took part in a meeting on the Market Ground at Farnworth, where Tommy Abbott was the main speaker.³ Abbott was also the spokesman on a deputation which afterwards was refused admission to the Town Hall where the local Council was meeting. The unemployed returned to the Market Ground where they were addressed by several speakers, and resolutions were carried protesting against the large numbers of police brought into the town for the occasion.⁴

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1. Rochdale Observer, 3, 7 October 1931; Manchester Evening Chronicle, 7 October 1931.
 2. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 5 October 1931.
 3. See below, Appendix VI for biographical details; Bolton Evening News, 6, 7 October 1931.
 4. Police reinforcements, including many mounted, had been brought in from the county divisions to control the crowd; Bolton Evening News, 6 October 1931.

The new scales of benefit were to be effective from 8 October. On the day prior to this, in a final effort to prevent the local authorities from adopting them, there were major demonstrations in several towns in South-East Lancashire. The biggest was at Manchester, the largest and most violent demonstration to occur in the area in the whole of the depression years.¹ Twenty-six arrests were made in this one demonstration alone, in which more than twenty thousand were involved. In the evening of 7 October there were a series of demonstrations at Oldham. On three occasions unemployed gathered on The Green in the town centre, with the object of marching to the Town Hall and sending a deputation to the Town Council. On each occasion, however, the police broke up the march before the unemployed had reached the Town Hall.² There were demonstrations, too, at Bury, Bolton, Heywood and Eccles, on 7 October. At Bolton, a crowd gathered in torrential rain on Victoria Square, where they were addressed by Harold Shaw, before a march round the town was held. A deputation of nine interviewed members of the local Council in the Town Hall where demands were made for the abolition of task work, more work schemes on a rota system, and a reduction in council rents.³ At Eccles, Billy Flanagan and Fred Dodd were among other local unemployed who formed a deputation

1. See above, pp. 440-4.

2. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 8 October 1931.

3. Bolton Evening News, 7 October 1931; Harold Shaw made a point of emphasising in his speech that this was not an anti-police demonstration, and that they desired everything to be peaceful and orderly. Bolton had a happy tradition in this respect, compared with other towns in the area, since scarcely any arrests were made by police during the demonstrations organised in these years by the N.U.W.M. The branch was very active and many demonstrations and marches through the town were held. The unemployed were allowed to hold meetings on the Town Hall steps in Victoria Square, and neither the Town Council nor the police made any attempt to prevent them from so doing. In addition, it should also be mentioned that the

to the Barton Guardians Committee.¹ In the Heywood demonstration, local officials of the N.U.W.M., including A. Greenway, secretary of the Heywood branch, E. Brierley, S. Wood and G. Bly, all of Heywood, and S. Mills of Rochdale, took part on deputations to the Employment Exchange and the local Council.²

On 8 October a total of thirty-eight people appeared in Court in Salford and Manchester on various charges arising out of the two major incidents in the cities. At Manchester the accused included Bill Dutson and Bill Abbott. The former was charged with breaking the arm of a policeman with an iron bar, and was sent to gaol for six months.³ Abbott was fined forty shillings. Twelve men each received prison sentences ranging from six weeks to five months: ten others were fined up to seven pounds each. At Salford, where a crowd of five thousand gathered in the neighbourhood of the Town Hall, twelve men appeared in Court. The Square was barricaded, and nearby shops had boarded windows in case of further disturbances. Edmund Frow, who was told by the Stipendiary to refrain from posing as a 'great leader', was convicted on a charge of assault and sent to prison for five months, with hard labour. George Watson was gaoled for three months with hard labour on a similar charge. Two other men were also imprisoned, five were bound over for twelve months and

Bolton newspapers gave a much fairer hearing and much better coverage to the N.U.W.M., both locally and nationally, than many other papers which have been consulted for this thesis.

1. Eccles Journal, 9 October 1931.
2. Heywood Advertiser, 9 October 1931.
3. Interview with Bill Dutson; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details. Bill Dutson was wounded during the first world war, and since then has had to walk with the aid of a stick. This, he alleged during the course of the interview, was the 'iron bar' to which the police were referring.

three discharged.¹ Later in the day, a deputation from the N.U.W.M. in Manchester met the City Watch Committee to protest against the conduct of the police during the demonstration. They demanded a public inquiry into the refusal to allow demonstrators into Albert Square, the responsibility for the barricade of tramcars and private vehicles in London Road, and for the batoning and arrests in Oxford Road, which was part of the agreed route. The deputation was asked to present its requests in writing and given assurances that they would be investigated.²

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As soon as the National Government had been formed, in August 1931, talk began in Conservative circles of a General Election. The Tories were not to be deterred by protests from MacDonald, or the Liberal leader, Samuel, since both had virtually become prisoners of the Conservative majority in the National Government. Parliament was dissolved in early October. In a confused election campaign, the only unity among Government candidates was in their abuse of their Labour opponents, and of the previous administration. Although the most powerful weapon against Labour was fear, patriotism was added to the National Government's already formidable assets: the Labour Ministers of the previous Government were denounced as the men who had run away. The mood of the campaign was sullen and depressed; the mood of the election itself was one of fear and panic.³ The result was an overwhelming victory for the National Government,

1. Manchester Evening Chronicle, 8, 12 October 1931.

2. Ibid., 9 October 1931.

3. C.L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 406-412.

in which all but George Lansbury of the former Labour ministers were defeated. The national pattern was repeated in South-East Lancashire. At Salford, for example, the Labour Party lost all three seats to National Conservative candidates. Ben Tillet and Joe Toole, both well-known trade unionists, lost their seats here by substantial majorities. Tillet, beaten by twelve thousand votes, declared:

'I lost because we are living in panic times. The whole social order from one end to another is in a panic. The electors have been stampeded into voting like this. Their minds at this period have neither the balance or common sense to realise what they have done.'¹

The unemployed demonstrations continued to occur in spite of the election campaign. At Heywood, on 28 October, the day after the election, a crowd of more than one hundred and fifty unemployed gathered outside the local Employment Exchange to listen to a speech from Wal Hannington. In the afternoon, Hannington led a deputation of local unemployed to the Heywood P.A.C. Offices.² It was not until 12 November that the Means Test came into effect, and even later than this that its full implications became known for each unemployed family or individual. Around this date there were several demonstrations and other protests in towns in South-East Lancashire, in an

1. Salford City Reporter, 9 October 1931.

2. Heywood Advertiser, 30 October 1931; Manchester Guardian, 29 October, 1931.

effort to persuade the authorities not to impose the Test. On 10 November several hundreds of unemployed took part in a demonstration in Manchester. As before they were refused permission to march through the centre of the city, but this time took care to follow the route suggested by the Chief Constable, although eleven arrests were made nonetheless, in Quay Street near the Ministry of Labour's Northern Offices.¹ On 11 November the leader of the unemployed at Oldham, James Brierley, was arrested following a demonstration in the town. A large number of unemployed women, most of whom had been deprived of benefit by the Anomalies Act, were involved. It was reported by the Oldham Evening Chronicle at the time that the women were deliberately placed at the head of the procession, from The Green to the Public Assistance offices, and were also told to bring along their children, in order that the likelihood of police interference with the demonstrators, and in particular of a baton charge, would be diminished, thus increasing the chances of the N.U.W.M. achieving its object of badgering the P.A.C. into receiving a deputation.²

On the following day, a deputation from the newly-formed branch of the unemployed movement at Ashton-under-Lyne marched at the head of a procession

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1. Manchester Evening News, 10 November 1931; Manchester Evening Chronicle, 11 November 1931.
 2. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 13 November 1931; Manchester Guardian, 13 November 1931; interview with James Brierley, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details. Mr. Brierley denied that these allegations were correct. The men and women mixed freely together; if some of the women had taken their children with them, this was simply because they had not wanted to leave them at home by themselves.

of several hundred local unemployed to the Parish Offices to interview the town's Public Assistance Committee. This was the morning on which the Means Test was brought into operation, and the deputation of unemployed unsuccessfully requested the Committee to make a protest to the Minister concerning the introduction of the test, the paucity of the scales of relief, and the condition that task work be performed where required before benefit was paid. The deputation also asked the Committee to provide each householder applicant for relief with two hundredweight of coal per week, and to provide expectant mothers with extra grants: in addition they demanded that a representative from the N.U.W.M. be allowed to sit on the Committee. To these requests the P.A.C. replied that they would look into them and see what they could do.¹ Soon after this, the Committee decided in favour of abandoning the local scale of transitional benefit, among the lowest in Lancashire, and instead to apply the county scale.²

Also on 12 November a deputation of eight members of the Salford branch of the N.U.W.M., led by the newly-elected secretary Larry Finlay who acted as spokesman, waited on the City's P.A.C. They were accompanied to the offices by a large crowd of unemployed, although there was no procession or demonstration. The deputation was inside the Town Hall for more than an hour, and asked for several points to be considered by the Committee, including the

1. Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter, 14 November 1931.

2. Ibid., 28 November 1931.

question of the operation of the Means Test in the City, the possibility of co-opting members of the unemployed movement onto the Committee, and the abolition of task work as a condition of the receipt of benefit. The Committee were of the opinion that if they refused to operate the test this would only result in the Minister of Labour appointing other persons to carry out the regulations in their place. They were also bound by regulation to impose some form of task work on recipients, and were unable to appoint any members of the N.U.W.M. to the Committee since this would require the permission of the Minister of Health.¹

There were further unemployed demonstrations in South-East Lancashire in December. At Heywood more than seven hundred unemployed attended a meeting outside the Labour Exchange on 2 December, where they were addressed by Bill Abbott of Manchester.² A procession was held to the P.A.C. offices in Queen Street where a deputation of six were able to interview the Committee for more than an hour. The Committee promised to pass on the suggestions of the men for higher scales of relief and the abolition of the means test to the county P.A.C. at Preston.³ On the same day a joint demonstration of

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1. Salford City Reporter, 27 November 1931; it has been suggested that Larry Finlay, who was secretary of the Salford branch of the N.U.W.M. from October 1931 to 1933, was the character 'Larry Mead' in Walter Greenwood's novel, Love on the Dole. (Information from Edmund Frow and George Watson, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details). 'Larry Mead' is portrayed as a man with left-wing political views, who speaks at many street-corner meetings, and who takes part in a demonstration of unemployed (referred to by name in the text of the novel) to Salford Town Hall, the description of which fits very closely with the demonstration of 1 October 1931.
 2. See below, Appendix VI for biographical details.
 3. Heywood Advertiser, 4 December 1931.

unemployed from the Eccles and Swinton branches of the N.U.W.M. was held to the offices of the Barton Guardians Committee in Patricroft, as a protest against the means test. A deputation was admitted to the buildings, consisting of two representatives from each branch, including Jimmy Crawshaw of Swinton, and Leslie Wood and Billy Flanagan of Eccles.¹

In pursuance of their earlier demands, there were subsequent meetings of the unemployed at Heywood in the following week. On 7 December several hundred men and women gathered on the vacant ground opposite the Employment Exchange where they were informed by Bill Abbott that their demands of the previous week had been refused by the Lancashire P.A.C. A second demonstration was held two days later when a deputation of six committee members of the local branch of the N.U.W.M. interviewed the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Town Clerk at a meeting in the Mayor's Parlour which lasted over an hour. The deputation included E. Brierley, chairman of the local branch, S. Wood, deputy chairman, A. Greenway, secretary, W. Slinger, organiser, J. Hughes, treasurer, and P. McDonnell, correspondent. They demanded that the Town Council withdraw all summonses and distress warrants relating to rates owed by unemployed persons, make a reduction in the rents of houses owned by the Council and occupied by unemployed families, send a protest to the Government concerning the means test, and provide a room in which the unemployed could meet. Another deputation interviewed the P.A.C. at the same time.² There were demonstrations

1. Eccles Journal, 4 December 1931.

2. Heywood Advertiser, 11 December 1931.

by the N.U.W.M. at Rochdale on 17 December and at Bolton on 22 December 1931.¹

Very little was achieved by all this, however, although at Oldham, after one deputation from the N.U.W.M., the local Public Assistance Committee announced that it would not take pensions into account when assessing the amount of relief for applicants for transitional benefit.² In addition, at Salford, where the P.A.C. had been instructed to make savings amounting to £8,000 in the present financial year, the Committee announced that this would not mean a lowering in the scales of relief for transitional applicants, but simply a reduction in rent allowances. Where the rent allowance was between seven and twelve shillings, this would be reduced by two shillings; in the cases of rent allowances of four to six shillings, a reduction of one shilling would be imposed.³ Nonetheless, in spite of the lack of success which resulted, October 1931 was a high-point of activity for the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire. In the nation-wide struggle against the Means Test, and the ten per cent. reduction in unemployment benefit, the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire played a leading part. What followed was, for several reasons, something of an anti-climax. After October 1931 there was a significant change in the character of the unemployed demonstrations: with a few notable exceptions they became much less violent in nature. There is no doubt that the

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1. Rochdale Observer, 19 October 1931; Bolton Journal, 24 December 1931.
 2. Oldham Evening Chronicle, 20 October 1931.
 3. Salford City Reporter, 23 October 1931.

force and intensity of the demonstrations in this month shocked many. Indeed, the violence displayed may in some ways account for the failure of the unemployed movement in the area after this date. Many unemployed workers were afraid to join: others were horrified. Although the demonstrations thereafter were always noisy, they were rarely violent to anything like the same degree. For the most part this was the result of a change in the tactics of the N.U.W.M., whose leaders, in an attempt to win over the greater masses of unemployed, made a substantial effort to see that the demonstrations remained peaceful. There was also a change in attitude on the part of the police and authorities, however, who began to treat the unemployed with a little more generosity and respect.

Chapter Twelve

THE UNEMPLOYED MOVEMENT IN SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE,
1932-1933

By January 1932, more than 2,700,000 men and women were unemployed throughout Great Britain. Early in this year, as has already been stated, the T.U.C. began its scheme to establish Unemployed Associations, while, at the same time, the National Council of Social Service began to undertake the organisation of social centres for the unemployed. The N.U.W.M., however, was largely unaffected by either: its membership, both on a national scale and also as far as South-East Lancashire was concerned, remained loyal. The movement was far too firmly entrenched to be displaced unless the trade unions had been prepared to throw all their weight into the struggle on behalf of the unemployed. As it was, the Unemployed Associations scheme was not only belated, but also somewhat half-hearted, and the arrangements for the Associations was left almost entirely to local trades councils, who were allowed to do as much, or as little, for the organisation of the unemployed as they wished. The T.U.C., wary of declining membership and funds, could not compete with the militancy of the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party in providing leaders for the protests of the unemployed. The Voluntary Occupational Centre Movement took much longer to develop and did not reach its peak until 1936, by which time the N.U.W.M. was in decline everywhere. In any case the centres attracted only a certain type of unemployed man, one who would not have been likely to join the militant N.U.W.M. whether or not the centres scheme had been begun.

In the early weeks of 1932 the N.U.W.M. continued to press for the withdrawal of the 'economies' and of the means test in its previous style, though with increasingly less likelihood of success as time went on. South-East Lancashire continued to play an important role. On 6 January a further joint demonstration of the Eccles and Swinton branches of the unemployed movement to the offices of the Barton Guardians Committee was held, and a deputation of six, including Billy Flanagan of Eccles, and Arthur Clinton of Swinton, was allowed to speak to the Committee.¹ Subsequently, a letter from Billy Flanagan was read at the next monthly meeting of the Guardians, on 3 February, asking them to support the proposals of a special sub-committee of the county P.A.C., which had recently recommended an increase in children's allowances from two shillings to three shillings, and a more generous consideration of pensions when assessment was made under the means test. The letter met with success: the Guardians Committee passed a resolution in favour of the proposals, which was forwarded to the Lancashire County Council.²

A series of unemployed activities were held in Rochdale at this time. First, on 14 January, a march was held to the P.A.C. offices, where a deputation was admitted. While the deputation was inside the building, however, various scuffles broke out between the police and the unemployed who waited outside. It was reported at the time that several windows in

1 Eccles Journal, 8 January 1932.

2 Ibid., 5 February, 1932.

the office building were broken by stones thrown by the demonstrators. The police made a baton charge to clear the area, and thirteen men, including Albert Matthews and John Hilton, both committee members of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., were taken into custody. As a result of the disturbances Matthews was sentenced to three months imprisonment.¹ A fortnight later another deputation from the N.U.W.M. in Rochdale again interviewed members of the Public Assistance Committee, demanding that they refuse to operate the means test in the town, and on 4 February a deputation was able to interview the Rochdale Town Council.² On 9 February the newly-formed branch of the N.U.W.M. at Radcliffe held its first meeting in a disused laundry adjoining the market place, when a resolution was passed and forwarded to the local council requesting the council to protest to the Government, demanding the withdrawal of the means test and the Anomalies Act.³

On 23 February 1932, International Fighting Day against Unemployment, demonstrations were organised all over Great Britain by the N.U.W.M. In London, where the biggest demonstration was held, unemployed marched through the centre of the City in the middle of the evening rush-hour, and assembled in Hyde Park where a deputation was elected to seek an interview with the Minister of Labour at the House of Commons. Some six

1 Manchester Evening News, 14 January 1932; Rochdale Observer, 23 January 1932.

2 Rochdale Observer, 30 January, 6 February 1932.

3 Radcliffe Times, 13 February 1932.

thousand or more demonstrators were involved in clashes with the police in Bristol, after a large meeting had been held at Horsefair.¹ Similar protests were held in five towns in the South-East Lancashire region. At Bolton a petition against the means test signed by over five thousand people was presented to the Town Clerk, following the biggest demonstration of unemployed the town had seen to that date. The unemployed gathered on Victoria Square in the afternoon, and a procession was held which slowly wound its way through the centre of the town and then to the P.A.C. offices in Mawdsley Street where a deputation of six, including two women, interviewed S. Kinley, the Public Assistance Officer. The procession was led by a brass band, and while the deputation was inside the P.A.C. offices, the band accompanied the crowd who sang 'The International': the band were asked to desist, however, following a complaint that the people inside the offices could not hear themselves speak.²

At Swinton a crowd of unemployed took part in a procession beginning on spare ground opposite the Windmill Hotel, Pendlebury. From here they marched down Bolton Road to Pendlebury Station, and then by way of Swinton Hall Road and Station Road to the Town Hall, Swinton.³ In a demonstration at Farnworth some three hundred or so unemployed gathered on the Market Ground, where several speeches were given before a resolution was carried

1 Times, 24, 25 February 1932.

2 Bolton Evening News, 24 February 1932; Bolton Journal, 26 February 1932.

3 Eccles Journal, 26 February 1932.

demanding the abolition of the means test and the immediate restoration to benefit of all persons disqualified since its introduction. This was later placed before the Town Clerk.¹ At Bury, after a meeting of unemployed, a deputation of two men and two women interviewed the Town Clerk, who was also the Public Assistance Officer, and placed before him demands for the abolition of the means test and of anomalies regulations.²

The largest demonstration was at Manchester, however, where a crowd of between four and five thousand unemployed met at Ardwick Green and formed a procession to All Saints. The Manchester Evening News noted that on this occasion the men taking part were in 'good humour', in contrast to a few weeks before. Contingents from all over the city took part in the demonstration. They were headed by the Openshaw Branch, whose members carried the Branch banner, on which was written in large red letters 'We want the right to live'. A substantial number of women were involved in the demonstration, many carrying babies in their arms or pushing children in prams. The demonstrators (it was reported), marched six abreast along a route suggested by the Chief Constable, singing songs to the accompaniment of an improvised band of combs and paper.³

1 Farnworth Journal, 26 February 1932.

2 Bury Times, 24 February 1932.

3 Manchester Evening News, 23 February 1932.

Tuesday, 8 March, was International Women's Day,¹ and a further demonstration was held in Bolton, in which about forty women were involved. For perhaps the first time in a demonstration organised by the N.U.W.M. in the town, the police interfered with the marchers when they attempted to enter Mawdsley Street and reach the offices of the P.A.C. Only people with legitimate business, it was reported, were allowed into Mawdsley Street, and an arrest was made. The demonstration began with a meeting on the Town Hall steps, where the crowd were addressed by Mrs. Rose, leader of the women's section of the local branch. About four hundred unemployed took part in the demonstration, the object of which was to send a deputation to the P.A.C. Only the appointed members of the deputation, however, were allowed through the lines of the police who blocked the entrance to Mawdsley Street.²

Towards the end of April the N.U.W.M. in Lancashire held a county march to Preston, the object of which was to place before the Lancashire County Council a demand for the abolition of the means test and to protest at the conditions in which the unemployed in the county were being forced to live. Altogether some 378 men were involved, 230 coming from the southern part of the county, and 148 from Blackpool and the North-West. From South-East Lancashire contingents from the Manchester, Bolton, Bury, Radcliffe, Farnworth, Rochdale and

¹ Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 7-8 May 1932.

² Bolton Journal, 11 March 1932.

Swinton branches took part, and there were also groups from the branches at Stockport and Stalybridge, in Cheshire, the total number from these branches being about 160. The march began on 16 April, a Saturday, and the men from the South-Eastern part of the county spent the night at Bolton, moving on to Preston next day. They arrived in Bolton in the early evening, when a welcoming demonstration was held on Victoria Square, and were billeted for the night at the Queen Street Mission, having been provided with an ample supper and, on Sunday morning, breakfast of bacon and eggs. Fourteen men joined them from the town when they left - an hour late since they had forgotten that summer-time arrived overnight.

On Monday, 18 April, their numbers increased considerably by hundreds of local unemployed, the marchers paraded through the streets of Preston, the administrative capital of Lancashire, to the offices of the County Council where a request was made that a deputation of twenty be allowed to interview the Central Sub-Committee of the P.A.C. On being informed by the police, however, that only four members of the deputation would be received various scuffles broke out, and a baton charge was made by mounted police to clear the area. Several arrests were made, two women being taken into custody although they were later released. After further meetings in the town, in the evening the marchers left Preston for home. The South-East groups travelled by specially provided double-decker buses to Bolton, but had to walk from there.¹

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¹ Bolton Journal, 15, 22 April 1932; Bolton Evening News, 18, 20 April 1932.

The summer months of 1932 were quiet ones for the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire, although the agitation began to increase once more as winter approached; unemployment, which had stood at almost 2,750,000 in June, rose to over 2.8 million in July, and in August reached over 2,850,000.¹ In September, while preparations were being made for a further national hunger march to London, a lengthy series of demonstrations took place on Merseyside. The protests began in Birkenhead on Monday, 12 September, and reached their climax the following weekend, when rioting began on the Saturday evening, and continued, almost without ceasing, until the Monday morning. The Times reported that on Saturday night a large crowd of men and women marched up and down Price Street, Birkenhead, smashing shop windows and throwing stones at the police and private cars. More than four hundred unemployed were involved, and when police attempted to break up the demonstration they were met, it was alleged, with a rain of bottles, bricks, stones, hammer-heads, lumps of lead and other missiles.

'One man was seen with a hammer and cold-chisel smashing up a railing round a school playground and the iron spikes were used by the rioters in their attacks,'

said the report.

1 See above, Appendix I.

At one point a wall was partly torn down by the demonstrators to provide ammunition, and the police were also attacked from the upstairs windows of houses, from which women threw other missiles. The ground floor windows of a public house were broken, and the rioters helped themselves to liquor. In one instance, a wire rope was stretched across the street, and a number of police were tripped as they pursued the mob. Even ambulances were attacked, it was reported, and a bus bringing police reinforcements to the area had all its windows broken. Special attention was paid to the police vans, which had to run a 'gauntlet of showers of stones and pieces of metal.'¹

This was only one side of the story, however. In his autobiography, Wal Hannington gave details of what has become a much quoted story:

'The worst night of terror followed on Sunday, September 18th, when lorry loads of police descended upon blocks of thickly populated tenement buildings in the dead of night. Their pretext was that they were "searching for loot", claiming that the workers had looted shops during their demonstrations. They smashed doors forcing their way into the workers' homes, and the severity of the police terror can be gauged from the fact that over one hundred workers were taken to hospital with various injuries, including cases of broken

1 Times, 19 September 1932.

pelvis, fractured ribs, broken arms and legs
and severe head wounds.'

This, too, is a version from one side. Hannington wrote that the secretary of the International Class War Prisoners' Aid, Bob Lovell, went to Birkenhead to investigate the disturbances and to arrange for the defence of those arrested. In his report, one woman was quoted as saying:

'The worst night of all was Sunday. We were all in bed at Morpeth Buildings and we were suddenly awakened by the sound of heavy motor vehicles. Hordes of police came rushing up the stairs of the Buildings and commenced smashing up the doors. The screams of women and children were terrible. We could hear the thuds of the blows from the batons and the terrific struggles in the rooms below, on the landing and on the stairs. Presently our door was forced open by the police. Twelve police rushed into the room and immediately knocked down by ⁱⁿ husband, splitting open his head and kicking him as he lay on the floor. The language of the police was terrible . . . My eldest daughter, aged 19, tried to protect me and her father. She, too, was batoned.'¹

¹ W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, pp. 253-4; International Class War Prisoners' Aid was the British section of a body known as International Red Aid, formed in 1922 by the Comintern for propaganda and agitation purposes. Similar to many other 'satellite organisations,' International Red Aid was used to raise funds for strikers or other victims of 'class warfare' in many countries.

There is no further evidence to support these statements, but it is important to realise that the unemployed regarded them as true.

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Towards the end of 1932, the N.U.W.M. held a further national hunger march to London. Plans were laid throughout August and September, and the first of the eighteen contingents which took part set out from Glasgow on 26 September. On this occasion, the women's contingent included groups from Scotland, led by Margaret Airey, five women from the Manchester Central Branch, led by Audrey Ainley, and a group from the North-East.¹ The contingent leader was Maud Brown, and the women, whose ages ranged from eighteen to over sixty, left Burnley in Lancashire at the start of their journey on 9 October. In contrast to 1930, on this march the women walked all the way. For the most part they spent the nights at the homes of local members of the unemployed movement, or at the premises of the local branch, although when no alternative accommodation had been arranged they had to sleep in a workhouse. At Burton-on-Trent an attempt was made to impose 'casual' restrictions on them, but the women refused to accept this, marching the streets in protest until, after midnight, the authorities gave way.² Elsewhere they were

1 Interview with Audrey Ainley; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 W. Hannington, op. cit., p. 259; there is no further evidence to support this.

well received, however: at Dunstable the I.L.P. branch sent a motor-coach to meet them three miles out of the town: at Luton the Co-operative Society provided them with a meal: and at Chelmsford, Essex, where accommodation was provided at the Labour Hall, before they left next day they were given sandwiches for their lunch and chocolates by local sympathisers. According to Mrs. Ainley, the women were often pleased to stay at a workhouse, since they could obtain a bath, and were in many cases given better treatment than casuals if the woman in charge of the institution had sympathies with their cause.¹

On Monday, 10 October 1932 the Scottish contingent arrived at Farnworth where they rested for the night. On previous occasions they had always stayed at Bolton. In addition, on this march they had also taken a different route from Preston: whereas formerly they had marched from Preston through Blackburn, Todmorden, Rochdale and Bury to reach Bolton, this time they came directly from Blackburn. They arrived in the town in pouring rain, it was reported at the time, carrying as always numerous banners to advertise the march, and headed by a fife band composed of men from Edinburgh. Most wore khaki shirts, and carried haversacks, with dixies and other utensils fastened on the back. Some wore berets. Numbering about three hundred, they showed, one report stated, 'no signs of despondency' after their long march. A hundred were billeted at the Working Men's

¹ Manchester Guardian, 25 October 1932; Oldham Evening Chronicle, 24, 25 October 1932; see below, Appendix VIII for routes of the march.

Mission Hall in King Street for the night, the others staying in the Old Fever Hospital buildings, permission having been granted by the local Council. Some weeks before, the Farnworth reception committee, organised by the N.U.W.M., had made an appeal for food. Such was the response from local sympathisers that the men were given one of the best meals they had had on their journey to date, and so much food was given that the N.U.W.M. in the town had to hire a horse and cart to collect it all. A local bakery provided two hundred and fifty loaves of bread.¹

Next morning the marchers left for Manchester, joined by five men from Farnworth, and others from Bolton and Blackpool. Large crowds watched them as they marched through Salford, along Broad Street and Chapel Street, by which time groups from Swinton and Eccles had joined with them, bringing their total to nearly three hundred and fifty. At Manchester the night was spent at Heyrod Street Mission Hall, Ancoats. On the following day, 12 October, the two contingents left the city, the Scottish contingent bound for Macclesfield, and the Lancashire men for Altrincham. The Scots were accompanied by two motor lorries, carrying cooking utensils, and the men also had their own cobbler.² It was reported at the time that about forty men from Liverpool, St. Helens, and Warrington were to join the Lancashire contingent at Northwich, Cheshire, having gathered on 12 October

1 Interview with Tommy Abbott; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 Manchester Guardian, 12 October 1932; Manchester Evening News, 12 October 1932; Salford City Reporter, 14 October 1932; Farnworth Journal, 14 October 1932.

at Warrington, where an attempt had been made to impose casual restrictions on them, following a request for shelter at the workhouse. The men refused to accept these conditions, however, and instead spent the night at the offices of the local branch of the N.U.W.M.¹

From Northwich, where they spent the night of 13 October, the Lancashire marchers made their way south by way of Crewe, Wellington, Birmingham and Redditch, to Stratford-on-Avon, which they reached a week later. Numbering about two hundred and sixty, and including a group from Birmingham and the Midlands, some of the marchers were housed for the night in the Corn Exchange, and others at the workhouse. Next morning, those who had spent the night at the workhouse protested at being served with only the regulation diet for both evening meal and breakfast. Police were called, and when fighting broke out, fire hoses were turned on the men. A baton charge was made to clear the Institution and the marchers were escorted out of the town. Several men were injured in the fight, and for a number of days newspaper reports spoke of marchers wearing bandages and showing other signs of rough treatment. Elsewhere their reception was more kindly: at Oxford they were waited on by undergraduates, who gave medical attention to the injured and provided them all with good meals during their stay. It was reported that about a dozen of those who had suffered most had to be brought on by lorry.²

1 Manchester Evening News, 13 October 1932.

2 Manchester Guardian, 24, 25 October 1932; Oldham Evening Chronicle, 24, 25 October 1932; W. Hannington, op. cit., p. 240.

On 27 October, having reached London the previous afternoon, the eighteen contingents of marchers assembled in Hyde Park, accompanied by thousands of Londoners. Processions of marchers were held from a number of different points in the capital to the Park. The Manchester Guardian thought it

'difficult to recall any demonstration in Hyde Park during recent years that has touched the imagination of the onlookers'

as much as this one did. Although the crowd were mainly interested in the marchers themselves, they could not help notice as the local men came by,

'men in a great many cases of poor physique, with pale, pinched faces and a look of worry in their eyes - young men with the stamp of despair on them.'

Beside these men the hunger marchers, chosen in most cases for their powers of endurance, looked 'fresh and vigorous.' Another report singled out for special mention the Welsh contingent, 'uniformed like an army' since most of them wore red hats and scarves, and khaki shirts, and carried staves. They were led by a pipe band. One Welsh woman had carried her baby 'not two years old,' all the way, said the report in horror.¹

At three o'clock in the afternoon the main procession arrived down Edgware Road. This included the Scottish contingent, 'with a fine array of banners bearing the names of many industrial towns,' and the Norwich marchers, headed by

¹ Manchester Guardian, 28 October 1932; Oldham Evening Chronicle, 27 October 1932.

a bugle band and carrying a huge wooden Norwich canary on a pole with a red hammer and sickle device at its feet:

'The crowd cheered the bare-headed clergymen who marched with this section. Far behind it stretched the banners and slogans of Lancashire - Manchester, Liverpool and Blackpool - and of Birkenhead, of Oxford and Birmingham, banners of the West Country and of the south coast towns. Loud applause greeted the women's contingent as it trudged past, to be followed by the contingents from the North Country and then by many London sections of the N.U.W.M.

As they marched to the accompaniment of pipes and fifes and bugles they all sang to jolly tunes words that were not so jolly or they shouted slogans or exchanged greetings with the crowd.

Probably even the more detached onlookers listened tolerantly to many expressions of bitterness. "Who pinched the baby's milk?" "Ramsay," shouted the marchers. "Ramsay's got the wind up, but he can't put the wind up us" they sang to the tune of "John Brown's Body," adding other verses of this ditty as they marched out of hearing. "The Means Test means mass murder," chanted the next section.¹

1 Manchester Guardian, 28 October, 1932.

In the Park itself several platforms had been erected, and speakers addressed the crowd until dusk, when those who had remained were escorted by police back along Edgeware Road.

On the night of 1 November, several unemployed marchers were able to enter the public gallery of the House of Commons. During the debate on the Ottawa Agreement, one of them, Philip Harker of Bolton, rose to his feet, and, in a loud voice, began to shout slogans. He was quickly seized by three or four attendants and plain clothes policemen, and was hustled out of the gallery still shouting. The scene lasted only a few seconds.¹ Until this point the activities of the marchers during their stay in London had been going as planned, and the march as a whole, the object of which was to present a petition at the Bar of the House of Commons demanding the abolition of the Means Test, had been fairly successful, attracting a good deal of public attention and sympathy. As has been described in Chapter Ten, however, on the afternoon of 1 November, Wal Hannington was arrested and the petition confiscated.² The march thus ended in failure.

The day on which the marchers were welcomed into London, 27 October, had been declared a National Day of Struggle by the N.U.W.M. leadership, and demonstrations were held up and down the country in support of the marchers' demands. In

1 Bolton Evening News, 2 November 1932.

2 See above, Chapter 10, pp. 417-8.

South-East Lancashire demonstrations of support were held at Bolton and Manchester. At Bolton a meeting of unemployed in the town was held on Victoria Square, where a deputation was appointed to interview the Public Assistance Officer. Police prevented the deputation from entering the P.A.C. offices, however, at which point it was decided that an attempt should be made to speak to the Mayor instead. Again police blocked their way as they tried to enter the Town Hall, and an official told the men that they would be permitted to see the Mayor on the following Monday.¹ In Manchester it was reported that 'van loads of police' were rushed to All Saints when it became known that, after a mass meeting, a crowd of unemployed had begun a march to the Town Hall. The procession was broken up, without trouble, by the police, but several hundred unemployed watched as a deputation of five of their number entered at the Princess Street door with the intention of presenting a resolution to the Lord Mayor, demanding the withdrawal of the Means Test. They were informed that they could not see the Mayor, however, and came away disappointed.²

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1 Bolton Evening News, 27 October 1932.

2 Manchester Evening News, 27 October 1932.

On 8 November 1932, soon after the hunger march had ended, the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance was published. It recommended a complete recasting of the unemployment insurance scheme; all unemployed persons who had exhausted their benefit rights would be transferred to the authority of an Unemployment Assistance Board. In addition the Report proposed the same scale of benefit as had been recommended in the Interim Report, published in June 1931, slightly lower, that is, than the ten per cent. reductions imposed in October of that year. On 22 November, in a widely reported speech, the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that, in his opinion:

'....when trade has become as brisk as anybody can naturally expect trade to become for this country, we shall still have a residuum. We shall still have a population which, were they not human beings one would describe - merely for the sake of making quite clear what their position was - as scrap.'¹

The Commission's Report, together with the arrests of Hannington, Elias, Mann and Emrhys Llewellyn during the last few weeks of 1932 provoked further protests from the unemployed. Early in December an Unemployed Council was formed at Bolton, on the lines laid down by the N.A.C. On its committee, as well as members of the N.U.W.M., were clergymen and members of the Labour party branch in the town. The Vicar of Bolton,

1 Hansard, 5th Ser. CCVXXII.

Canon Spencer Elliott, took an active interest in its affairs. On 23 December, after a demonstration organised by the Council involving about two hundred unemployed workers had been held on the Town Hall steps, eight men were arrested in a march to the offices of the Public Assistance Committee. At the meeting on Victoria Square several speeches were made, including one by Philip Harker, a member of the committee of the Unemployed Council, and also by Canon Elliott, who appealed to the crowd not to take part on the march but to go instead to the Parish Church, where he would give them all food tickets. His pleas were ignored, however, and the march took place. The police prevented those taking part from entering Mawdsley Street, and scuffles broke out during which the arrests were made. Harker was one of the men taken into custody. At one point, it was reported, the scene appeared to be taking an 'ugly turn,' but the large number of police on duty, including many mounted, effectively dispersed the crowds. On 27 December the arrested men appeared in Court, and were remanded for a week pending further enquiries. While the men were waiting for the Magistrate's decision on the question of bail, the Mayor of Bolton had an interview with Harker and two other men, and promised them that a deputation from the Unemployed Council would be seen by the Town's General Purposes Committee later in the week.¹

Fairly soon, however, the demonstrations came to a halt:

¹ Bolton Evening News, 6, 23, 27 December 1932.

with no-one to give a lead, the first months of 1933 were notable for their lack of activity on the part of the N.U.W.M., in spite of the fact that in January unemployment reached its inter-war peak of almost three million. In South-East Lancashire almost the only unemployed demonstration to be held in the first quarter of the year was at Farnworth on 4 January, although the Unemployed Council at Bolton was fairly active during this period. As has been suggested in Chapter Ten, the developments in Germany in the first months of 1933 also had a damper effect on unemployed agitation in Great Britain.¹ During the months of February and March, however, the leadership of the movement in South-East Lancashire were being involved in preparations for the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., to be held at the Caxton Hall, Salford, from 15-17 April. This Hall was owned by the Typographical Association, and was one of the traditional meeting places of working class organisations in the area, being conveniently situated on the border of Salford and Manchester, near Victoria and Exchange Railway Stations. At its quarterly meeting in February, the N.A.C. reported that the Manchester Reception Committee had already obtained accommodation for more than one hundred delegates. The Council issued instructions to the movement as a whole to organise mass meetings to raise money for delegates to attend the Conference.² In Manchester arrangements were made for a march of unemployed to be held

1 See above, Chapter 10, p. 421.

2 Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 25-26 February, 1933.

from Ardwick Green to the Conference Hall in Salford to coincide with its opening. A reception and social evening for the delegates was also planned. On Sunday, 16 April two mass meetings were to be held, one at Whitworth Hall in Manchester, and the other at Caxton Hall.¹

The Conference was attended by 168 delegates representing 126 branches of the movement and other working class organisations.² After the delegates had been welcomed, a speech was given by Wal Hannington, lasting over three hours, in which he gave an account of the activities of the movement since the last conference, and gave a detailed analysis of the problems facing the unemployed and the N.U.W.M. in particular. He condemned the refusal of the General Council of the T.U.C. to accept the proposals of the Communist Party for a 'United Front', and also in its attitude to the N.U.W.M., especially with regard to the opposition encountered on the 1932 Hunger March. He also attacked the Unemployed Associations scheme, which, he declared, was an attempt to split the unemployed. This was followed, however, by an insistence that the N.U.W.M. was always ready to work in close co-operation with these organisations, and, more important, that the unemployed movement was ready to meet representatives of the trade unions to discuss the steps necessary for the building of a united front against unemployment on a joint programme of activity and demands. A resolution was passed instructing the N.A.C. to make proposals to the General Council on these lines.

1 Daily Worker, 28 March 1933.

2 Manchester Guardian, 17 April 1933.

Next, Hannington turned to the question of the development of unemployed councils, and he criticised the movement for failing to recognise the importance of involving greater numbers in the struggle against unemployment. Criticism was also made of the lack of activity and attention given to unemployed women. The majority of the branches had as yet 'failed to make serious efforts to establish women's sections or to conduct any special activity among the women.' This must be remedied at once, he said, especially in the textile areas, where there was extensive unemployment among women. The N.U.W.M. must 'harness this discontent' and direct it into 'mass activity' by calling special meetings of unemployed women and formulating specific demands relating to their conditions.¹ After discussion, the principle of electing the national officers was abandoned. A permanent National Headquarters Committee of four, Hannington, McShane, Bob McLennon and Maud Brown, was appointed: Mann remained as treasurer, and Sid Elias, formerly the Chairman, and Emrhys Llewellyn, the Secretary, were appointed as national organisers.²

The Salford Conference was regarded by the movement as highly successful. The decisions and resolutions passed were published in pamphlet form soon afterwards. In this was printed the reply from the General Council of the T.U.C. to the request by the N.U.W.M. for talks on the question of a united front

1 Report of the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1933; made available by R. & E. Frow.

2 Manchester Guardian, 19 April 1933.

against unemployment. The N.U.W.M. had called for a programme of joint action to demand the abolition of the means test, the restoration to benefit of all unemployed disqualified under the test or anomalies regulations, the opening out of public works schemes by national and local government authorities under trade union rates and conditions, and the establishing of a forty-hour week in all industries without wage reductions. The General Council refused the movement's request to take part in talks, however, and this was followed by the publication of a pamphlet by the N.U.W.M., written by Wal Hannington condemning the refusal and containing the correspondence between the unemployed and Walter Citrine, the T.U.C. General Secretary.¹

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In spite of the success of the Conference at Salford, however, the general state of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire was again giving rise to some concern on the part of the leadership of the movement. Early in 1933, the N.A.C. had considered the possibility of raising money to appoint a County organiser, and a special recruitment drive had been ordered. At its quarterly meeting in May, the N.A.C. suggested the postponement of plans for a county hunger march to Preston, planned for later that month, until better arrangements could

¹ W. Hannington, Who Prevents the United Front (1933); made available by R. & E. Frow.

be made to ensure its success.¹ In addition, in April, a letter from a member of the Oldham branch to the Unemployed Leader noted a distinct lack of effort on the part of the movement in South-East Lancashire with regard to the sale of the newspaper; the branches in the area, the letter alleged, failed to realise the importance of the paper as the official organ of the movement.² There was little response, however: one of the few activities to be held in the area in the spring and early summer months was a joint deputation on behalf of the N.U.W.M., the Trades Council and local Co-operative Guild at Eccles to members of the town's School Medical Service. The small deputation, which included Leslie Wood, the organiser of the N.U.W.M. in the town at that date, demanded the provision of meals for all children of the local unemployed.³

The county hunger march was eventually held in July. There had been a similar march in 1932,⁴ but the 1933 march was much larger and more representative of the movement in Lancashire. Unemployed workers from most of the major towns in the county took part; weavers from Nelson, Colne, and the Rossendale Valley; spinners from the south-eastern towns; dockers from Merseyside; miners from the Wigan and Leigh district; representatives from Barrow in the north, from Blackpool and the Fylde.⁵

1 Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 27-28 May 1933; Daily Worker, 8 March 1933.

2 Unemployed Leader, April 1933.

3 Eccles Journal, 19 May 1933.

4 See above, p. 490.

5 P. Harker, Lancashire's Fight for Bread: The Story of the great Lancashire Hunger March (Bolton 1933); made available by R. & E. Frow. The March Treasurer was George Staunton, see above Chapter 11, p. 458, note 1.

In all some eight hundred men and women took part, including about one hundred and fifty from the Manchester district.¹ There were also contingents from North-East Cheshire.

In the end, thanks to the intervention of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., preparations had been very carefully laid. Local committees were set up in all towns with branches of the unemployed movement to make preparations for the sending of contingents. In addition, two county conferences were held at Bolton. At the first, which took place early in March, a Central Marchers' Council was elected to take overall responsibility, and Philip Harker, recently appointed Lancashire Organiser, was made secretary of this Council. A second conference was held on 15 July, delegates from many branches in the county sending representatives. A deputation of seventeen, including a delegate from each major town or public assistance area in Lancashire, was assigned to interview the county P.A.C. on 24 July. Les Wood was to represent the Barton-On-Irwell area; Heywood, Bolton and Ashton-under-Lyne also had representatives on the deputation.²

Thorough preparations for the march were also made in towns throughout South-East Lancashire. At Eccles, on 5 July, the N.U.W.M. sent a deputation to the monthly meeting of the Barton Guardians Committee to ask for the provision of boots for the marchers. The spokesmen were Jimmy King, the branch secretary,

1 Interview with Bill Dutson; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 Bolton Evening News, 24 July 1933.

and Les Wood, the organiser: Wood told the Committee that the marchers from Eccles were all men who had been totally disqualified from benefit and that other public assistance authorities in Lancashire had granted similar requests. A telephone call to Preston was made, but, after a conversation with a member of the county P.A.C., who informed the Guardians that they had no power to grant the request, the deputation was turned away disappointed. Instead, the local branch held a door-to-door collection in the town, to raise money to provide blankets for the marchers.¹ At Heywood a number of meetings were held in the town to advertise the march. It was reported that the town's organising committee had met with 'a good response financially from local business people,' although the trades council and Labour party branch refused requests for help. The chairman of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., E. Brierley, was the Heywood representative on the deputation to the county P.A.C., and sixteen unemployed men from the town took part on the march.²

The march began on Saturday, 22 July, 1933. Thirty-five men and five women from Eccles took part, leaving Wood Street at lunchtime, and marching through Patricroft to Pendlebury, where they joined the marchers from Manchester, who included among their number about thirty men from Openshaw, and other groups, at a meeting on Pendlebury Market Ground. Austin Coghlan,

1 Eccles Journal, 7 July 1933; interview with John B. Smethurst, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 Heywood Advertiser, 18 August, 22 September 1933.

Billy Flanagan, Les Wood, and Fred Dodd were among the marchers from Eccles.¹ They were billeted for the night, as on the 1932 march, at Bolton, before setting off the following morning on the final stage of their journey. Other contingents spent the night at Wigan and Blackburn. On Sunday evening, on their arrival at Preston, the marchers were given a warm welcome by local unemployed and supporters on the Market Ground. The crowd listened to speeches from Harker, George Staunton, Emrhys Llewellyn and George Jane. The night was spent on the covered corporation car park, after an unsuccessful attempt had been made to press the town's authorities into providing more comfortable accommodation.²

On Monday, 24 July, as planned, the deputation of seventeen met the County Public Assistance Committee. It had also been intended that the remainder of the marchers, together with local unemployed from Preston, would stage a march through the centre of the town, after accompanying the deputation to the P.A.C. offices. The police would not allow this, however, and, in place of the procession, a meeting was held on the Market Place. Three spokesmen presented the demands of the marchers. They asked that the County authority refuse to operate the Means Test, and abolish task work as a condition of the receipt of benefit. In addition they demanded the provision of public work schemes at full trade union rates of pay, and that the N.U.W.M.

1 Eccles Journal, 21 July 1933; interviews with John B. Smethurst and Austin Coghlan, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 Bolton Evening News, 24 July 1933.

be allowed to represent its members before the P.A.C. The Committee promised the deputation, which was led by Philip Harker, that a special sub-committee would be appointed to examine their demands. On the following day, the promise of the appointment of a committee being regarded as satisfactory, the marchers left for home, special buses being provided, free of charge, to take them.¹

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Lancashire, despite misgivings about the state of the movement there, thus figured prominently in what was the most successful year of summer activity the N.U.W.M. was to have. Agitation increased still further after the announcement by the Government in August of its new measures to deal with unemployed insurance, which were to be based on the Final Report of the Royal Commission, and which were, therefore, to include the complete separation of the transitional benefit scheme from the Unemployment Insurance Scheme. At its quarterly meeting, in August, the N.A.C. instructed its branches to begin a new campaign against the Bill, which was to be introduced in November. A call was also issued by the N.A.C. to continue to develop agitation inside trade unions around demands for the abolition of the means test, work schemes at trade

1 Bolton Evening News, 24 July 1933.

union rates, and the forty-hour working week as a method of reducing unemployment. The N.A.C. report declared that, in this agitation, 'our Branches must plan for carrying this issue on to the floor of every Trades Union Branch in the locality, by literature, speakers, and deputations to the Trades Union Branches.' This was a further step in the development of the 'united front' campaign, which was by now becoming a deliberate courtship of the official Labour movement. The branches were also encouraged to begin campaigns for extra winter relief from their local P.A.C., on the basis of three shillings extra per week for all adult unemployed, and one shilling and sixpence for children, plus two hundredweight of coal per week for unemployed householders.¹

As winter came nearer demonstrations of unemployed once more took place in towns in South-East Lancashire, in response to the instructions from the N.A.C. On Wednesday, 6 September 1933 a crowd of about two hundred unemployed marched to the offices of the Guardians Committee at Patricroft, Eccles, where a deputation entered and asked to speak to the Committee. At the end of the ordinary business of the Committee the request was considered, but members complained at the short notice, and it was decided to ask the deputation to submit their proposals in writing in order that they could be first of all investigated before the deputation would be given a hearing. When the clerk conveyed this decision to the men

¹ Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 26-27 August.

outside, the deputation demanded to know why they had been kept waiting for two hours and then had their request turned down. The crowd, too, were annoyed at this, and swarmed through the gates of the building and packed the drive in front of the offices. A Committee member from Eccles tried to leave on foot but was compelled to turn back by the excited crowd, it was reported, and, following this, as two Stretford members tried to drive away in a car the main gates of the drive were closed and the crowd surged round the car. 'Women screamed and men adopted a threatening attitude, a red banner being waved and then swung in front of the car,' the Eccles Journal reported. A police officer who tried to clear a way through the crowd was jostled and pushed almost over the car's radiator. Two demonstrators were thrown off their feet in the melee, and eventually the Stretford members left their car and returned to the offices. Eventually the police managed to clear the demonstrators. The newspaper reporter felt that it was only the 'tactful manner' of the police on duty which prevented further disorder.¹ Before he left, Councillor J. S. Speakman of Eccles, Chairman of the Guardians, spoke to the leaders of the unemployed and promised to call a special meeting of the Committee to receive the deputation.²

On Wednesday, 4 October, therefore, a crowd of about the same number of unemployed as on the previous occasion accompanied

1 Eccles Journal, 8 September 1933.

2 Ibid, 22 September 1933.

a deputation of six to the Guardian offices. The deputation consisted of Leslie Wood, the organiser of the N.U.W.M. in Eccles, Jimmy King, the branch secretary, three other men and one woman. Each member of the deputation was allowed to address the Committee of Guardians, giving names and addresses of local unemployed alleged to be suffering great hardship under the means test. They demanded the increased benefits laid down by the N.A.C. at its meeting in August, that is, three shillings extra for each unemployed adult, one and sixpence for each child, and free coal, and also the abolition of task work and of the means test. After a lengthy discussion, the Guardians agreed to introduce a rent allowance for the unemployed in their districts, up to the value of four shillings per week, to grant an allowance for insurance premiums, and to reduce the cost of meals supplied to the unemployed on task work from one shilling and sixpence per week to eightpence. They also decided to press the County P.A.C. to abolish task work, and to accept the proposals made by the sub-committee established following the march to Preston in July, the report of which had been issued a few days before. This was a substantial victory for the unemployed movement in Eccles.¹

The report of the Special Sub-Committee had made the following recommendations:

- 1) That out-door relief in the case of children under sixteen years of age should be raised from two shillings to three shillings in respect of the first child.

¹ Eccles Journal, 6 October 1933.

- 2) That in calculating the amount of income available for the support of members of a household, twenty-five per cent. of the net earnings of each member may be disregarded, except in the case of the head of the household, other than a widow with dependent children.
- 3) That relief of a person in receipt of disability pension or workmen's compensation may be increased to meet any additional needs consequent upon the disability, except in certain cases which must be reported to the P.A.C.
- 4) That certain modifications be made in the computation of relief in the case of old age, widows, and orphans pensions.
- 5) That where an applicant for transitional payment is not the head of the household, and the latter is in receipt of wages, five shillings of such wages be disregarded in computing the total income available for the maintenance of the household.

It was estimated that the cost of raising the child allowance would be about £9,000 per year. The Committee also recommended that schemes of public works for the unemployed be started at once.¹

1 Bolton Evening News, 23 September 1933.

This, too, was regarded as a considerable victory for the unemployed. The report was published on 23 September, and two days later a deputation of twelve members from the Central Marchers' Council travelled to Preston with a request to be present at the discussion of the County P.A.C. on the report. They were refused this request, however, and their hopes for an improvement in the conditions of unemployment in Lancashire received a severe setback when the Committee decided by sixteen votes to fourteen to postpone consideration of the report, pending the publication by the Government of its new Bill to deal with unemployment insurance and assistance.¹

The N.U.W.M. in Lancashire decided at once to hold a further march to Preston, in an attempt to alter the Committee's decision. The march began on November 25, but even before this the County P.A.C. announced that they would not see any deputation from the marchers. Three hundred and fifteen men and women were involved on the march on this occasion, including about thirty from Manchester and others from Heywood and elsewhere in South-East Lancashire. As before this group spent the night at Bolton, before continuing to Preston the following day. On Monday, 27 November, a deputation from the marchers proceeded to the offices of the P.A.C. but was refused permission to enter. Several Committee members pressed the Chairman to admit the deputation, but their efforts were unsuccessful, and after a vote was taken, the decision not to meet any deputation was

1 Bolton Evening News, 25 September 1933.

upheld by a large majority. Thereupon, six members of the Committee, including Councillor J. McClean of Irlam, the representative from the Barton Guardians, walked out of the meeting. The remainder of the P.A.C. refused to adopt the report of the Special Sub-Committee, in the light of the recent introduction into Parliament of the Government's new Bill to deal with Unemployment Insurance. On 29 November, therefore, the unsuccessful marchers decided to leave for home: out of the money collected on the march and during their stay in Preston, they were able to pay for buses to take them to their home towns.¹

The year of 1933 ended for the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire with an unsuccessful attempt at Heywood to obtain extra Christmas allowances for the unemployed on transitional benefit. A deputation led by the chairman of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., E. Brierley, interviewed the Public Assistance Committee on 20 December, but their requests were refused. Later that week a letter appeared in the local newspaper complaining bitterly about the conditions of unemployment in the town. The letter alleged that Heywood was one of the few towns in the country without any public work schemes, in spite of 'pious expressions of sympathy and promises from our local civic leaders.

¹ Manchester Evening Chronicle, 25 November 1933; Heywood Advertiser, 1 December 1933; see below, Appendix IX for Handbill relating to the march, published by the Salford branch of the N.U.W.M.

In addition, it alleged that in most other towns the unemployed were being granted extra winter relief, whereas this had been refused in Heywood. The letter continued:

'Another matter is the social service mystery in Heywood with regard to the distribution of clothing, shoes and food parcels. Hundreds of unemployed have had nothing of these, while others get plenty. What's the reason for this? Just to divide the unemployed. No definite place to apply for these gifts is stipulated and many persons are left in a maze. The Social Service Centres are debarred to militant unemployed people.'¹

At Salford, however, extra allowances for the week of Christmas were given to the unemployed, to the value of two shillings per adult and one shilling for each dependent child. In addition, the P.A.C. announced its intention to grant coal allowances to old people for the rest of the winter.²

1 Heywood Advertiser, 1 December 1933.

2 Salford City Reporter, 1 December 1933.

Chapter Thirteen

THE UNEMPLOYED MOVEMENT IN SOUTH-EAST LANCASHIRE
1934-1936

Towards the end of 1933, in protest against the National Government's new measure to deal with unemployment insurance, the N.U.W.M. decided to hold a further hunger march to London, its fifth in all.¹ The march began on 22 January 1934. Marching via Kilmarnock, Catrine, Carlisle, Kendal, Lancaster, Preston and Blackburn, the Scottish contingent arrived in Bolton, led by a flute band, in the late afternoon of Monday, 5 February. Some of the men spent the night at the Queen Street Mission, which had been used on the 1930 March, while others slept at Claremont Baptist School, an occupational centre for the unemployed. Free tickets for shows at local cinemas were given to the marchers, and two swimming baths were provided for their use by the Town Council. In addition, in the evening, a meeting was held at the Co-operative Hall, where the audience listened to speeches from, among others, John McGovern, M.P., one of the leaders of the marchers from Scotland. Next morning the men set off for Warrington, following a different route than on previous marches, led by Harry McShane, George Middleton and Peter Kerrigan. Lunch was provided for them at Leigh.²

On 9 February, the Lancashire contingent left for London from All Saint's Church, Manchester, where they had gathered

1 See above, Chapter 10, pp. 422 et seq.

2 Bolton Evening News, 6 February 1934; see below, Appendix X for routes of the march.

from all parts of the county. They were led out of the city by the Vicar, the Reverend Etienne Watts,¹ who carried a large red flag. A contingent from Heywood took part, having left home the previous afternoon. They were equipped with boots and blankets bought from monies donated by local businessmen, although letters to the Heywood Advertiser from E. Brierley, chairman of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., alleged that both the trades council and Labour party in the town had refused requests for aid.² Similarly allegations were made in the Rochdale Observer with regard to the Rochdale Trades Council. It was also stated that on previous marches men from Rochdale taking part had been given boots and blankets by the P.A.C., but this time this aid was refused, too.³ A group of men from the town went on the march nonetheless. On 7 February an eve of departure meeting was held in the Pioneers' Hall, Toad Lane, Rochdale, where several addresses were given, including one from Albert Matthews, secretary of the local branch of the N.U.W.M., and leader of the Rochdale marchers. The following afternoon a crowd of about one hundred gathered on the Town Hall Square to watch the men - seven from Rochdale and five from Littleborough - as they left to join the remainder of the Lancashire contingent at Manchester.⁴ A group of about sixty men from Manchester itself took part, including about twenty from the Openshaw Branch, and there were

1 Rochdale Observer, 21 February 1934; interview with Edmund Frow, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

2 Heywood Advertiser, 2, 9 and 23 February 1934.

3 Rochdale Observer, 3 February 1934.

4 Ibid, 10 February 1934.

also men from Eccles, Wigan and St. Helens. In all, the Lancashire contingent numbered about two hundred and fifty.¹

The seventeen contingents of hunger marchers arrived on the outskirts of London on 23 February, and remained in the City until 7 March. It had been hoped that, soon after their return home, the leader of the Lancashire contingent, George Staunton, would be allowed to give a short account of the march on a B.B.C. North Regional radio programme. On 8 March, however, a correspondent wrote in the Manchester Evening News:

'I tried to find out today how far the proposed talks by unemployed....would be censored by the B.B.C. But on that point the august autocrats of Broadcasting House remained delightfully vague. The talks will, I gathered, have to conform to B.B.C. "rules", which app^oarently means that any purple passages will be deleted by the censor, and any references to Mr. Thomas's claim to have conquered unemployment will be severely frowned upon in official quarters. Shall we hear, I wonder, about the hardships that the means test has inflicted, or will that be blue-pencilled? If they are frank these talks may be of real value in helping the country to appreciate the plight in which the genuine seekers for work are situated.'²

¹ Manchester Guardian, 23 February 1934; Eccles Journal, 9 February 1934; see above Chapter 10, p.426, note 1, for numbers of the contingents. Also interview with Bill Dutson, see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

² Manchester Evening News, 8 March 1934.

This was not to be, however. On 13 March it was reported that Staunton had composed a short talk and submitted it for approval to the B.B.C. He was told that it was 'too political and too controversial,' and the Corporation suggested lines on which it should be given. The N.U.W.M. in Manchester decided after discussion that such a script was not suitable, and the talk was scrapped from the programme.¹

After the march had ended the N.U.W.M. continued to press the Government to withdraw its new Unemployment Bill. On 14 March a Town's Meeting was held at Eccles to discuss the Bill's provisions. More than fifty speeches were made during the course of the evening, including several by N.U.W.M. members in the town, and one by Ellis Smith, secretary of the Eccles Trades and Labour Council.² Resolutions were passed condemning the Bill, and demanding the restoration of the 1931 economy cuts and the adoption by the Government of large-scale schemes of public works at trade union rates, to absorb as many unemployed as possible. Copies of these were sent to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour.³ With the Budget due on 17 April, at its quarterly meeting earlier that month, the N.A.C. instructed the branches to prepare for a nation-wide day of demonstrations on Sunday, 15 April, to be known as 'Budget Sunday.'⁴

1 Manchester Evening News, 13 March 1934; see below, Appendix XI.

2 Ellis Smith; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

3 Eccles Journal, 16 March 1934.

4 Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 7-8 April 1934.

In his Budget Speech, however, the Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, announced that the 1931 reductions in unemployment benefit were to be restored from 1 July 1934. This was the most noteworthy success the N.U.W.M. had so far achieved. Soon after this, the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire met with further success. On 6 June a deputation from the Eccles branch of the N.U.W.M. met the Barton Guardians Committee and placed before them demands for the abolition of task work in the borough, together with a request that the Committee protest to the Government about its plans to establish training camps for the unemployed under Part Two of the new Unemployment Act. The Committee turned down the former request, although there was considerable support for the demands of the unemployed. Mrs. C. Blake, an Irlam Guardian, said that she had seen one task worker who was receiving only one shilling and sixpence per week.

'My blood went cold,'

she was reported as saying,

'to think that there were members of this Committee who would send a man to work for four days and at the end of it give him one shilling and sixpence. I can't understand where the human feeling comes in.'

However, the Committee decided to forward a resolution to the County P.A.C. protesting against the proposal to make a condition of the receipt of benefit that claimants should have

to attend training camps where required. The deputation, which was led by Austin Coghlan, the branch secretary, and its resultant success were reported in the July edition of the Unemployed Leader, a letter from Coghlan being printed.¹

The movement in South-East Lancashire and in Lancashire county as a whole, however, was beginning to decline. At the N.A.C. meeting in July, correspondence was read from the Lancashire Organiser, Philip Harker, concerning the poor state of the N.U.W.M. in the county. A decision was taken to send a letter to all the branches in the County, pointing out the dangers of allowing the movement to fail in that area, due to the growth of Fascism, and calling for special reports from all the Lancashire branches, as to the cause of their weakness. It was also decided to hold two special district council conferences in mid-August, at both of which a representative from headquarters would be present, in order to help solve some of the problems facing the movement in Lancashire, and to discuss ways of improving the organisation of the N.U.W.M. in the county as a whole, and of increasing its membership.²

These conferences, together with the approach of another winter, and the threat of further reductions in the scale of unemployment allowances under Part Two of the new Unemployment Act, had their effect, although the renewed strength and vigour of the movement in South-East Lancashire was only transitory.

1 Eccles Journal, 8 June 1934; Unemployed Leader, July 1934.
 2 Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 14-15 July 1934.

On 3 October a further demonstration was held at Eccles, when a crowd of unemployed once again accompanied a deputation to the offices of the Barton Guardians Committee at Patricroft. The deputation, which was led by Austin Coghlan, demanded that the Committee raise the allowances of unemployed applicants for transitional relief to the level of statutory unemployment benefit. Under the transitional benefit scheme, an unemployed man in Eccles received fifteen shillings per week for himself, eight shillings for his wife, and three shillings for each child under sixteen years of age. Children between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one were entitled to five shillings per week. Under the statutory benefit scheme a man received seventeen shillings, and his wife nine shillings. Several members of the Committee, it was reported, expressed sympathy with the request of the deputation, and a resolution was passed recommending the Lancashire County P.A.C. to increase their scale in accordance with the Government's policy of restoring the 1931 reductions.¹

A few weeks later, on 2 November 1934, following the publication of the Annual Report of the County's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Butterworth, the Eccles Journal published a letter from Austin Coghlan, a copy of which had been sent to

¹ Eccles Journal, 5 October 1934; under the statutory unemployment benefit scheme, children's allowances were only two shillings. Until January 1935 transitional benefit payments differed widely from place to place. Scales of assistance were not made national and uniform until the Unemployment Assistance Board took over the administration of transitional benefit. (C. L. Mowat, op. cit., p. 472).

the Lancashire Public Assistance Committee. It read:

'For months past we have been agitating for higher scales of relief for the unemployed. As a result of our representations to the local P.A.C., they.....unanimously passed a resolution declaring that the present rates of relief were inadequate. Again on October 3rd., they passed a resolution to the same effect, and asked the Lancashire P.A.C. to increase the scales of relief.

Now, to further supplement our claims, comes the report of Dr. Butterworth, which is a complete condemnation of the scales of relief laid down by the county authority. Today you have that report before you, every line of it pointing out the misery which is being suffered by thousands of unemployed throughout the county. In the name of those unemployed and in particular of those mothers who are definitely shortening their lives in order that their children may have a little more, we demand of the Lancashire County Council that they immediately empower the Lancashire P.A.C. to substantially raise the scales of relief and so put an end to the state of malnutrition and under-nourishment which is undermining the health of thousands of our country men and women.'

There was no response from the County Council to the letter.¹

The branch at Bury also showed renewed activity and strength. On 9 October local unemployed invaded the Corporation offices in an attempt to press the Town Clerk into calling a special meeting of the Council to consider the rates of transitional benefit and relief scales paid by the local P.A.C. They entered the building singly and in two's and three's, it was reported at the time, and local officials were unaware of their presence until the request was sent that the Town Clerk should interview them. A branch officer estimated that seventy men were present at the interview, during which the unemployed also asked that free coal and milk be provided for unemployed families.² Later in the month it was reported that distress was so acute among wives of local unemployed in the town, that the Mayor of Bury had decided to open soup kitchens at four social centres. The Mayor told a Manchester Evening News reporter,

'We are of the opinion that some wives and children of unemployed men are suffering, particularly the women.'

Butchers in the town promised to help with supplies of meat.

The soup was to be sold at one penny per quart.³ Soon after this

1 Eccles Journal, 2 November 1934.

2 Manchester Evening News, 9 October 1934.

3 Ibid, 26 October 1934.

the N.U.W.M. in the town, and the unemployed of Bury as a whole, met with a small success, when the P.A.C. announced that, following the representations made by the local branch of the unemployed movement, they had decided to grant one hundredweight of coal per week to persons on relief during the winter, and to increase the allowance of old age pensioners in the Institution from one shilling to one and sixpence. It was also decided to grant an extra Christmas allowance to applicants for transitional benefit of two shillings per adult and one and sixpence for each dependent child.¹

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The restoration of the 1931 benefit cuts in April 1934, and the new spirit of co-operation in the area between the unemployed movement and trades councils and branches of the Labour Party, had, in some ways, made the need for a campaign against Part Two of the Unemployment Act seem less urgent so far as the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire was concerned. The events in Europe during 1934, and the victories of the unemployed in South-East Lancashire during this year, had combined to take the edge off the situation of the unemployed as far as the general public was concerned, and the movement itself in South-East Lancashire had become rather apathetic and it was inclined to let its activities fall off. In addition, by the end of 1934

1 Manchester Evening News, 23 November 1934.

the engineering factories in the district had for some time been winning new orders, and the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire began to lose some of its most able leaders. On 11 December 1934, however, the new U.A.B. scales were published. In many cases, as has been indicated, they were to mean a reduction in allowances for those unemployed who were to be transferred to the authority of the local Boards. By the end of January their full effects were known, and a wave of protest began to sweep the country.¹

In South Wales, where the protests were strongest, the South Wales Miners' Federation led the way. In South-East Lancashire, however, as elsewhere, the N.U.W.M. once again took the lead. On 7 January 1935 a meeting was held in All Saints Church Manchester to protest against the new scales, attended by more than four hundred people. The Vicar of All Saints, the Reverend Etienne Watts, spoke first and expressed the hope that the present Government

'might be swept away as were Ahab and his wicked works.'

The main speaker, however, was Sid Elias, one of the national organisers, who was on a recruiting campaign in the area. One of the main objections to the Act on the part of the unemployed was the provision made to send workers to training camps, where they would receive instruction in basic skills and crafts, as a

1 See above, Chapter 10, pp. 432-3.

condition of payment of benefit. Elias, who called this a step towards Fascism in Britain, alleged that this training would later be used to undercut established trade union wage rates and conditions. He also suggested that a side-effect of the training camps would be to break up homes and families in cases where the father was made to live at a camp away from home for a time.¹

A sizeable meeting of unemployed and employed workers was held at the Eccles Labour Party headquarters in Patricroft on 17 January, to protest against the new U.A.B. regulations. Austin Coghlan took the chair, and in his opening remarks drew attention to the effect of the scales on the income of unemployed in Eccles, alleging that some families were experiencing drops of up to ten shillings per week in assistance. Sid Elias was again the main speaker, and, in a talk lasting one and a half hours, it was reported that he gave a detailed explanation of the new Act and relief scales, showing how in a majority of cases they meant a drop in the income of the unemployed. This he alleged would be used to force down the wages of men in work. He urged all trade unionists to take united action with the unemployed to meet this danger. A resolution was passed calling on the Trades and Labour Council in Eccles to organise a united front demonstration against the Act, and on the P.A.C. to make up any reductions in the allowances of the unemployed, and also

1 Manchester Guardian, 8 January 1935.

to support with full relief any worker who refused to enter a training camp.¹ Elias was again the main speaker on 27 January at a protest meeting organised by the Openshaw Branch of the N.U.W.M., held in the Co-operative Hall, Manchester.²

On 28 January the Manchester Central Branch, together with representatives of the I.L.P. and Garment Workers' Union in the city, sent a deputation to the offices of the Manchester Public Assistance Committee which placed before the Committee cases of unemployed families whose weekly allowances, it was alleged, had been reduced by up to one pound a week. The P.A.C. refused a request from the deputation, which was led by Arthur Jackson, to send a resolution of protest to the Government. Outside the offices a crowd of several hundred unemployed men and women stood and waited, listening to speakers, while the deputation were interviewing the P.A.C.³ It was reported by the Manchester Guardian two days later that the P.A.C. at Oldham had decided to send such a resolution to the Government concerning the new scales.⁴

Elsewhere in Great Britain the protests against the U.A.B. regulations were much larger, and, early in February, the Government was forced to back down. Unwilling to wait for the Minister of Labour's promise that repayments would be made

'as soon as the pressure of work permits,'⁵

the N.U.W.M. at once demanded the immediate refund of monies

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- 1 Eccles Journal, 25 January 1935.
 - 2 Manchester Guardian, 28 January 1935.
 - 3 Ibid, 29 January 1935.
 - 4 Ibid, 30 January 1935.
 - 5 Hansard, 5th Ser. CCXCVII.

to the unemployed. On 6 February 1935, more than ten thousand men and women demonstrated outside the Town Hall in Sheffield. A request for a deputation from the N.U.W.M. to be allowed to interview the City Council was refused, and, when attempts were made to clear the Square, fighting broke out between unemployed and police. Extensive damage was caused to the city centre by the demonstrators. Twenty-six arrests were made, and many people, including a number of police, were treated in hospital for injuries sustained in the fighting. The demonstration had an immediate effect, however; that night several members of the Sheffield City Council, headed by the Mayor, travelled by train to London and pressed the Minister of Labour and representatives of the U.A.B. into granting permission for the repayments to be made at once. Similar demands followed from all over the country, and within a few days, following pressure from Labour M.P.'s in the House of Commons, a temporary Act had been rushed through Parliament giving local authorities powers to make back payments at once.¹

Gradually the outcry died down. In the agitation against the regulations the branches of the unemployed movement in South-East Lancashire had obviously played a far less significant role than they did in the protests of 1931, against the introduction of the means test and the ten per cent. reductions in unemployment benefit. The reason was largely that the movement in the area was in decline. Many of its leaders had found work once more, and, on the whole, membership was falling with the

1 Hansard, 5th Ser. CCXCVII.

general drop in unemployment. Elsewhere in Great Britain, the N.U.W.M. was better able to retain its influence; but in South-East Lancashire the movement was so dependent on a core of militant engineers that once these men were taken back into employment the movement collapsed fairly quickly. After the campaign against the U.A.B. regulations had succeeded, the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire faded away, raising itself for one final effort in the 1936 hunger march.

During the agitation, the new contacts between the N.U.W.M. and the official Labour movement had been maintained and in many cases strengthened. The leadership of the British Labour movement for once did not actively oppose the nation-wide protest, even if it did not encourage any closer contact between its rank-and-file membership and the N.U.W.M. Throughout the country, therefore, many working class organisations, including a large number of local Labour parties and trades council, had joined in the demands for the repeal of the scales, and in many towns some sort of united front committee had been established. This was noticeable in South-East Lancashire, where, at Bury, for example, all working class organisations were invited to join in a demonstration of protest against the scales, organised by the Trades Council.

At Heywood, the Trades Council passed a resolution which was forwarded to the Prime Minister asking for the withdrawal of the scales, which, it said, were 'inhuman' and likely to inflict 'great suffering upon the unemployed,' besides

'interfering with family life by breaking up the homes of many workers.' It was also decided to co-operate with the local Labour party in calling a mass meeting to protest against the means test and demand its abolition, although there was, as yet, no move to officially invite the N.U.W.M. to join in.¹ At Rochdale, however, where the Trades Council had been reported as refusing a request to give help to the hunger marchers from the district a few months before, the Communist Party, Trades Council and Labour Party co-operated on a number of occasions during the agitation against the U.A.B. regulations. On 3 February, for instance, Albert Matthews, Chairman of the Rochdale branch of the N.U.W.M., spoke at a protest meeting organised by the Rochdale Trades and Labour Council. He urged that the people of the town should join together in 'great public demonstrations' against the present treatment of the unemployed. A fortnight or so later a joint deputation from the Trades Council, I.L.P. and N.U.W.M. in the town met officials of the local Unemployment Assistance Board to protest against the workings of the means test in the town.²

The most significant development in this direction, however, was in Manchester, where the local Trades Council and the branches of the N.U.W.M. in the city, formed a Unity Council early in 1935, which, soon after the U.A.B. regulations had

1 Manchester Evening News, 21 February 1935; Heywood Advertiser, 1 March 1935.

2 Rochdale Observer, 6 February 1935; 23 February 1935.

been withdrawn, issued the following call to action:

'Fellow Workers,

The Government has weakened! The storm of indignation against the 2nd Part of the New Un-employment Act has caused the National Government to agree to postpone the reductions in allowances and return the monies taken. Is it because they have "seen reason"? No! It is because they have realised that this mass movement of the people in South Wales, embracing hundreds of thousands, and the mass demonstrations in Scotland and Sheffield have shown to them that if they persist in such an openly brutal policy they will be swept from office.

They have relented in order to save the life of the Government....

But this step of the National Government is a tremendous victory for all those who have fought the Act. What does it show:-

- 1) That united action can win the workers their just demands.
- 2) United action has forced the Government to temporarily restore the cuts. A greater united movement can force them to restore them permanently.

- 3) Unity in action has forced them to retain all increased allowances. A mightier effort can now compel them to grant increased benefits all round.
- 4) That solidarity action can force the complete withdrawal of the Act.¹

x x x x x x x x x

In the summer of 1936, after the revised U.A.B. regulations had been published in July of that year, the N.U.W.M. began to prepare for a sixth national hunger march to London.² The march began from Scotland on 5 October 1936, and on 20 October, the West of Scotland marchers, led by Peter Kerrigan, reached Blackburn in Lancashire.³ Here they were given a warm welcome, one of the best on their march according to Kerrigan, the corporation having placed the town's public baths at their disposal, and a local cinema giving free tickets to the men. The Blackburn P.A.C., Labour Party, and Co-operative Society provided accommodation, and the P.A.C. also provided food for the men and gave them extra blankets.⁴ Next day they marched via Darwen to Bolton, where elaborate preparations had been

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Made available by R. & E. Frow; see above, Chapter 8, p. 307.
See above, Chapter 10, p. 435 et seq.
See below, Appendix XII for routes of the march.
Manchester Evening News, 20 October 1936.

made to receive them. They were met at Duns-car Bridge on the outskirts of the town by the local reception committee, and in the evening a mass meeting was held on Victoria Square, outside the Town Hall. Two hundred and fifty men were accommodated for the night at Jackson House, an occupational centre for the unemployed,¹ sixty at St. Edmund's School, and about forty of the more elderly at the Kingsgate Public Assistance Institution. The Bolton Public Health Committee also gave the marchers use of the local baths. The Royal Infirmary treated some of the men for blistered feet, and eighty others were given medical treatment by six local ambulance men who had volunteered their services. Next morning, led by a drum and fife band, the marchers left for Manchester. They were joined by eight local members of the N.U.W.M., including Cyril Walsh, who had taken part on the 1930 march, when he had become involved in a disturbance inside the House of Commons,² and also including the new branch secretary and his wife, Mrs. Bentley joining the women's contingent of thirty-five at Coventry.³

The night of 22 October was spent at Altrincham, Cheshire, where the marchers were given an official welcome, and provided with accommodation at the Public Hall.⁴ The arrangements for this had been made by the local Trades Council, which also

1 See above, Chapter 5, p. 182.

2 See above, Chapter 10, p. 395.

3 Bolton Evening News, 20 October 1936; Manchester Evening News, 28 October 1936.

4 Altrincham is within the Manchester conurbation; Manchester Evening News, 22 October 1936; Daily Worker, 29 October 1936.

provided the men with an evening meal, and with breakfast next morning. From here the men continued to Wellington, in Staffordshire, and then to Wolverhampton. The Lancashire contingent, including the group of men from Bolton, left Manchester on 22 October. As well as sections from other towns in the South-East of the region, there were men from Liverpool, Blackburn and elsewhere. These groups had marched to Manchester on the previous day, having met at Wigan.¹

London was reached on 7 November 1936. On 9 November, Aneurin Bevan presented a petition from the marchers to the House of Commons, containing a request for representatives to be allowed to speak at the Bar of the House. He said:

'I beg leave to present a humble petition from the unemployed marchers showing the grievous hardship which is being endured by great numbers of unemployed men and women by reason of their loss of physical well-being, the breaking up of many of their homes, the wretched conditions of the villages and towns, and the harsh incidence of the family means test. Wherefore your petitioners pray that they, or some of their number, be heard at the Bar of the House as representatives of the unemployed, to set forth their grievances and to urge, on behalf of the unemployed men and women, the provision of decent maintenance or employment at trade union rates of wages.'²

1 Bolton Evening News, 21 October 1936.

2 Hansard, 5th Ser. CCCXVII.

As in previous years, however, their request was turned down. On 10 November, therefore, the marchers attempted to lobby M.P.'s, and about three hundred of them were allowed into the Parliament Buildings and into the Central Lobby of the House of Commons, on condition that they would not cause a disturbance. They were shepherded out, however, the Times reported next day, when several of them adopted what the paper described as 'an angry and threatening attitude' towards M.P.'s. A strong force of police was on duty for the occasion.¹ On 11 November 1936 several questions were put to Stanley Baldwin in the House as to why the Government would not agree to meet a deputation from the marchers. The Prime Minister stated that he did not believe that to give a hearing to the marchers at the Bar of the House would add anything to the information of its Members or the Government, but would be

'an admission of the inadequacy of Parliamentary representation,'

which would be something which he deplored. That night Labour M.P.'s were able to obtain time for a debate on the Prime Minister's refusal

'to grant any facilities whatever for the unemployed hunger marchers to voice their grievances to himself, the Cabinet, or the House.'

Clement Attlee led the attack on the Government.²

1 Times, 11 November 1936.

2 Hansard, 5th Ser. CCCXVII.

The size of the march, and of the support it had received from all quarters, together with the pressures to which the Government was subjected in Parliament, forced the Prime Minister to give ground. On Thursday, 12 November, four days after the marchers had arrived in London, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, announced that in company with other officials and a number of Members of Parliament, he would receive a deputation from the hunger marchers at the House of Commons. The interview lasted over two hours, during which the deputation described the conditions which existed in the areas from which the men and women who had taken part on the march had come, and of the effects of the means test, demanding its withdrawal.¹ On Sunday, 15 November a farewell demonstration was held in Trafalgar Square, prior to the marchers leaving for home the following day. Ben Tillet, Harry Pollitt, Aneurin Bevan, and march leaders John Strachey, Maud Brown, Peter Kerrigan and Harry McShane, as well as Wal Hannington spoke to the crowd.

In South-East Lancashire, the N.U.W.M. had been in decline since 1934. In part, this was due to the fact that the skilled engineers who had formed the militant leadership of the N.U.W.M. in the region in the years between 1929 and 1933 were in many cases among the first to find work once more. Those who remained were largely unskilled men. Without an active leadership, the unemployed movement, both on a national level

1 W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, p. 319.

and also in the districts, failed to maintain the interest of even a small percentage of the unemployed, and, after the 1936 Hunger March, the activities of the movement in South-East Lancashire came to an end.

Chapter Fourteen

THE POLICE AND THE HUNGER MARCHERS

In the course of this thesis, many references have already been made to the relations between the police and the unemployed. Descriptions have been included of battles between the police and demonstrators in Manchester, Salford, Belfast, on Merseyside, in London, Glasgow, and elsewhere. Baton charges by the police were resisted by stone throwing on the part of the unemployed. Over the years hundreds of arrests were made by the police, and in 1932, in Belfast, as has been shown, two men were shot dead when the police opened fire on the demonstrators.¹ During interviews in 1968 and 1969 with members of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire, a number of allegations were made that the police made use of planted agents and agents provocateurs, but those who made these allegations were unable to substantiate their claims.² The recently opened files of the Metropolitan Police throw further light on the subject of the police and the unemployed: the nature of the information contained in these records, only part of which remain, is highly revealing. In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the material found.

Of fifteen Police files examined, nine were wholly concerned with the activities of the N.U.W.M., and four others directly or

1 See above, Chapter 10, p.412, note 1.

2 Interview with Bill Dutson; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details. Mr. Dutson alleged that the police made use of agents provocateurs in the demonstration of 7 October 1931 in Manchester, described at the start of Chapter 14. There is no evidence to support this claim.

indirectly related. The earliest¹ concerns a demonstration organised by the National Union of Ex-Servicemen on the afternoon of 18 October 1920. Most of the material contained therein is of a routine nature, that is, reports, memoranda and telegrams from the officers in charge of the various London districts (about twenty-five in all) to Scotland Yard giving details of their arrangements for controlling the different groups of marchers. Seven contingents of unemployed, who assembled at nineteen different points throughout the City, converged on Whitehall, in support of a deputation of London Labour Mayors to No. 10 Downing Street. While the deputation was with the Prime Minister, the crowd were held in Whitehall, where various attempts were made to break through the lines of police. Nine arrests were made, and a police baton charge was necessary eventually to break up the demonstrators, estimated by police officials at 15,000. It is recorded in the file that more than two hundred panes of glass were broken in the War Office and Treasury Buildings by stones thrown by the unemployed. The importance of this file is that, like the rest, it demonstrates how well prepared the police were, although, on this occasion, there is nothing in the records to show that any 'inside' information as to the intentions of the demonstrators was obtained. More than 1,300 police, including 98 mounted, were on duty in Whitehall and along the different routes; the files are clearly important in this respect, too, since for this and on many other occasions of unemployed demonstrations during the inter-war period it is now possible to state with accuracy the numbers

1 Mepol 2, 1958, Unemployed Processions 1920-1925.

of police involved. It seems more than likely, however, since this particular file is dated '1920-1925' that this was not the only occasion on which the metropolitan police recorded such information in these years, and that similar files on other demonstrations have been destroyed, possibly because it was not thought to have any 'historical value' by the person or persons who sorted through it when it became the property of the Public Record Office. Probably these details were kept because this was the biggest demonstration of the period in London. The extent and nature of the material destroyed will presumably remain unknown.

Three files concern the preparation and publication of a booklet entitled 'Meetings, Processions and Demonstrations: powers and duties of police', the first three parts of which were published in 1933, Parts IV and V in 1934 and 1935.¹ Although not solely related to unemployed demonstrations, there is no doubt that the booklet was prepared with the N.U.W.M. very much in mind, since, although the majority of the text is devoted to matters such as the telephoning of information of Headquarters, and various Acts of Parliament, such as a number of Traffic Acts, relating to obstruction, many of the 'powers and duties' listed are those which had already been used, or were later to be employed, to control N.U.W.M. demonstrations. In Part 1, 'Notes for the guidance of Senior Officers in the

1 Mepol 2, 3033, Commissioners' directions about hostile demonstrations, July 1932; Mepol 2, 3037, 'Meetings, Processions and demonstrations', Pts. I to III, November 1933; Mepol 2, 3037 'Meetings, Processions and demonstrations', Pts. IV and V, 1934-1935.

case of possible large disturbances,' it is stated that:

'The essence of success in operations lies
in early, continuous and accurate information.'

Meetings likely to become dangerous must be carefully watched, the leaders clearly identified, and notes of speeches made, particular attention being paid to the use of inflammatory language. In addition;

'Where facilities are available for using fire hoses adjusted to fire hydrants in an enclosed area they should be brought into play if a large crowd refuses to obey Police directions and gets out of hand.'

Part II begins with the statement that:

'The basic principle is that the citizens have a right to hold meetings or organise processions so long as the object is lawful and the conduct of the participants is orderly....'

In this section reference was made to the Seditious Meetings Act of 1817 and to an Act of 1360, under which Tom Mann and Emrhys Llewellyn had been detained in December 1932.¹ Where there is:

'reasonable ground for anticipating an offence,' it was stated, steps must be taken to deal with this. Those involved must be asked to modify their plans and eliminate any objectionable features. If the promoters disregarded this

1 See above, Chapter 10, p. 420.

request;

'it would be the duty of the Commissioner to take such steps as may be necessary to secure the preservation of order.'

Furthermore, it would be open to the Commissioner :

'to apply to a Magistrate, by complaint, to order any person, who he had reason to believe was organising disorder or a breach of the peace, to enter into recognizance and find sureties to keep the peace or be of good behaviour.'

In the event, When Mann and Llewellyn refused, they were gaoled.

In one file, two important tables were found:¹

¹ Where appropriate, these figures have been included in the text, but they are repeated here in the form given in the police files. Their importance should not be overlooked: as in the case of the figures given on p. 545, for the demonstration on 18 October 1920, they are the first accurate figures of the numbers of police on duty on these occasions.

Table 1

NUMBER OF POLICE EMPLOYED ON MAJOR DEMONSTRATIONS, 1932-1934

		<u>Supts.</u>	<u>Insp.</u>	<u>Sgts.</u>	<u>P.C.'s.</u>	<u>Mounted</u> <u>insps.</u>	<u>p.c.'s</u>	<u>Specials</u> <u>foot</u>	<u>mounted</u>
1.	27 October 1932	6	67	143	1508	4	114	740	18
2.	30 October 1932	3	47	99	1057	3	105	400	10
3.	1 November 1932	6	90	199	2176	8	170	500	25
4.	19 December 1932	7	65	120	1316	6	119	-	-
5.	5 February 1933	12	64	129	1310	5	119	-	27
6.	7 May 1933	8	53	105	1166	4	46	-	50
7.	25 February 1934	5	83	190	1986	8	157	200	50
	(Additional)	-	4	7	95	-	-	-	-
8.	4 March 1934	6	70	165	1717	8	147	150	50

Note: Numbers 1-3 relate to the demonstrations during the 1932 Hunger March;

7-8 relate to the demonstrations during the 1934 Hunger March;

4-6 relate to the only other demonstration in the interim which required more than 1,000 P.C.'s.

Table 2

NUMBER OF POLICE EMPLOYED IN LONDON DURING THE 1934 HUNGER
MARCH, 23 FEBRUARY TO 8 MARCH 1934

	Fri 23 Feb.	Sat 24 Feb.	Sun 25 Feb.	Mon 26 Feb.	Tues 27 Feb.	Wed 28 Feb.	Thur 1 Mar.	Fri 2 Mar.	Sat 3 Mar.	Sun 4 Mar.	Mon 5 Mar.	Tues 6 Mar.	Wed 7 Mar.	Thur 8 Mar.
Traffic Duty	99	626	1202	484	511	401	-	4	644	1094	44	-	173	263
Beats and Patrols	38	395	924	530	554	316	32	18	445	932	75	16	238	219
HQ Reserves, Mobile Reserve Station Reserves and Traffic Reserve	<u>208</u>	<u>667</u>	<u>1572</u>	<u>673</u>	<u>663</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>612</u>	<u>956</u>	<u>101</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>275</u>
TOTAL Nos. employed	345 ===	1688 ===	3698 ===	1687 ===	1728 ===	1177 ===	120 ===	110 ===	1701 ===	2982 ===	220 ===	66 ==	613 ===	757 ===

550.

(From Mepol 2, 3037, 'Meetings, Processions and Demonstrations,' Pts.
IV and V 1934-1935.)

It will be seen that the first table includes figures for the National Joint Council of Labour demonstration on unemployment held on 5 February 1933.¹ One of the files examined concerned this demonstration, and it is worth noting that, apart from the usual details of divisional arrangements to deal with the various contingents, the material contained in this file is of an entirely different nature from those kept on the activities of the N.U.W.M. This is evidently because the Police considered that this would be an orderly demonstration, unlike those of the N.U.W.M. Soon after the National Joint Council had notified the Police of their intention to hold a major demonstration on that day, it is noted in the file which was opened that:

'This will be a large, but presumably peaceful demonstration...'²

Most of the material retained in the file relates to the close collaboration between the Police and the organisers of the demonstration; there are several letters from Walter Citrine, the General Secretary, to the Police Commissioner, including one dated 6 February 1934, which spoke of the

'fine spirit of co-operation'

which had enabled the demonstration to pass off without

1 See above, Chapter 8, pp. 267-72.

2 Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council demonstration, 5 February 1933; this remark was made by a senior official at Scotland Yard, but it was not possible to ascertain his name. A copy of the National Joint Council of Labour pamphlet, Official Programme of the National Demonstration on Unemployment (1933) 8pp., was found in the file.

'the slightest trace of disorder.'

The Police, too, considered that the demonstration had passed off peaceably; in contrast to the files on N.U.W.M. demonstrations, this file contains many reports from divisional inspectors and superintendents expressing sentiments of the kind that the demonstration was

'exceptionally quiet and orderly.'

After N.U.W.M. demonstrations, the same reports speak of arrests, injuries to Police, and damage to property. It is evident that every effort was made by the National Joint Council to prevent the N.U.W.M. taking part in the demonstration. The Police file contains a transcribed report of an interview between Chief Constable F. W. Abbott of Scotland Yard and the Chief Marshalls for the demonstration on behalf of the National Joint Council, R. T. Windle and E. P. Harries. The Labour representatives explicitly stated during the course of the discussion that the N.U.W.M. had not been invited to take part. In addition, the file contains a memorandum from the Superintendent of Kentish Town noting that the St. Pancras Labour Party and Trades Council had asked the police to understand that they had no connection with the N.U.W.M., and no desire for the movement to associate with them.¹

1. The file contained this letter:

25, Bolton Gardens,
Teddington.

6 February 1933.

'To the Right Honourable Lord Trenchard,

'May I, as a member of the Public, who stays at home, yet watches events, Thank you for Your Splendid organisation in Hyde Park on Sunday. We consider you were a real friend. A friend to friend and foe alike. Nothing Hidden. All above board. So

This and a number of other files contain evidence of police discrimination against members of the N.U.W.M. Elsewhere in this thesis it has been stated that Communist and unemployed leaders were inclined to the opinion that the police were prejudiced against them, and it has been suggested that this belief was of importance in itself, whether or not it had any foundation. In his research on Fascism in Britain, Dr. Benewick has discovered an:

'occasional bias on the part of the police against the anti-Fascists,'

although, he continues, the Blackshirts

'also experienced their share of discrimination.'

Even so, he remains of the opinion that:

'In general, it was true that more anti-fascists were arrested and charged.'¹

That Police activities were directed more against the left-wing, as it were, of the political spectrum than[^] right-wing adherents is borne out by the evidence discovered in the unemployed files.

that the forces against Law and order were powerless and the fools were saved from themselves.

'...May God ever give You renewed Strength in the Confidence and Respect of the British People.

Believe Me,

Yours truly,

M.M. Steven.

When we do right, the whole Police Force is our Friend.' The original letter was written in longhand: the capital letters were as set down.

1 R. Benewick, op. cit., p. 183.

In assessing this information, however, the inflammatory nature of the speeches of the unemployed leaders must be taken into account, as must the fact that the N.U.W.M. numbered among its followers a small minority of trouble-makers. On the other hand as Dr. Benewick has pointed out, until 1937 the Blackshirts like the police claimed to stand for law and order. The Communists, on the other hand, openly defied the police, and were involved in many more clashes than the Blackshirts.¹

In the case of the National Joint Council of Labour demonstration in February 1933, there is evidence in the Police files of a written debate or discussion between senior officials at Scotland Yard as to whether or not the N.U.W.M., as they had requested, should be allowed to erect a platform in Hyde Park. One official was of the opinion that, since the N.U.W.M. was:

'in no way responsible for the meeting and
merely going there to disturb the police,'

permission should be refused. This sentiment clearly revealed a bias against the unemployed movement, as was also observed by his superior to whom his suggestion was sent. In fact, although the request was at first refused, and the N.U.W.M. notified of this decision, to avoid any accusations from the unemployed movement of police discrimination, the decision not to allow the N.U.W.M. to set up a platform in the Park was later reversed. However, directions were issued that the N.U.W.M. platform was to be kept well away from the general meeting, in the hope,

1 R. Benewick, op. cit., p. 257.

in the words of the second of the two officials involved in this discussion, that:

'we may isolate their activities and prevent them causing a disturbance at the main platform.'¹

An earlier file, dated July 1932, contains a similar example.² A directive from the Police Commissioner, Lord Trenchard, refers to a memorandum of April of that year sent by Chief Constable F. W. Abbott of Scotland Yard to officers in charge of districts throughout the Metropolis, stating, in regard to an unemployed demonstration planned for later that month (i.e. 30 April 1932), that the C.P.G.B. is

'determined to make a show'

and

'get as much publicity as possible'

out of the demonstration. The memorandum continues;

'In order that propaganda can be made out of the affair (and incidentally prove to Moscow that the Communist Party in this country is not a spent force) stern resistance is to be offered to the police and a film taken of whatever might develop in consequence.'

1 Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council demonstration, 5 February 1933; it is not altogether clear who these officials were, since the 'discussion' takes the form of short, scribbled messages passed between the men concerned. Each statement is initialled, and it is possible that the men were Chief Constable F. W. Abbott, and the Commissioner himself.

2 Mepol 2, 3033, Commissioners' directions about hostile demonstrations, July 1932.

The Communists, it was stated, hope to obtain what appear to be

'scenes of police batoning workers'

and so on. These statements are, of course, by way of a political commentary on the affairs and activities of the C.P.G.B., and the Commissioner directed that future communications were not to contain emotive statements of this nature.¹

On the occasion of the 1932 Hunger March a

'very urgent and confidential'

memorandum was sent out from police headquarters to officers in charge of districts throughout Britain, dated 24 October 1932, urging that:

'To assist the Commissioner in taking any action he may consider necessary in connection with the Unemployed Demonstrations, will you please report as early as possible the names and addresses of any of the local or other leaders of the Communists or Unemployed against whom you possess evidence of incitement to create disturbance, or of participation in disturbances that have occurred.'²

1 The Home Office record on the National League of the Blind March, 1936 (H.O. 45, 16545) contains a statement made by the Commissioner in his summary of the March, to the effect that the organiser, a Mr. J. Palmer, National League of the Blind headquarters, 76 Grays Inn Road, London W.C.1., was approached on several occasions by the Communist Party and N.U.W.M. to join forces with the Hunger Marchers. 'These advances were rejected,' states the report, 'but both organisations took every opportunity of exploiting the Blind Marchers for their own benefit.' There is no explanation of what this statement means.

2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

This met with a considerable response. Details of twenty-three members of the Scottish and North-East Coast contingents, their full names, addresses and details of convictions, including in some cases photographs, were sent to Scotland Yard. The Glamorgan Constabulary forwarded similar details of eighteen men, described as the

'most prominent of the South Wales contingent.'

These included Will Paynter, then twenty-eight years old, whose address was given as 8 Milton Terrace, Trebanog, Glamorgan.

Paynter was described as

'a very dangerous agitator,'

who was

'very defiant'

when in contact with the Police; he

'refuses to acknowledge any kind of law and order, and has been convicted on several occasions for assaulting the Police.'¹

At the major demonstration in Hyde Park on 27 October 1932, Paynter was one of fourteen men arrested. He was fined £5 for obstruction, and was described in the Police file on the demonstration as

'an agitator...with a very bad reputation.'²

The main targets for the Police, as in this case, were the unemployed leaders and other well-known militants, and the discrimination was, in part, directed against these men.

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

2 Mepol 2, 3065, Hyde Park demonstration, 27 October 1932.

There can be no doubt that the N.U.W.M. leaders were kept under constant surveillance by the Police during Hunger Marches and at other times of widespread unemployed agitation. One of the files kept on the 1932 March, for example, reveals that not only Hannington but also Emrhys Llewellyn and Harry Pollitt, were under observation. The Special Branch Daily Bulletin for 17 October 1932 records the movements of the two former men on the previous day, and also reports that Pollitt was seen boarding a ship at Harwich bound for the Hook of Holland.¹ S. Saklatvala was observed making a speech at Battersea. The Daily Bulletin of 1 November, the day on which the Hunger Marchers planned to present their petition to the House of Commons, reported the arrival at Dover on 31 October of Henri Barbusse,

'the well-known French Communist and international revolutionary,'

who was stated to be staying at an hotel in Russell Square.²

In his summary of the demonstration in Hyde Park at the climax of the 1936 March, the Police Commissioner emphasised that Hannington was the real organiser;

'but in accordance with the plan not to prematurely betray the extremist nature of the March, he has kept somewhat in the background, and most of the work of enlisting the sympathy and help of the Labour bodies has been done by the Secretary, Pat Devine.'³

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.
 2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.
 3 Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park demonstration, 8 November 1936.

There is evidence, too, that on the 1936 March the movements of Ronald Kidd, Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, were closely watched. In a summary of the March, dated 9 November 1936, written by the Commissioner and sent to the Home Office, Kidd was stated to have been observed in Hyde Park during the previous day's demonstration; the Commissioner described Kidd as

'well-known for his antipathy against the
Police and their methods.'¹

Tuesday, 10 November 1936, was the day appointed for a mass lobbying of M.P.'s by the marchers and London unemployed. The admittance of the marchers to the Central Hall of the House of Commons was regulated by police throughout the afternoon and evening, and was maintained at about two hundred. Kidd was reported as being present in the Central Hall for part of the afternoon.²

Finally, included in this category must be the notes of an inspector from Bow Street Police Station, dated 23 and 28 February 1934, stating that he had made enquiries at King's College, University of London, and at the London School of Economics, regarding the unemployed demonstration planned by the 1934 Marchers for 25 February and 1 March respectively. He had interviewed Mr. A. Hallett, Assistant Secretary of King's College,

1 Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park demonstration, 8 November 1936.

2 Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936; for further details of Ronald Kidd, see R. Benewick, op. cit.

and, on the 28 February, Sir William Beveridge, Secretary of L.S.E., but neither had any information as to plans for groups of students to take part in the demonstrations, although students might take part as individuals.¹ The fact that the police considered it necessary even to try to obtain such information with regard to the activities of student sympathisers, however, must in itself be interpreted as prelude to possible discrimination against such students, had their initial enquiries met with any success.

The police records contain a substantial amount of literature published by the N.U.W.M., and other organisations, such as the National Joint Council, and in addition many newspaper cuttings relating to demonstrations of unemployed and to hunger marches. One file on the 1932 March, for example, contains two copies of the N.U.W.M. leaflet, Plan of the Great National Hunger March on London, which gives complete details of the routes to be followed by the different contingents.² Another file kept on the 1934 March contains a copy of the National Congress and March Council pamphlet, Manifesto of the National Hunger March and Congress, which gives the routes of the 1934 marchers.³ The same file includes a copy of a newspaper issued by the National Congress and March Council, dated 25 February 1934, entitled Bulletin of the Hunger March and Unity Congress,⁴

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

3 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934; National Congress and March Council, Manifesto of the National Hunger March and Congress (1934) 12 pp.

4 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

while the previously mentioned 1932 file contains a copy of the Unemployed Special for September 1932, with a front page article by Wal Hannington headlined 'The Hunger March - and Why,' and also March Bulletin No. 3 (4 October 1932), published by the N.U.W.M., giving details of the arrangements for accommodation of the marchers in London, and of the activities planned during their stay.¹

Many leaflets issued by the unemployed movement were retained in the police files. One of the most interesting is a circular to all branches of the N.U.W.M., entitled 1936 Hunger March on London - Preparations, which instructed the branches to organise Red Cross groups to accompany the men, to organise small drum and fife bands to lead each contingent, and to arrange for three or four cyclists to accompany each contingent, to ride ahead each day and make arrangements for the reception of the marchers. Each contingent is instructed to arrange for its own field kitchen, and to provide a banner announcing each town or locality,

'bearing a suitable slogan which brings out
the objects of the march.'

There was also a list of suitable slogans, such as

'Stop the Means Test,'

or

'Employed and Unemployed Unite.'

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932; Unemployed Special, September 1932; N.U.W.M., March Bulletin No. 3 (4 October 1932), 4 pp.

Other leaflets included one published on the occasion of the National Joint Council demonstration of February 1933, which urged

'All Out on February 5th.'

(this was issued by the London District Council of the N.U.W.M.), and for the same demonstration leaflets published by the St. Pancras and South West Ham Branches of the unemployed movement.¹ The 1932 Hunger March had produced a number of stickers directed at the police. These simply stated:

'Policemen! If you attack us on Tuesday (i.e. 1 November 1932) We will fight back. We want Bread not Batons.'²

Newspaper cuttings are to be found in several files, but are particularly plentiful in the Home Office file on the 1922 Hunger March.³ This includes cuttings from not only national dailies such as the Times, Telegraph, Manchester Guardian, Daily Express and Daily Mail, but also from a number of local

1 Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council demonstration, 5 February 1933.

2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932; other examples of N.U.W.M. literature to be found in the police records include a leaflet, The Marchers are Coming, issued during the 1936 March, and a pamphlet, Programme of the March, also published during the 1936 March. Also, for the N.J.C. demonstration in February 1933, six leaflets showing assembly points and routes for each of the six different contingents, and a copy of a newspaper, the East Ham North Citizen, February 1933. On the occasion of the May Day demonstration of that year, a copy of the N.J.C. leaflet, May Day 1933, showing the routes to be followed by the six contingents; the National Joint Council pamphlet, Labour Day: Souvenir Programme (1933), 8 pp., and Bermondsey Labour Magazine, April 1933.

3 H.O. 45, 11275, Unemployed Marchers, November 1922 and February 1923.

Birmingham newspapers, such as the Sunday Mercury and Evening Dispatch. From all of these it was possible for the police and Home Office to build up a comprehensive picture of the March.¹ Unlike later hunger marches, when the unemployed remained in London only for seven or eight days, on this occasion it is clear that a large number of those who took part on the march stayed in the capital for a period of about three months, from November 1922 to February of the following year. The first contingents of marchers arrived in London on 17 November 1922, and although the majority had left the City by the end of the month, a significant number remained until after Christmas, when they were organised into three contingents to march round the south of England to gather new recruits for the opening of Parliament on 13 February 1923.

They were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to gain reinforcements, however. A group of about one hundred and thirty

¹ The Birmingham papers relate chiefly to Hannington's arrest after a jam-stealing incident at Rugby workhouse (see also W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p. 137 et seq.) For further details of the 1922 Hunger March as a whole see W. Hannington, The Insurgents in London, and T. Regan, The Hunger March of 1922. Other newspaper references include Times, 22, 23 November, 18 December 1922, and 14 February 1923; Manchester Guardian, 22 November 1922; 5 February 1923; Daily Telegraph, 22 November 1922; Daily Mail, 22 November 1922; Daily Express, 22 November 1922; Daily News, 22 November 1922; Morning Post, 22 November 1922; Evening News, 22 November 1922; Birmingham Sunday Mercury, 4 February 1923; Birmingham Evening Dispatch, Birmingham Mail, 3 February 1923; and Birmingham Post, 5 February 1923.

men, led by Wal Hannington, marched in the direction of Birmingham, while two other contingents, each numbering about eighty, were detailed to march through towns in Kent and Hampshire. Only nineteen new recruits were waiting for the contingent at Birmingham, seven from Stafford and twelve from Manchester, including five men from Oldham, although the Times had reported on 18 December 1922 that twenty-five men from Newton Heath and fifty from Salford had joined the other marchers already in London.¹ It is clear from these newspaper reports that Sid Elias was even at this stage in the history of the N.U.W.M. a prominent figure in the movement. He was reported by the Manchester Guardian, 22 November 1922, as having led a deputation to the Ministry of Health, along with Percy Hays, on the previous day.²

Both this Home Office file and almost every other Metropolitan Police file kept on the N.U.W.M. contain extensive transcripts of speeches made at London demonstrations and other unemployed gatherings by prominent members of the N.U.W.M. and by other well-known militants. This is by way of routine work

1 Times, 18 December 1922; these men were stated to have reached London on 4 December 1922. Eleven of the new recruits were named in the Manchester Guardian, 5 February 1923; they were Henry Rawson, Tom Brown, James Connor, James McCormick and John Kay, all from Oldham, and William Walters, Alfred Austin, Richard Porter, Harry Ratcliff, Thomas Simmons and a man named Hodgkinson, all from Manchester. The leader of the Lancashire contingent was stated by the Daily Mail, 22 November 1922, to be Horace Newbold, of Barrow-in-Furness.

2 Manchester Guardian, 22 November 1922.

and investigation on the part of the police, and, in that no interference is made with the rights of freedom of speech and liberty of the orators concerned, it is in no way disturbing that police sergeants and constables should take notes of political speeches. In fact, these notes provide the most accurate accounts of unemployed meetings, although what was said was almost always of a trivial, propagandist nature. One of the files, for instance, kept on the 1934 March contains several transcribed reports made by police constables and sergeants of speeches delivered by unemployed leaders at meetings and demonstrations held during the hunger marchers stay in London.¹ The same is true of the 1936 March, on which occasion particular attention was paid to the speeches made during the demonstration in Hyde Park on 8 November 1936. Speakers from the six platforms erected in Hyde Park for this demonstration included Arthur Horner, of the South Wales Miners Federation, Pat Devine and Wal Hannington, of the N.U.W.M., and Aneurin Bevan, M.P., and Clem. Attlee, leader of the Labour Party. Detailed accounts of the speeches of all these people are to be found in the records of the Metropolitan Police.²

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

2 Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park demonstration, 8 November 1936; for example, Clem. Attlee was reported to have 'referred to the necessity of the people demonstrating to show their disagreement with the Means Test and the policy of the National Government as a whole. The Government could improve the conditions of the unemployed, but had refused to do so, because the whole wage structure was based on the status of the unemployed. If their allowances were increased the wages of those in work would have to be raised in proportion.'

In these transcribed reports, particular attention was paid to the use of inflammatory language by the speaker. For example, a file on the 1932 Hunger March contains a lengthy report made by a police constable at an unemployed meeting in Hyde Park, in which the speaker, a man named King, appealed to his audience to attend the demonstration to the House of Commons planned for 1 November;

'and to take what they liked.' 'He said he was taking an iron bar; no law existed which prevented a man from defending himself, and if it was necessary to fight "then bloody well fight."¹

A few days beforehand, at the major demonstration held in Hyde Park on 27 October 1932 to welcome the Hunger Marchers, the police once again took notes of the content of the speeches made by the unemployed leaders. The Special Branch Daily Bulletin of 28 October noted that:

'Most of the leaders were present, but the speeches made from the six platforms were of a guarded character and no direct incitement to violence was made.'²

It is evident that the police expected a considerable amount of disorder on 1 November 1932. In a precis dated 26 October on the information received so far on the intentions of

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.
2 Ibid.

the March leaders, it was maintained that Sid Elias:

'openly states that there is certain to be much trouble between the unemployed and the police, and to use his own words "The police are not going to have it all their own way."¹

The information received included suggestions that fifty men had been assigned the task of wrecking the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus, and also that the demonstrators intended to arm themselves with feathered darts to throw at the police. A precis on 29 October, stated:

'1 November is the day marked down for trouble. Renshaw has remarked "We expect real bloodshed on that day." Determination has been expressed by the C.P.G.B. and the N.U.W.M. that the demonstrators shall reach the Houses of Parliament. Orders have been issued that if opposition is met with from Police, the unemployed are to resist.'²

The precis also stated that seamen and dockers in the East London Docks area have been canvassed to attend, and that casual labourers had been asked to carry their hooks (used for handling bales of paper, etc.), Much of this information, it should be noted, was wildly inaccurate. Finally, during the 1934 March,

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932. It is not clear as to where the police obtained this information.

2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932. George Albert Renshaw was Secretary of the Minority Movement at this time.

as the marchers neared London, Hannington visited the Scottish contingent and addressed them in a field outside Bedford on 19 February 1934. The context of his speech was taken down by a police officer, and special note was made of his use of phrases such as:

'We'll show them, won't we Boys,' 'Will we let ourselves be driven back?' and 'The Police cannot take away a man's walking stick.'¹

Besides such inflammatory statements, particular attention was paid to the name of the speaker. During the 1932 March, a report of a meeting of the Hackney Branch of the N.U.W.M., held at Ellingfort Road, Hackney, on the morning of 28 October 1932, was made by Police Sergeant J. Holmes. His report states that about one hundred people were present at the meeting, and includes transcribed details of the two speeches made by local leaders of the movement. He is careful to give their names and addresses; they were James Rich, of 3 Hockley Street, E.9, and Ernest Marshall, 54, Punderson's Gardens, Bethnal Green.²

Indeed, one of the most important aims of the police was always to identify as many of those involved in the marches and demonstrations as possible. It has already been seen that on the occasion of the 1932 Hunger March a memorandum was sent out from Scotland Yard urging district officials throughout Britain to

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.
 2 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

report the names and addresses of any of those taking part known to the police, and that this met with a considerable response. The names and addresses of twenty-three members of the Scottish and North-East contingents were sent to police headquarters. Eight of these were described as 'thieves,' three of them 'well-known' (that is, with more than one conviction.) One, Edward Gallacher, was reported to have twenty-two convictions, mostly for assault, breach of the peace and drunkenness. Another marcher was a dismissed policeman. One of the North-East contingent leaders, as in 1934, was Sam Langley, an important figure in the N.U.W.M. In his report to Scotland Yard, the Chief Constable of Durham County noted that Langley had been deported from Canada for sedition, and included a photograph of Langley leading the North-East contingent out of Darlington. The Glamorgan Constabulary reported details of eighteen members of the South Wales contingent; the Chief Constable of Wigan sent in the names and addresses of ten local men who had joined the Lancashire contingent; and the Norwich City Police gave information on eight local members of the unemployed movement, including Frederick Bayes Copeman, then 35 years of age and a national figure, like Langley, in the movement, who was stated to have spent fifteen years in the Navy before being discharged as a result of taking a prominent part in the Atlantic Fleet dispute at Invergordon in September 1931.¹

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932. Fred Copeman later became London District Organiser of the N.U.W.M. (see F. Copeman, op. cit.) In 1931, along with reductions in unemployment benefit, and cuts in the pay of the police and of teachers, the National Government also proposed a reduction in the pay of the Armed Forces (in the Navy this was to be 10.5% reduction for

Similarly, both of the files on the 1936 March pay special attention to the names of the members of the Marchers' Council and the London Reception Committee.¹ Both contain a copy of a thirteen page long summary of the March made by the Police Commissioner, which includes details of the number of men and women on each contingent, details of the arrangements for their accommodation in London, as well as a lengthy introduction giving the background to the March, the Means Test, Part Two of the Unemployment Assistance Act of 1934, and statements on previous marches, including comments on the Bermondsey Congress of 1934. The names of all the members of the London Reception Committee and the Marchers' Council are also given. The former included Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., S. O. Davies, M.P., G. R. Strauss, M.P., John Jagger, M.P., and Aneurin Bevan, Dr. Edith Summerskill, Jenny Lee, and Ted Hill, as well as Tom Mann, who was Chairman, Pat Devine, Secretary, Hannington, Alex Gossip, Maud Brown and Rose Smith. Ted Hill, Gossip and Bevan were joint treasurers of the Committee.² The Marchers' Council included two representatives of the Reception Committee, Hannington and Devine, and also

an able seaman, married and with children, 13.6% for an unmarried able seaman). Thus resulted in a 'mutiny' at Invergordon, as a result of which 36 men were dismissed from the Service, but no charges were brought against them (see C. L. Mowat, op. cit., pp. 403-6).

1 Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park demonstration, 8 November 1936;
Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936.

2 There were thirty members in all: the remainder were, A. M. Wall, Secretary of the London Trades Council; Councillor J.E.A. King, of the London County Council, J. R. Scott, W. Solomons, John Aplin, W. Payne, A. E. Turpin, Rev. L. Schiff, Rev. W. E. Lister, Rev. Iredell, B. Sharkley, Leah Manning, Commander Young, Garry Allighan, M. A. Bass, and John Mahon.

Maud Brown (representative of the Women's Contingent), Peter Kerrigan (West of Scotland), Harry McShane (East of Scotland), Lewis Jones (South Wales), and Ted Williams (Lancashire Contingent).¹

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The use of spies and agents inside popular movements has not been uncommon in British history. During the first half of the nineteenth century it was, of course, widespread, and it is also known to have occurred during the first world war and immediately afterwards.² The most important discovery made in the examination of the Metropolitan Police records relating to unemployed disturbances in the 1930's is that police agents were at work inside the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. The indications are that at least one police agent had reached the highest levels of the movement, and had access to the most secret meetings, although the information he was able to give to the police was only of secondary importance. There is no evidence to suggest that the officials of the unemployed movement were aware that information from these meetings was being passed to the police; nor is there any indication as to the identity

1 Also R. S. Elliott, of the Durham marchers, Dai Ley (Yorkshire, Notts. and Derby), D. Burke (Cumberland), and T. H. Richardson (Northumberland).

2 See, for example, F. W. Chandler, Political Spies and Provocative Agents (Sheffield, 2nd ed. 1936).

of the person or persons involved, although this is hardly to be expected.

Firstly, however, it is necessary to understand that a certain amount of information as to the intentions of the unemployed, was given to the police by the leaders of the movement themselves. For example, in 1936, on the occasion of the Hyde Park demonstration of 8 November, the Secretary of the London Reception Committee, Pat Devine, wrote to the Police Commissioner asking for permission to hold the demonstration, and giving details of the routes through the City by which the contingents would march to Hyde Park. His letter is to be found in the file kept on this demonstration.¹ In most cases the Commissioner granted permission for the contingents to march along the routes suggested by Devine; in some cases, where delays to traffic might occur, alternative routes were suggested. Nonetheless, the police, in possession of this information, were able to act accordingly.

Similarly, the file kept on the 1934 March, contains a telegram sent by a London district Superintendent to Scotland Yard, which states:

'Information has been received from Mr. McShane, leader of the Scotland contingent of hunger marchers, that on Friday, 2 March, at 2.30 p.m. they will march to Woolwich, arriving at the Commonwealth Buildings, George Street, at 5 p.m. where they will have tea, leaving at 5.45 p.m. They will then march to

1 Mepol 2, 3053, Hyde Park demonstration, 8 November 1936.

Plumstead Baths where a meeting will be held which is expected to last for about one hour.¹

There is no reason to doubt that any of the information supplied to the police by the leaders of the unemployed as to their intentions was in any way false or intended to deceive the authorities.

Less accurate in some cases was that information given to the police by 'casual' informers. As has been suggested, some of this information was absurd, although the police pursued it as a matter of course. There is no reason to believe that the hunger marchers or their leaders ever intended that some of their number should carry darts to throw at the police, or that there was ever a plot to wreck Eros. The former information was submitted to the Special Branch by an Inspector of Cannon Row Police Station, in a telegram which read as follows:

'At 12.45 a.m., 26 October 1932, Mr. William Gilbert, 44, Hereward Road, Upper Tooting, H. C. (Hansom Cab) Driver, Badge No. 8166, called at this station and stated that on the evening of 25 October, in the "Greyhound" Public House, Clapham Road, he had overheard a conversation between three men, in which it was stated that it was the intention of the unemployed demonstrators to arm themselves with

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

feathered darts for the purpose of throwing at the Police during the forthcoming demonstration on Thursday 27 October 1932.¹

This is one of only two occasions on which the name of the informer is to be found in the records. The other, which relates to the demonstration of 1 November 1932 to the Houses of Parliament, is the signature (Walter R. Hooper) on a letter from an inmate of the Westminster Poor Law Institution regarding the intentions of the unemployed on that occasion.² The letter begins:

'I am simply doing this as a loyal citizen, though I am in here,'

and goes on:

'I have obtained from a man in here "certain information" that a "very determined attempt" to gain access to the Houses of Parliament is to be made by the Marchers on Tuesday next; "it may come from the River."'

The man from whom the information was obtained was described by the writer of the letter as:

'well in with some of the "Reds" from Lancashire.'

1 . Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

2 Mepol 2, 3066, Demonstration to the House of Commons, 1 November 1932; it is not clear as to whom this letter is addressed.

The letter concludes:

'The Marchers are living on the best of food this Sunday morning, having fed on Eggs, Porage (sic), Ham, Bread, Butter, Tea and Coffee. The Co-operative Society sends large quantities of food here, and it is all for the so-called "Hunger Marchers."'

Nothing came of this warning, however, which was duly investigated by Scotland Yard. Nor, on the same occasion, was there any evidence discovered that the East London dockers had been called upon by the unemployed leaders to carry their working hooks to the demonstration. Likewise, there was no evidence found to substantiate the allegation made in a memorandum dated 28 October 1932 sent to police headquarters from Wandsworth Police Station, which read:

'Reliable information has been received at Wimbledon that unemployed workers have been directed that in the event of trouble arising in future at any demonstration, they are to make a concerted attack on the members of the Special Constabulary, if any are present.'¹

Other information received in this manner, that is, from occasional informants, was more plausible. One of the files on the 1932 March contains a memorandum dated 25 October 1932 from a London district Police Station which stated that parties of

¹ Mepol 2, 3066, Demonstration to the House of Commons, 1 November 1932.

'Communists' would enter restaurants during rush hours, order expensive meals, and, at a given signal, leave if possible without paying.¹ This was in order to draw police away from their regular duties, perhaps, though this is not clear from the memorandum, so that other groups of unemployed could stage uninterrupted demonstrations elsewhere. There is no evidence to suggest that this plan was ever put into action, but its originality is typical of the N.U.W.M. and it is, therefore, likely that the information was more accurate than some of the examples given above. The memorandum states that the information was disclosed by a seaman in the Merchant Service from the East End of London. His name was not given.

The information given to the police by the unemployed themselves, and also that provided by others who thought of themselves as 'loyal citizens,' but who, as in the case of the inmate of the Westminster workhouse, may have been acting from more selfish motives than they cared to admit to themselves, must be distinguished from that supplied by police agents or regular informers. More accurate material was supplied by this latter source. In six of the files examined, Special Branch reports are to be found, beginning 'The following information has been received,' or, in some cases, 'The following information has been received from a reliable source.' The reports are surprisingly numerous, and some of them are also fairly lengthy.

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932; it is not clear from which London division of the Metropolitan Police this came, since the file contains only a duplicate copy of the memorandum in this case.

The file on the National Joint Council of Labour demonstration in Hyde Park, held on 5 February 1933, contains a precis of the information gathered on the plans of the unemployed leaders for the demonstration. This is dated 4 February, and states, firstly, that the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party will participate in the demonstration, and that it is expected;

'that the leading members of these movements will endeavour to speak from the official T.U.C. platforms, or hold independent meetings and demonstrations.'

The Communists, it continues;

'have stated their intentions to turn it into a militant demonstration against the wishes of the T.U.C.'

An attempt will be made:

'to take four rostrums into Hyde Park for the use of the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party officials, although permission has been given for only one platform.'

Furthermore;

'Instructions have been given to Wal Hannington to endeavour to get on to one of the T.U.C. platforms and speak therefrom. A body-guard of ten men, under the control of Henry Van Loo, has been selected to look after him.'

Finally;

'The Communist Seamen in the Seamen's Minority Movement are due to leave West Ham Recreation

Ground at 11.15 a.m., Newby Place, Poplar
at 11.30 a.m., and join up at the Labour
Hall, Stepney Green with the T.U.C.
demonstration,'

while members of the Busmen's Rank and File Movement
'will assemble at Temple Pier, Embankment,
at 1 p.m.'

That the police should have obtained such detailed and
accurate information as to the plans of the unemployed movement,
especially the intention to take four platforms into the Park
and for Hannington to attempt to speak from one of the official
platforms, is surprising. There is no doubt as to how the
information was obtained. A Special Branch report, dated 3
February 1933, and beginning

'The following information has been received,'
and goes on to state:

'The Organising Bureau of the N.U.W.M. met this
morning (Friday) at 59, Cromer Street, W.C., to
consider the official refusal of permission to
speak from their own platform in Hyde Park on
Sunday next (5 February). It was decided that
despite this ban, four rostrums, the property
of the C.P.G.B. Locals, would be taken into
Hyde Park for the use of N.U.W.M. and C.P.G.B.
officials. The opinion was expressed that one,
if not more, of the rostrums could be safely
erected and surrounded by sympathisers before
the police would become aware of it. The police

would then, it is considered probable, use their discretion and not take action.

'Wal Hannington has been instructed by the Communist Party to endeavour to get on one of the T.U.C. platforms and speak therefrom. He does not appreciate his selection for this task as, having just come out of prison, he considers that someone else should, to use his own words, "take a chance of being pinched." However, as he is "under a cloud", he is expected to make the attempt. A bodyguard of ten men, under the control of Henry Van Loo, of 30, Church Row, Limehouse, East, has been selected to look after Hannington.

'The Communists consider that the trouble, if any, will break out on the Embankment. In order to get support, the N.U.W.M. and Communist Party members have been instructed to form up as units behind "militant" (that is, sympathetic with Communism) Trades Union Branches. To deal with possible eventualities on the Embankment, Frederick Bayes Copeman (the ex-"Invergordon" naval rating), the London District Organiser of the N.U.W.M., will be assisted by Thompson, leader of the Southwark unemployed.

'In various East End Branches, the rank-and-file have been told that should a T.U.C. marshal object

to any bannerette carried in the N.U.W.M. ranks, and request the Police to eject the bearer or seize the bannerette, they should not concentrate on resisting Police, but on the T.U.C. official concerned.'¹

Similarly, the file also contains a transcribed report of an earlier meeting of the organisers, also at the Minority Movement headquarters, on Thursday 26 January. About twenty persons were present, says the report, and the meeting began with three cheers being given for Wal Hannington, who had just been released from prison.

'He made a long statement,' continues the report;

'on his recent arrest and sentence, which he described as a "frame-up" to get an excuse to search the offices of the N.U.W.M.'

In addition, there is a third report on a meeting of the London District Council of the N.U.W.M., again held at Cromer Street, held on the evening of 19 January. The chairman of the meeting was stated to be a man named George Finch, and Frederick Copeman and Pat Devine, acting National Secretary in place of Emrhys Llewellyn, were also present. Discussion centred on the imprisonment of Tom Mann, and on the possibility of arranging a welcoming demonstration for Hannington on his release. Included with this report was a copy of a circular from Fred Copeman, dated

¹ Mepol 2, 3050, National Joint Council demonstration, 5 February 1933; 59, Cromer Street, was the Headquarters of the National Minority Movement.

14 January, to all branches and area councils of the movement, which urged that where provincial demonstrations were being held in supply of the National Joint Council demonstration;

'We do everything possible to turn them into militant demonstrations against the wishes of the T.U.C.'

There was also a copy of a letter dated 14 January from Copeman, the London District Organiser, to all members of the National Administrative Council reminding them of the meeting to be held on 19 January 1933.

All this is obviously of considerable importance. As a result of being supplied with this information, the police were able to take steps not only to prevent the N.U.W.M. supporters from erecting the four platforms which they intended, but also to prevent Wal Hannington from reaching the official stands. The police were also in possession of the name and address of the leader of Hannington's bodyguard in this attempt. Again, there is nothing to suggest that the N.U.W.M. were aware that their plans had been betrayed. Furthermore, it has been noted that each of the three meetings at which the police informer was present had been held, not as might have been expected, at the N.U.W.M. headquarters (since those present were solely members of the unemployed movement, and since the business conducted related exclusively to the affairs of the N.U.W.M.), but instead at the headquarters of the National Minority Movement. Yet information also reached the police following similar meetings, as will be shown, at the N.U.W.M. offices and several other

places besides. It seem likely, although this cannot be proved beyond all doubt, that the same person was responsible for passing information to the police on all these occasions, and that he or she was one of the most highly trusted members of the central committee of the N.U.W.M., whose presence at meetings of both the London District Council and National Administrative Council was taken for granted, no matter where that meeting was to be held. This, indeed, seems the only way in which the informer could have obtained copies of the letters and circulars, which were also handed over to the police. It is interesting, too, to note that Hannington's instructions to make an attempt on the official platforms came from the Communist Party, and that he:

'did not appreciate his selection for this task,' since it meant exposing himself to the risk of further arrest, and that the informer judged him to be out of favour with the Communist Party (hence his comment 'under a cloud')¹

1 Similarly, the file Mepol 2, 3051, May Day demonstration, 7 May 1933, contains a memorandum written by Chief Constable F. W. Abbott, dated 6 May 1933, which begins 'The following information has been received,' and goes on: 'Regarding the participation of the Communist organisations in the T.U.C. demonstration to be held in Hyde Park tomorrow (Sunday), the only additional arrangements made by the Communists to those previously reported are that they have now definitely decided to have two of their own platforms in the Park...' This was a corollary to a previous memorandum from the Chief Constable, dated 5 May, which stated that the C.P.G.B. 'may endeavour to muster their members and sympathisers' to take part in the demonstration, organised under the auspices of the National Joint Council, and that they 'are asking that their speakers may be allowed on the official T.U.C. platforms;' 'if the request is refused, they may try to do so by force.' The police had, it was noted, received additional information which suggested that 'In view of the recent action by the Hitler Party in Germany in seizing the trade unions, etc., the Communists are endeavouring to organise a demonstration to the

It is equally apparent from examining the police records that the police were supplied with similar information during the 1932 Hunger March. There are four files relating to this march, and the largest of them,¹ contains over sixty transcribed reports of speeches made by unemployed leaders and other militants, mostly taken down by police sergeants or constables at open-air meetings. Several, however, are reports made by Special Branch detectives, which, as in the case of the National Joint Council demonstration, begin with the statement

'The following information has been received,'
and are accounts of meetings of the London Reception Committee of the N.U.W.M., the London District Council, and in one instance, a meeting of the International Labour Defence.

The first such information is a four page report of a conference convened for the purpose of forming a reception committee for the Hunger Marchers, which was held at Friars Hall, Blackfriars Road, in South East London, on Sunday 25 September 1932. Those present included Wal Hannington, Sid Elias, and Emrhys Llewellyn.² A Committee of nineteen members was formed.

Germany Embassy.' It is not clear from whom this information was obtained by the police: it is possible that it was submitted by the same informer who gave the police details of the N.U.W.M. meetings.

1 Nopol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932.

2 Ibid.; their full names were given as Sidney Job Elias, and Emrhys Glanffrwd Llewellyn.

Its first meeting was held in the public dining room of the 'Pindar of Wakefield' Public House, Grays Inn Road, on the evening of 29 September. The main speaker was Wal Hannington. A five page report of the meeting is to be found in the police records. As in the case of the previous meeting, most of the speeches made were of a woolly, propagandist nature, and are of no importance in themselves.

There are, in addition, two reports of meetings of the London District Council of the N.U.W.M., the first held at Cromer Street, on 20 October, at which representatives of more than twenty branches were present, including Sid Elias, and also Bob Lovell, of the International Labour Defence. The second was held at the headquarters of the N.U.W.M., 35 Great Russell Street, on 29 October. The first report is six pages long, the second four.¹ A meeting of the I.L.D. itself, at Canning Town Hall (Small), on the morning of Sunday, 9 October, is also reported on, Bob Lovell being the Chairman. In the evening, at Canning Town Hall (Large), an open meeting, attended by more than one thousand, and addressed by Harry Pollitt and Pat Devine, was held; this too is reported upon. Finally, a further meeting of the London Reception Committee was reported upon, namely that held at the

1 Mepol 2, 3064, National Hunger March 1932; the second report stated: 'Wal Hannington is "wobbling" now, and is rather nervous regarding his responsibility. He is in favour of endeavouring to induce the Hunger Marchers to return to their home areas, following the presentation of the Petition on Tuesday, but Isabel Brown, the paid Communist official in charge of the Workers' International Relief, is intensely opposing him, as she wants the marchers to remain in London indefinitely.' The 'Isabel' Brown referred to was Maud Brown, the N.U.W.M. Women's Organiser.

N.U.W.M. headquarters on 21 October 1932. The report states that sixteen persons were present, including Elias; the topics discussed included the arrangements for accommodation for the marchers, and the activities of the contingents during their stay in London, but none of this was new to the police.

The file on the 1934 Hunger March contains even more distinct evidence of the existence and activities of an informer working for the police inside the unemployed movement. The summary of events on the March sent by the Police Commissioner to the Home Secretary begins with the following statement:

'On 26 August 1932, information was received that the National Unemployed Workers' Movement was endeavouring to obtain signatures to a National Petition against the Means Test, which it was proposed to present to Parliament. Arrangements were then commenced by the leaders of the movement to organise a march of unemployed men and women on London...'¹

Although, once again, there is no indication as to how this information came into the hands of the police, it may well have been that it was supplied by the same informer who was responsible for giving information on the 1932 March (and perhaps the National Joint Council demonstration in February 1933 also), particularly in view of the fact that the first notification

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

received by the police of the 1932 Hunger March was in September 1932, one month after the date in the statement quoted above.¹

At the same time, therefore, as a file was being kept on the 1932 March, a second file was opened on the question of a National Petition, which eventually became the file on the 1934 March. The next information in this context does not appear to have been conveyed to the police until February 1934, when the informer reported on a meeting of Branch officials of the N.U.W.M. at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, held on Tuesday, 20 February of that year. The Chairman of the meeting was reported to have been Bob McLennan,² and Fred Copeman was also stated to have been present. The topics discussed at the meeting ranged from details for the accommodation of the marchers in London, to arrangements for the Bermondsey Congress. The same file contains a report on a meeting also held on 20 February of the East London March Committee, held at 82, Culloden Street, Poplar.³ Those present at this meeting included delegates from the West Ham Branch, East Ham, Poplar, Limehouse, Stepney, Hackney and Shoreditch branches, and, among the national leaders, Fred Copeman was also present. The report indicates that a lengthy discussion took place on the welcome of the marchers in West Ham. It was agreed that attempts would be made to press the local Council

1 See above, p. 583.

2 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934; full name given as Robert Graham McLennan.

3 It is not clear as to what this address is: perhaps it was the office of one of the East London branches, or the home of one of the branch leaders.

into providing accommodation for ten days for one hundred and fifty men.

It could be that the same person made each of these reports: Fred Copeman, for example, was named in the police records as having been present at both meetings, and it must, therefore, have been possible for others to have attended both. The East London Council meetings were probably attended quite frequently by representatives from the National Administrative Council. Even so, this is further proof of the firm trust and high position within the movement of the informant, and also of his audacity. But a second informer did exist. A Special Branch report dated 21 February begins with the following statement:

'A report has been received from another reliable agent who has been with the Scottish contingent.'

The report continues;

'the leaders have complete control over their men,'

some of whom are in possession of sticks, which are described as:

'formidable weapons.' 'It has not yet been decided whether the men will carry their sticks when they march into London, or whether they will be collected, and put into a lorry and taken to a "safe place."'

The report goes on;

'In addition to the Headquarters of the N.U.W.M. being protected against an attack by Fascists,

No. 16 King Street, the head offices of the

C.P.G.B. has established a permanent guard.'

It is likely that this information was received from another source, not the agent with the Scottish marchers. The same report concludes with the following paragraph:

'Regarding the question of sticks, the following information has been received from another source. Arrangements are being made by the Workers' International Relief for supplying the Hunger Marchers with tea and sandwiches in Hyde Park on Sunday, February 25th. Vans are being hired for the purpose. A suggestion has been made by the more irresponsible section that the vans should be used to convey the sticks or missiles to the park for distribution, because the police would seize them at the assembly points if carried by the marchers.'¹

There is no further indication as to how this last piece of information was obtained: it seems likely that it was from a third source, in addition to two previously mentioned. Finally, the file contains another Special Branch report, this one dated 2 March 1934, the information presumably being obtained from the original source, referring to a meeting of the March leaders that afternoon, 2 March, during which arrangements for Monday, 5 March were discussed. There were to be deputations to various Ministries in the afternoon of that day, including the Ministries of Labour, Health, Transport, Education and Pensions. It is

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

likely that this was the first time that the police had heard of these intentions.¹

One occasion on which the police were not able to obtain first hand information into the affairs of the N.U.W.M. during this March, was on the occasion of a meeting in a Committee Room at the House of Commons on 21 February, 1934. The police files record that about 140 M.P.'s were present, representative of all political parties. The meeting was called by James Maxton, and was addressed by Campbell Stephen, the former I.L.P. member, and by Lewis Jones of the Welsh marchers, and Harry McShane. The police were not allowed into the meeting.² It is also worth noting that as a result of the support the marchers were receiving from M.P.'s such as Bevan, Maxton, and McGovern, in their demands for representatives to be heard at the Bar of the House, the Home Secretary was sufficiently worried to call a meeting in his room, on 6 February, in order to ascertain the procedure for the suspension of M.P.'s, should there be a disturbance in the House. The Police Commissioner was present at this meeting, and a copy of the minutes of the meeting was found in the Metropolitan Police records for the 1934 March.³

1 Mepol 2, 3071, National Hunger March 1934.

2 Ibid.; there is nothing in this file to suggest that the police obtained information on the discussions which took place at this meeting.

3 Ibid.; the remainder included the Right Honourable Douglas Hacking, Unionist M.P. for Chorley, Lancashire, who had been Conservative Party Whip in the House of Commons from 1922-25, and was at the time Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office; Brigadier-General Lord Esme Gordon-Lennox, Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod and Secretary to the Lord Chamberlain; Lt.Col. Sir Ralph Verney, Secretary to the Speaker; W. H. Erskine, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms in the House of Commons; and Sir Russell Scott, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Home Office.

Finally, one of the files kept by Scotland Yard of the 1936 Hunger March reveals the continued existence of a police agent within the N.U.W.M. As in 1934, this file was begun after the police, in July 1936, received the following information:

'The Communist Party and the N.U.W.M. have for the past few weeks been considering the prospect of being able to organise a successful "hunger march" from various points of the country to London in October or November next, and have now decided that the intense opposition of the new Unemployment Regulations can be exploited to secure this aim.

"Steps are, therefore, being taken to set up the preliminary machinery for this purpose... Every effort is to be made to keep in the background the "Party" character of the march and to make it as much an "all-in" protest demonstration as possible.'¹

It would appear that, although the possibility of a hunger march had been under discussion

'for the past few weeks,'

the informer waited until a definite decision had been taken as to whether or not to hold the march, before notifying the police. No indication is given as to how this information was obtained by the informer, but it seems likely that it was secured as a result of his attending meetings of the Headquarters Advisory

¹ Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936; the Special Branch report containing this information was dated 25 July 1936.

Committee throughout the summer of 1936, evidence once again of the high-ranking position of the informer within the unemployed movement.

Early in September, the Special Branch were informed of a meeting of the National Administrative Council of the unemployed movement, which had been held in London over the weekend of 29-30 August, and had been attended by delegates from Scotland, South Wales and the provinces, the purpose of which had been to discuss the proposed Hunger March. The report contains details of a speech made at the meeting by Wal Hannington, in which he announced that arrangements had been made for seven main contingents to take part. These would be from Scotland (East and West), Lancashire, the North East Coast, South Wales, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and a contingent of women. The police were thus given an early brief as to the plans of the unemployed organisers.¹

Soon after this, the police were given reports of two meetings, the first, at the headquarters of the movement, 11a, White Lion Street, on 8 September 1936, being a meeting of the Headquarters Advisory Committee, and the second, held at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, soon after this date, being a meeting of the London District Council. The discussion in both cases centred on the arrangements for the March; at the second meeting the route of the contingent from Aberdeen was announced. A few days later, a report was submitted of a meeting held at Toynbee

1 Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936.

Hall, in the east of London, on 14 September, for the purpose of forming a London Reception Committee for the Hunger Marchers. Hannington took the chair, and the report given to the police included details of his speech.

On 18 September, the authorities were notified by this informer that a conference of leading members of the unemployed movement was to be held in London on 26 September. Those expected to attend were Arthur Horner, Hannington, Ted Williams, appointed leader of the Lancashire contingent, and whose address was given as 115, Chatham Street, Liverpool; Harry McShane, leader of the East of Scotland marchers, whose address was given as 63, John Street, Glasgow; Dai Ley, of 175, Victoria Road, East Kirby, Notts.; and Len Youle, 87, Heavygate Avenue, Walkley, Sheffield. The police were also given a list, indicating the towns through which each of the contingents would pass on their way to London, although no dates had yet been fixed. In addition, the police were also given the names of other contingent leaders: the West of Scotland marchers were to be led by Councillor John Heenan of the I.L.P.; Maud Brown was to lead the women's contingent, as on previous occasions; D. L. Davies, Member of Parliament for Pontypridd had been appointed Treasurer of the South Wales contingent; and Wal Hannington had been invited to lead the marchers from Northumberland.

The first meeting of the London Reception Committee was held on 21 September, and this, too, was made known to the police. Those present, it was stated in a Special Branch report dated 24 September, included Hannington, Devine and Llewellyn,

along with eight others. Along with the details of the meeting, a copy of a letter from Hannington, dated the previous day, to all branches of the movement, was attached. This included a document (also attached) giving the routes and timetables of the various contingents: the police, therefore, knew of the complete itinerary of the 1936 March, as soon as the branches did.¹

Three further meetings of the London Reception Committee were also reported upon. The first, on 12 October, was attended by Hannington, Devine, and Dr. Edith Summerskill. The speeches of the two former men were reported in detail. A copy of a letter dated 9 October and signed by Pat Devine to all London trades union branches and trades council urging them to support the march was also handed over to the police, and is to be found in the file. Similarly, a copy of a letter written on the same day, again addressed to all London trades union branches and trades councils, but this time appealing for donations to the marchers' fund, is also contained in the file. This was signed by Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., John Jagger, M.P., G. R. Strauss, M.P., Aneurin Bevan, M.P., S. O. Davies, M.P., Councillor J. E. A. King of the London County Council, Ted Hill, Jenny Lee, Tom Mann, and Alex Gossip. Soon after this, the London Trades Council, the London Labour Party, and the Co-operative Party decided in favour of sponsoring the March.

A second conference of the Reception Committee was held during the afternoon of 17 October. The report to the police

1 See Appendix XII for routes of the 1936 Hunger March.

contained details of the speeches made by Wal Hannington, Pat Devine, Harry McShane and Peter Kerrigan. Others present included Aneurin Bevan, Dr. Edith Summerskill, Maud Brown, Tom Mann, and Len Youle. Finally, a third meeting was held at the National Trades Union Club, New Oxford Street, on the evening of 19 October 1936. Thirty-two persons were reported to have been present, including Mann, Devine, Maud Brown and Edith Summerskill. Devine's speech was noted at length, and a copy of 'Hunger March Bulletin No. 3' was also handed over to the police.¹

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In conclusion, it is evident that, from the summer of 1932 onwards, one or more police agents were at work within the N.U.W.M. Nothing more about the identity of this person or persons is known. Much of the information appears to have been supplied by only one person: in particular this would appear to be true of details supplied to the police from meetings of the N.A.C. and London District Council of the N.U.W.M., together with the reception committees formed on the 1932 and 1936 Hunger Marches. It cannot be proved, however, that only one person was involved on these occasions, and during the 1934 March, as has been indicated, it is likely that two or possibly three agents gave information to the police. Information was received by the police on the following meetings:

1 Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936.

1932 HUNGER MARCH RECEPTION COMMITTEE

Meetings at:

Friars Hall, Blackfriars Road,
S.E. London September 1932

'Pindar of Wakefield' September 1932

35 Great Russell Street
(N.U.W.M. Headquarters) October 1932

LONDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meetings at:

59 Cromer Street, (National
Minority Movement Headquarters) October 1932

35 Great Russell Street October 1932

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DEFENCE

Meeting at:

Canning Town Hall October 1932

ORGANISING BUREAU OF THE N.U.W.M.

Meetings at:

Cromer Street January 1933

Cromer Street February 1933

LONDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting at:

Cromer Street February 1933

N.U.W.M. BRANCH OFFICIALS

Meeting at:

Marx House February 1934

EAST LONDON MARCH COMMITTEE

Meeting at:

82 Culloden Street, Poplar February 1934

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Meeting at:

11a White Lion Street
(N.U.W.M. Headquarters)

August 1936

HEADQUARTERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting at:

11a White Lion Street

September 1936

LONDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting at:

Marx House

September 1936

1936 HUNGER MARCH, LONDON RECEPTION COMMITTEE

Meetings at:

Toynbee Hall (first meeting
after inauguration)

September 1936

(Not stated)

September 1936

(Not stated)

October 1936

(Not stated)

October 1936

National Trades Union Club

October 1936

In addition, in August 1932, as has been stated, the police received notice that the N.U.W.M. had decided to organise a national petition against the Means Test which, it was intended, would be presented to Parliament: this became the 1934 Hunger March file. Similarly, in July 1936, the police were informed that the unemployed movement intended to hold a further national hunger march.

Certain questions remain to be asked about the files themselves. The numbers of the files are not, in most cases,

consecutive, although these are apparently the only records relating to unemployed disturbances in the inter-war years. Why, for example, does file no. 3040 (on the Hyde Park demonstration in September 1934) come before that of the National Joint Council demonstration of February 1933, the number of which is 3050? Likewise, why does no. 3051, which relates to a demonstration in 1933 come before files 3064-7, all of which relate to the 1934 Hunger March, while the file on the 1936 March is numbered 3053? Why were no files kept on either of the 1929 or 1930 Hunger Marches? Why is file number 1958 entitled Unemployed Processions, 1920-1925 when it contains the records of only one demonstration, and that in 1920? Have some records been destroyed? If so, what was the nature of the material contained in them? Did the police receive similar information to that described in this chapter on other occasions? Finally, might the names, or at least further clues to the identities, of the informants have been revealed, perhaps on the first occasion on which they came forward to give the police information?

Answers to these, and other questions will presumably remain unknown. Without such information, only an incomplete, though nonetheless interesting, picture can be pieced together. It appears that the records which have been kept were retained for the reason that they referred, as, for example, has been suggested in the case of the 1920 demonstration,¹ to the

1 See above, p. 545.

biggest demonstrations of the period. Similarly, from Table 1 of this chapter, it will be seen that only on eight occasions in the years between 1932 and 1934 were more than one thousand police required at any one unemployed demonstration.¹ Yet there were other disturbances in London organised by the N.U.W.M. in these years. The files on these eight occasions have all been kept, for the reason, or so it appears, that these were the largest demonstrations: other records, of smaller demonstrations, have been destroyed, possibly because they were thought to be of less 'historical value,' in that much of the material contained in them merely repeated what was to be found on a larger scale in the other files.

¹ See above, p. 549.

Chapter FifteenTHE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT:
CONCLUSIONS

After the 1936 Hunger March, direct action on the part of the unemployed declined sharply. Throughout 1937, unemployment in Great Britain was falling: from almost 1.7 million in January of that year, the figures showed a steady drop until September, when 1,339,000 were still out of work.¹ This was a large enough figure in itself, of course, but not one, when compared to almost three million unemployed in January 1933, which the N.U.W.M. could use to arouse support for its activities on the scale of previous years, and, during 1937, unemployed agitation was confined mainly to London. In May of that year, however, the movement organised a national petition, calling for the abolition of the means test, and for the Government to begin a national plan of public works schemes.² During the winter months of 1937-8 unemployment rose once more, and throughout the whole of 1938 the figures remained above 1.75 million. In this time the N.U.W.M. published several new penny pamphlets, including one written by Wal Hannington, but as far as demonstrations and other protests were concerned, unemployed activity was at a minimum.³

In November 1938, however, with almost two millions out of work, the N.U.W.M. began a nation-wide campaign for extra winter

1 See above, Appendix I.

2 W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, pp.319-20.

3 W. Hannington, Beware! Slave Camps and Conscription (1938): also J. Connolly, Your Rights Under the U.A.B. (1938); both made available by R. & E. Frow.

relief for the unemployed. As in 1937, most of the activity took place in London, and there were no demonstrations in the South-East Lancashire region. In Scotland, however, a national hunger march to Edinburgh was held, on which more than eight hundred unemployed workers took part. Led by Wal Hannington and Harry McShane, the marchers arrived in the city on 27 November, when they were given an official welcome by the Trades and Labour Council. They slept on the Waverley Market, with boards covering the stone floor. On 28 November a deputation of twelve of their number, including Hannington, met the chief officers of the Ministry of Labour for Scotland, the Unemployment Assistance Board, and the Board of Health, in an interview which lasted more than two hours.¹

The usual activities such as meetings, demonstrations and petitions failed to awaken any public interest in the unemployed on this occasion, however. Instead, popular attention was focused on the European situation. To overcome this lack of interest the unemployed movement found it necessary to employ new techniques of protest action. This unique campaign, which gained extensive publicity, depended for its success on various surprise actions by small well-organised groups of men and women. On 20 December 1938, in the middle of London's evening rush hour, a group of unemployed lay down across the road in Oxford Circus, blocking traffic. They were forcibly removed by police, who were themselves prevented from reaching the scene by the hold-up

1 W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp.323-4.

of traffic which was caused. Considerable interest on the part of the passers-by was aroused at the sight of the men lying on their backs in the middle of the road chanting slogans and displaying banners across their chests.¹

On 22 December, about fifty members of the N.U.W.M. in London, including three women, walked into the Grill Room of the Ritz Hotel, Piccadilly, and asked to be served with tea.

'They stated that they were willing to pay,' it was reported by the Times next day, but since the Grill Room was closed at the time, the report continued, the management refused service and called the police. While waiting for the arrival of the police, speeches were made by the unemployed demanding extra winter relief and special consideration at Christmas. After some time, two police sergeants arrived and asked them to leave. The demonstrators agreed, and walked out in a body, chanting

'We want winter relief,'

as they did so. On leaving the Hotel they paraded along Piccadilly, carrying posters advertising their demands.² This was followed on 23 December by a deputation, consisting of fifteen members of the N.U.W.M. in the City, to Buckingham Palace, where a request was made to be allowed to present a petition to the King on the subject of the condition of the unemployed. The unemployed were informed that the King was

1 W. Hannington, Black Coffins and the Unemployed (1939), p.10.

2 Times, 23 December 1938.

away at Sandringham, however, but the leader of the deputation was allowed into the forecourt of the Palace in order to hand the petition to a Private Secretary.¹ A few days later a reply was received by the N.U.W.M.

One of the most strikingly effective demonstrations of the campaign in London took place on 30 December, when several members of the movement climbed to the top of the Monument on Fish Street Hill, at the northern approach to London Bridge, and hung from the summit a huge banner, thirty feet wide, on which was written

'For a Happy New Year the unemployed must not starve in 1939.'

Not for some considerable time were police able to reach the Monument and remove the banner. The incident was widely reported by the newspapers next day, and the position of the Monument sufficiently prominent for thousands of Londoners to have seen the banner for themselves.² Later that day, New Years Eve., the N.U.W.M. held a parade through the main streets of London, from Trafalgar Square to St. Paul's. The demonstrators on this occasion carried a black coffin on which had been painted in bold white lettering

'He did not get winter relief.'

The coffin and the mock funeral procession were intended, wrote

1 Times, 24 December 1938.

2 Ibid, 31 December, 1938.

Hannington,

'to symbolise the policy of Mr. Chamberlain
in regard to the unemployed.'¹

A large crowd of 'mourners' from the London branches of the unemployed movement had gathered in Trafalgar Square an hour before midnight, and the procession then set out through the Strand in a slow 'funeral' march, with the coffin at the head. Lighted candles were carried and silence was maintained by the demonstrators, whose numbers were constantly augmented from among the ranks of the hundreds of people who stood and watched on the pavements. Before the procession reached Ludgate Hill, however, they were confronted by a line of mounted and foot police, and were quickly separated and dispersed, although the coffin was retained.

Some days later, on 3 January 1939, the coffin re-appeared, when an attempt was made to deliver it to No. 10 Downing Street. The police were called to Whitehall when it became clear that a demonstration of unemployed was to be held in the vicinity of Downing Street, but a furniture van was allowed to pass through the ranks of police, and this stopped outside the Prime Minister's residence. A man jumped out, and others, who had been inside the back of the van, began to carry the coffin to the door of No. 10. The police ran to the scene, and the coffin was restored, after a brief struggle, to the back of the van. The remainder of the demonstrators were dispersed peaceably. The

1 W. Hannington, Black Coffins and the Unemployed, p.29.

van driver, who had been hired by a reputable firm, was arrested, but as he knew nothing of what was planned was later released. The coffin^{was} afterwards returned to the N.U.W.M. offices. Later in the day a number of demonstrators knocked at the door of No. 10, and asked that a deputation be received. This was refused, although the men were allowed to hand in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, which stated:

'We deliver this coffin to you -
 symbolic of the condition of British
 industry, and the fate which awaits the
 men, women and children, who will be
 hounded to the grave by hunger.'¹

During the next few weeks the 'coffin' became a symbol in the winter relief campaign of the N.U.W.M., and appeared regularly on the streets of London in demonstrations and public events. Whenever it was captured by the police, or broken up in a demonstration, another was built to replace it. The publicity which the London campaign aroused stimulated similar activities in provincial towns and cities where a number of other 'coffins' appeared, although South-East Lancashire was not included.²

On Friday, 6 January 1939, the Times reported that members of the N.U.W.M. in London had sent a telegram to the King asking him to recall Sir John Anderson, the Lord Privy Seal, who

1 Times, 4 January 1939; W. Hannington, op. cit., P.32.
 2 W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, p.327.

was in charge of civil defence, from his holiday in Switzerland, to hear their proposals for providing work for the unemployed on national defence.¹ On the same day seven men chained themselves to the railings of the house of the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, in Camden Road. It took police more than forty minutes to saw through the chains, during which time the men shouted slogans protesting against the Government's treatment of the unemployed. A few days later, on January 12, a number of other unemployed workers used the same methods of protest outside the Labour Exchanges in Camden Town, Holloway and elsewhere in London.²

This was followed, on 17 January, a Tuesday, by a further demonstration in which about fifty men and one woman, all members of the unemployed movement, held up traffic for about a quarter of an hour in Oxford Street, London, by laying down in the roadway. It was reported at the time that, in spite of pouring rain, they remained in regular rows across the road, making it impossible for vehicles to move, while other unemployed workers paraded up and down the pavements displaying posters and chanting slogans. When police arrived and requested them to move on, they offered no resistance, and normal conditions were soon restored.³ In the same week, on Saturday, another demonstration was held. About a dozen members of the N.U.W.M. invaded

1 Times, 6 January 1939.

2 Ibid, 13 January 1939; W. Hannington, Black Coffins and the Unemployed, pp.38-9; notes by Ronald Kidd, made available by the National Council for Civil Liberties.

3 Times, 18 January 1939.

the pitches of the Highbury and Upton Park football grounds, during the interval of soccer matches between Arsenal and Charlton, and West Ham and Tottenham. At Highbury, the demonstrators carried placards round the pitch bearing slogans such as

'Kick with us for work or bread.'

They were chased by police, it was reported, for some five minutes before all were caught and ejected from the ground. At the West Ham game, however, the demonstrators managed to escape into the crowd.¹

One of the final activities of the winter relief campaign took place on Saturday, 4 February, when twenty members of the Hackney Branch of the N.U.W.M. lay down across a pedestrian crossing at Mare Street, Hackney, and held up traffic in either direction for about a quarter of an hour. A queue of vehicles had built up about one and a half miles long before police arrived to clear the demonstrators. Five men and one woman were arrested, but a large collection was taken by other unemployed workers from sympathetic passers-by.² In March 1939, Wal Hannington visited Lancashire on a campaign tour.³ In the same month a new pamphlet was published by the movement, written by Hannington: this was followed in June by a further publication.⁴ In August 1939 unemployment fell below 1.25 million

1 Times, 24 January 1939.

2 Information made available by the National Council for Civil Liberties.

3 Manchester Guardian, 16 March 1939.

4 W. Hannington, Chamberlain: Face the Facts (1939); W. Hannington, The Fascist Danger and the Unemployed (1939); both made available by R. & E. Frow.

for the first time since June 1928. On 3 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Within a few months, many of the remaining unemployed had been absorbed into industry, or in the case of those who were still fit enough, into the armed forces, and the N.U.W.M. came to an end.

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For almost twenty years the National Unemployed Workers' Movement had led the struggles of the unemployed. In terms of concrete victories its history can hardly be regarded as an outstanding success: both on issues of national importance, and also as far as activities in South-East Lancashire, it was only on rare occasions that any agitation undertaken by the movement was directly successful. In terms of membership the N.U.W.M. scarcely touched the surface of the unemployment problem. At the beginning of the period 1929 to 1936 the movement had about ten thousand members. This was doubled to about twenty thousand by the end of 1929, but even after October 1931, the main period of activity against the means test and the benefit reductions, in spite of the pressures from the R.I.L.U. to do more, membership had only reached fifty thousand.¹ At its peak, therefore, in the winter of 1932-3, when unemployment itself reached its highest point in the depression, the membership of the movement

¹ L. J. MacFarlane, op. cit., p. 240(n); Communist Review, IV (October 1932).

was probably not more than one hundred thousand, or three per cent. of the total out of work. Even these estimates are open to doubt, since it is impossible to determine on what basis different branches recorded their membership. In every branch only a small number regularly paid their weekly subscriptions, although many more could always be relied upon to attend demonstrations and meetings.

One of the most disappointing features of the history of the unemployed movement, therefore, was the failure of the branches to broaden themselves sufficiently to include more than a very small percentage of the unemployed, in spite of extensive efforts to the contrary by the N.A.C. But it would be an injustice to analyse the movement in terms of success or failure alone. In 1920 the movement was begun in an attempt to secure an immediate improvement in the conditions of unemployment in Great Britain, by demanding adequate maintenance until work could be provided. This remained the central aim of the movement throughout its existence, and manifested itself in all the various activities undertaken by the unemployed, including, for example, demands made by deputations to local authorities, demonstrations, and hunger marches. Although the outcome of most of these was unsuccessful, in that no concession to the demands of the unemployed were obtained from the authorities, it would be wrong to condemn the movement as a failure because of this.

In many ways the most important work of the movement was in its legal activities. Almost every branch had members who

acted as the representatives on behalf of unemployed before courts of referees or public assistance authorities. Few had any legal training, but, after studying the insurance regulations, they became quite expert in arguing the technicalities of different cases, and many claimants had their benefit restored or increased as a result. At the movement's headquarters in London a Legal Department was established which dealt with appeals to be taken before the Umpire of the Unemployment Insurance Scheme, when a claim on good grounds had been rejected by a local court. Over the years of the movement's history, several thousand appeals were submitted to the Umpire, and a very substantial proportion were upheld, resulting in the gain of thousands of pounds by members of the unemployed movement.¹

¹ No records of the Legal Department of the N.U.W.M. are available, and the N.A.C. Reports give only the barest details of the work undertaken in this sphere. In 1932 and the first quarter of 1933 almost two thousand cases were handled by the Department and nearly 650 were upheld:

<u>1932</u>	<u>Allowed</u>	<u>Disallowed</u>	<u>Not Entertained</u>	<u>Total</u>
January-April	131	500	42	673
May	86	106	21	213
June	59	26	5	90
July	67	40	2	109
August	64	57	3	124
September	35	71	7	113
October	40	68	12	120
November	16	22	2	40
December	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>47</u>
T O T A L	518	910	101	1529
<u>1933</u>				
January-April	129	223	22	374

Report of the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1933
(made available by R. & E. Frow.)

In addition to this the N.U.W.M. was the only organisation which made any attempt to assist the unemployed in understanding their entitlements under the Unemployment Acts. Similar work was undertaken by the T.U.C. and Labour Party, but not to anything like the same extent. The N.U.W.M., on the other hand, constantly issued pamphlets and circulars explaining new Acts of Parliament or regulations or amendments. It is no exaggeration to say that, under the guise of calls for 'economy' or for 'greater sacrifices all round,' successive governments attempted to reduce the burden of unemployment insurance by simply reducing the numbers applying for benefit. When, for example, in December 1934, the new Unemployment Assistance Board regulations were announced, the Manchester Guardian commented that:

'there is reasonable ground for complaint that the U.A.B. and the Ministry of Labour have not taken the public into their confidence as completely as they might have done.....The regulations are thrown at the head of Parliament with little explanation and with little guidance as to the reasons that led the U.A.B. to put them forward in this form.'¹

In January 1935 the N.U.W.M. published a pamphlet entitled An explanation of the New Unemployment Assistance Scales and Regulations.² In South-East Lancashire, Sid Elias, one of the

1 Manchester Guardian, 17 December 1934.

2 J. Connolly, An Explanation of the New Unemployment Assistance Scales and Regulations (1935); made available by R. & E. Frow.)

two national organisers, who was on campaign work in the county, went to considerable lengths to explain the new regulations to his audiences at various meetings in the same month.¹ Apart from the efforts of the N.U.W.M., little or no attempt was made to help the unemployed through the varied and complicated methods of application. Few of them fully understood what was their due. The work of the N.U.W.M. in this direction, therefore, was of considerable importance.

The N.U.W.M. had to face much opposition, not the least of which, as has been shown, came from the T.U.C. and Labour Party, bodies which might have been expected to support the movement. On each of the five national hunger marches organised by the movement between 1929 and 1936, both the General Council and the National Executive of the Labour Party maintained a steady opposition, and when in 1930 the Labour Party issued the first of its 'Black Circulars,' declaring a number of organisations stated to be under Communist control ineligible for affiliation to the Party, the N.U.W.M. was among those bodies proscribed. The attitude of the leadership of the official Labour movement to the N.U.W.M. itself presented further difficulties: the fact that the unemployed movement did not have the support of the Labour Party and T.U.C. was used as a shield by Tory M.P.'s to oppose the claims of the movement. In addition, employers used the opportunity to refuse work to men who were known to be members of the N.U.W.M., and thus many who might have joined the

1 See above, Chapter 13, pp. 531-3.

movement were deterred from doing so by the threat of victimisation.

As has also been suggested, relationships between the police and the N.U.W.M. were poor. In 1937, Ronald Kidd, first secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, wrote:

'It is disquieting to find that provocative agents have been employed within recent years for political purposes, to attempt to discredit political or economic movements which are disliked by the government of the day. The writer of this article and one of his friends witnessed two incidents of the use of agent-provocateurs during the Hunger March of 1932. The discrediting of the Hunger Marchers was without doubt the deliberate policy of the Government in 1932 and 1934. In the latter year, the then Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour, abused his public position by attempting to create a panic mentality before the arrival of the marchers. A day or two before they were due to arrive in London, Sir John, through the medium of the Press, warned the public not to be at large and to keep their children off the streets, and he advised shop keepers to shutter-up their windows.'

Kidd went on to describe in the article an incident during a demonstration in London after the arrival of the marchers, when two 'roughly dressed' men, wearing scarves and cloth caps, in the midst of a police baton charge suddenly drew from under their coats regulation police truncheons, and proceeded to 'lay about them,' and made two arrests. In addition, at a moment when the demonstration appeared to be calming down, a well-known detective sergeant, dressed in a trilby hat, drew a missile from his pocket and threw it at the mounted police. This action prompted a further baton charge.¹ In the 1934 Annual Report of the Council it was stated that, following a letter to the Manchester Guardian,² after the march had ended a number of independent witnesses brought forward reports of police provocation and other irregularities.³ The violence of the demonstrations against the economies and the introduction of the means test in October 1931 prompted the leaders of the unemployed movement to take steps to avoid further clashes with the police, and although demonstrations after this date were always rowdy, the occasions on which open fighting with the police broke out were much less frequent. Significantly, in South-East Lancashire, which experienced considerable violence

1 Civil Liberty, No. 2 (Augumn 1937); R. Kidd, British Liberty in Danger (1940), p. 145.

2 See above Chapter 10, p. 424.

3 National Council for Civil Liberties, Annual Report 1934.

in 1931, in the agitation against the U.A.B. regulations much greater use was made of hall meetings as opposed to outside demonstrations than had been the case in the past. There was far less likelihood of the police breaking up an indoor meeting, and the movement in this way was in part able to rid itself of the image that it was

'simply an organisation of unemployed revolutionaries,'¹

an important step forward in the united front campaign.

The N.U.W.M. encountered much opposition from the national Press, which was inclined to play down its achievements, and also to minimise the size of its demonstrations. On 5 March 1930, for example, the Times, referring to the demonstrations planned by the N.U.W.M. for the following day, International Fighting Day against Unemployment, declared that:

'There will, of course, be no response to this flamboyant instigation to "mass action" with its covert implications of violence. But here and there the Communist leaders may succeed in manhandling a few of the unemployed.'

Two days later, in its report of the demonstration in London, the paper stated that the protest march 'would almost have escaped notice but for the few banners and red flags carried.' The numbers involved were stated to be 'little more than five hundred.' The Communist newspaper, the Daily Worker, on the

¹ Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 25-26 May 1935.

other hand, called the demonstration 'magnificent,' and estimated that about four thousand unemployed had taken part.¹

There were other obstacles. The 'first result' of unemployment, Michael Foot has written, 'was to sap the spirit of militancy' among those out of work.² To most, unemployment meant apathy: the main problem was how to keep warm and conserve low energy. This was done by staying in bed late in the morning and going to bed early at night. The cinemas and billiard halls provided similar opportunities, as did the public libraries: all were full of unemployed. Others loafed at street corners. Far from turning to revolution as the answer to their situation, the unemployed, for the most part, simply settled down to existence on the dole. At the very time, therefore, when the unemployed might have been expected to be willing to fight to improve their condition, the large majority were found lacking in the necessary spirit and energy. Once more, the N.U.W.M. was a revolutionary body in a non-revolutionary situation.³

Other factors weighed heavily against the success of the N.U.W.M. in South-East Lancashire. As has already been stated, unemployed skilled engineers formed the leadership of the movement in this area. Yet, although the inter-war years, as far as Lancashire is concerned, are traditionally associated with the slump in the cotton industry, in spite of the high level of unemployment among cotton operatives, few ever joined the N.U.W.M.

1 Times, 5, 7 March 1930; Daily Worker, 7 March 1930; there is no evidence to support the latter estimate, and the number stated to have taken part may be exaggerated.

2 M. Foot, op. cit., p. 36.

3 See above, Chapter 9, p. 333.

a result, at least in part, of the large amount of short-time worked in the industry, which meant that there was usually at least some prospect of employment in the foreseeable future. Moreover, since employment of women was higher in Lancashire than elsewhere, there was often more than one wage-earner in the family, and unemployment was not necessarily as disastrous as in other parts of Great Britain.¹ Yet the N.U.W.M. also had to face conservatism of the working class in this area. Pelling, writing of the difficulties encountered at this period by the Communist Party in Lancashire, has made reference to what was by no means a rare phenomenon, the Conservative working man: indeed, he has written,

'If any totalitarian creed stood a chance of adoption by the Lancashire workers, it was likely to be Fascism.'²

The National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M. was aware of this, and paid considerable attention to the state of the movement in Lancashire, regarding the movement as a bulwark against the advance of Fascism.³ Undoubtedly, what Pelling has referred to as the

'inveterate conservatism of the working class' in Lancashire, and the

'stout Nonconformist or Roman Catholic

religious enthusiasms,'

1 This point has been dealt with in Chapter 3, pp. 103-4.
 2 H. Pelling, The British Communist Party, pp. 62, 66; see R. K. Middlemass, The Clydesiders (1965), p. 32.
 3 See W. Hannington, Never on our Knees, pp. 330-1.

was an important reason for the failure of the unemployed movement to extend its membership and influence in the area.

At least some continuity of leadership and of membership were essential for the N.U.W.M. to be a success, but since both were constantly changing, as some men found work, and as others became unemployed, this was never acquired for more than brief spells, usually those times at which the fortunes of the movement were running at a high level. In most cases, as soon as men found fresh employment they immediately lost touch with the movement. In many ways they were precluded by their employment from joining in the movement's activities: demonstrations were usually held during the day, hunger marches lasted days or weeks. There was also the possibility of victimisation. Many, however, no doubt lost touch simply because they became indifferent to the problems and situation of their former colleagues once their own situation was improved. In addition, it would appear that, even in the depressed areas, there were large numbers of workers who were unaware or apathetic to the unemployed. The movement was never able to establish any contact between the employed and the unemployed, in spite of the fact that the N.A.C. issued streams of directives to its branches calling for work among the trades unions.

The N.A.C. was, in addition, never able to overcome the decline in interest and activity in the summer of each year, with the exception of 1933. That the movement was only active from September to March of each year was in itself a considerable

barrier to continuity of leadership and membership.¹

Sectarianism was an added problem, since branches were frequently dominated by one particular group, either of a political nature, for example, or of workers from the same place of previous employment or the same district of a town. After 1933 membership of the Salford Branch was confined almost entirely to unemployed seamen, and the Branch moved its premises to a room above a shop near the entrance to the Docks. As late as May 1935, in spite of many attempts to rid the movement of sectarianism in the united front campaign, the N.A.C. reported:

'We still find in many of our branches examples of strong sectarianism which is holding back the development of the movement. It must be emphasised that the N.U.W.M. is a non-party organisation, and we must be ready to embrace all workers, irrespective of their religious or political associations, who are prepared to join in the fight against unemployment. Any conduct on the part of our branches which discourages the widest masses of the workers from joining our movement.... is harmful to our movement in the extreme.'²

The National Administrative Council itself, of course, was subjected to strong pressures from the C.P.G.B. and also from

1 The occupational centres also had this problem; see above, Chapter 7, p. 258.

2 Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 25-26 May 1935.

the Communist International, and in many ways by following the Communist 'line' after 1929 had made certain of its own failure because of the extreme sectarian nature of the 'class against class' policy.

In several aspects the unemployed movement must be regarded as a failure. One of these was the absence of any serious activity on the part of unemployed women or the wives of unemployed men. Even more than the failure to respond to the calls to establish contacts between the employed and the unemployed, or to take steps to end sectarianism, the branches failed to carry into effect the many directives from the N.A.C. to develop women's sections. Precise instructions were issued as to how the women should have their own committees, and on what relationship this committee should have with the men; separate charters of demands were also issued. Frequent attempts were made by the leadership to involve the women in the general agitations of the movement. A special Women's Department was established at the movement's national headquarters, and a Women's Organiser, Maud Brown, appointed. After 1930 a contingent of women took part on each national hunger march, and women were also involved in many of the county marches.

Prior to International Fighting Day in March 1930 strenuous efforts were made to encourage women to take part in the day of demonstrations. A national scale of unemployment benefits for women was produced, which included demands for increased

allowances for unemployed women as well as for the wives of unemployed men, together with a special maternity allowance for at least one month before childbirth and one month afterwards.¹ Two conferences of women's sections were held in London in early March, and 8 March, two days after International Fighting Day against Unemployment, was made International Women's Day. A London Committee was formed to make arrangements for women's demonstrations in the capital on that day, and to organise a recruitment campaign among women at the Labour Exchanges in the City.²

In spite of this, at the movement's Eighth National Conference in 1933, it was once again necessary for Hannington to draw the attention of the delegates to the situation of work among women. The majority of branches, he said, had failed to make sufficient efforts to establish women's sections, or even to conduct any special activity among women, and he urged that steps be taken to remedy this weakness at once. There was mass

1 Daily Worker, 1 March 1930; the scales adopted as demands were as follows (the then present scales in parenthesis):

Over 18	30s. per week	(18-20 years, 12s: over 21, 15s.)
17 years	12s. " "	(7s. 6d.)
14-16 years	10s. " "	(5s. 0d.)
Adult dependents	10s. " "	(9s. 0d.)

2 Daily Worker, 5 March 1930; see above, Chapter 10, p. 393.

unemployment among women in many industrial towns, and strong feeling among wives of unemployed men against the conditions in which they and their children were being made to live. The branches must 'harness this discontent' and direct it into 'mass activity.'¹ Again, however, at the Derby Conference the following year, the main report drew attention to the lack of activity among women.² Part of the fault lay with the women themselves. Few were politically conscious or had the ability to organise their fellows. Even fewer had the necessary time, for while unemployment brought leisure to the men, it brought no rest for the women. In any case, most preferred, when they became unemployed, to devote more time to their families rather than take part in political activities. The main fault was that the men did not take work among the women seriously, and the women's side both on a national level, and as far as South-East Lancashire in particular was concerned, was neglected because of this. In spite of the intensive efforts of the N.A.C., few branches in South-East Lancashire had active women's sections.³

The most important failure of the N.U.W.M., however, was the inability of branches in all parts of the country, and also of district councils, to act on the decisions and directives of the National Administrative Council. This happened on many occasions, and frequent attempts were made to improve the situation. For example, at regular intervals the reports of

1 Report of the Eighth National Conference of the N.U.W.M. 1933 (made available by R. & E. Frow.)

2 Report of the Ninth National Conference of the N.U.W.M. 1934 (made available by R. & E. Frow.)

3 Interview with Tommy Abbott; see below, Appendix VI for biographical details.

the Council were sent out accompanied by notes on the following lines:

'This Report must be widely discussed by every District Council and Branch. Under no circumstances must this Report be left in the hands of the secretaries as their sole preserve. Each committee must discuss this Report in special meetings and special branch meetings must also be arranged to discuss the issues contained in this Report. Only if this is done will we ensure that the whole of our movement is clear as to the directions issued.'¹

The most notable example of this failure was the abortive attempt made by the N.A.C. to follow the lines of the resolution of the Red International of Labour Unions in 1931, namely, to expand the movement by establishing broad unemployed councils to which the majority of unemployed could belong, without having to become members of the N.U.W.M. The branches failed entirely to respond to the call of the N.A.C. In South-East Lancashire several branches made what proved to be unsuccessful attempts to establish unemployed councils, but the failure of the attempts merely reflected the manner in which they were made, for the efforts were by no means whole-hearted ones. At Farnworth, for example, soon after the circular from the N.A.C. in August, plans were announced for the formation of a council of action at a meeting of unemployed on the Market Ground in

¹ Report of the National Administrative Council of the N.U.W.M., 3-4

October 1931, but no further references to such a body are to be found, and it must be assumed, therefore, that the plans were never put into practice.¹

A similar attempt may have been made a short time later at Salford. On Friday, 16 October the Salford City Reporter gave notice of a meeting of the local branch of the N.U.W.M. to be held at the William Horrocks Hall, Liverpool Street, on the following Sunday. It was reported that a circular had been issued by the branch, signed by the secretary, Larry Finlay, giving notice of the meeting at which plans for 'united working class action' against the economy cuts would be put forward.²

A 'Joint Committee of Unemployed and National Unemployed' was formed at Bury soon after this,³ and at nearby Radcliffe, where a branch of the movement was not founded until early in 1932, a committee said to represent 'every section of the community' was formed later in that year for the purpose of improving the conditions of the unemployed in the town.⁴

The most successful attempt by any of the branches of South-East Lancashire to form an unemployed council was made at Bolton. At a meeting of unemployed on Victoria Square, on 31 October 1932, a council of action was established, consisting of

1 Bolton Evening News, 7 October 1931.

2 Salford City Reporter, 16 October 1931; again, no further reference to such an organisation is to be found. William Horrocks Hall was better known as Hyndman Hall (see below Appendix VI, interviews with Dick France and George Watson).

3 See Bury Times, 12 December 1931.

4 Manchester Evening News, 5 November 1932.

about twenty men and women from the town, with the aim of strengthening the organisation of the unemployed in Bolton. It met for the first time that evening, when, it was reported at the time, plans were formulated for a campaign against the means test, and to deal with individual cases of hardship among local unemployed.¹ This came to nothing, however, but early in December an Unemployed Council was inaugurated. Among the members of its committee was a young Baptist minister, the Reverend C. H. Cleal, and in addition the Vicar of Bolton, Canon Spencer Elliot, took an active part in its affairs. A 'rents' committee was formed to investigate anomalies among the rents of the unemployed, and other sub-committees included a works committee, to further the object of relief schemes, and a 'grievances' committee to investigate cases of anomalies of unemployment benefit, transitional payments, public assistance relief and task work.² Later in the month, a letter from the secretary of the Council, W. Warwick, to the Bolton Evening News, spoke of the possibility of the Council being able to widen its scope by attracting representatives from the local branch of the National Union of Railwaymen.³ In the next few weeks the Bolton Unemployed Council was extremely active, and its activities were reported almost daily by local newspapers. On 28 December 1932, however, Canon Elliot was expelled 'as a betrayer of the

1 See above, Chapter 12, pp. 503-4; it is not clear as to what were the backgrounds of the men and women involved in this attempt. They may all have been members of the N.U.W.M.

2 Bolton Evening News, 6 December 1932.

3 Ibid, 22 December 1932.

Council.¹ and from this date onwards the likelihood of the organisation achieving further credit among the mass of unemployed in Bolton abruptly declined. After a ban was placed on meetings of unemployed on the Town Hall steps early in the New Year,² the Council was brought to an end, and the branch of the N.U.W.M. in Bolton reverted to its former style and methods. The failure to establish these Councils was indicative of the general lack of response from the branches to the directions of the N.A.C. At the Ninth National Conference of the unemployed movement in 1934, the main report once again stated:

'One of the chief weaknesses in our movement still continues to be the lack of responsiveness to the leads and directions issued from Headquarters. When the N.A.C. meets and plans the work of the movement nationally, we should be able to see a national response to the decisions of the N.A.C. as soon as they are issued. It must be confessed that in many branches the N.A.C. Report is not even read by the branch committee, let alone by the branch members and the great mass of unemployed.'³

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1 Bolton Evening News, 29 December 1932.

2 Ibid, 3 January 1933.

3 Report of the Ninth National Conference of the N.U.W.M., 1934 (made available by R. & E. Frow).

The contribution of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement to the attempts to solve the unemployment problem in the inter-war years was unquestionably an important one. The steps taken by the movement to educate the unemployed as to what was their due under the Unemployment Acts and regulations, and the work undertaken by the movement in acting as the representatives of the unemployed before the Courts of Referees and later the Public Assistance Committees, cannot be regarded too highly, since the N.U.W.M. was the only organisation to make whole-hearted efforts on these lines. The N.U.W.M. also earned for itself the nickname of 'blackleg-proof,' no mean achievement at a time when men were so desperate for employment; far from being an organisation from which employers could draw reserves and replacements, the unemployed movement in numerous strikes and lock-outs throughout the inter-war years actually provided members to swell the picket lines. Perhaps the most important achievement of the N.U.W.M. however, was simply to bring to the attention of the British public the condition of the unemployed. Officially the T.U.C. and Labour Party had little share in the unemployed agitations in this period, and it is more than likely that, had the unemployed relied solely on the efforts of the British Labour leaders, the government of the day, and the local authorities, too, would have conceded even less to the unemployed than in fact they did.

In the end the N.U.W.M. failed to achieve more because of its lack of money: a penny a week from each member proved

insufficient to do all that was necessary, but there was no question of raising even this subscription to, say, twopence or threepence. The major problem which confronted the movement was that there were simply too few active workers. The few who did exist were overburdened by innumerable tasks: the organisation of local agitations, district activities and national marches: the collection of subscriptions, the recruitment of new members: the selling of the Unemployed Leader and the penny pamphlets. Most of the active members were also members of the Communist Party, and had similar duties to perform in this respect.¹ Both movements demanded the constant attentions of their members.

On a national level lack of funds meant that the N.A.C. could not afford to pay for as many full-time organisers as were necessary to sustain interest in all the different districts of the country in which the movement existed. The district councils were unable to plan sufficient work in their particular area because many branches could not raise the necessary funds to send representatives to each meeting: the councils themselves could not afford to send representatives to each meeting of the

1 For example, the sale of the Daily Worker; this must have posed a grave problem to the Communist Party, in view of the refusal of established newspaper distributors to handle the paper. Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Gray (see below Appendix VI for biographical details) both helped to sell the paper in the Manchester region during this period. This involved collecting the copies from the station in Manchester in the early hours of the morning, and taking them round to the buyers. They each cycled between twelve and fourteen miles each day before work.

National Administrative Council. The movement could not afford to hold an annual conference. Continuity, and also communication between the leadership and the rank-and-file, were affected on all these accounts. The movement remained semi-professional. In addition, like other grass-roots movements, the N.U.W.M. relied heavily on a few active leaders, both nationally and in the districts: when these were imprisoned, as in 1933, or left the movement for new employment, the unemployed activities declined appreciably. Most of all, the N.U.W.M. relied on the inspiration given by Wal Hannington: of this man, Aneurin Bevan wrote after the 1936 Hunger March had ended:

'The first thing that struck me about Hannington was his tireless, unobtrusive efficiency. He combines two supreme virtues of leadership, the gift of powerful, inspiring speech, with great organising ability. Whatever may be its ultimate effect on Government policy there is no doubt that the Hunger March of 1936 was a triumph of organisation and imaginative mass agitation. To no-one does the credit more belong than to Wal Hannington. Others there were who made valuable contributions. But no-one could bring to the task either the personal gifts or the ripe experience of Hannington.

He is a veritable archive of information about the problems of hunger marches, and no-one who has not been intimately connected with them can have any idea of what these problems are.¹

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In Great Britain, the long-term influence of the depression years was the question of unemployment which burned itself into the consciousness of the British working population, in much the same way as did the fear of inflation in Germany. In Britain it was widely anticipated that mass unemployment would return at the end of the second World War. Even in the late 1940's and early 1950's, particularly during the General Election campaign in 1951, Labour Party propaganda was directed towards this anxiety on the part of many members of the working classes, and 'Ask Your Dad' was one slogan used by the Labour Party in these years. This fear of unemployment was apparent in Britain until at least the mid-1960's, and even in the present time unemployment remains, along with Germany and appeasement, part of the popular memory of the 1930's in Great Britain.

1 Labour Monthly, XVIII (December 1936)

Appendix VI

SOME WORKING CLASS BIOGRAPHIES

1. Edmund FROW (From interview with John Saville and Ralph Hayburn, together with Dick France and George Watson, at the home of Mr. Frow, 111 King's Road, Old Trafford Manchester, on 18 December 1967.)

Born 5 June 1906 in Lincolnshire. His mother came from a Norfolk farming family, and his father and grand-father were farmers in Lincolnshire. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the family moved to Yorkshire. Educated at Tingley elementary school, near Morley, Leeds, till the age of 12, and then for two years before starting work, went to Holbeck Day Boys Preparatory Trade School. Here he came under the influence of Arthur Haigh, socialist, a schoolmaster, who encouraged him to read socialist books.

At the age of 14 apprenticed engineer in a Wakefield workshop. Recalls the 'grim, monotony' of these years of work in 'soul-destroying workshop conditions.' Travelling by train to work each day, he came under the influence of Isaac Clay, a railwayman, who would talk to him in the waiting room. Clay was a member of the I.L.P. Frow remembers buying early copies of the Daily Herald, and the first issue of the New Leader. Under Clay's influence, he began to attend I.L.P. meetings in nearby Bradford.

In 1922, his father returned to Lincolnshire, and Edmund moved to lodgings in Wakefield. With no further restraints on his activities, he attended technical evening classes in Leeds, and then began to attend National Council of Labour Colleges classes in Leeds, where he was once again taught by Haigh. Here he met members of the Communist Party, and became a party member of the Leeds Branch in 1924.

Later he became secretary of the Wakefield Branch of the C.P.G.B., which he helped to form, and he was also secretary of the N.C.L.C. branch in the town. During the General Strike, he gave up work, although the engineers were not at first called out, to work on behalf of the Communist Party in the Castleford coal-mining area. He was sacked for not attending work at the end of the strike, and returned to Lincolnshire. Unemployed for a year, but then found work in Derby, where he continued with his political and industrial activities, through the A.E.U. branch, and the local Communist Party.

After 18 months here, he moved to Liverpool, where he came into contact with Leo McGree, Charles Hoyle, and Jack Longworth, experienced members of the C.P., who spoke at many meetings in the North, which Frow attended. McGree was a woodworker, a Liverpool-Irishman, with a ready wit, and was a fine speaker. In the twelve months Frow spent in Liverpool, he had a number of jobs, and became a shop steward in one firm. He was delegate from the Liverpool Party Branch to the 11th Party Conference at Leeds, and was for a time the branch secretary.

At the end of 1929 he came to Manchester, and worked at Fords for three months before being sacked. He suspects that political victimisation cost him his job. He was unemployed from March 1930 until January 1934. By the time he was sacked he had already become politically active in the City, and was a member of the District Committee of the Manchester C.P. In October 1930 went to Moscow for a month along with representatives from London, Scotland and Wales, to attend a Communist International Commission on the state of the Party, now at a low ebb, in Great Britain. When he returned he began work with the N.U.W.M. and in the demonstration of October 1931 in Salford, was arrested and batoned in the entrance to the Town Hall by four policemen. (This allegation was confirmed by George Watson, who stated during the course of the interview, that as he, Watson, was being escorted to the Town Hall, under arrest, he saw Frow being led out on his way to hospital with his nose pouring with blood.)

In 1934 began work at A. V. Roe's, Newton Heath. Then went to Ferrantis, Hollinwood, and Gardners', Eccles, before joining Salford Electrical Instruments (S.E.I.) Here there were no shop stewards or trade union organisation, and Frow began to play a more and more active part in union work. Before long he was appointed shop steward, and tried to organise the whole factory of about 800-1,000 men (skilled workers numbering about 300 of these.) Met with some degree of success. The Spanish Civil War had a strong impact on the C.P. members in the Manchester district, and Larry Finlay and a number of others began to recondition old motor bikes which were sent out to Spain as mobile medical units. Joined the Left Book Club on its formation.

In 1936 moved to Salford Electrical Instruments, where he became a shop steward and convenor. In 1938 elected Shop Stewards' Representative on the District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Active as a shop steward during the second world war. Became a branch secretary of the Union in 1937, and in 1941 elected to the Divisional Committee. In 1942 elected to the National Committee of the A.E.U. Elected Manchester District Secretary in 1961. Due to retire in June 1971 at the age of 65.

2. Dick FRANCE

Born in Salford, 5 October 1894. Educated at elementary schools until he was 14, when he entered the engineering industry as an apprentice to a machine operator. Soon after finishing his 'time' in 1915, he went to Nottingham to work in a munitions factory. He joined the Toolmakers' Union. The leading shop steward in the factory was a socialist named Billy Bolton. This was the first time that France had come into contact with socialist ideas, and he soon became a member of the Socialist Labour Party (S.L.P.)

At the end of the War he returned to Salford, and was a founder member of the South Salford Branch of the Communist Party. In employment for most of the 1920's, he was politically active as a rank and file member, and was also a member of the Hyndman Club. He was elected delegate to a local unity conference in January 1921, from his branch of the A.E.U. (Salford No. 9.) Dick France was also a member of the minority movement, and spoke at street corner meetings on numerous occasions. In 1922, when the Communists were expelled from Hyndman Hall, after the split over the resolutions of the 2nd International, France started to attend meetings at the Socialist Hall, Margaret Street, Openshaw. Out of work for most of the 1930's, he became an active member of the Salford Branch of the unemployed movement, as organiser.

Continued to work in engineering factories from the late 1930's until his retirement in 1959. An activist who did not aspire to any official trade union position.

3. George WATSON

Born May 1897 in Unity Street, Salford. His father was an Engineer's Labourer, and both he and his mother were born in Salford. They were members of the Anglican Church and Watson himself became a choirboy at an early age. Educated at Ordsall Council School, he left school at 14, and thereafter had a variety of jobs, including working in a warehouse and in various printing houses.

At the age of about 10 he began to attend the Socialist Sunday School held at Hyndman Hall. Sam Farrow was the President of the School which evidently began about 1907. George went to the School under the influence of his brother, Willie, an executive member of the British Socialist Party, and a well-known speaker in the Manchester district. He was killed in March 1918, aged 28. On one occasion, the Sunday School was held at St. Margaret's, Altrincham, where the Vicar was Hewlett Johnson.

As a result of the influence of his brother, and of attending the school, George became an ardent left-winger, and in 1919, having been demobilised, joined the B.S.P. and became a foundation member of the C.P.G.B.

During the First World War he had joined the Royal Naval Division as a wireless operator. He came out of the Navy in June 1918 and began work as a telephone tester, and then went to Metro-Vickers in 1922 as a proof reader, where he remained until 1930. He was then out of work, except for short spells, until October 1934, when he joined the Post Office Telephones. During this time he was a member of the Salford Branch of the N.U.W.M., and was its secretary until 1 October 1931, when he was arrested along with Eddie Frow and others at the Salford demonstration.

Remained with the Post Office until his retirement in 1962, but never took much interest in political activity after the 1930's struggles.

4. Audrey AINLEY (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at her home, 13 Victoria Way, Bramhall, Cheshire, on 19 March 1968.)

Born in Bradford, Manchester, in 1900, where she lived until 1929. After leaving school at 14, became a machinist in a factory in All Saint's, Manchester. Here Mrs. Ainley witnessed extreme poverty. Her brother was a militant, and had an important influence on her. He was a member of the Young Communist League, and Audrey used to read the literature he brought home. Because of a bad injury to his hip during childhood, he was unemployed for the whole of the depression years, and was himself an active member of the Manchester Central Branch of the N.U.W.M., being secretary for a time. He was also closely associated with the Openshaw Branch.

In 1927, Audrey married a young teacher. In 1929 she joined the Manchester Central Branch, having lost her job, and for a time was a committee member. Had been a member of the Communist Party since 1925, and still is. Audrey knew the Vicar of All Saints, the Reverend Etienne Watts, and was one of the people to whom he gave sanctuary in the demonstration of October 1931 in Manchester.

In 1929 Mrs. Ainley and her husband moved to Rusholme. Her husband was in employment all through the 1930's, but Audrey nonetheless kept up her associations with the N.U.W.M., and in 1932 took part on the women's contingent of the National Hunger March to London.

5. Wilfred GRAY (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 367 Barlow Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, on 20 March 1968.)

Born at Freemantle, Australia., in 1902; from the age of 7 lived in Victoria from where his parents came. His grandparents came from England, and his grandfather was a trade unionist during the period of the Combination Law struggles. His parents were born in Australia. Left school at 13 when a fierce winter wiped out his father's farm and the family moved to Geelong. He then moved to New South Wales where he worked as a wheat lumper. Although he had always been fairly militant, his workmates here were all members of International Workers of the World ('wobblies') He joined the Australian Navy in 1919, and then came to England.

Married in 1928. His wife was a weaver from Yorkshire. They lived first in Barrow and then in Belfast before moving to Salford in 1931. Between this date and 1936 was unable to find any work, although his wife was always in work. In September 1931 listened to Eddie Frow and George Brown addressing unemployed seamen outside the Docks. He read one of the leaflets they were handing out and turned up outside Hyndman Hall to take part in the big demonstration outside the Town Hall, Salford on 1 October 1931. In 1932 joined the C.P.G.B., after attending a meeting addressed by Tom Mann at Pendleton Co-operative Society.

Sold the Daily Worker when it was boycotted by the wholesalers in 1933. This involved collecting the papers in the early hours of the morning at London Road Station, and cycling round Salford to deliver it to the newsagents and individual buyers in the southern part of the City. His wife, Ada, who joined the party in 1935, also helped in this, delivering the papers to West Salford and Swinton and Pendlebury, some twelve miles or so each morning before going to work. On Sundays they both took part in C.P. literature sales.

In 1932 they moved to Whit Lane, where they lived over a shop owned by the C.P. The shop was used to sell literature. On one occasion, several Scottish hunger marchers were put up here. They also held bazaars to raise money for the marchers.

6. Mary DAVIES (nee HODGKISS) (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at her home, 15 Delamere Avenue, The Green, Clifton, near Manchester, on 26 March 1968.)

Born in 1898 in Gold Street, Pendleton. Moved to Pendlebury at the age of 5, and began work at the age of 13 at Holsworth and Gibbs Mill, Moorside, as a layer-on (her job was to replace the bobbins as they became full.) She worked from 6 a.m. until 5.30 p.m. in the evening, and Saturday mornings, for 4/9d. per week. In 1918 she married a dyer, George Davies, but he was never interested in politics.

Mary became a left-winger because of her brother, and it was through him that she joined the C.P. in 1930. Her brother was 'sacked from every pit in the area,' she stated because of his political activities and eventually had to move to Bradford, Manchester before he could obtain work. Mary herself was literature secretary for the Swinton branch of the N.U.W.M., which she joined towards the end of 1930. She took part in the big demonstration in Manchester in October 1931.

7. Tommy O'DONNELL (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 10, Willan Road, Eccles, Manchester, on 13 May 1968.)

Born in Patricroft in 1915. Left school at 14 and apprenticed with Projector Lamp and Lighting Company, an engineering firm in Monton, Eccles. After six years he moved to a locomotive works in Eccles where he completed his 'time.' He stayed here until the outbreak of the Second World War. His father an engine driver and an official of the local A.S.L.E.F. branch, and it was from him that Tommy gained his left-wing views. Helped his father to picket at an early age.

In 1926 Tommy joined the Communist Party. He had two brothers who both became unemployed in 1931 and in October of that year he joined the N.U.W.M. in sympathy with them. He was always in work during the 1930's and was therefore unable to take part in the mid-week demonstrations.

8. Bill DUTSON (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 88, Oswald Road, Chorlton, Manchester, on 16 May 1968.)

Born Clayton, Manchester, 1899. Lived in Scotland and Essex until his family returned to Manchester in 1907. Remained in Manchester until 1938. Left school at 14, and worked in his uncle's rubber factory for six months, before leading a strike when a boy was sacked for smoking in his lunch-break. Began apprenticeship as a blacksmith with the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company. Disabled during the first world war, and unable to handle tools, so that he was employed by the same Company as an engine-cleaner. In 1929, by which time he had become the secretary of the local departmental committee, he was involved in a dispute with the management, and was dismissed. Apart from a number of jobs, each lasting only short periods, he remained out of work until 1938. Almost certainly politically victimised, and alleged during the course of the interview that police interference prevented him from holding down any job for long during these years.

His mother was a tailoress, and a very keen trade unionist, and it was she who encouraged Bill to read left-wing political literature, and also to discuss the politics of the day. In 1925 he joined the Minority Movement, and was involved in work with

the unemployed movement in this connection, even while in employment. When he lost his job in 1929 he joined the N.U.W.C.M. and became a Communist Party member in the same year. He helped in selling the Daily Worker when the Newsagents Wholesale Federation boycotted its sale. Bill Dutson was a member of the Manchester Central Branch of the unemployed movement, and spoke at all the major towns in Lancashire during the 1930's. He was a committee member of the Branch for most of these years, and became its chairman in 1931. In 1933 he became secretary of International Labour Defence for the whole of Lancashire.

9. Arthur WALMSLEY (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 103, Cromwell Road, Eccles, Manchester, on 26 May 1968.)

Born in December 1895 in Salford. From the age of 3 lived near Ordsall Park. At 13 left school and went into the engineering trade at Vulcan Locomotive Works, but had a number of jobs. Joined the A.S.E. at the age of 16. When war broke out went into the Army.

In 1918 returned to Salford, his parents having taken a public house in Oldfield Road. He worked as a fitter for a year at Salford Technical School, but thereafter had a number of different jobs again, though he was never unemployed. For a time worked at Metro-Vickers. From 1924 worked for some time at Gardner's Engineering Works in Eccles. Throughout the 1930's had short spells of unemployment and a variety of jobs.

Even before 1914 was a left-winger, and used to listen to S.D.F. speakers at Broadway near the entrance to the Manchester Docks. Had dealings with the unemployed movement in the early 1920's, and in 1924 joined the Communist Party and also the Minority Movement. Was a member of the Salford Branch of the N.U.W.M.

10. Tommy ABBOTT (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 517, Plodder Lane, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire, on 27 May 1968.)

Born at Haydock, Lancashire, in 1906. His father was a railwayman, but in 1911 took a job in a pit at Farnworth, to where the family moved. Tommy has lived there ever since. One of five children, he began work at the age of 12 in a cotton mill, working 'half time' for a wage of five shillings a week. At the age of 15 he went to work in the same pit as his father.

When he was 18, he was elected to the Miners' Branch Committee, and a year later became branch delegate to the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation. He was also branch delegate to the Farnworth Trades and Labour Council. Has remained an active trade unionist all his life.

In 1930, the mine closed and he was unemployed for three years. He had been a member of the Minority Movement since the mid-twenties, and at this point joined the Communist Party. Also a member of Friends of Soviet Russia (F.O.S.R.) Had acquired his left-wing leanings from his father, who was President of the trade union Branch, and also from his father-in-law, who was President of the local branch of the N.U.R.

Tommy Abbott was instrumental in beginning the local branch of the N.U.W.M. in Farnworth, along with Joseph Goodram, a member of the Labour Party, and was its first organiser and secretary. In 1933 he obtained work in civil engineering, but kept in touch with the unemployed movement, since he was on short time, and often worked only one week in four. He continued with his industrial activities, and formed a branch of the Building Trade and Civil Engineering Workers' Union in Farnworth, for a time being a member of the District Committee of the Transport and General Workers' Union. In 1945 was a delegate at the Blackpool Trades Union Congress.

11. Austin COGHLAN (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 20, Oxford Street, Eccles, Manchester, on 29 May 1968.)

Born in August 1897 just four doors away from where he now lives, at No. 14 Oxford Street. At the age of 12 he won a scholarship to Salford Technical College where he attended for four years. From here he went to work for the Manchester Evening Chronicle, but when war broke out joined the Army. At the end of the War moved to London where he worked on the staff of a Sunday paper for about 18 months. In 1922 returned to Eccles, where he had a number of jobs until 1929. Out of work from this date until 1933, when obtained work with Taylor Brothers, an Eccles engineering firm.

His father was a right-wing Conservative, and out of awkwardness rather than anything else, Mr. Coghlan called himself a socialist, though he had no real left-wing leanings. In 1930 he joined the N.U.W.M. and later became a committee member of the Eccles branch, and was secretary in 1933 for a few months before finding work.

12. Harry WILLIAMS (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 72, Coronation Street, Salford, on 6 June 1968.)

Born in Ordsall Park, Salford, in 1900. His first job on leaving school was as a messenger boy in the Superintendent's Office of the Manchester Ship Canal Company. He worked here for a year, and in 1914 moved to the plant office of Metro-Vickers, Trafford Park. In 1916 became an apprentice turner at Smith and Coventry's, and joined the A.S.E. Before he had finished his 'time,' however, at the end of the War, he lost his job. Was then unemployed for three years, except for short spells in a number of different jobs, until he became a taxi-driver in 1923.

Mr. Williams was instrumental in forming the Salford Branch of the N.U.W.C.M. in 1921. The branch activities were mainly social; they had a band and ran P.T. classes. There was little political activity or discussion, other than when visiting speakers came. The Branch applied to the Council for premises and was granted the use of Hope Chapel, Liverpool Street, next door to Hyndman Hall, which had been the headquarters of the S.D.F. in Salford, and later the meeting place of the B.S.P. The N.U.W.C.M. Branch had a huge banner, made out of black cloth, with a white skull-and-crossbones painted on it, carrying the slogan of the unemployed movement, 'Work or Maintenance.' This was lost to the police in a big demonstration in 1922, however.

Harry comes from a radical family, all Labour supporters. He joined the B.S.P. at Hyndman Hall on Armistice Night. His father-in-law, George Bishop, one of the founder members of the S.D.F. in Salford, was an agent for Joe Toole, M.P. Harry later became a Labour Member of the Salford City Council.

13. Bill ABBOTT (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 82, Fovant Crescent, Reddish, Stockport, Cheshire, on 12 June 1968.)

Born 1905, Ancoats, Manchester. Left school at 14 and became an apprentice patternmaker to a firm of wire manufacturers, where he worked for 8 years, until 1927 when he was dismissed, allegedly because of his political activities as a shop steward. In 1928 he became one of the founder members of the Openshaw Branch of the N.U.W.C.M. He had been a member of the Communist Party and also of the Minority Movement since 1925.

Bill Abbott acquired his left-wing beliefs simply by 'keeping his eyes open' around the area in which he lived. He saw many families living in poverty, evicted from their homes because they were unable to pay their rent. Both his parents died when he was still young, and he was brought up by an aunt. He joined the Clayton Labour Party in 1922, and later became its Vice-President. He was always a militant, however, and was expelled when he joined the C.P. Spoke at most of the South-East Lancashire towns in these years.

He was first secretary of the Openshaw Branch, and took part in the 1932 national hunger march, but had to drop out at Birmingham because of exhaustion. He was unemployed until 1932, when he joined A. V. Roes at Newton Heath. Two years later he was dismissed again, for political reasons (he believes he was one of the first to draw victimisation pay from the A.E.U.) He became East Lancashire organiser of the N.U.W.M. In 1935 he found regular work once more.

14. Frank MORGAN (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 9, Ivy Cottages, Haughton Green, Denton, Manchester, on 2 April 1968.)

Born Northampton in 1905. Lived here until 1911 when his family moved to Altrincham, and then to Lower Broughton, Salford. Left school at 13, and worked as a cobbler, and then in a box workers for about a year, before becoming an apprentice tool-maker in a Salford engineering firm. In the 1920's, when the firm went on short time, became a page boy in a Manchester hotel. Glad to leave this job when he was sacked after six months.

Now became apprenticed to a firm of electricians, which was fortunate as he had almost passed the age of apprentice recruitment. Just before he finished his 'time' in 1926, the firm folded up. He then had various jobs until 1936, though none lasted very long.

Father and mother both in the shoe trade. Mother died when he was 16, and was brought up by older sisters. Acquired left-wing leanings while working as an engineering apprentice, through contact with a Scot, who was a member of the S.L.P. This man made him start to read the Weekly Worker and other socialist literature. Frank became a member of the Salford Branch of the N.U.W.M. in 1931 when he also joined the Communist Party.

15. James BRIERLEY (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 608, Ripponden Road, Moorside, Oldham, on 9 April 1968.)

Born at Moorside in 1898. Left school at 13 and for a time worked in a cotton mill, before moving to a foundry works. Volunteered for the Army in 1915 and fought in France during the First World War. After the War he returned to Asa Lees foundry for three years. He then had various jobs until 1929, and various period of unemployment. From 1929, however, until late 1933, he had only one week's work - for the G.P.O. at Christmas.

He was not politically conscious until the General Strike, after which he began to read the Daily Herald. In 1929 he became interested in the N.U.W.M. through listening to the speeches of a local Communist outside the Labour Exchange in Oldham where he drew his unemployment benefit. He joined the unemployed movement that year. When the Daily Worker was started he moved further to the Left, and in mid-1930 joined the Communist Party. He spent his years of unemployment on a Means Test allowance of 26/- per week, of which 13/- was in the form of a food ticket. On this amount he was expected to keep a wife and three children.

16. John B. SMETHURST (From interview with Ralph Hayburn, at his home, 81, Parrin Lane, Monton, Eccles, Manchester, on 24 March 1968.)

Born 1932, Barton, Eccles. Left school at 14 when he became a foundry apprentice trainee. After two years lost his job following an apprentices strike. Joined Chloride Batteries as a trainee electrician, and later employed by the National Coal Board. From 1954 employed as a contract electrician. In 1957 became press electrician at Thomson's Newspapers in Manchester.

His wife's grandfather a founder member of a drug-house workers' union, which became Manchester No. 1 Branch, National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (later USDAW). His father, Wilfred Smethurst, also a strong union man, active in NUDAW (and USDAW.) Both these men were members of the I.L.P. and later the Labour Party. His wife an active co-operator, and a member of the Co-operative Women's Guild. His uncle, Albert Smethurst, was successor to Tom Mann as General Secretary, A.E.U.

It was from these people that Smethurst gained his political convictions. His own first activities in politics were as messenger boy to Frederick H. Dodd, Labour Party Agent in Eccles in the 1945 Election. Joined the Swinton, and later Eccles, League of Youth in 1947, and became President of the South Lancashire Federation of the League, 1951-4. Secretary Eccles Trades Council, 1958-61, and delegate to the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Trades Councils, 1958-62. Attended Annual Conference of Trades Councils 1960 and 1961. Member Eccles Youth Employment Committee since 1957, and Eccles Employment Committee since 1961. Member of the Labour Party until 1961, and delegate of the Eccles constituency to the Party Conference in 1960.

But always a left-winger, and in 1961 joined the Communist Party. Since then, has stood five times, all unsuccessful, as C.P. candidate, Westwood Park Ward. Manchester Area Committee member C.P. 1962-5, and since 1967.

Very interested in local history, and this stimulated by his political work. Author of Lancashire and the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, 1842-8 (Eccles 1969), 28pp.; Strikes and Strike Breakers (Eccles, 1966); Ballads of the Coal-Fields (Eccles, 1967); and 'Erman, Engels and Eccles,' Mark House Bulletin, Jan.-March 1967.

17. Ellis SMITH (1896-1969)¹

Born at Eccles, 1896. Educated at Green Lane School, Patricroft, Eccles. Gained a First Class Certificate in Advanced Economics ^{at} Manchester Co-operative College. Engineer. Shop steward for 15 years at Metropolitan-Vickers (now A.E.I.), Trafford Park. Founder member of Eccles Branch Patternmakers Union in 1922, and delegate from this branch to the Eccles Trades Council from 1922-66. Member, Stretford Patternmakers Branch, 1917-22. Executive member of the Union, 1927-36. Chairman, Lancashire and Cheshire Patternmakers Committee, 1931, and later full-time organiser of the Union. National Chairman, 1946-50, 1952, and 1958-1964. Secretary, Eccles Trades Council, 1924-35. Delegate from this body to the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Trades Councils, and President of this organisation 1937-64. Delegate from Eccles to the First Annual Conference of Trades Councils, where he met Ben Tillet and A. A. Purcell (q.v.) Life-long admirer of the latter.

During the First World War, he served with the South Lancashire Regiment and in the Machine Gun Corps. and Tank Corps. He was joint secretary with a man named A. T. Smith, of the Eccles Strike Committee in 1926. Joined the Labour Party in 1915. Fought his first parliamentary election in 1931, when he was defeated by the Conservative candidate at Stoke. At the 1935 Election, however, he won the seat when he defeated Mrs. Ada Copeland (C), sister of Oswald Mosley. (Figures: Smith 20,992; Copeland 18,867; majority 2,125.) Held the seat until redistribution, and from 1950 until he retired in 1966 sat for Stoke-on-Trent South.

Member of the I.L.P. until the 1930's (exact date of resignation from the Party unknown, but it was sometime after 1931.) President, Eccles I.L.P. Branch. Member of the Co-operative Party, and stood as Co-operative candidate at one of the Eccles wards in 1923. Tutor, National Council of Labour Colleges. Appointed J.P. for Lancashire in 1944. Life-long supporter of Manchester United Football Club.

His wife, Edith, also a J.P. and a member of the Co-operative Party and the Co-operative Women's Guild.

During his years as an M.P., Ellis Smith was for some months Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade in the Attlee administration after the Second World War. He resigned in

¹ Information supplied by John B. Smethurst; Who's Who, 1969; Manchester Evening News, 13 May 1966; Times, 10 November 1969; Daily Telegraph, 10 November 1969.

January 1946 because of a difference of opinion with Sir Stafford Cripps, then President of the Board. One of his criticisms was that 'austerity was overdone' (Daily Telegraph, 10 November 1969.) Championed the rights of backbenchers and supported a campaign for cleaning and brightening towns and industrial areas. During an economic debate in July 1949, he was suspended for disobeying the instructions of the Chair (Times, 10 November 1969.) Died 7 November 1969.

18. Albert Arthur PURCELL (1872-1935)¹

Born in East London. First job in a Keighley, Yorkshire, woollen mill at the age of 9. By 1890, he was working as a French Polisher in Hoxton. Member, London French Polishers Union, and also of the S.D.F. General Secretary, London French Polishers at the age of 26, and later President. Member in 1893 of the International 8-Hour Day League. From 1907-1912, member of the Salford Borough Council. Stood at West Salford in the 1910 General Election, but was defeated. Chief Organiser N.A.F.T.A. from its formation in 1910.

In 1919 he was elected to the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. and later to the General Council, when it was formed in 1921. Served until 1927, being President at the Hull Congress in 1924. In 1920, visited Soviet Russia as a member of the Labour Delegation, and also took part in discussion which resulted in the formation of the Red International of Labour Unions, attending the inaugural meeting of this body.

In the 1920's all his work was directed to the establishment of a single Trade Union International. A step on this road was the establishment of the alliance between the British and Russian Trade Unions in 1924, Purcell being a member of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee and Chairman of the T.U.C. delegation to Russia.

Elected Labour M.P. for Coventry in 1923, but lost seat in the 'Red Letter' Election of 1924, returning to Parliament in the Forest of Dean by-election the following year. From 1924-7 President, International Federation of Trade Unions. Frequent contributor at this period to Labour Monthly and Chairman of the Editorial Board of Trade Union Unity which he founded. In 1925, attended the Atlantic City Congress of the American Federation of Labour at which he was a speaker. Visited Mexico in 1926 to assist the work of trade unions there. In 1927 he was a member of a T.U.C. delegation to India.

¹ Report of the 36th Labour Party Conference, 1936;
J. A. Mahon, 'A. A. Purcell: A Champion of Working Class Unity,'
Labour Monthly, XVIII (February 1936.)

Purcell was Chairman of the General Strike organisation in 1926, and was reputedly 'the most disappointed man in the country when the Strike was called off.' He was President of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council in 1910, 1917-19, 1922, and from 1929 until his death was Secretary of that body. His work here has been described as an 'unequaled example of what can be done to rally the working class around the Trades Councils.' Under his leadership, the Council became a 'centre for mobilising the workers on all the main political issues.'

He was the author of several pamphlets, including The Workers' Battle for Livelihood and Life (Manchester 1935), 32 pp.; Economics of a madhouse (Manchester, 1931); and Trades Councils and local working class movement (Manchester, 1931), 14 pp. (all made available by R. & E. Frow.)

19. Philip Neville HARKER, Lancashire Organiser of the N.U.W.M. from 1933 to 1936¹

'A scene was created in the House of Commons by a Bolton man last night.

'While the Ottawa Bill was under discussion and while Mr. Malcolm MacDonald (Under Secretary for the Dominions) was speaking, a man said to be Philip N. Harker rose in the Strangers' Gallery, and, in a loud voice, called "Down with the Means Test! In the name of the millions of unemployed, I denounce...." Before he could complete the sentence he was seized by three or four attendants and plain clothes officers who arrived on the scene with incredible swiftness and hustled him out of the Chamber still attempting to continue his exclamations. The scene lasted only a fraction of a minute.

'Harker's parting cry as he disappeared from the Gallery was "Release Wal Hannington."

'Harker is a native of Bolton, where his parents still reside. He was educated at the Church Institute School, and since then has had a varied career. He began his political activities as a youth with the Bolton branch of the League of Young Liberals. At that time he was a bank clerk in the town and subsequently in Manchester. Finding work in a bank un congenial, he moved to London, where he obtained a post with an electrical firm. He subsequently became a student of economics at the London University, entered the Pioneer Preachers' movement - which is to a certain extent allied to the Unitarian faith - and became resident at their hostel in North London.

1 Bolton Evening News, 2 November 1932.

'Falling under the spell of Russian propoganda, he was able to obtain a post for a time at the offices of Arcos, the Soviet organisation in London.

'His grandfather was the Reverend B. J. Harker, once pastor of the old Duke's Alley Chapel, Bolton, and later of Adlington.'

20. Harry McSHANE (From interview with Ralph Hayburn and John Saville, at the University of Hull, on 12 March 1969.)

Born in the Gorbals district of Glasgow (in Govan Street, now Ballater Street) on 7 May 1891. His mother's father was a blacksmith, the oldest of five daughters. His father was a builder's labourer, of Irish parentage. His father was a Catholic, and his mother was a Protestant. Differences based on religion and status led to a temporary break between his parents resulting in his being sent to live with his father's parents when only a few weeks old. Lived with grandparents until he reached manhood. Brought up a Catholic in a Catholic school which he left at the age of 14. Started apprenticeship to sailmaking and remained at this job for eighteen months. Then worked for six months at wire-weaving while preparing to start an apprenticeship at engineering at the age of 16.

Prior to leaving school, he was taken by his father to Glasgow Green to hear lectures and debates mainly on religious topics. Became a vociferous reader on these matters, and paid some attention to the controversy on Darwinism, but retained his belief in the Catholic Church, guided by the outpour of literature by the Catholic Truth Society. Like all Catholics on Clydeside, he was interested in Irish politics. The United Irish League which directed Irish electors to support Liberal candidates began to lose hold around 1906. A split led to a Labour victory in the Gorbals. The constituency was then known as Blackfriars and Hutchestown. This led to a discussion on Socialism in Catholic circles. The priests came out strongly against it. It was in this situation that John Wheatley founded the Catholic Socialist Society. The battle between Wheatley and the priests led to McShane taking an interest in Socialism, and he joined the Kingston Branch of the Independent Labour Party, in August 1909. While there he read Blatchford's Not Guilty, which, on top of his earlier reading, brought about his split with religion. He became interested in Marxism, bought Marxist publications from the bookshop of the Socialist Labour Party at 50 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, and attended the economics class run by John MacLean.

A call was made in the columns of the Clarion for the formation of a British Socialist Party. McShane filled in a form which was printed in the Clarion on 5 August 1910, declaring his readiness to join such a party. It was formed provisionally during the annual conference of the Socialist Democratic Party

at Easter 1911. It was in this period that Harry McShane first came into real personal contact with John MacLean, the two holding street corner meetings to put forward the point of view of the British Socialist Party.

McShane's apprenticeship was completed in 1912. He was dismissed soon after this, because he would not do the work of apprentices who had gone on strike. In 1914 he joined the Army, but later deserted, and, after bluffing the police, worked for a time at the Parkhead forge in Glasgow, where he became a shop steward. He moved to another engineering shop, and in 1919 took the employees out in the 40 Hours Strike. In 1920 his branch of the British Socialist Party broke away, and at the same time John MacLean left the Executive Committee of the Party. McShane joined him, in May 1920, on a campaign that took them all over Scotland. They put out thousands of leaflets and pamphlets.

In May 1922 McShane was arrested over an eviction. In addition to resisting the eviction he was also charged with making two seditious speeches. The police evidence was, in his opinion, 'clownish', and he got a 'not proven' verdict. He was arrested again in September 1922 over an alleged riot in the Anderston district, but again the case was dismissed.

In July 1922 McShane had decided to join the Communist Party. He and MacLean had organised the unemployed in Glasgow and the West of Scotland since the last months of 1920, and had prevented the unemployed in Scotland from joining up with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. But now McShane's views on national organisation changed, and the two movements combined. (See above, Chapter 10 , p.367).

In August 1923 McShane decided to move to England, and spent several months in Mansfield, before moving to Orpington in Kent, and then to Leicester. Early in 1925 he applied for a job in the Yukon, and remained abroad until January 1930, when he returned to Glasgow. He now started work with the Communist Party, and became Scottish organiser of the N.U.W.M. He was arrested on many occasions after demonstrations in Glasgow, including those on International Fighting Day Against Unemployment, 1930 (6 March), and 1 October 1931.

In 1932 McShane led the Scottish contingent on the National Hunger March to London. Led a campaign in Dundee against the ban on demonstrations imposed by magistrates (see above, Chapter 10 , p.405). ~~Chapter , p.~~ In 1933 helped to organise and lead a Scottish march to Edinburgh. ~~above, Chapter , p.~~ On this march, the local authorities tried to force the men home by refusing accommodation, but they slept on the pavement in Princess Street. Also one of the leaders on the 1934 National Hunger March, and of the Edinburgh contingent on the 1936 March.

During all this period he did a good deal of work for the C.P.G.B. He was a parliamentary candidate for the Party in the Gorbals in 1931, and fought the Gorbals Municipal Ward almost every year, but without success. When war broke out in 1939 he became the Scottish correspondent for the Daily Worker until the paper was closed down in January 1940. He then became Glasgow Secretary of the Party. When the Daily Worker was allowed to start publication once more, he moved back to his former position as Scottish correspondent.

He was a member of the Scottish Committee of the C.P.G.B. from 1930 until 1953, when he resigned from the Party and from his job on the Daily Worker. Had doubts about many issues. After resignation met with every kind of slander. After eight months' unemployment got a job at his trade in a shipyard.

Joined with Eric Heffer and others to form a Marxist Federation soon after his resignation. Still President of his trade union branch, and a representative on the Glasgow Trades Council.

Appendix VII

THE UNEMPLOYED CHARTER¹

That the 1927 Unemployment Insurance Act shall be amended as follows:

- 1) Raise the benefit scales to the following amounts
 - 30s. per week to all unemployed workers 18 years of age and over.
 - 10s. per week for wife or other adult dependent.
 - 5s. per week for each dependent child.
 - 15s. per week to young persons 16-18 years of age.
 - 10s. per week to those between 14 and 16 years.
- 2) Remove the 'Not Genuinely Seeking Work Clause'
- 3) Restore all unemployed persons to benefit who were disqualified under the previous Government's administration.
- 4) Establish the principle of continuous benefit during unemployment irrespective of the number of contributions paid. No disqualification from benefit unless suitable employment at Trade Union rates and conditions can be offered.
- 5) Abolish the six days waiting period. Benefit to operate from the first day of signing.

1 From W. Hannington, Our Case for the Unemployed Charter (1929), p. 6; made available by R. & E. Frow. The scale of demands laid down in this Charter, in the light of the events which followed, can be seen to have been particularly high, although really nothing more than the sum to which all unemployed workers should have been entitled. At this stage, however, the N.U.W.M. was still basing its demands on the scale of benefits which had been paid by the Lloyd George Government immediately after the first world war had ended, namely: 29s. per week for men, 25s. per week for women, 6s. for the first dependent child, 3s. for each additional child.

For relieving unemployment:

- 6) Put into operation effective schemes of work of National Importance, at full Trade Union rates of wages and conditions.
- 7) Abolish all test and task work under the Boards of Guardians and the farm colonies, Belmont and Hollesley Bay.
- 8) Stop the imposition of hardships upon the unemployed under the Industrial Transference Scheme. No person must be forced to transfer under the threat of losing benefit, and those who willingly desire to accept employment outside of their own area must be guaranteed full Trade Union rates and conditions, with adequate facilities and protection from the Government for the transference of their families.
- 9) Introduce a shorter working day without wage reductions, the Government to lead by instituting the shorter working day in mining and in all Government establishments and Government contracting firms.
- 10) The Old Age Pension should be payable at the age of sixty years, and should be not less than 30s. per week.
- 11) Raise the school-leaving age to sixteen years, with a Government maintenance allowance of 10s. per week for each young person so affected.
- 12) Repeal the Guardians Default Act and re-establish the Boards of Guardians that have been superseded, and the repeal of the Poor Law Reform. Establish a national scale of relief not lower than the Unemployment Insurance Benefit demands of the N.U.W.C.M.

Appendix VIII

ROUTE OF THE 1932 HUNGER MARCH¹1. Scottish Contingent

Left Glasgow on 26 September, and spent the night of the 26 at Kilmarnock; Catrine 27; New Cummock 28; Kirkconnell 29; Thornhill 30; Dumfries 1 October; Annan 2; Carlisle 3; Penrith 4; Kendal 5; Lancaster 6 and 7; Preston 8; Blackburn 9; Farnworth 10; Manchester 11; Macclesfield 12; Congleton 13; Stoke-on-Trent 14; Stafford 15; Lichfield 16; Tamworth 17; Nuneaton 18; Coventry 19; Warwick 20; Banbury 21; Buckingham 22; Aylesbury 23; Berkhamsted 24; Watford 25; Willesden 26.

2. North-East Contingent

Left Newcastle on 2 October; Sunderland 2; Durham 3; Bishop Auckland 4; Darlington 5; Northallerton 6; Thirsk 7; Ripon 8; Harrogate 9; Bradford 10; Wakefield 11; Doncaster 12; Gainsborough 13; Lincoln 14; Newark 15; Grantham 16; Bourne 17; Stamford 18; Peterborough 19; Huntingdon 20; Cambridge 21; Saffron Walden 22; Thaxted 23; Bishop Stortford 24; Ware 25; Edmonton 26.

3. Women's Contingent

Left Burnley on 9 October; Todmorden 9; Halifax 10; Huddersfield 11; Barnsley 12; Rotherham 13; Worksop 14;

¹ Manchester Guardian, 25 October 1932; W. Hannington, Never on Our Knees, p. 240 (map); some inaccuracies in both, but corrected.

Alfreton 15; Derby 16; Burton-on-Trent 17; Coalville 18;
 Hinckley 19; Rugby 20; Northampton 21; Wolverton 22;
 Bletchley 23; Luton 24; St. Albans 25; Holloway 26.

4. Plymouth Contingent

Left here on 10 October; Ivybridge 10; Totnes 11; Newton
 Abbott 12; Exeter 13; Honiton 14; Chard 15; Yeovil 16;
 Sherbourne 17; Shaftesbury 18; Salisbury 19; Andover 20;
 Witchchurch 21; Basingstoke 22; Aldershot 23; Guildford 24;
 Staines 25; Acton 26.

5. Lancashire Contingent

Left Manchester on 12 October; Altrincham 12; Northwich 13;
 Crewe 14; Market Drayton 15; Wellington 16; Wolverhampton 17;
 Birmingham 18; Redditch 19; Stratford 20; Chipping Norton 21;
 Oxford 22 and 23; High Wycombe 24; Uxbridge 25; Chiswick 26.

6. Yorkshire Contingent

Left Sheffield on 14 October; Chesterfield 14; Mansfield 15;
 Hucknall 16; Nottingham 17; Loughborough 18; Leicester 19;
 Market Harborough 20; Kettering 21; Northampton 22; Bedford 23;
 Hitchin 24; Hatfield 25; Tottenham 26.

7. South Wales Contingent

Left Cardiff on 15 October; Newport 15; Bristol 16; Bath 17;
 Chippenham 18; Swindon 19 and 20; Hungerford 21; Newbury 22;
 Reading 23; Maidenhead 24; Slough 25; Hammersmith 26.

8. Norfolk Contingent

Left Norwich on 16 October; Great Yarmouth 16; Lowestoft 17;
 Southwold 18; Farnham 19; Woodbridge 20; Ipswich 21;
 Colchester 22; Braintree 23; Chelmsford 24; Romford 25;
 West Ham 26.

9. Kent Contingent

Left Canterbury on 21 October; Faversham 21; Sittingbourne 22; Chatham 23; Gravesend 24; Erith 25; Deptford 26.

10. South Coast Contingent

Left Brighton on 23 October; Crawley 23; Redhill 24; Croydon 25; Wimbledon 26.

11. Merseyside Contingent

Left Liverpool on 11 October; St. Helens 11; Warrington 12; Northwich 13; joined Lancashire Contingent.

12. Hereford Contingent

Left Hereford on 17 October; Ledbury 17; Stroud 18; Cirencester 19; Swindon 20; joined South Wales Contingent.

13. Hampshire Contingent

Left Southampton on 21 October; Winchester 21; Basingstoke 22; joined Plymouth Contingent.

14. North Staffordshire Contingent

Left Stoke-on-Trent on 15 October with Scottish Contingent.

15. Nottingham Contingent

Left Mansfield on 16 October with Yorkshire Contingent.

16. Bristol Contingent

Left Bristol on 17 October with South Wales Contingent.

17. Midlands Contingent

Left Birmingham on 19 October with Lancashire Contingent.

18. Teeside Contingent

Left Darlington on 5 October with North-East Contingent.

A HANDBILL OF THE N.U.W.M. IN SALFORD: NOVEMBER 1933¹

Fellow Workers,

The New Unemployment Insurance Act of the National Government is the biggest attack yet launched on the unemployed workers. It is based upon the Report of the Royal Commission on Unemployment whose Interim Report proposed in 1931 the 10% cut in benefit etc. Its avowed aim is to make Unemployment Insurance 'solvent' and to bring the scales of relief all over the country uniform at the lowest level. The New Bill will be along the following lines and must meet with a powerful wave of united working class resistance:

Unemployment Assistance Board

A Board of 5 full time members receiving about £2,000 each a year will have powers to submit recommendations on the assessment of needs. This Board will be appointed by the Ministry of Labour and the unemployed workers who have exhausted their statutory benefit will come under its control. Boards will be set up in each district to impose a stricter means test than in operation at present, and will have power to send men into a training centre for an instruction course.

Training Centres

These Slave Labour Concentration Camps of the type operating near London will force men to do work for relief instead of a wage. TRADE UNIONISTS will be forced to work in these centres, thus breaking down trade union rates and conditions.

¹ Made available by E. Frow.

Local Appeal Tribunals

An unemployed worker will have the opportunity of appealing to this body against the decision of the Board. The value of this appeal can be seen from the composition of the tribunal. One is appointed by the Ministry of Labour, one by the Board, and one workers' representative. Thus we have two bosses' representatives against one workers' representative.

Insurance of Children

Children from 14-16 are to be insured and to pay 2d. a week for a benefit of 2s. a week if unemployed. This will mean all payment and no benefit as most children are on low wages and seldom unemployed. If unemployed they will be compelled to attend a training centre similar to their parents. This will be compulsory and parents liable to imprisonment for their non-attendance.

'Concessions'

Great play is made by the boss class press of the 'concessions' granted, of a longer period of Statutory Benefit to persons who have had little unemployment during the last five years. But the majority of unemployed are unaffected by this: the concessions are really nil and are an attempt to split one section of the unemployed from the rest.

The N.U.W.M. calls for a united front of employed and unemployed against this Bill and puts forward the following demands:

Abolition of the Means Test and the Anomalies Act.

That the maintenance of the unemployed shall become a State responsibility through a non-contributory scheme, wholly financed by the national exchequer.

For the 40-hour week without wage reductions and work schemes at trade union rates of pay.

Only the mass action of the workers can smash this Bill. This week the Lancashire Unemployed March to Preston to put their demands before the county P.A.C. In January a National March to London is being organised. We in Salford must play our part.

A meeting will be held on Wednesday, 22 at 3 p.m. on Liverpool Street Croft. Questions about the Act will be answered.

ROUTE OF THE 1934 HUNGER MARCH¹1. Scottish Contingent

Left Glasgow on 22 January, and spent the night of the 22 at Kilmarnock; Catrine 23; New Cummock 24; Kirkconnell 25; Thornhill 26; Dumfries 27; Annan 28; Carlisle 29 and 30; Penrith 31; Kendal 1 February; Lancaster 2; Preston 3; Blackburn 4; Bolton 5; Warrington 6 and 7; Northwich 8; Crewe 9; Market Drayton 10; Wellington 11; Wolverhampton 12; Birmingham 13 and 14; Coventry 15; Rugby 16; Northampton 17; Bedford 18; Luton 19 and 20; St. Albans 21; Barnet 22; Tottenham 23.

2. Tyneside Contingent

Left Newcastle on 1 February; Durham 1; Bishop Auckland 2; Darlington 3; Northallerton 4; Thirsk 5; Harrogate 6; Leeds 7 and 8; Wakefield 9; Doncaster 10; Gainsborough 11; Lincoln 12; Grantham 13; Stamford 14; Peterborough 15; Huntingdon 16; Cambridge 17 and 18; Saffron Walden 19; Bishop Stortford 20; Chelmsford 21; Romford 22; Poplar 23.

3. Cornwall and Devon Contingent

Left Plymouth on 7 February; Ivybridge 7; Totnes 8; Newton Abbott 9; Exeter 10 and 11; Honiton 12; Chard 13; Yeovil 14; Shaftesbury 15; Salisbury 16; Andover 17; Basingstoke 18; Aldershot 19 and 20; Guildford 21; Staines 22; Chiswick 23.

1 National Congress and March Council, Manifesto of the National Hunger March and Congress, pp. 9-12; made available by R. & E. Frow.

4. Lancashire Contingent

Left Manchester on 9 February; Stockport 9; Macclesfield 10; Congleton 11; Hanley 12; Stafford 13; West Bromwich 14; Birmingham 15; Warwick 16; Banbury 17; Bicester 18; Oxford 19 and 20; High Wycombe 21; Uxbridge 22; Acton 23.

5. Yorkshire Contingent

Left Sheffield on 10 February; Chesterfield 10; Mansfield 11; Nottingham 12; Loughborough 13; Leicester 14 and 15; Market Harborough 16; Kettering 17; Bedford 18 and 19; Dunstable 20; Berkhamstead 21; Watford 22; Willesden 23.

6. South Wales Contingent

Left Cardiff on 11 February; Newport 11; Bristol 12 and 13; Bath 14; Chippenham 15; Swindon 16 and 17; Newbury 18; Reading 19 and 20; Maidenhead 21; Slough 22; Chiswick 23.

7. Women's Contingent

Left Derby on 12 February; Burton-on-Trent 12; Tamworth 13; Nuneaton 14; Coventry 15; Rugby 16; Northampton 17 and 18; Bedford 19; Hitchin 20; Hatfield 21; Barnet 22; Islington 23.

8. Norfolk Contingent

Left Great Yarmouth on 13 February; Lowestoft 13; Beccles 14; Farnham 15; Woodbridge 16; Ipswich 17; Colchester 18 and 19; Braintree 20; Chelmsford 21; Romford 22; West Ham 23.

9. South Coast Contingent

Left Brighton on 20 February; Crawley 20; Redhill 21; Croydon 22; Wimbledon 23.

10. Kent Contingent

Left Chatham 21 February; Gravesend 21; Erith 22; Deptford 23.

11. Merseyside Contingent

Left Liverpool on 9 February; Birkenhead 9; Chester 10; Crewe 11; Hanley 12; joined Lancashire Contingent.

12. Teeside Contingent

Left Stockton on 3 February; joined Tyneside Contingent at Darlington on same day.

13. North Staffordshire Contingent

Joined Lancashire Contingent at Hanley on 12 February.

14. Nottingham and Derby Contingent

Joined Yorkshire Contingent at Mansfield on 11 February.

15. Midlands Contingent

Joined Lancashire Contingent at Birmingham on 15 February.

16. Hampshire Contingent

Left Southampton on 17 February; Winchester 17; Basingstoke 18; joined Devon and Cornwall Contingent.

17. Bristol Contingent

Left Bristol with South Wales Contingent on 13 February.

Appendix XI

THE N.U.W.M. AND THE B.B.C.¹

'As a result of an invitation from the BBC North Regional Station, Manchester, for a Hunger Marcher to broadcast on the recent march to London, Mr. Harker, leader of the Lancashire contingent visited Broadcasting House, with a copy of the speech or talk I intended to deliver, and was requested to come along again the following morning to arrange for the broadcast. I accompanied him.

On arrival Miss Schill (Director of Talks) proceeded to discuss my speech, and stated that owing to its political and controversial character it could not be accepted. She suggested alterations, and finally drafted a talk, which was mainly a descriptive story of the march to be entitled 'Back from London', omitting any reference whatever to the chief object of the march, namely, the fight against the "New Unemployment Bill".

In fact the speech was dictated, in dictatorial fashion, and we were informed that it would be typed ready for my rehearsal in the afternoon, previous to the actual broadcast in the evening. We retired and returned at 2 p.m. as arranged: meanwhile in consultation with March Leadership we discussed the matter and decided that I must insist on the original speech or none at all, claiming the right to free speech and free use of an alleged democratic instrument, to tell the mass of the

1 G. Staunton, Banned (1934) 6pp.; made available by R. & E. Frow. George Staunton had been Deputy Leader of the Lancashire Contingent on the 1934 Hunger March.

workers the real facts about the march, and the Great Congress of Action that accompanied it in opposition to the new "Slave Bill" also our experiences on the road and in London itself. However on returning for rehearsal I informed Miss Schill that I would not broadcast the speech prepared for me by her. She then stated that in the circumstances she would have to consult the Director. The Director arrived, and he, too, took exception to the political nature of the speech, singling out a few of the chief controversial points for modification. Having failed to persuade me, he also hesitated and engaged in a continuous consultation and negotiation on what would be acceptable to the BBC.

Finally, after three hours in the studio, I was informed that the position was hopeless....' George Staunton, Manchester, March 1934.

A. George Staunton's speech

I am an unemployed man with a wife and family with two years experience of the means test. I, and the three hundred other workers who marched with me from Lancashire, were not prepared to continue to live under these terrible conditions and realised that the Hunger March was an opportunity not only to protest but also to rally the mass support of employed and unemployed workers to take common action to end these conditions.

The New Unemployment Bill would offer me the choice between the workhouse and the prison should I refuse to be driven into the compulsory labour camps which mean an injury to

my fellow trade unionists.

That is why all of us who took part in the march are determined that this Unemployment Bill shall be withdrawn and that work of social value at trade union rates shall be provided for the mass of the unemployed.

Most of us had been elected by working class organisations, such as trade union branches Labour clubs, unemployed organisations etc., to undertake the long trek on their behalf so that we marchers were very much representative of the widespread poverty and unemployment prevalent throughout Lancashire. No-one can say we did not know how to conduct ourselves in an organised and disciplined fashion. Many of us were ex-servicemen. I am myself an ex-serviceman, twice wounded and received three medals. For seventeen days we were on the road covering sometimes up to twenty-five miles a day. For all this great organisation is necessary. The marchers themselves elected a control council which was the leadership of the contingent and in turn departmentalised itself in order to cater for the general welfare of the marchers. We had our own motor lorry for transporting boilers ahead to prepare meals. We needed our own staff of cooks our own ambulance guard our own cobblers cyclists tailors collectors as well as our own improvised band to cheer us on our way.

It is likely, I ask, that to face the hardships of the road by day and to sleep on the boards by night, can be carried out by over three hundred men without a single hitch over a period of a month or more without each man understanding exactly

why it is done? I say that the exemplary conduct of the men and the fine spirit of enthusiasm shown by everyone was because each of us felt the hunger march was right. It was timely, it was our only effective method of protest and because we knew we had the support of a great majority of our class comrades.

In London it is true our deputation was refused a hearing both by the Prime Minister and by the House of Commons, which welcomes the fact that Mr. Arthur Henderson and the General Council of the T.U.C. had also turned us down previously.

But there were many local Labour Parties, trade union branches and Co-operative Guilds who flocked to our aid because they stood with us: the I.L.P. the C.P. and unemployed organisations all came together on the local reception committees to see that we were well fed and well housed. This is what we call unity in the ranks of the working class. The National Government which feared the march, knows that the united front of workers is growing rapidly against the Unemployment Bill Fascism and war.

Our march has been a success. It has been a triumph of working class discipline over provocation. It has captured the sympathy of the great masses of the people. It has shaken Parliament itself.

Already there is a revolt against the niggardly sum of 2s. for an unemployed man's child. Already there is talk of restoring the dole cuts - cuts which have meant untold suffering and mass starvation to millions. But the hunger march and the congress of action are only the beginning. Decisions were taken in London and are already being operated throughout the

country to take the necessary actions for the withdrawal of the new Unemployment Bill and to make capitalism provide work and wages at trade union rates and conditions!

Workers! Build a mighty united front and smash the Government of hunger and war!

B. The B.B.C. version

I am an unemployed man with a wife and family and have been out of a job for two years. I have just come back from London and the Hunger March. About two hundred and fifty of us went from Lancashire representing practically every town in the county, chiefly men from the three main industries of coal, cotton and engineering.

We collected at All Saints, Manchester on 8 February between 6 and 8 p.m. complete with a valise, each containing a change of underclothing, blankets and feeding utensils; we also carried greatcoats. We spent the evening in electing our Control Council which I was to undertake the leadership of the contingent. It divided itself up into sections in order to cater for the general welfare of the marchers. We had our own motor-lorry for transporting boilers ahead to prepare meals. We had our own staff of cooks our own ambulance guard, cobblers, tailors, cyclists collectors as well as an improvised band to cheer us on our way. That evening the contingent leader spoke to us and explained the organisation of the march. The result of this careful planning was an organised and disciplined crowd. Many of us were ex-servicemen and knew how these things should

be done. I am an ex-serviceman myself, twice wounded and with three medals. We were seventeen days on the road covering sometimes up to twenty-five miles a day.

We moved from Manchester for Stockport the next morning and began the march in real earnest. Fortunately the weather was fine - the drought was a blessing to us at least, if not to the farmers. We slept under cover each night - in industrial towns arrangements had been made by sympathetic Councillors, in rural areas we put up at the workhouses. We usually started the march each morning about 10 a.m. The evenings were spent in organising the march for the next day.

Well, eventually we came to London. Our contingent slept at Acton that night, and the next day marched to Hyde Park to arrive there at 3 p.m. which was the hour fixed for us all to meet. There were fourteen platforms in the Park and we knew which one we had to gather round. Each platform had speakers from the marchers and the Congress of Action. We were in Hyde Park about two hours and then marched off to the Labour Hall at Hammersmith which was to be our headquarters for the next ten days. I can tell you we were a bit tired that night! We spent the ten days in going round to meetings and socials, speaking at factory gates, trade union gatherings and so on. We also enjoyed baths and a general clean-up. Three of our Lancashire contingent went on the deputation to the Prime Minister and one to the House of Commons, but as you know they were not received. All of us went to see our own M.P.'s in the House. Some of us were lucky and some weren't. The contingent leaders also went

on deputations to various ministries. Then on Sunday 4 March we had a final meeting in Trafalgar Square. On Monday we marched round the City and the West End, and on Wednesday we all came home - by train.

We came back as fit as we left home - with perhaps a few exceptions as to feet - and our morale was good. We had the satisfaction of feeling that we had at least shown London a bit of what the unemployed of Lancashire were feeling and had shown them too, how a great march of this kind could be well organised and disciplined.

(The BBC graciously condescended to add the following paragraph as a result of our protest.)

I say that the exemplary conduct of the men and the fine spirit of enthusiasm shown by everyone was because each of us felt the Hunger March was right, it was timely, it was our only effective method of protest, and because we knew we had the support of the great majority of our class comrades. The object was to protest against the new Unemployment Bill.

Appendix XII

ROUTE OF THE 1936 HUNGER MARCH¹1. Scottish East Contingent

Left Aberdeen on 27 September and spent the night of the 27 at Stoneham; Montrose 28; Arbroath 29; Dundee 30 and 1 October; Methil 2; Cowdenbeath 3; Edinburgh 4 and 5; Gorebridge 6; Galashiels 7; Hawick 8; Langholme 9; Carlisle 10 and 11; Alston 12; Middleton 13; Barnard Castle 14; Richmond, Yorkshire, 15; Ripon 16; Harrogate 17; Leeds 18; Wakefield 19; Barnsley 20 and 21; Rotherham 22; Sheffield 23; Chesterfield 24; Alfretton 25; Derby 26 and 27; Loughborough 28; Leicester 29; Rugby 30; Northampton 31; Wolverton 1 November; Leighton Buzzard 2; Luton 3 and 4; St. Albans 5; Watford 6; Willesden 7.

2. Scottish West Contingent

Left Glasgow on 5 October; Kilmarnock 5; Catrine 6; New Cummock 7; Kirkconnell 8; Thornhill 9; Dumfries 10 and 11; Annan 12; Carlisle 13; Penrith 14; Kendal 15; Lancaster 16; Preston 17; Blackburn 18 and 19; Bolton 20; Manchester 21; Stockport 22; Macclesfield 23; Congleton 24; Stoke-on-Trent 25 and 26; Stafford 27; Lichfield 28; Nuneaton 29; Coventry 30 and 31; Warwick 1 November; Banbury 2; Buckingham 3; Aylesbury 4; Berkhamstead 5; Watford 6; Willesden 7.

1 Mepol 2, 3091, National Hunger March 1936.

3. North-East Contingent

Left Newcastle on 13 October; Sunderland 13; West Hartlepool 14; Stockton (mid-day 15); Middlesbrough 15; Stokesley 16; Helmsley 17; Malton 18; York 19; Selby 20; Doncaster 21 and 22; Gainsborough 23; Lincoln 24; Newark 25; Grantham 26; Stamford 27; Peterborough 28; Huntingdon 29; Cambridge 30 and 31; Saffron Walden 1 November; Bishop Stortford 2; Dunmow 3; Chelmsford 4; Romford 5; Poplar 6 and 7.

4. Lancashire Contingent

Left Manchester on 22 October; Altrincham 22; Northwich 23; Crew 24 and 25; Market Drayton 26; Wellington 27; Wolverhampton 28 and 29; Birmingham 30; Redditch 31; Stratford 1 November; Chipping Norton 2; Oxford 3 and 4; High Sycombe 5; Uxbridge 6; Fulham 7.

5. Yorkshire, Nottingham and Derby Contingent

Left Sheffield on 25 October; Worksop 25; Mansfield 26; Hucknall 27; Nottingham 28 and 29; Loughborough 30; Leicester 31; Market Harborough 1 November; Kettering 2; Bedford 3 and 4; Hitchin 5; Hertford 6; Wood Green 7.

6. South Wales Contingent

Left Cardiff on 25 October; Bristol 26 and 27; Bath 28; Chippenham 29; Swindon 30 and 31; Newbury 1 November; Reading 2 and 3; Maidenhead 4; Slough 5 and 6; Hammersmith 7.

7. Women's Contingent

Left Coventry on 30 October; Rugby 30; Daventry 31; Towcester 1 November; Stoney Stratford 2; Bletchley 3; Dunstable 4; St. Albans 5 and 6; Finchley 7.

8. Cumberland Contingent

Joined Scottish West Contingent at Carlisle on 13 October.

9. Merseyside Contingent

Left Liverpool on 20 October; St. Helens 20; Wigan 21;

Manchester 22; joined Lancashire Contingent.

10. North Staffordshire Contingent

Left Stoke-on-Trent on 26 October; Market Drayton 26;

joined Lancashire Contingent.

11. Monmouthshire Contingent

Joined South Wales Contingent at Newport on 25 October.

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