

THE INTERPRETATION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BY BRITISH TRADE  
UNION LEADERS: A CASE STUDY OF THE AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING  
UNION, 1945-1951

by

Irving Bernstein

Ph. D.

University of Edinburgh

1980



I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my own work  
and that I have composed it myself.

## CONTENTS

	page
Abstract .....	1
List of Abbreviations .....	3
Chapter	
I. Organization and the Shaping of Information: A General Framework and Guidelines for Study .....	5
II. External Settings: The Context of Organizational Action and the Bases of Governmental Policy .....	36
III. The Organizational Setting of Communication: The Period before 1945 .....	71
IV. The Organizational Setting of Communication: 1945-1951 .....	132
V. The Content of Communication: Britain among the Nations ....	197
VI. The Content of Communication: The External Elements of Reconstruction and the Selling of the Cold War .....	257
VII. Summary and Conclusions .....	343
Bibliography .....	364
Tables	
1. Items Dealt with by the AEU Executive Council, 1921-51 .....	74
2. Action Taken by the Executive Council in Respect of Items Raised, 1921-51 .....	75
3. The Political Fund and Political Spending in the AEU, 1944-1951 .....	157
4. Industrial Stoppages in Metals, Engineering, Shipbuilding and Vehicles, 1945-1951 .....	181
Figure	
1. AEU Structure and Internal Division and Distribution of Powers .....	98

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the information about international affairs that was transmitted by the leaders of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) in the years 1945-1951. In general the study confirms suggestions derived from a review of the literature in the fields of communication, organization and the international behaviour of trade unions. AEU leaders did not proffer their interpretations of the world outside the United Kingdom and of Britain's place in that world out of a disinterested wish to impart information or out of ideological or nationalistic zeal. Rather, such messages tended to be part of arguments about the leaders' basic organizational concerns: goal attainment, organizational maintenance and power. The selection of information for transmission was thus a function of the suitability of a datum of international affairs to the leaders' argument. Consequently, a negative image of a certain country might be useful in one context, while a positive image of the same country might be useful in another. Nevertheless, various other factors could impose a degree of internal coherence on the resulting world image and could also result in a measure of agreement between this image and the one projected by other sources in the UK.

The AEU's leaders painted a picture of a world hostile to Britain and to its prosperity in order to obtain the members' support for their policy of cooperation with the State and the employers. The image of a hostile outside world was a particularly notable feature of the AEU

Executive's arguments on behalf of wage restraint. During the period under review, the images of the United States and the Soviet Union shifted in accordance with changes in the leaders' understanding of how important to their objective of maintaining full employment in an expanding economy those countries and/or certain images of those countries were. As the focus of discussion with regard to economic development and reconstruction shifted from trade to aid and productivity to rearmament, the AEU leaders presented the Soviet Union in an increasingly negative and hostile manner and the United States in an ever more positive way. Very particularistic motives led the Engineering Union's leaders to become propagandists of the Cold War, exponents of anti-Sovietism and pro-Americanism.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACP ..... Anglo-American Council on Productivity  
AEU ..... Amalgamated Engineering Union  
AFL ..... American Federation of Labor  
ASE ..... Amalgamated Society of Engineers  
AUFW ..... Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers  
CIO ..... Congress of Industrial Organizations  
CLP ..... Constituency Labour Party  
CPGB ..... Communist Party of Great Britain  
CSEU ..... Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions  
DC ..... District Committee  
DO ..... Divisional Organizer  
DS ..... District Secretary  
EMTSSNC .. Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards' National  
          Council  
EC ..... Executive Council  
ERP ..... European Recovery Programme  
ICFTU .... International Confederation of Free Trade Unions  
IMF ..... International Metal Workers' Federation  
ITS ..... International Trade Secretariat  
JPC ..... Joint Production Committee  
MM ..... Minority Movement  
NATO ..... North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
NC ..... National Committee

NEJTM ..... National Engineering Joint Trades Movement  
CEEC ..... Organization for European Economic Cooperation  
TGWU ..... Transport and General Workers' Union  
TUC ..... Trades Union Congress  
UAW ..... United Automobile Workers of America  
WFTU ..... World Federation of Trade Unions

CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION AND THE SHAPING OF INFORMATION:  
A GENERAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDELINES FOR STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

The subject of this thesis is how the leaders of a voluntary organization interpreted the world outside their own country to their constituents. It deals with the image of the early postwar international situation projected by the leaders and spokesmen of a British trade union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU),<sup>1</sup> in speeches, statements and publications aimed at the members. We shall be looking not only at the contents of the images but at their context as well. The object of this study is to try to understand why the leaders of the AEU adopted specific public stances on specific issues and imparted specific information to their members. We may thus be able to learn something about the ways in which ideas about foreign affairs are spread, about the formation of public images, attitudes and opinions about international affairs and the place of one's own country in the world.

The period under review here, 1945 to 1951, was that of the first majority Labour Governments in Britain. It was also one of sharp economic and political retrenchment for the country. The UK had been in

---

1. After a series of amalgamations and some name changes this has become the Engineering Section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers.

relative economic and political decline for many years before this time, but the decline had not been so precipitous as it was now to become. The United Kingdom may well have been adjusting its own international behaviour and activities to take account of the growing power of the United States since the early nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> It was quite another matter, however, for the UK to begin divesting itself of its non-white empire and of other overseas economic, political and military commitments and to become in its turn economically and militarily dependent on the United States.

Many people seem to have regarded those years as a mere interlude, at worst a period of convalescence from the shocks of war. Once Britain and the rest of the war-ravaged world had recovered, it was thought, the UK would resume its leading role among the nations. To be sure, some aspects of the country's decline may have been obscured for many individuals by the improvement in their personal well-being as a result of the expansion of the social services and the maintenance of full employment. The far greater damage suffered by the countries of the Continent may also have blurred certain underlying long-term trends. Yet those who should have known better --- and, indeed, sometimes indicated that they were well aware that Britain had more to contend with than simply recovering from the war --- even they did not always offer a sustained corrective analysis of the country's situation. If

---

2. Compare Coral Bell, The Debatable Alliance (London, 1964), pp. 10-14.

one scans the parliamentary debates and examines Government policies of the period, the overwhelming image one discovers is that of a Britain which had suffered certain short-term setbacks which could be overcome.<sup>3</sup> Those who contended instead that the nation's problems were structural as well as cyclical, that the nation's decline was in some measure irreversible and that the Government should adapt its policies to the new economic and political realities were in a distinct minority.<sup>4</sup> Britain, it was generally agreed, would take its rightful place in the world again, if, indeed, it could ever be said to have left it.

The reason for the projection of this latter image was not that the national elite were engaged in a massive plot to hoodwink the people. It is more likely that they could not understand the country's problems and the nature of developments elsewhere or make the leap from an awareness of these trends to a comprehension and belief in their significance, reality or magnitude. In any event, if evidence be needed about how widespread and deep-rooted these views were, one need only look at the policies pursued and propounded by the political leadership in government and opposition, in Parliament and outside it, during and after this period. It is this fundamental belief in Britain's rightful role which makes understandable the "global posturing" of later years when policies were conceived of independent action for the UK in each

---

3. See below, Chapter II.

4. For an illustration of the minority position of such views in the context of Britain's atomic programme, see Margaret Gowing, Independence and Deterrence, Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952, Volume I, Policy Making (London, 1974), pp. 224-34.

and all of the three Churchillian circles of the Empire and  
Commonwealth, the North Atlantic and Europe.<sup>5</sup>

As we shall see below, the AEU leaders, too, projected such an image of Britain in messages to their constituents. While they probably believed what they were saying and may have believed it for the reasons just outlined, that does not explain why they said it, why they publicized this image. After all, it is not generally considered a primary function of trade union leaders to educate their members about international affairs. When they do take a public stance on an issue of foreign policy, that stance is often ascribed to factors and reasons which are not directly related to the basic functions and operations of trade unions.<sup>6</sup> It is contended here, however, that the leaders' statements about international affairs and the images of international affairs that they projected stem directly from the organizational context and can be understood and explained more fully in terms of the basic functions of the organization, of relations within it and between it and other bodies.

This means, in short, that communication must be studied in terms of its social context. This statement seems so obvious as to be trite.

5. The phrase "global posturing" is from Tom Nairn, "The Left Against Europe?", New Left Review, 75 (1972), 20. Compare F.S. Northedge, Freedom and Necessity in British Foreign Policy (London, 1972), p. 25.
6. See, for example, V.L. Allen, Trade Union Leadership (London, 1957), p. 295; Roger Eatwell, The 1945-1951 Labour Governments (London, 1979), p. 135; Martin Harrison, Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945 (London, 1960), pp. 144-45, 217-20, 223-24.

Communication theorists, however, on the whole have not looked at the social context and have tended to abstract the communication process from its social setting. It has thus been noted that "perusal of the communication literature, at least prior to the 1970's, would almost lead one to assume that social structure does not affect human communication".<sup>7</sup>

Yet a survey of research in the field shows that, insofar as communication has been related to social structure, studies have dealt with problems of technique, that is, with the ways in which structure can support or impede the efficient transmission of a message.<sup>8</sup> The question of the contents of communication, of the determination of what goes into the message in the first place, has received rather less attention from scholars in the field. Their concentration on "engineering" has gone hand in hand with an indifference to these so-called "semantic aspects".<sup>9</sup> This neglect of contents, thus, was due not to the insidious effects of a concern for quantification and quantifiable phenomena but to a simple and basic prior lack of interest in the issue.<sup>10</sup>

7. Everett M. Rogers and Rekha Agarwala-Rogers, Communication in Organizations (New York, 1976), p. 2.
8. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers provide such a survey. See too Lyman W. Porter and Karlene H. Roberts, editors, Communication in Organizations (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1977); Karlene H. Roberts and Charles O'Reilly III, "Measuring Organizational Communication", Journal of Applied Psychology, 59 (1974), 321-26 (p. 321).
9. C.E. Shannon, quoted by Wulf D. Hund, Ware Nachricht und Informations-fetisch (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1976), p. 15.
10. Hund, p. 14.

The attempts of Hund and others to carry communications theory beyond its usual constraints are thus something of a breakthrough for the field.<sup>11</sup> These scholars, however, have brought the approach to bear on an area of communication studies in which empirical research has dealt with problems of content and sought to relate it to social setting --- namely, to studies of the press.<sup>12</sup> Students of other types of communication have been more restricted by the traditional limitations of the field, in part, perhaps, because of the Business and Management and Diffusion of Innovation orientations of much of the empirical research in the discipline. The problem, thus, has been less often "What does one tell the workers (or peasants or whomever)?" than "How does one tell them a given thing so that they do what one wants them to do?"<sup>13</sup>

To return to our study, in order to understand how the social

11. Hund summarizes many of the more interesting attempts.
12. For a summary of this type of research on the press published in English before 1976 see Denis McQuail, Review of Sociological Writing on the Press, Royal Commission on the Press, Working Paper No. 2 (HMSO, 1976), pp. 39-49. See also, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Colin Seymour-Ure and Jermy Tunstall, Studies in the Press, Royal Commission on the Press, Working Paper No. 3 (HMSO, 1977); Denis McQuail, Analysis of Newspaper Content, Royal Commission on the Press, Research Paper No. 4, Cmd. 6810-4 (HMSO, 1977)
13. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers summarize the work which shows the Business Studies orientation. Everett M. Rogers with F. Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations, second edition (New York, 1971) summarizes the work with the Diffusion orientation. There have, of course, been exceptions to this trend. For example, Employee Communication, Policy and Tools, Studies in Personnel Policy, No. 200 (New York, 1966); Fritz Steele, The Open Organization (Reading, Massachusetts, 1975)

setting of the leaders of the AEU shaped the contents of their communications with their constituents, it would be useful to step back to examine the process in more general terms.

1. Communication

For our purposes, communication is defined as the transmission of a message through a channel or medium from one actor, the source, to another, the receiver, with the intention on the part of the source of bringing about a change in the receiver's knowledge, attitudes and/or overt behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

The message itself is an idea or information and is "produced by selection from the variety of objective reality".<sup>15</sup> The selection of information for transmission will clearly be affected by the other four factors in the communication process. The channel used may range from any type of direct personal contact through the mass media, and different channels affect the form and content of messages in different ways. One need only think of the constraints we all feel in composing a telegram to understand this. On another level, there is the oft-cited difficulty of using television to transmit complex, detailed information.<sup>16</sup>

---

14. See Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, pp. 9-10.

15. This is Hund's conception of "social information". See Hund, p. 24. My translation. Italicized in the original.

16. It has been a recurrent theme in Chris Dunkley's column in the Financial Times. See also Michael Tracey, The Production of Political Television (London, 1977), pp. 91-104; Jay G. Blumler, "The Political Effects of Television", in The Effects of Television, edited by James D. Halloran (London, 1970), pp. 70-101 (pp. 96-98).

The source's personality, background and perceptions are also important in shaping the contents of communications. The source is, after all, the selector of the information to be transmitted, and what he selects will be limited by what he sees and knows. One cannot, for example, expect someone with no knowledge of nineteenth century French literature to illustrate his statements with quotations from Ruy Blas.

The capacities, background and personality of the potential and intended receiver of the message also shape the content of the message, albeit, for the most part, indirectly. His impact is generally mediated by what the source knows and expects of him. The source cuts his message to what he expects his receiver to understand or to what he thinks the receiver needs to know.<sup>17</sup> Thus, if he wants the receiver to understand the allusion, rather than merely to be impressed, he will, even if he has studied French literature, not quote Ruy Blas in the original to a unilingual English-speaker.

Finally, the purpose of the message is crucial in determining its contents. This point should be obvious. A message intended to encourage saving, for instance, will not deal with the ease and joys of hire purchase. Clearly, moreover, the purpose of a message is inseparable from its source. Why, however, should a source have a purpose with regard to a certain receiver? Why should he care what the receiver thinks, knows or does? The obvious answer is that the intended

---

17. Compare Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production", in Comparative Organizations: The Results of Empirical Research, edited by Wolf D. Heydebrand (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973), pp. 476-506.

receiver's attitudes, knowledge and behaviour may somehow affect the source's interests and concerns. Such an effect implies a social relationship between the source and the receiver, or more precisely, implies that they are both located in a single social system, an agglomeration of interdependent groups and individuals. The purpose of communication thus stems from this setting. The social setting, furthermore, provides channels for communication and determines access to them. Telegrams are hard to compose because access to them is controlled by the Post Office, which charges for them by the word. Depending on one's position in the distribution of income in a society, moreover, one can be more --- or less --- constrained than another person by the requirement of payment. In addition, the social setting establishes a framework according to which the communicators may assess themselves and their relationship to each other. Social setting thus moulds their mutual perceptions which in turn shape the contents of the message.

None of the above means that idiosyncratic factors are unimportant; even a rich person may avoid sending telegrams if he is stingy. Nevertheless, the importance of the social setting for communication within it is undeniable.

## 2. Organization

In the case to be studied here the most obvious social relationship between the communicators --- the leaders of a trade union and their constituents --- is their common membership in the union and their relative positions in it. For our purposes it is useful to regard a

union as a specific type of organization, that is, as a specific kind of "stable system of individuals who work together to achieve, through a hierarchy of ranks and division of labor, common goals".<sup>18</sup> In an organization, "divisions of labor, power and communication responsibilities ... (are) deliberately planned to enhance the realization of (the organization's) specific goals ... (while) one or more power centers ... control the efforts of the organization and direct them toward its goals".<sup>19</sup>

An organization can thus be distinguished by four basic characteristics: 1) its goals; 2) the means it uses to achieve them; 3) the subdivision of these means into tasks for the various members, that is, the division of labour; and 4) the hierarchical distribution of power, that is, the subordination of some of the members to the decisions and directives of others.

### 3. Trade Unions

A trade union is distinguished from other organizations, first and foremost, by the nature of its objectives. Many organizations exist in order to offer goods and services to non-members. A union, on the contrary, is intended to provide specific services to its own members. The services involved are well-summarized by the Webbs' definition of a trade union as a "continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their

---

18. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, p. 6. Compare John Child, Roy Loveridge and Malcolm Warner, "Towards an Organizational Study of Trade Unions", Sociology, 7 (1973), 71-91.

20  
working lives". Members may join for a variety of reasons, and a  
union's goals may be interpreted in different ways at different times,  
while new goals may sometimes be adopted and others may be abandoned as  
circumstances change. Still, it seems fair to say that the provision  
of certain services to the members, services pertaining to the  
maintenance and improvement of the conditions of their working lives  
---- in terms of employment, earnings, hours and the physical conditions  
under which they labour --- have constituted the hard core of union  
activity in Britain.

#### 4. Organizational Complexity and Leadership

Another feature of trade unions distinguishes them from other  
kinds of organizations and places them firmly in the category of  
voluntary organizations. In voluntary organizations membership is not  
generally a function of legal constraints, and participation does not  
normally involve remuneration. There is also the (at least formal)  
complexity of the power distribution within the organization. In a  
"simple" organization the power relationship is consistent throughout,  
and the hierarchy admits no exceptions. While there may be a number of  
levels in the decision-making and instruction-giving hierarchy, member A

- 
19. Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964), p. 3.
  20. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, revised edition (London, 1920), p. 1.
  21. E. Wight Bakke, "To Join or Not to Join", in Industrial Relations and the Wider Society: Aspects of Interaction, edited by B. Barrett, E. Rhodes and J. Beishon (London, 1975), pp. 43-52.

who takes decisions and gives orders to member B is never himself subject to B's decisions so long as they maintain their respective positions.

In more complex organizations, and voluntary ones tend to fall into this category, the relationship between A and B may well be inconsistent, so that B sometimes may take decisions and give orders to A. Such a reversal occurs most obviously when an elected official stands for re-election by the rank-and-file members. Congresses of rank-and-file members able to take decisions and issue instructions to office-holders may also take place. In these circumstances it is evident that the term "leaders" is only a very loose designation for those who more properly might be called the "incumbents of high official positions in the organizational hierarchy". It is not meant as a precise definition of the link between the communicators or to imply that the rank and file are mere "followers".<sup>22</sup>

The organizational behaviour of the leaders is guided by three main concerns: goal attainment, organizational growth and maintenance and power. It is the task of the leaders, by virtue of their office, to "control the efforts of the organization and direct them toward its goals".<sup>23</sup> Their behaviour is thus animated by a concern for achieving the organization's goals and for managing the operations of the organization. This managerial concern in turn involves a desire to

---

22. See Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana, Illinois, 1964), p. 75. Compare Etzioni, p. 61. Note that in this discussion of "complexity" I am dealing with lines of authority, not with patterns of control; contrast Etzioni, p. 60.

ensure that the organization is functioning well enough to achieve its goals.<sup>24</sup> This latter interest may also involve a concern for the functioning and maintenance of the lines of authority, or of the power distribution, within it. The leaders' behaviour may also be based on somewhat more selfish motives, too. Thus, their concern for the distribution of power may stem from a desire to maintain or enhance their own position in the organizational hierarchy. Indeed, personal ambition may be the prime motive for all of a leader's organizational behaviour.<sup>25</sup> He may try to further the interests of the union and its members because he deems it necessary to advancing his own interests, power and standing.

It is thus evident that the behaviour of the leaders of an organization is not governed solely by its formal constitution or by a set of rules. Idiosyncratic factors may also be important. Even in terms of role-determined behaviour, that is behaviour determined by the leaders's place in the hierarchy, formal structures are not reliable guides. For an organization and relations within it are by no means fixed, all-encompassing and all-defining. Relationships evolve over

---

23. Etzioni, p. 3.

24. Compare Karl E. Weick, The Social Psychology of Organizing (Reading, Massachusetts, 1969), pp. 36-37. Weick's analysis of the place of goals in organizations is different from the one used here. Nevertheless, he points out that in order for an organization to continue to accomplish whatever it is it does, the "processes involved in organizing (itself) must continually be reaccomplished". (p. 36)

25. Bakke, pp. 45-48.

time, partly as a result of cumulative idiosyncratic changes effected by officials, partly as adaptive responses to changes in the organization itself (e.g. growing membership) and in the organization's setting. Thus the power of full-time officials may grow simply because they are on hand to deal with problems as they arise, when strict adherence to rules about consulting the rank and file would lead to delay and inefficiency.

Consequently, in examining the workings of an organization, due attention must be paid such informal and customary developments, structures and modes of behaviour. One should not, however, ignore the formal structures and rules, for even when robbed of substance they may still shape attitudes and the forms of behaviour, whether out of habit or a concern to keep up appearances, to make it seem, for example, that the powers of the rank and file have not been usurped.

##### 5. The External Setting

Special attention too must be paid the relationship of the organization with its social setting, for its structure, goals and modes of behaviour are themselves affected, if not determined, by the world that envelops it. The problems, needs and wants that the organization is meant to remedy or supply arise in the external setting and can change as the setting changes. Thus the postwar extension of social welfare and health care by the State led to a concomitant reduction in the friendly society functions of the AEU.<sup>26</sup> The American YMCA adjusted

---

26. See below, Chapter IV-B-2.

to changes in its social setting by devoting "increasing attention to its physical and social goals, and less attention to the original religious and spiritual aims".<sup>27</sup>

On another level the values, customs and laws of the external setting determine what means are available, practicable and effective. For example, in a society in which freedom of association is severely restricted, the instrument of organization itself may not even be available.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, an organization draws the resources it needs for its operations --- money, personnel, information and the like --- from the external setting. Its relationship with other organizations and groups in the society can constrain its access to these resources and will then influence its policy choices and determine its ability to pursue its goals.<sup>29</sup>

---

27. David L. Sills, "The Succession of Goals", in A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations, edited by Amitai Etzioni, second edition (New York, 1969), pp. 175-87 (p. 179).

28. Compare H. F. Moorhouse, "The Political Incorporation of the British Working Class: An Interpretation", Sociology, 7 (1973), 341-59; James D. Thompson and William J. McEwen, "Organizational Goals and Environment", in A Sociological Reader ..., pp. 187-96.

29. J. Kenneth Benson, "The Interorganizational Network as a Political Economy", in Organization and Environment, edited by Lucien Karpik (London, 1978), pp. 69-101.

## B. COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Communication is vital to the operation of an organization. It is both a condition and a tool of organization. Communication is necessary if decisions are to be taken and instructions given about the execution of certain tasks and the adaptation, adoption and abandonment of others. Reports must be made to the formulators of policies and the givers of orders to provide them with the data they need to make their decisions. In order to ensure that the necessary information can be transmitted and the flow of unnecessary information inhibited, the structure of the organization must provide for the opening of some channels and the blocking of others for certain sources and receivers.

Who may or may not send what type of message by what means to whom is a function of the relationship between the members in the overall scheme of the organizational division of labour and distribution of power. Katz and Kahn suggested five types of "downward" organizational communication, from those higher in the organizational hierarchy to those lower down:

1. Specific task directives: job instructions.
2. Information designed to produce understanding of the task and its relationship to other organizational tasks: job rationale.
3. Information about organizational procedures and practices.
4. Feedback to subordinates about (their) performance.
5. Information of an ideological character to indoctrinate a sense of mission: indoctrination of goals. (32)

30. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, p. 7.

31. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers, pp. 77-101.

32. Daniel Katz and Robert E. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations, second edition (New York, 1978), p. 440.

Not all organizational leaders always or ever send messages of all these types. For example,

It is often assumed that an emphasis on information about full job understanding will conflict with strict allegiance to specific job instructions. If workers think they know a certain thing they may attempt to do it in other than the specified fashion and the organizational leaders may not want to tolerate the variability of behaviour this entails. (53)

The apparent purpose of these five types of message is fulfilment of the leaders' main responsibilities of ensuring the attainment of the organization's goals and the maintenance and enhancement of the organization itself. The third possible concern of the leader --- the distribution of power --- may also affect the transmission of such messages. The reluctance to tolerate "variability of behaviour" may be due to a fear of disruption of the organization's operations and lines of authority and/or a fear of challenges to the leaders' personal position in the power distribution.

Katz and Kahn's classification of downward communication is an adequate representation of leader-to-rank-and-file communication in what I have called simple organizations. In a complex body, however, allowance must be made for leader-to-rank-and-file communication when decision-making responsibility rests with the latter. In these circumstances the leadership would, in effect, send messages "up the line". Katz and Kahn discerned four types of communication of this kind: "what people say (1) about themselves, their performance and their problems, (2) about others and their problems, (3) about organizational policies

and practices, and (4) about what needs to be done and how it can be done".  
34

The apparent and ostensible purpose of this upward communication is to provide the policy-makers with the data they need to carry out their duties. An office-holder may thus conscientiously select and transmit information which will enable the decision-makers to make their own reasoned choices. Since, however, much of this upward communication concerns the office-holders themselves, their colleagues --- and protégés and potential rivals --- and their ideas and performance, personal considerations are even more likely to intrude here than in downward communication. The data the leaders select and transmit to the rank-and-file decision-makers may thus be geared to guide the latter to issue the orders that the leaders want to carry out. An official may thus be concerned to prevent the rank and file arriving at a decision which would damage his own position in the organizational hierarchy, whether through election or the allocation of duties. Katz and Kahn write in this regard:

The boss is not likely to be given information by subordinates that will lead to decisions affecting them adversely. It is not only that they tell the boss what he or she wants to hear. In a study of upward communication Read ... reported less accuracy for subordinates with strong upward mobility than for those less ambitious. (35)

---

33. Katz and Kahn, p. 441.

34. Katz and Kahn, p. 446.

35. Katz and Kahn, p. 447. See too Sidney Rosen and Abraham Tesser, "On Reluctance to Transmit Undesirable Information: The MUM Effect", Sociometry, 33 (1968), 253-63; Charles A. O'Reilly III and Karlene H. Roberts, "Information Filtration in Organiza-

In a complex body the "boss" may be the rank and file and the "subordinates" the officials.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL SETTING

1. The International Setting as a Resource for Argument

Given what we have learned about the bases of organizational communication, how do aspects of international affairs come to figure in statements made by a trade union leader to his constituents? The obvious answer is that the international setting is somehow related to 1) the fulfilment of the organization's goals, 2) the maintenance and enhancement of the organization and 3) the maintenance and enhancement of the power distribution and of the leader's position in it. We have already seen how closely the external setting is linked with the development and operation of an organization, and so it is logical that aspects of the setting should figure in internal communications. This answer, however, is too vague to be satisfactory.

In an American study Chittick found that leaders of unions and other voluntary organizations were willing to disseminate among their members propaganda provided by the State Department. He suggests that the parties were engaged in a mutually beneficial exchange. The State Department got a way of spreading its propaganda, and the organization

---

tions: Three Experiments", Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 11 (1974), 253-65.

got the information it wants and needs to conduct its own "information-education programs". These are programs intended to increase the members' awareness of international affairs and thus to mobilize their support for the organization's international activities. What is more, "many ... groups acknowledge a responsibility for educating their membership on foreign affairs".<sup>36</sup>

Why, however, should State Department propaganda meet the needs of the organization's education programme? Why should both groups wish to project the same image of the outside world? Onofri suggests that something like this may occur when an ostensibly independent organization is in fact an offshoot or dependent of another "decision centre", that is, when it is a front organization. It may then propagate the centre's views and values among its members and the general public.<sup>37</sup>

Links between groupings may be of a broader type than those suggested by Chittick and Onofri. Instead of merely offering information, one decision centre may offer another group and/or its leaders prestige, material benefits, statutory rights and so on. The leaders of an organization may court or return the centre's favour by transmitting among their members information favourable to the centre or by refraining from transmitting information abhorrent to it. The exchange need not be explicit, but it may nonetheless be real.

36. William O. Chittick, State Department, Press and Pressure Groups (New York, 1970), pp. 220-27.

37. Fabrizio Onofri, Potere e strutture sociali nella società industriale di massa (Bologna, 1976), pp. 125-27.

What, however, if no such links or exchanges can be discerned? What if the organizational leaders transmit information which contradicts government policy? How does one explain why information about international affairs is being transmitted in that case? One should then, logically, begin to examine the organization itself, its internal workings and its relationship with its setting far more closely. Thus, Hero and Starr, in their analysis of the foreign affairs education programme of the United Automobile Workers of America --- a programme often very critical of US Government policy ---, ascribe prime importance to the history of the union and to the personal background of its leaders --- the "traditions and history" of the UAW and the "psychological and ideological roots of the Reuther brothers".<sup>38</sup>

Other scholars have suggested that "public relations" of an "interest group" should be understood in terms of the leaders' conception of their audience, their organization and the "magnitude" of the organizational "public relations function" and of the group's access to the mass media.<sup>39</sup>

In his study of postwar Italian trade unions Cavalli suggested that in order to understand their organizational behaviour and development --- which one might expand to include communication behaviour --- one should look at a number of variables "international conditions,

38. Alfred O. Hero and Emil Starr, The Reuther-Meany Foreign Policy Dispute (Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1970), pp. 22-24.

39. Gabriel A. Almond, "A Comparative Study of Interest Groups and the Political Process", American Political Science Review, 52 (1958), 270-82 (p. 274).

the economy and the (class structure), its leaders, oligarchies and (opposition groups) ... who ... are in competition for control of the masses".<sup>40</sup>

All of these approaches are suggestive, but given what we have learned about intra-organizational communication none seems to offer more than a very partial explanation. A much more useful guide would come from a combination of Harrod's analysis of the bases of trade union foreign policy and the general statements about organization and communication developed earlier. Harrod suggests five possible incentives for a union to engage in international activities, the first three of which coincide roughly with the three organizational concerns of leaders noted above: goal attainment, organizational maintenance<sup>41</sup> and the distribution of power. Firstly, international activities may stem from "direct international links with the welfare of union members", through trade, migration and investment. Secondly, foreign activities may be seen as a way of obtaining "prestige, acceptance or power" for the organization, or of undermining the influence of rivals and opponents. The prestige such activities bestow on the organization may thus help to reinforce the members' pride in and commitment to it. Thirdly, these "accessory functions" may be used for "internal political

---

40. Luciano Cavalli, "Il sindacato come agente di mutamento", in Materiali sull'Italia in trasformazione, edited by Luciano Cavalli (Bologna, 1973), pp. 11-44 (p. 11). My translation.

41. Jeffrey Harrod, Trade Union Foreign Policy (London, 1972), pp. 38-54.

and personal reasons". International activities may endow a leader with prestige and increase the members' support for him.

The fourth and fifth incentives suggested by Harrod do not fit as easily into the schema of the three principal leadership concerns, particularly if we are dealing with a trade union which is but little concerned with matters other than the core issues of the conditions of the members' working lives. According to Harrod international activity may be motivated by support for the nation and its foreign policy and/or by a wish to promote or defend a political movement or group ideology. To the extent that neither patriotism nor ideology figure among an organization's main concerns, they are likely to be less important in motivating action than the other three factors. Even if they are deemed important organizational values, an active concern with them is likely to be considered a luxury in comparison with the pursuit of the other three types of objective. Nevertheless, grave crises and a sense that the pursuit of ideological and power goals will somehow contribute to the attainment of other goals may make them weightier incentives to international action. In these circumstances, however, they are, strictly speaking, means not ends. In general the fourth and fifth incentives are likely to act as inhibitors or catalysts of action stemming from the first three considerations. Thus a union may derive "tangible benefits and assistance in performing basic functions" if it supports the state's foreign policy. (It is evident how this approach can subsume types of transactions in addition to those mentioned earlier.) On the other hand, a socialist ideology may

legitimate foreign actions stemming from other concerns, or may make such actions more difficult.

In any event, it is clear that, insofar as a union may engage in a foreign policy of its own, references to that policy will appear in upward and downward communications of the types listed by Katz and Kahn, messages about goal attainment, organizational maintenance and the internal power distribution. These factors, however, need not lead to action in order to produce the transmission of messages about international affairs. If the international setting is linked directly with the members' welfare, that setting may figure in messages involving instructions and statements or explanations of policy, or as part of the data transmitted to policy-makers in order to provide background for their decisions. This general relevance is an important, but not necessarily the only or even a necessary factor in the selection of information about the outside world for transmission. If, for example, a leader wants to justify, argue or persuade the rank and file to adopt a specific policy, the selection of information will be governed also by the extent to which this information supports his argument. In that case, selection may involve conscious or unconscious distortion. <sup>42</sup> The link with the international setting thus need not be real or even perceived as real by the source; it is necessary only that it be possible to represent it as real. Nor need the link with the international setting be direct: the external system may simply serve as a source of

---

42. Unconscious distortion may result from seeing what one wants or hopes to see.

parables, a resource for argumentation and a reservoir of examples and models which can be used to support one policy or to attack another.

An organization may not be able to enhance its own prestige, acceptance or power merely by its leaders making statements about international affairs, but it might be able to undermine support for rival groups. To this end the international setting may again be used as a resource. For example, a splinter group may be attacked by pointing to the harmful effects of the splintering of labour organizations in other countries. A group espousing certain policies may be attacked by demonstrating the harm caused by groups pursuing similar policies abroad. Links and parallels of other kinds may be drawn between rival groups in the United Kingdom and evil, harmful and subversive elements elsewhere.

Such parallels and links may be drawn when the rival is inside the organization as well, that is when it is competing with the current leadership for power within the union or is otherwise trying to change or disrupt the lines of authority. The leader thus may try to undermine support for the rival in order to protect the existing distribution of power and/or his own position in it. On the other hand, if there is a group within the organization which has international links and if the leaders need that group's support, they may try to curry favour with it by drawing flattering pictures of the foreign actor or grouping involved. The international setting also may further the leaders' ambitions by serving as a scapegoat; setbacks suffered by the organization can be blamed on international factors in order to shift responsibility from

the leadership.

Support for the nation and ideological propaganda are unlikely to be major conscious bases for statements about foreign affairs, though they may well be important subconscious factors. This is especially true insofar as they are not among the primary concerns of the leaders acting in the organizational context. Moreover, it must be remembered that the leaders do not have unlimited access to their members. Maintaining and using a communication channel costs money, time and effort, and these are subject to competing claims among both union officials and the rank and file. Consequently, messages based on the leaders main concerns are far more likely to figure prominently in communication with the members. This does not mean that patriotism and ideology can be ignored. They may be the subconscious basis for statements about the international setting, and they may also be the explicit proximate cause of such statements when they can be used to advance the other objectives.

## 2. Internal Consistency and Societal Conformity

References to the international setting thus are likely to be governed by how well they fit into and serve arguments and explanations concerning the interests of the members, the union and the leaders. Therefore, the image of the outside world that is projected may well be inconsistent and incoherent. One argument may be better supported by a negative image of the United States, for example, while another may be helped by a positive one. Patriotism and ideology, in these circum-

stances, can constitute limiting factors. They may predispose the leaders to take a favourable view of one country and an unfavourable view of another. If a leader cannot say anything good (or bad) about a country in whose favour (or against which) he is prejudiced, he may say nothing about it at all. Or, given a variety of foreign models, he may be drawn to one more than to the others. Ideological leanings and support for the nation thus may impose a measure of consistency and coherence on images which otherwise would be subject to the whims of logical argument.

Students of the mass media have often remarked that despite the multiplicity and apparent variety of sources of information in a society, the images which these sources project tend to be rather uniform. Rather than provide a variety of viewpoints and interpretations of their society, different sources will merely reinforce and confirm one another. This uniformity of the press may stem, inter alia, from the "currency of common news values, or ... other processes of standardisation", like the pervasive influence of the wire services, the national media, the "upmarket" press and so on. Moreover,

given the dominance of the British press by a single set of market imperatives, it is plausible that the convergence of the press in defining the problems of society and finding remedies has something to do with market forces as with inescapable truths that all agree on,

43

--- the basic values of the society.

---

43. McQuail, Review of Sociological Writing on the Press, p. 48.

Trade union leaders are members of a larger society and are subject to many of the same processes and pressures as anyone else in that society. They are, therefore, likely to share, to some degree at least, in the prevailing social consensus. Perhaps more importantly, the values, interests and concerns of the organization may well be a particularized form of the societal ones. As we have seen, an organization is a product of its society and is in constant interaction with it. The mere fact that an organization persists should indicate that it is behaving according to criteria or that it stands for something at least partly acceptable in the society. Messages from the leaders to the rank and file may therefore reflect this consensus. This agreement, consequently, may impose a measure of consistency on leadership communication, not only between one message and another, but also between the messages transmitted by the leaders and those sent by other sources, like the political leadership.

The contents of messages may also be subject to certain "market forces". An organization, it must be remembered, competes for resources with other groups and organizations, and the leaders may have to compete with challengers to their position. In order to retain the support of the members against other groups and leaders, or to obtain the favour of those in control of some other resource, organizational officials may adopt stances that they see are "selling" well. If it is popular or worthwhile to say nice things about the USSR, they may therefore say them. This can be another source of uniformity.

Finally, uniformity can be accidental and stem from the simple convergence of interests and purposes between the organizational sources and others in the society. They may propound the same views for different reasons and thus come to project similar images. Such convergence may well be based on a far more fundamental, if not so readily evident, community of values and interests between the organization and the society. Nevertheless, arguments based on purely particularistic premises may lead to agreement with policies derived from very different concerns.

#### D. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have explored in very general terms the relationship between the contents of messages from organizational leaders to members, on the one hand, and the internal (intraorganizational) and external (extraorganizational) settings, on the other. In the following chapters we shall examine the contents of real communications in a real organization. The foregoing discussion will guide us in the attempt.

We shall look at the factors of the communication process deemed to shape the contents of the message --- the source, channel, receiver and purpose --- and see to what extent these contents actually were governed by the purposes, concerns, needs and structures of the AEU in the years 1945 to 1951. To understand this relationship, we must understand what the purposes, concerns, needs and structures of the AEU

were in those years. We shall have to consider to what extent they were determined by the incumbents of high organizational office at the time or were the result of the Union's historical development and of responses to changes in the external setting. The preceding discussion would lead one to expect that organizational variables were rather more important than idiosyncratic ones. We shall also try to determine the relative importance of ideological, patriotic and other concerns in the activities of the Union and the leadership.

In looking at the bases and reasons for the contents of the messages, we shall also look at the bases and reasons for their internal consistency and societal conformity or for the absence of these traits. In order to provide a basis for determining the extent of any conformity, Chapter II will summarize the development of the policies of the Labour Governments and Party during this period. We shall examine to what extent this conformity was based on a community or convergence of interests or on some manner of exchange. Chapter II will serve also as an outline of the external setting in which the AEU had to operate and with which it had to contend, and will help us to avoid too many digressions later.

Chapters III and IV will examine the internal setting of communication. They will look at the ends, means, division of labour and distribution of power in the organization to see how they developed and how the Union adapted to changes in the external setting. They will examine the role of the communication process in the organization; how

and to what ends certain channels of communication from the leadership to the rank and file were used. Finally, Chapters V and VI will explore the messages about international affairs that were transmitted and see how they fit into the complex of organizational relationships and processes.

CHAPTER II

EXTERNAL SETTINGS: THE CONTEXT OF ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION AND THE BASES  
OF GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

In this chapter we shall examine economic, social and political developments in Britain the years 1945 to 1951. This will help to provide a basis for determining the extent of community or convergence of interests between the AEU leadership and the Labour Government and will also help to establish the wider context in which the Union operated. The interaction between the organization and its setting will be studied later. Here we are more concerned with setting the scene.<sup>1</sup>

The policies of Britain's Governments in the early postwar period were marked most strongly by a concern for reconstruction and restoration both at home and abroad. The Labour Party had come to power in the summer of 1945 pledged to extend and expand the social services, to take into public ownership a number of Britain's basic, troubled and/or failed industries and to maintain high levels of employment. While it set about fulfilling these problems, however, there were a number of other problems it had to resolve.

---

1. I am indebted to Andrew Glyn and his colleagues at the Oxford University Institute of Economics and Statistics for allowing me to see some of their unpublished material on the period of reconstruction. This material was extremely valuable in helping me reach an understanding of the period.

Britain emerged from the war battered and bruised but in far better condition than much of the rest of the world, certainly better than most of its continental neighbours which had served as battle-fields for foreign armies. In fact, although civilian casualties were far higher than they had been during the 1914-1918 war, deaths among the troops were much lower. Small comfort though this may have been to the bereaved, Britain was at least spared decimation of its manpower and distortion of the structure of its population. Physical damage, especially to housing, was high.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, housing and industrial plant suffered from neglect; the diversion of men, money and material to other more urgent needs during the war meant that there was a lot to be replaced and refurbished.<sup>3</sup>

For an industrial power, Britain was notably poor in natural resources, with the exception of coal and people. It had always imported raw materials of all kinds, and, as the population grew, it required more and more food to be supplied from abroad. These imports were paid for only partly by the exports of British manufactures. Trade slumps and exclusion from foreign markets by protectionist

2. For casualties and physical damage in western Europe, see Georges Dupeux, "La reconstruction de l'Europe occidentale", in Histoire économique et sociale du monde, Tome V, Guerres et crises, 1914-1947, edited by Georges Dupeux (Paris, 1977), pp. 509-31 (pp. 510-516).
3. See R.G. Hawtrey, The Balance of Payments and the Standard of Living (London, 1950), pp. 34-36. See also C.H. Feinstein, Statistical Tables of National Income, Expenditure and Output of the U.K., 1855-1965 (Cambridge, 1972), T86, T89, especially the figures for gross domestic fixed capital formation for 1938-1945.

governments aggravated the difficulties faced in trying to compete with the later industrial developers, principally Germany, the United States and Japan; but British goods fared little better as compared with foreign products even when world trade was bouyant. This was due, in part, to an overvalued currency and to the nature of the overseas markets that Britain had access to. It derived, also, from the very basic relative inefficiency of British industry. Some of the older, traditional main industries, such as coal and shipbuilding, were most vulnerable, but even the newer sectors --- automobiles, electrical goods and chemicals --- tended to lag behind their foreign competitors. 4

During the war exports were cut back sharply as resources were diverted to the war effort. After the war world trade was severely hampered by the disruption everywhere of transportation and production. Such trade as could take place after the liberation of the Continent often placed Britain in the position of having to sell its goods to countries which had nothing to sell or whose goods and currencies the British neither wanted nor needed. On the other hand, the countries producing what Britain did need, chiefly the US and other American countries, neither wanted nor needed much of what Britain (or 5 most of the other European states) had to offer.

4. P.D. Henderson, "Britain's International Position", in The British Economy, 1945-1950, edited by G.D.N. Worswick and P. H. Ady (Oxford, 1952), pp. 62-71 (p. 63). See also H.S. Booker, The Problem of Britain's Overseas Trade (London, 1948), pp. 37-48.
5. On one aspect of this problem, see Hawtrey, pp. 47-49. See too M.A. Fitzsimons, The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Government, 1945-1951 (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1953), pp. 92-93.

Until the 1930s Britain had usually been able to make up its deficit on visible trade through the sale of services, like banking, insurance and shipping, and through the income from overseas investments. For most of the decade before the war, however, as the world foundered in depression, even these sectors could not cover the cost of foreign spending.<sup>6</sup> The war aggravated this problem too, as it had that of trade. Ships were sunk and the service industries disrupted. Over £1000 million worth of British investments abroad were sold to obtain the foreign currency to buy needed supplies; the income was now gone forever. Nearly £3000 million was run up in new overseas liabilities, mainly in the Sterling Area, as supplies for troops stationed there and for the home market were bought and payment, in effect, was deferred. In 1945 Britain's net foreign non-trade income was estimated to be a paltry £97 million.<sup>7</sup>

Another economic problem that Britain faced at the end of the war was how to avoid inflation. Earnings and profits had accumulated during the war years when there had been little to spend them on. If the flow of this money into the market were not checked, it would drive up the prices of goods of all kinds, thus affecting the competitiveness of exports and the standard of living of the people,<sup>8</sup> divert production from the export market and suck in imports too.

---

6. See Feinstein, T82.

7. Statistical Material Presented During the Washington Negotiations, Cmd. 6707 (HMSO, 1945).

8. The policy-makers' understanding of the inflation problem is discussed by C.A.R. Crosland, Britain's Economic Problem (London, 1953), especially pp. 11-12.

In short, when it came to power in 1945, the Attlee Government faced economic problems exacerbated by the war but from which the country, or parts of it, had suffered throughout the interwar period. It is not clear, however, that the Government was aware of the two aspects of the question. In practice it stressed the effects of the war and embarked on policies at home and abroad which gave priority to paying for essential exports and to developing the capacity to continue to do so in the longer term. This next section will deal first with home policy.

Since income from invisible exports was low and was likely to remain low for some time to come, it was considered that visible trade would have to bear the lion's share of the burden; as high a proportion as possible of the nation's manufactures would have to be exported. The priority given to exports was intended not only to cover the short-term balance of payments deficits but also to recapture markets which had been lost or which had contracted during the war, so that the UK might continue to pay its own way. It was estimated that, to fulfil these objectives, exports would have to surpass their prewar level by 75 per cent, even assuming stable import prices. To achieve this, not only the proportion of manufactures exported but the total volume of production would have to be expanded. Investment would have to be geared to this end, but increased production would have to be sought mainly through more efficient use of existing plant and, in particular, through higher labour productivity. Again,

this was seen to have long-term benefits in ensuring continued competitiveness.

The priority given to export meant that limitations would have to be imposed in other spheres. The re-equipment of industry would have to be limited or at least directed so that investment was concentrated in exporting industries. Disturbances to the balance of payments, as in 1947 and 1949, would lead to even greater restrictions on investment. Consumption would have to take a place even further down the queue. The restraint of investment and consumption, of course, was also consistent with the Government's anti-inflation policy.

The mechanisms for achieving these aims were, at first, mainly direct controls and later, increasingly, fiscal measures. Most of the controls were retained from the war years. Some, like the direction of manpower were dropped quickly. Construction, imports, exports, raw materials, the production and distribution of consumer goods, currency transactions and so on were all subject to varying degrees of control and decontrol through direction, licensing, allocation and rationing systems.

The Government was fairly successful in achieving its ends. Manufacturing and industrial output in general increased rapidly,<sup>9</sup> while employment in these sectors rose far more slowly.<sup>10</sup> There was

---

9. Dudley Seers, "National Income, Production and Consumption", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 35-61 (p. 38).

10. G.D.N. Worswick, "The British Economy, 1945-50", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 1-34 (p. 3); Seers, p. 38.

thus a clear trend towards higher productivity. Exports climbed in volume to levels much higher than they had been before the war, while imports did not surpass their prewar volume until 1954. Prices too were kept under control<sup>11</sup> as investment and consumer spending rose only slowly after a sharp increase during 1945.<sup>12</sup> When, from mid-1947,<sup>13</sup> the Government began to present as the major inflationary factor not the by-now largely dissipated pent-up demand of wartime but the wage demands of workers under conditions of full employment, they had little difficulty in obtaining trade union support for a policy of wage restraint. It was not until 1950 that collaboration in this matter<sup>14</sup> broke down.

In large measure the Labour Government's success in its policies was due to a national and international setting that was in some ways not only less hostile than it first seemed but was even positively congenial. One factor has already been mentioned --- the willingness of the trade unions to cooperate. Cooperation was made easier by the formal and informal links between the Labour Party and most of the trade unions. Another factor, however, was that even into 1947 the potentially disruptive communist elements among the workers were among the most active in pressing for collaboration with the Government's

11. See Roy Harrod, The British Economy (New York, 1963), p. 31.

12. See Feinstein, T140; Dupeux, pp. 519- 22.

13. See Feinstein, T22, T89-90.

14. From 1946 to 1950 average weekly wage rates rose by only 14% while wage earnings rose by only 28%. In 1951 alone they rose by some 7.75% and almost 10% respectively; Feinstein, T140.

export and production drives. Worker and union collaboration, no doubt, were further facilitated by the Government's nationalization, full-employment and social welfare policies. Success in limiting unemployment was particularly marked as, to the surprise of many, the switchover from war to peace production turned out to be rapid and smooth. Demobilized troops, who could look for work while still officially in the armed forces, quickly found jobs, since there was a shortage of workers in certain sectors.<sup>15</sup> Thus, full employment was maintained.

While these policies may have had a particular appeal for the unionized working class they were not really a challenge to the national,<sup>16</sup> or perhaps more correctly, the national elite, consensus. It was not only that Labour's policies were largely unexceptionable; so too was the way they were carried out. The national social services, for instance, had been abuilding since before the First World War. Their further development, as well as the maintenance of full employment, was (despite differing definitions of what these might actually entail) accepted by all parties during the war. Nor did nationalization give rise to great opposition until the latter part of the period. This was due partly to the "troubled" nature of the firms nationalized, to the generosity of the payments to the shareholders and, perhaps, too,

---

15. Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Years 1939-1946, Cmnd. 7225 (HMSO, 1947), pp. 147, 130.

16. On the development of this consensus see Paul Addison, The Road to 1945 (London, 1975).

to the fact that no significant changes were made in management  
17  
methods: nationalization did not mean workers' control. The main  
difficulties in nationalization, and the principal opposition, arose  
in connection with those industries --- road haulage and iron and  
steel --- which were not "troubled" to the same extent. Indeed, in  
the case of the latter, sections of the Labour Party leadership itself  
18  
grew increasingly doubtful of the value of nationalization.

Nor did the Government believe strongly in anything more than  
so-called "democratic planning", which amounted to little effective  
19  
national planning at all. Direct controls were retained after the  
war, but they were not considered to be a permanent feature of British  
life. Rather, they were a means of helping the United Kingdom through  
20  
the heavy seas of the transition to a peacetime economy. The  
conception of democratic planning stressed cooperation rather than  
21  
control, a point reflected in the very administration of the system  
of controls. Especially in the beginning, they were run by representa-  
22  
tives of the firms they were intended to regulate. Indeed the

17. Compare Ralph Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism (London, 1961),  
pp. 278-90.

18. Henry Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party (London, 1968),  
p. 97; Miliband, pp. 300-301.

19. D.N. Chester, "Machinery of Government and Planning", in Worswick  
and Ady, pp. 336-64 (especially p. 360). Compare Miliband,  
pp. 290-91.

20. G.D.N. Worswick, "Direct Controls", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 278-  
312 (p. 282).

21. See A.A. Rogow, The Labour Government and British Industry, 1945-  
1951 (Oxford, 1955), p. 44.

22. Rogow, pp. 61-63. Compare Miliband, p. 290.

involvement of interested groups in the formulation and administration  
of policies was one of the hallmarks of Labour rule. Direct controls  
were, moreover, relaxed, tightened and dropped in response to changes in  
specific aspects of the domestic and international market and of political  
needs, rather than in accordance with some coherent national  
programme. There seems to have been little resistance in principle  
on the part of the Government to the eventual abolition of the system.  
The direction of manpower, so abhorrent to the trade unions, was one  
of the first to go, while most of the others followed as soon as  
circumstances seemed to permit or demand it. From 1947 on, greater  
stress was laid on fiscal policy as a means of guiding the economy.

There was much, too, that was unexceptionable in Labour's policy  
with regard to the financial sector. The only bank nationalized was the  
Bank of England, and, again, the pre-nationalization Governor retained  
his office and the Bank itself much of its independence. The cheap  
money policy maintained by Labour "ensured a big expansion of bank  
deposits, and thus additional earning assets for the banking system".  
Despite some aspects of the policy which the banks disliked, one  
analyst could sum up the period in the following terms:

---

23. See, for example, Samuel H. Beer, Modern British Politics  
(London, 1965), pp. 164-78.

24. Worswick, "Direct Controls".

25. C.N. Ward-Perkins, "Banking Developments", in Worswick and Ady,  
pp. 278-312 (p. 282).

In retrospect there appears to be no very spectacular development to record either in the field of banking organization or of banking practice that has occurred during the past six years. Seldom has the financial machine, and the banking part of it in particular, operated with so little general criticism as during Britain's first majority Labour Government .... (26)

As for the City's international role, Government policy, at the very least, cannot be said to have imposed a serious impediment to it. Indeed, the discount market, which was "one of the features that (made) London, despite all the weaknesses of the (preceding) thirty years, an attractive international banking centre", was officially encouraged and supported.<sup>27</sup> The retention, maintenance and encouragement of sterling as an international currency, particularly by its institutionalization in this role during and after the war in the Sterling Area, also helped conserve the City's international functions,<sup>28</sup> though this may not have been the Government's primary intention. The export of private capital within the Sterling Area was not greatly hampered either;<sup>29</sup> the petroleum industry and the petroleum-producing states seem to have been the main beneficiaries of such transfers, which were at least partly financed by the City.<sup>30</sup> Investment in other raw materials was apparently less important.

26. Ward-Perkins, p. 208.

27. Ward-Perkins, p. 216.

28. Susan Strange, Sterling and British Policy (London, 1971), pp. 60-61, 64.

29. J.R. Sargent, "Britain and the Sterling Area", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 531-49 (pp. 536-37).

30. See Committee on the Working of the Monetary System, Minutes of Evidence (HMSO, 1960), Appendix, p. 952.

Labour's policy, thus, was essentially one of reform and restoration, a policy which sought to avoid --- and, indeed, if it was to succeed, had to avoid --- driving any of the main veto groups in the society into active opposition. The attainment of the production and export goals would have been difficult if not impossible to achieve without relatively peaceful industrial relations<sup>31</sup> and a willingness to limit restrictive practices. The operation of the system of controls probably would not have been so smooth had the representatives of the trade associations not been willing to help put them into effect. Illegal transfers of capital overseas, generally<sup>32</sup> in order to evade taxation, were indeed high, if one accepts the estimates of £200 million for the four years 1946 to 1949,<sup>33</sup> but they hardly amounted to a full-scale flight of capital. Moreover, while domestic industrial investment may well have been inadequate, the blame could not be laid on the financial institutions, which, albeit reluctantly at times, were willing to provide the funds for home investment.<sup>34</sup>

Insofar as there was domestic opposition to Labour's policies, it stemmed, on the right, from opposition to specific policies like road-haulage and iron and steel nationalization, and sometimes, too, from rather restricted publics, like the BMA's opposition to the

---

31. Working days lost through industrial disputes in 1946-1950 were a mere fraction of those lost in 1919-1923, the corresponding years following the First World War; Allan Flanders, "Industrial Relations", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 101-24 (p. 119).

32. Rogow, pp. 120-24.

National Health Service. Rather more consistent opposition seems to have come from the left within the Party. From their standpoint, the generally unexceptionable nature of the Government's programme was thoroughly objectionable. On the whole, however, "the Labour Left between 1945 and 1950 was vociferous, but largely unorganized and unsuccessful." <sup>35</sup> Nowhere is the Left's weakness more clearly demonstrated than in the victory of the "consolidationists" in the elaboration of Labour's new programme for the next election. Socialism and nationalization were played down. Instead, the Labour Government would be pledged to consolidate the gains already made. In terms of nationalization, this meant making those firms already nationalized <sup>36</sup> work well and efficiently rather than extending the system further.

A domestic setting congenial to Government policy was complemented by an international setting which was, in some respects, also compatible with the attainment of Britain's limited goals of recovery. Exports could expand quickly in part because, for much of the period, the UK benefitted from a sellers' market. The massive demand for manufactures

---

33. Thomas Balogh, The Dollar Crisis, cited by Rogow, p. 121.

34. Ward-Perkins, pp. 222-23.

35. David Rubinstein, "Socialism and the Labour Party: The Labour Left and Domestic Policy, 1945-1950", in Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville, edited by David E. Martin and David Rubinstein (London, 1979), pp. 226-57 (p. 235).

36. Eatwell, pp. 119-23.

of a world attempting economic reconstruction while the productive capacity of Japan, Germany and much of Europe was out of action made British sales easier than they had been for a long time. The Sterling Area too provided the UK with what became more and more a captive market, or at least one willing to limit its purchases from third countries.<sup>37</sup> Although the members of the Area refused to scale down Britain's debts to them,<sup>38</sup> some of them did limit the "amount and speed of their withdrawals from the sterling balances".<sup>39</sup> In effect, they limited the speed of their reconstruction and development to the rate at which Britain could increase its capacity to export production (and capital) to them.<sup>40</sup> To some extent they had no alternative. When an alternative did present itself, however, they proved eager to take it, until it became evident that its side-effects might be even worse for them than their original course of action.

The alternative presented itself in relation to the external aspect of the Government's recovery policy. During the war Whitehall had realized that some time would necessarily elapse before exports were high enough to pull the balance of payments on current account into the black. Meanwhile, Britain would still have to import food and raw materials. To solve this short-term difficulty, the British

---

37. Strange, pp. 62-64.

38. Joseph Frankel, British Foreign Policy, 1945-1973 (London, 1975), pp. 182-83.

39. Strange, p. 20.

40. Strange, p. 69.

turned to their wealthy American ally, the country best able to supply the goods and currency that Britain needed, and asked for a grant of \$6000 million.<sup>41</sup> The Truman Administration agreed to a loan of \$3750 million, and Congress approved it the following summer. Canada added another \$1250 million to the kitty. While less than the British had in mind, the problem might have ended there but for a few other factors. One of these was that the US had attached a number of strings to its loan. Of particular importance was a British promise to make sterling fully convertible for current transactions during the summer of 1947. When sterling was accordingly freed, the sterling balance holders fell over themselves in their rush to exchange their pounds for dollars which, among other things, would buy the goods they needed for their reconstruction more quickly than Britain could produce them.<sup>42</sup>

However rapid the growth in British production, it was, in relation to the country's liabilities and needs, still inadequate. However successful the country was in attaining the objectives set by Government policy, higher attainments and more far-reaching policies were required than could be reconciled with the Government's manifest desire not to alienate any of the major interests in industry, commerce and finance.

In any event, the fright of the convertibility rush led the UK and the Sterling Area to coordinate their policies even more closely.

---

41. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power (New York, 1972), p. 63.

42. Hawtrey, pp. 92-100.

A further closing of the sterling ranks occurred in 1949 when increasing pressures were exerted, particularly from the USA, for a devaluation of the pound.<sup>43</sup> The result was a temporary strengthening of Britain's protected market.

Another reason for the speed with which the American loan ran out was that, by 1947, the terms of trade had begun to turn against the UK. In the 1930s, when demand was low, the global productive capacity of food and raw materials had declined.<sup>44</sup> The destruction of war, the dislocations and natural disasters of the immediate postwar years, together with the upsurge in demand from all countries and inflation in the United States,<sup>45</sup> drove prices for Britain's imports steadily higher. To some extent, the UK had to increase the volume of exports simply in order to buy the same volume of imports.

International political difficulties tended on the whole to exacerbate the United Kingdom's economic difficulties. The increasing tension and antagonism between the Soviet Union and the west was especially harmful.<sup>46</sup> The division of Europe cut Britain off from some

43. Strange, p. 62.

44. T. Balogh, "The International Aspect", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 476-510 (p. 496).

45. The ratio of export to import prices declined fairly consistently from 1946 to 1951, and rose again only in 1952; Feinstein, T64.

46. Paradoxically, it was also the heightened tension that smoothed the allocation of economic aid by the US Administration and Congress for Britain and Europe; Thomas Balogh, The Dollar Crisis (Oxford, 1949), pp. 19, 72-73; Kolko and Kolko, pp. 65-69; Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace (London, 1978), pp. 177-78.



of its prewar sources of raw materials and markets for its manufactures. Britain's dependence on the dollar markets was thus intensified, as was that of the other European countries similarly deprived.<sup>47</sup> This heightened dependence meant in turn heightened vulnerability to the vagaries of the American economy in its periodic bouts of inflation and recession, though hardly to the extent feared by observers at the time. Increased discrimination by the Sterling Area and western European states against trade with the dollar countries provided only partial protection.

Britain emerged from the war victorious, a major partner in the anti-German alliance, crowned with the prestige of having escaped occupation and having been the only country continuously at war with Germany from the invasion of Poland to the capitulation. It was still a great and imperial power with all the economic, political and military overseas commitments that entailed. Some commitments, like those in the colonies, were inherited from before the war; some, in Greece and the Dutch East Indies for instance, fell to the UK during and immediately after the fighting.<sup>48</sup> Cuts were made, however.

In the spring of 1947, Britain turned over to the United States the cost of defending and maintaining the right-wing Greek regime

- 
47. J.B. Sargent, "Britain and Europe", in Worswick and Ady, pp. 511-30 (p. 512); Balogh, The Dollar Crisis, p. 48n; Thomas G. Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion and Congress", Diplomatic History, 3 (1979), 1-18 (pp. 3-4).
48. Balogh, "The International Aspect", p. 479.

against its leftist opponents and of supporting Turkey against Soviet pressures. In 1948, after losing £100 million and the lives of 300 of its citizens since the end of the war and having failed to obtain American endorsement for the imposition of an anti-zionist solution,<sup>49</sup> the British finally withdrew from Palestine. Further relief to the Exchequer came when India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon were granted independence in 1947 and 1948.

There were, however, limits to the retrenchment Britain might undertake. For while much of the rest of the world wallowed in uncertainty, the British leadership tended, despite (or perhaps because of)<sup>50</sup> the country's economic problems to accept Britain's global role,<sup>51</sup> Differences seem to have revolved more about the interpretation of the part than its essentially global character.<sup>52</sup>

The Foreign Secretary through most of this period, Ernest Bevin, was well aware of Britain's postwar weakness but considered it unadvisable that, in the short run at least, this weakness be translated into any display of lack of resolve.<sup>53</sup> The obvious question is: Resolve in the face of what? The primary threat perceived by the British leaders

49. F.S. Northedge, Descent from Power (London, 1974), p. 121.

50. See Frankel, pp. 258-59; compare Francis Williams, Ernest Bevin, Portrait of a Great Englishman (London, 1952), pp. 250-51.

51. Frankel, p. 11; Northedge, Freedom and Necessity...; of course, there were doubters too: Frankel, pp. 160-62.

52. For example, for some this meant leading a Third Force; Avi Shlaim, Peter Jones and Keith Sainsbury, British Foreign Secretaries Since 1945 (Newton Abbott, 1977), p. 42.

53. Williams, pp. 248-51.

was that posed by an expansionist Soviet Union and communist movement,<sup>54</sup> particularly in western Europe. At the same time there was a strong and expansionist United States to contend with, especially in western Asia.<sup>55</sup> In Asia, which was of continuing commercial and financial as well as strategic importance to the United Kingdom,<sup>56</sup> there were also local antagonisms and local nationalist and/or communist movements challenging British interests.

Bevin may well have been sincere in his attempts to reach an accommodation with the Soviet Union;<sup>57</sup> he did not take any chances, however. America's demobilization and withdrawal from all but its occupation functions in central and western Europe meant that a Soviet military offensive or communist insurgency on the Greek model could not be fended off. Britain was concerned to keep its first line of defence as far east as possible, and so, first with France and then with France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, it entered into military alliances. Obviously, even these combined forces were an inadequate defence against any projected Soviet advance. It is true that two world wars had shown that sending a British expeditionary force after war had already broken out was no answer to an invasion.<sup>58</sup> However, even given the damage suffered by the USSR and the Red Army, the permanent station-

---

54. Williams, pp. 252-55; Northedge, Descent..., p. 95; Shlain et al., pp. 39-41.

55. Kolko and Kolko, pp. 59-60.

56. See Committee on the Working of the Monetary System, Appendix, p. 952; "Who Holds the Sterling Balances?", The Banker, 94 (1950), 93-97 (pp. 95-96).

57. Williams, p. 265; Frankel, p. 197.

58. Frankel, p. 294.

ing of British troops was not an answer either, unless the UK was willing to commit the bulk of its armed forces to European defence.

Among a number of other factors, Britain's main objective when it set about organizing its continental neighbours in political and military alliances was to draw the Americans into assuming an active role in western European defence, as far as possible on Britain's terms. The reasoning of the British policy-makers seems to have followed the lines indicated below, though it was doubtless less calculating than this summary would lead one to think.

On one level the intended audience for Bevin's ploys was not so much Truman and his Administration as the US Congress.<sup>59</sup> One of the arguments used by American representatives when dealing with foreign suppliants was that, whatever the Administration's own views on the subject, "public opinion" or "congressional opposition" made it hard for the United States to accede to their requests. Sometimes it was added that a change in certain policies or the adoption of certain courses of action by the suitor might make it easier to get public and congressional approval. This was one of the arguments used in 1947, for example, in the "attempt to persuade the British to join a European economic plan".<sup>60</sup>

---

59. Thus, according to one account, the Administration had expressed its willingness to assume at least some of the burden of supporting the regime in Athens as early as the summer of 1945; Kolko and Kolko, pp. 222-23.

60. Paterson, "Presidential Foreign Policy ...", p. 10.

There was a tendency to stress that the American public and its representatives in Congress would be most likely to help those who helped themselves. In the case of Europe, political and economic unification was considered one of the best indicators of self-help. The United Kingdom, though opposed to unification, was willing to accept cooperation and organization. The themes of organization for the fulfilment of common aims and of self-help recurred frequently on the American side.<sup>61</sup> In London the self-help theme tended to receive greater emphasis. In his speech at Harvard in June 1947, Secretary of State Marshall had said: "The initiative must come from Europe.... When European countries have agreed on their requirements and on the part they themselves will play, then and only then can the United States take supporting action."<sup>62</sup> In response, Ernest Bevin set about organizing the western Europeans for the distribution of American aid.<sup>63</sup> In this case there were clear benefits to be reaped, and the actual extent of collaboration could be kept to a minimum. In other cases the British commitment had to assume a much more concrete form and the costs were rather more obvious.

---

61. See, for example, the Vandenberg Resolution passed by the US Senate in June 1948; in US Senate, A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949 (Washington, 1950), p. 197. See too the statement by Dean Acheson of 8 April 1949, Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 7 (21-28 May 1949), 10009.

62. Quoted by Williams, p. 264.

63. See Pierre Léon, "La mutation de l'Europe", in Histoire économique et sociale du monde, Tome VI, Le second XXe siècle: 1947 à nos jours, edited by Pierre Léon (Paris, 1977), pp. 246-75 (p. 246).

In the spring of 1948 Britain signed the Brussels Treaty for joint defence with France and the Benelux countries. Bevin is reported to have called the alliance a "sprat to catch a mackerel", namely an American commitment. In his attempts to "arouse congressional sympathy",<sup>64</sup> moreover, he stressed "the 'self-help' element" in the Western Union. The mackerel was hooked in April 1949 when the United States joined the Brussels Pact states and six other countries in the North Atlantic Treaty. The Europeans then forwarded to Washington a formal request for aid. As Prime Minister Attlee put it, they "have had under consideration their common defence programme, and have drawn up a request to the U.S. Government for assistance in carrying out this programme".<sup>65</sup> Towards the end of the year, Congress passed the Mutual Defence Act, authorizing the provision of military aid to the European allies in the form of equipment, money and advisors.<sup>66</sup>

The theme of self-help might have remained mere lip-service had its functions been only to help US policy-makers justify themselves to each other and to the electorate. A number of factors, however, combined to give substance to the self-help policy in the field of defence. One was the heightening of international tension. In the autumn of 1948,

---

64. Shlaim et al., p. 48. Compare Geoffrey Goodwin, "British Foreign Policy since 1945: The Long Odyssey to Europe", in Constraints and Adjustments in British Foreign Policy, edited by Michael Liefer (London, 1972), pp. 35-52.(p. 38).

65. Prime Minister's written reply, House of Commons Debates, volume 463, column 213, 8 April 1949.

66. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 7 (7-14 April 1950), 10446-49.

in the midst of the Berlin crisis, for example, the Government introduced a number of measures to strengthen the armed forces.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, while the Americans might grudgingly accept a charade in relation to economic union, they were far less tolerant in matters of defence. So, during the Korean War, the US exerted direct pressure on the UK to expand its rearmament programme.<sup>68</sup>

A third factor was the Government's concern that Washington take British ideas and interests into consideration and not take London's support for granted. In the autumn of 1945 Bevin had complained to his Cabinet colleagues that neither the Americans nor the Soviets were paying due regard to Britain's views and needs during the Council of Foreign Ministers negotiations then in progress.<sup>69</sup> The following summer he described the Americans as "bomb-minded".<sup>70</sup> In general, the British were suspicious of American enthusiasms, instability and inexperience and feared the consequences to themselves if American policy were not channelled and guided in the right direction.<sup>71</sup> There were, furthermore, various British economic interests to be protected from the United States' aggressive capitalists. Finally, Britain's

- 
67. That, at least, was how the Government justified the measures. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 7 (25 September- 2 October 1948), 9527-9528.
68. Royal Institute of International Affairs, Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Role in the Free World (London, 1952), p. 7; Michael R. Gordon, Conflict and Consensus in Labour's Foreign Policy, 1914-1965 (Stanford, 1969), p. 227.
69. Yergin, p. 131.
70. Yergin, p. 231.
71. Shlaim et al., p. 46.

traditional global role and status had to be recognized.

Although Britain's military and defence programmes were based on a number of complex and shifting factors, certain common elements run through them. The course of British policy showed that the UK was not merely one of several European countries worthy of US assistance but the first among the worthies and, therefore, an object of special consideration. Government policy also aimed to show the UK capable of, or determined to be capable of, independent action. From this standpoint it was important that London be seen to be the organizer of the neighbouring European states for the distribution of Marshall Aid and for defence; that the scale of its self-help defence programme mark it off from the others and leave no doubt as to the importance of its contribution to the common effort;<sup>72</sup> that it further demonstrate its capacity for taking independent action by protecting its own interests and advancing its own policies, even though they might conflict with America's outside Europe.<sup>73</sup> Britain was to be recognized as a special European power and an especially useful one; it was also a world power and one which even its principal ally and protector could not take completely for granted. Their relationship, too, would have to be special.

Similar considerations apparently were operative in the secret

---

72. For the relative defence contributions of the UK, the US and France see Frankel, pp. 82-83.

73. See below, pp. 62-64.

decision of January 1947 by a small group of Cabinet ministers that Britain build its own atomic bomb. To some extent, this decision was merely a confirmation of the assumption held by almost everyone involved in the atomic programme even before war's end that the United Kingdom would have a bomb of its own.<sup>74</sup> This does not mean that the policy was not carefully considered and deliberate.<sup>75</sup>

The current level of international tension was not an important factor in the decision; no potential enemy was expected to have the bomb before five years were out, when the UK's own bomb would be ready. The decision derived from some of the same factors which determined Britain's general foreign and defence policy, but with some differences. Gowing notes that it was in many ways due to "fundamentalist and almost instinctive" factors:

a feeling that Britain must possess so climacteric a weapon in order to deter an atomically armed enemy, a feeling that Britain as a great power must acquire all major new weapons, a feeling that atomic weapons were a manifestation of the scientific and technological superiority on which Britain's strength, so deficient if measured in terms of sheer numbers of men, must depend....

The decision was also a symbol of independence .... American (hostility to an independent British programme) hardened Britain's resolution not to be bullied out of business and not to acquiesce in an American monopoly; it encouraged her to be a nuclear power for the sake of the influence this was expected to give her in Washington. (76)

The commitments entailed in sustaining Britain's desired international role, however, were costly and required continual outlays of

---

74. Gowing, pp. 160-79.

75. Gowing, p. 179.

76. Gowing, p. 183.

cash --- and more. National Service legislation was passed in 1947, and in 1948 the rundown of manpower in the armed forces was slowed down. A general rearmament programme was introduced in the same year. National Service and the stationing of troops in Europe had costs not only in terms of sterling and foreign currency reserves but in the diversion of skilled manpower from industry. In 1948 the "steel requirements of the (atomic) programme were involving heavy diversion from other vital and more immediate uses".<sup>77</sup> The rearmament programme assumed massive proportions after war broke out in Korea in the summer of 1950 and called for vast expenditures --- £4,700 million for 1951-1954. Rearmament increased the demand for raw materials, which were also being sought by other countries, particularly the United States, for stockpiling and for current arms production. Raw material prices skyrocketed.

Rearmament also diverted production from the export markets; the metalworking industries, which accounted for about 40 per cent of the country's exports, were also those that had to contribute most to the defence programme. Home industrial development, which earlier had to take second place to exports, now had to take its place behind rearmament as well. There was a reordering of priorities in state spending, leading to cuts in the social services and particularly to the imposition of prescription charges in the National Health Service.<sup>78</sup>

---

77. Gowing, p. 224.

78. Northedge, Descent ..., pp. 278-79.

The balance of payments, which had so painstakingly been brought into surplus, plunged into deficit. American aid under the Mutual Defence Act and later through "counterpart funds" was a help but not a solution. Moreover, from January 1951, despite fears about the impact of the war that had broken out the previous summer, the British Government took no more Marshall Aid.

Britain's imperial and political commitments outside the North Atlantic area imposed further strains on its economy. Independence had been granted India for a number of reasons: one was the awesome cost of any attempt to hold on to the area in the face of growing local opposition. Another was the Labour leadership's belief in the justice of the nationalist cause and Labour's long association with the Indian national movement. Furthermore, there was a belief that Britain's interests in the region could be protected and advanced by building a relationship on a new basis, without having to resort to military occupation.

This belief in the possibility of recasting relations in a new non-military mould did not extend, however, to Britain's relations with the Middle East or with East and Southeast Asia, even though the defence of these areas from an external threat depended largely on a British presence in India and on the Indian Army. The UK continued to

---

79. See Feinstein, T82-83.

80. Northedge, Descent..., pp. 278-79.

81. Labour Party, Report of the 50th Annual Conference, 1951, pp. 62-63.

82. Georges Fischer, Le parti travailliste et la décolonisation de l'Inde (Paris, 1966).

maintain troops at both ends of Asia, and indeed reinforcements were sent to Malaya to suppress the insurgency and to Hong Kong in response to the "unsettled political conditions there".<sup>85</sup> There were, in addition, subsidies and military largesse for friendly princelings in west Asia.<sup>86</sup>

The reasons for these costly policies were manifold, and it is difficult to know what weight to attach to each of them. The UK had numerous economic and strategic interests in the Middle East and east Asia. Both areas were sources of raw materials vital to British industry and lay astride the routes to other such areas. They were also the objects of continuing British investment, and countries there held growing sterling balances.<sup>87</sup>

The threats to British interests were generally the same as those summarized above. The British leadership feared direct Soviet intervention (as in Iran in 1945-1946); communist and/or nationalist subversion and insurgency (as in Malaya and Egypt); intervention by third regional powers (like Saudi Arabia) hostile to Britain and its protégés (like the Hashimite monarchies in Amman and Baghdad); and from the United States itself as it tried to expand its petroleum and other economic

---

83. Shlaim et al., p. 57.

84. Shlaim et al., pp. 57-58; Northedge, Descent ..., p. 277; Frankel, pp. 301-02.

85. Northedge, Descent ..., pp. 278-79.

86. Frankel, p. 128.

87. See above pp. 46-47, and material cited in footnotes 29 and 30; "Who Holds the Sterling Balances?", The Banker, 94 (May 1950), 93-97 (pp. 95-96)

interests. Nor had all Britain's ostensible allies in the Middle East distinguished themselves by unequivocal loyalty to the Allied cause during the recent war; their current and future loyalty could not be guaranteed either.

The costs of withdrawal were, consequently, high, perhaps too high, and could well have hampered Britain's economic development as this was understood by the national elite.<sup>88</sup> Britain would have liked the US to assume more of the burden of defending the Middle East, so long as the US accepted the priority of British interests there. Not surprisingly,<sup>89</sup> Washington refused. Within the parameters of a foreign policy concerned with the protection of traditional British interests, there can have been little alternative to a continued and costly presence in the region. British policies in east and west Asia were traditional in another sense too; they seem to have stemmed, at least in part, from an inability to conceive of these regions without a British presence.<sup>90</sup>

Given the importance the Labour Government attached to the American link and to its other overseas interests and concerns, the low priority given direct ties with Europe comes as no surprise. Often, links with the Continent seem to have been conceived not as useful in themselves but as means to the end of greater American involvement and support for

---

88. Frankel, pp. 258-59.

89. Frankel, p. 217.

90. Frankel, pp. 298-99.

Europe and Britain's reconstruction, recovery and defence. In part this attitude stemmed from devastated Europe's obvious inadequacy as a basis for achieving these aims. Western Europe simply had too little to offer. The American, Commonwealth, Imperial and Sterling Area contributions were, as we have seen, real enough, and perceived as far more important. European integration, unless carefully limited and controlled, might clash with and damage these interests should the UK decide to take part in it. The Atlantic Alliance might be destroyed and America might have an excuse for reverting to isolationism.

92

Hostility to European integration was not based on these contingencies alone, however. There were some very fundamental attitudes at work too. For example, there seems to have been little understanding of the centrifugal forces at work in the Commonwealth. The meaning of decolonization in south Asia and the growing military and economic importance of the United States for the countries of the Old Commonwealth was not, apparently, fully grasped. The Commonwealth continued to be seen as a basis for British power and influence which it would be foolish to risk for Europe.

93

94

---

91. See above, pp. 55-57.

92. Shlaim et al., p. 51.

93. Compare Hugh Seton-Watson, "Commonwealth, Common Market, Common Sense", in Suicide of a Nation?, edited by Arthur Koestler (New York, 1964), pp. 131-46 (p. 134), and above p. 62. See also Trevor R. Reese, Australia, New Zealand and the United States (London, 1969).

94. Seton-Watson, p. 139; Shlaim et al., p. 51. See too Peter Nettl and David Shapiro, "Institutions versus Realities ---a British Approach", Journal of Common Market Studies, 2 (1963), 24-36 (pp. 26-27).

British attitudes were also affected by the "traditional insularity<sup>95</sup> and mistrust of foreigners and their unstable political systems".

The Government was particularly hostile to suggestions involving the relinquishing of sovereignty. The British state, after all, had not been put in question in the same way as had the states which had suffered<sup>96</sup> defeat and occupation during the war. Why, moreover, should Britain, whose Labour Government was extending its control over the economy, yield that control to a grouping of nations which had swung sharply to the<sup>97</sup> right?

Cooperation with Europe thus was acceptable when it had obvious benefits for Britain's recovery and defence, whether directly, as in the case of the European Payments Union, or indirectly, as in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the Brussels Treaty. Support for intergovernmental cooperation, however, was not to be confused with support for supranational schemes; these were opposed and resisted. The Council of Europe thus was successfully emasculated while yet in embryo. Schuman's Coal and Steel Community, which would have affected the newly-nationalized industries, and Pleven's European Defence Community also met British resistance. While the latter was eventually scuttled, the former was established without UK participation.

The Attlee Government's foreign policy was in many ways the counter-

---

95. Shlain et al., p. 51.

96. U.W. Kitzinger, The Challenge of the Common Market, fourth edition (Oxford, 1962), p. 3.

97. Fitzsimons, p. 127.

part of its policies of reform and reconstruction at home and, like these domestic policies, was consistent with the national elite consensus. It certainly continued the foreign policies of earlier governments. Conflict about it was more or less constant but was restricted mainly to the Labour Movement itself.

In opposition the Labour Party had propounded a "socialist" approach to foreign affairs based on the principles of internationalism, international working class solidarity, anti-capitalism and opposition to militarism and power politics. Whether or not they needed it, the Party's leaders were subjected to a re-education in foreign affairs during their years in the wartime coalition Government, a re-education that was not extended to all corners of the Party.

Sniping at and attacks on Government foreign policy in Greece, Marshall Aid, the American Alliance and rearmament rose and fell in intensity throughout this period. The source of this criticism was groups whose opposition to the leadership sometimes converged but often did not. There were those who attacked British policy because they supported the Soviet Union. There were those who wanted to develop a socialist foreign policy based on the concept of a Third Force of

98. Gordon, pp. 13-14.

99. On Bevin's attitudes, for example, see Williams, pp. 262-63; and The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 1943-1946, edited by Thomas M. Campbell and George C. Herring (New York, 1975), pp. 417-18.

100. Gordon, pp. 93-101. For an analysis of the wartime shift in the leaders' foreign policy attitudes see T. D. Burridge, British Labour and Hitler's War (London, 1976).

European and/or socialist and/or Commonwealth countries, independent of the two superpowers. There were those who distrusted "power politics",<sup>101</sup> and there were the pacifists. What is most striking about this opposition is that "attitudes towards foreign policy divided the parliamentary party far more sharply than domestic politics".<sup>102</sup> This does not mean that the internal opposition was any more successful on this issue than on domestic ones.<sup>103</sup>

It was only in the wake of the Korean War, with its massive rearmament programme and the impact it had on the progress of economic reconstruction and the social services, that most of these groups could come together in opposition to the leadership.<sup>104</sup> Still, although three ministers resigned in April 1951 as a sign of their opposition, they did not go on at this time to lead a challenge to the Party leadership.<sup>105</sup> The Government's position was far too tenuous for that. It should be borne in mind, too, that whatever the motives of Bevan's supporters, his own did not apparently stem from a concern for a socialist foreign policy. Indeed, earlier in the year he had defended the expanded defence programme "and barely qualified his defence with ambiguous warnings of the dangers of too rapid a rate of rearmament".<sup>106</sup>

---

101. See David Howell, British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay (London, 1976), pp. 146-48. Compare Hugh Berrington, Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons, 1945-1955 (Oxford, 1973), pp. 47-82; Pelling, p. 99.

102. Rubinstein, p. 236. Compare Pelling, p. 99; Miliband, p. 295.

103. Miliband, p. 297.

104. Berrington, p. 122.

105. Miliband, p. 314.

106. Miliband, p. 313.

In general, Bevan and his colleagues did not argue that rearmament was wrong but that the "scale of rearmament" decided by the Government was too high. The position they argued from was one of "economic realism", although they "contrived, consciously or unconsciously, to put it into a socialist context". Fundamentally their point was that Britain could have attained its goals (with which they agreed) with less effort and disruption.

(They) insisted that the Labour Government had underestimated Britain's bargaining power with the United States; they discounted the Government's fears that failure to respond to the American initiative would encourage a reversion to isolationism, and believed that both the British and American Administrations overrated the Soviet military threat. (107)

This conflict in the Party's ranks broke out during the second Labour Government elected in 1950 with a very slim majority. Indeed, it was the slimness of the majority which limited the extension of the conflict to other issues besides rearmament and its impact on the economy and the social services. In November 1951, another election was held and the Conservatives were returned to power; many of the inhibitions on the extension of the conflict within the Party thus disappeared.

This chapter has examined the extraorganizational setting of leader-to-rank-and-file trade union communication in the period 1945 to 1951. The bases of Government policy in home and external affairs have been

---

107. Berrington, pp. 121-22.

explored. In the chapters that follow we shall see how the Amalgamated Engineering Union developed and how it coped with and operated in this political and economic setting. We shall study too how the Union's leaders interpreted this setting and what factors led them to express agreement or disagreement with the Labour Government's policies, particularly in the field of foreign affairs.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING OF COMMUNICATION: THE PERIOD BEFORE 1945

In Chapter I it was argued that communication about international affairs in an organization should be understood as a function of that organizational setting; that is, of its goals, operations, division of labour and distribution of power. In this chapter and the next one we shall examine this setting and the role and pattern of communication through two leader-to-rank-and-file channels in it.

I shall not neglect the formal "rule-book" aspects of the Union's structure, for formal rules, even when robbed of all substance, may well continue to dictate forms of organizational behaviour, including communication. The emphasis here, however, will be on actual patterns of behaviour and relationships and on their historical development through custom and tradition. Thus, whatever the rule book may say about the objectives of the AEU, for example, its goals are here understood "as summaries of previous actions".<sup>1</sup>

There are, of course, numerous books about the functions and structure of British trade unions in general.<sup>2</sup> Although these studies are useful, one obviously cannot assume that such generalizations or sub-generalizations as they supply actually apply to any given union at a given point in its history.

---

1. Weick, p. 37.

2. See Bibliography below.

There are also works dealing specifically with the AEU, but they are generally inadequate in terms of the requirements of this thesis. The history by Jefferys, for example, contains a wealth of information<sup>3</sup> but does not draw conclusions of the type of concern to us here. Richter, on the other hand, in the historical section of his study, draws what seem often to be correct conclusions with respect to some of the problems of concern to us here. In certain areas, because he does not go into the historical background deeply enough, his conclusions<sup>4</sup> seem to be misleading.

This chapter and the next one seek to answer these basic questions: What specific forms did the leaders' concerns about 1) organizational goal attainment, 2) organizational maintenance and growth, and 3) power and task distribution take? What did they do to further these concerns? What part did communication with the rank and file play in furthering these concerns? It is my intention not to write a history of the AEU but simply to establish what patterns prevailed with regard to these aspects of the organization.

This aim determined the structure of Chapters III and IV. Chapter III deals with the period before 1945 and provides the background necessary to an understanding of the later period which is examined in Chapter IV. In each chapter we shall look at the develop-

---

3. James B. Jefferys, The Story of the Engineers (London, (1945?)).

4. Irving Richter, Political Purpose in Trade Unions (London, 1973), pp. 29-48. See too below pp. 167-68.

ment of the Union's goals, modes of operation, division of labour and distribution of power and at the leaders' use of the communication system.

A. Organizational Goals, Modes of Operation and Maintenance in Rule and Practice

The Amalgamated Engineering Union was founded in 1920 through the amalgamation of ten unions of craftsmen in the engineering industry. The largest of these was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), established in 1851, which was the dominant force in the new union.

The formal statement of the Union's objectives and of the methods for achieving them is contained in a rather short and not very coherent series of paragraphs in the second clause of the first rule in the AEU constitution.<sup>5</sup> This list reflects a concern not only with what might more commonly be called the attainment of organizational goals but also with the maintenance and growth of the organization. It thus involves two of the areas of leadership concern noted earlier.<sup>6</sup>

Four main types of organizational goals are listed, regarding 1) conditions of employment, 2) welfare and benefits, 3) social transformation and 4) partisan and parliamentary activity.

---

5. The discussion of the rules is based on the 1940 edition of the Rule Book. Changes in force in 1945-1951 are noted. The discussion of objects and methods and all quotations in this regard are based on Rule 1:2 unless otherwise specified.

6. See above, pp. 16-17.

1. Conditions of Employment

Of these goals, the ones upon which the AEU's leaders focused most of their attention were the "obtaining and maintaining of just and proper hours of work, rates of pay and conditions of labour" and "the negotiation and settlement of disputes between the members of the Union and the employers". This is evident from the leadership's reports of its own activities through the years.

TABLE 1: ITEMS DEALT WITH BY THE AEU EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, 1921-1951

YEAR	NUMBER OF ITEMS DEALT WITH		NUMBER OF ITEMS INVOLVING:									
	NO.	%	CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT		WELFARE AND BENE-FITS		ORGANIZA-TIONAL GROWTH/ MAINTENANCE		PARTY AND PARLIA-MENT		OTHER	
1921	203	100	155	76	16	8	23	11	5	2	5	2
1931	69	100	52	75	3	4	11	16	2	3	2	3
1941	206	100	177	86	5	2	20	10	2	1	11	5
1945	335	100	313	93	2	1	19	5	4	1	15	4
1951	450	100	373	83	10	2	48	11	14	3	35	8

Source: The AEU Journal, 1921, 1931, 1941, 1945, 1951. The sums of the rows will not equal the numbers in the first column because a single item may involve a number of problems. The rounding of the percentage figures to the nearest whole number results in further inconsistencies in their sums.

Table 1 summarizes the problems and issues that the Executive Council was reported to have dealt with during the years 1921, 1931, 1941, 1945 and 1951. In each of these years, most of the matters involved conditions of employment questions, that is, wages, hours,

health and safety at work and the like. Organizational growth and maintenance came a distant second, followed, during this pre-1945 period, by welfare and benefits issues. Partisan and parliamentary activity received minimal attention.

When we turn to the manner in which these issues were handled, it is clear that collective bargaining with the employers was the method most commonly used.

TABLE 2: ACTION TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE IN RESPECT OF ITEMS RAISED, 1921-1951

YEAR	NUMBER OF ITEMS DEALT WITH		ITEMS DEALT WITH BY:									
	NO.	%	COLLECTIVE BARGAINING		PARTY/PARLIAMENTARY ACTION		PRESSURE GROUP ACTION		INTER-UNION ACTION		INTERNAL AND OTHER ACTION	
1921	203	100	156	77	4	2	8	4	13	6	32	16
1931	69	100	46	67	2	3	4	6	9	13	14	20
1941	206	100	166	81	1	#	22	11	11	5	13	6
1945	335	100	268	80	1	#	22	7	67	20	13	4
1951	450	100	311	69	5	1	49	11	267	59	18	4

Source: The AEU Journal, 1921, 1931, 1941, 1945, 1951.

The sums of the rows will not equal the first column figures because a single issue may be handled in a number of ways. The rounding of the percentage figures to the nearest whole number results in further inconsistencies in their sums.

# Less than 0.5%

It should be noted that Tables 1 and 2 are in some ways misleading guides to the activities of the Union's leaders. Firstly, the tables depend on the Executive's own monthly reports of its affairs;

matters may well have been dealt with which were not publicized. Secondly, the tables do not take into account continuing and routine activities which did not require new decisions, departures and negotiations. This includes much of the Union's welfare and benefit work, some of its political and pressure group activities and some aspects of inter-union relations. Thus the AEU conscientiously carried out its duty to provide material benefits to members in "distressed circumstances", in case of unemployment, sickness, disablement, death and so on.<sup>7</sup> It tried, not always successfully, to execute this function even in times, like the 1920s, when, because so high a proportion of the membership was unemployed, doing so imposed great hardship on<sup>8</sup> the organization and the members in work.

In its dealings with the employers in pursuit of the maintenance and improvement of the members' conditions of employment, the AEU, during the period under review, never resorted to a national strike. Officially sanctioned and unofficial local strikes were not infrequent, as the Union's reports reveal, but the closest the AEU came to a national strike was in the 1926 General Strike. It was a rather confused experience, and only some of the members laid down their tools. While the Union's official leadership afterwards expressed its opposition to the concept of the general strike, the leftist opposition

---

7. Rule 1:2.

8. This sad record is revealed in the "General Office Report" published in each issue of the Journal during the 1920s and early 1930s.

in the Union attacked the TUC General Council's weak handling of the  
9  
affair.

While the leadership rejected radical mass confrontation with the employers, they did not swing to the other extreme and accept collaboration. This latter trend gained currency and publicity after the Mond-Turner talks of 1927 in which General Council and employer representatives elaborated the "industrial peace" line. This line entailed the acknowledgement that the good of the workers depended on the prosperity of the employing firms, and, therefore, that the two sides must collaborate to ensure their common welfare. Britain's economy was deemed to be in so precarious a state that care had to be taken to avoid its total collapse and the consequent loss of jobs and  
10  
decline in the standard of living of the workers. From this standpoint, the good of the workers and of the national economy was identified with the good of privately owned industry.

The AEU publicly rejected this line. The mere holding of the  
11  
Mond-Turner talks was a gross infringement of the Union's autonomy. Pressure from the militant opposition in the Union was one factor militating against collaboration. The most important factor, however,

---

9. Jefferys, pp. 232-34.

10. See Noreen Bramson and Margot Heinemann, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties (London, 1971), pp. 86-88; G.D.H. Cole, "The Labour Party and the Trade Unions", Political Quarterly, 25 (1953), 18-27 (pp. 21-22).

11. Jefferys, p. 238; see also Journal, October 1930, pp. 36-37; November 1930, pp. 37-38; October 1931, p. 36; February 1932, pp. 31-32; May 1932, pp. 29-30; June 1934, pp. 5-6; October 1936, pp. 8-9.

was simply that the AEU had little to gain from the exercise. The AEU was a shrinking union with a high proportion of skilled men among its members. It was operating in an economy in which the demand for many manufactures, and hence for many skilled workers, was relatively low. "Industrial peace" meant peaceful acquiescence and cooperation in policies of rationalization and mechanization,<sup>12</sup> which would further have decreased the demand for skilled workers, particularly as long as demand continued to be low. Rejection of the line of industrial peace was thus a logical policy and clearly in the short-term interest of the AEU's members and of the union which defended their jobs.

During the Second World War, however, the Union and its leaders willingly embraced the line they had refused earlier, partly out of patriotism and "the general sense of involvement in defence against the threat of invasion".<sup>13</sup> Moreover, after the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the strong communist element in the internal opposition became the most ardent apostles of collaboration with the Government and the employers against the Fascists. This reversal made collaboration easier.<sup>14</sup> Another important factor in the change, however, was probably the fact that collaboration now paid, for the industrial and economic environment was not only less menacing than it

---

12. Bramson and Heinemann, pp. 85-86.

13. Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, third edition (Harmonsworth, Middlesex, 1976), p. 214. The practical aspects of this collaboration are discussed as they become relevant in the sections that follow.

14. See below pp. 114-17.

had been before the war; it was positively encouraging.

The war industries meant hundreds of thousands of jobs in engineering and hundreds of thousands of new AEU members, many if not most of them semi-skilled, unskilled and, from 1943, even women. Given the growing demand for labour, given, too, that the Union catered to the workers whose labour was in demand, collaboration no longer posed a threat to the members' jobs and the Union's membership and strength. It was thus possible and acceptable to adopt a "national" line, that is, policies based on the assumption of an identity between the good of the nation, the national economy --- and the prosperity of the private employers in it. As long as private industry functioned smoothly in the war, the workers had little to fear.

The very expansion of the engineering industry, of the work force in it and of the membership of the AEU created an interest in maintaining this employment and membership. If events were to follow the course they had taken after the 1914-1918 war, the Union would see demand contract, unemployment rise, the Union's bargaining power weakened and its membership plummet. The Union's problem became how to ensure the continuation of the beneficent industrial conditions after the war. Revolutionary change, as we shall see below, was not an option. The fundamental requirement for the postwar period was not to change the economic system in order to ensure jobs but to ensure jobs within the existing economic system. Radical policies might be more disruptive than curative. As long as the demand for labour was high,

the Union would be in a better position to bargain with the employers for improved conditions of employment and the Union itself could be assured of a continued large membership.

The leadership did not expect that unemployment would be a problem in the immediate postwar period. Demand for engineering goods, it was thought, would remain high and so would demand for engineering workers. This period of high demand could be used to restructure industry, to rationalize and mechanize it, to enable it to supply goods of a quality and at a price that would keep demand high.<sup>15</sup> It was as one of the instruments which would help carry out such a policy to ensure full employment in the medium and long term that the AEU leaders paid increasing attention to the Labour Party.<sup>16</sup> As long as full employment was maintained there would be no incentive for the AEU Executive to turn from its "national" line of cooperation with the Government and employers. In those circumstances the good of the "nation", of the engineering workers (whose good was defined in terms of their conditions of employment) and of the AEU as an organization were in fact synonymous.

During the war collaboration entailed the Union's participation in various tripartite advisory and administrative bodies and the maintenance of union discipline to prevent the disruption of production.<sup>17</sup>

15. Journal, August 1945, pp. 225-26.

16. See below Chapter III-A-3.

17. See below pp. 89-90.

After the war it involved the pursuit of policies which will be examined in the next section of this chapter.

## 2. Social Transformation

The rule book lists among the primary purposes of the organization the "control of industry in the interests of the community" and the "extension of cooperative production to assist in altering the competitive system of society for a co-operative system".<sup>18</sup> This formal concern with bringing about a change in the control of the means of production received little attention in practice. Thus the Union's official history records no involvement by the old Amalgamated Society of Engineers in cooperative engineering shops after 1875.<sup>19</sup> In the early 1920s Engineering Guilds were set up in Coventry, Birmingham and London, but they soon went out of business. It seems, in any case, that the intention behind these was not to promote revolutionary change but simply to provide a form of "insurance" at a time of high unemployment.<sup>20</sup>

During the Second World War certain moves by the Union indicated a greater concern with and commitment to social change. On the initiative of the AEU and with the support of the Government, Joint Production Committees (JPCs), comprising representatives of workers and

---

18. Rule 1:2.

19. Jefferys, pp. 33-34, 42-44, 88.

20. Anthony Carew, "Rank and File Movements and Workers' Control in the Engineering Industry" (unpublished M. Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1971), p. 114.

management, were set up as a forum for consultation in order to increase war production by increasing industrial efficiency. Despite this clearly collaborationist purpose, the Union's president spoke of the JPCs as a means of ensuring that "the greed and self-interest of the powerful few at the top are progressively curbed by the combined action<sup>21</sup> and pressure of the workers", and as "the first step towards the<sup>22</sup> real control of industry".

The portrayal of the JPCs in this manner reflected a general tendency on the part of the Union leadership to discuss postwar economic and social policy and to emphasize the construction of a new type of society in Britain.<sup>23</sup> In order to help bring about this new society, the National Engineering Joint Trades Movement (NEJTM), a coalition of the unions in the engineering industry in which the AEU was the dominant force, established its own Reconstruction Sub-committee to plan the future.<sup>24</sup> Researchers at the AEU General Office produced a much-heralded programme for popular control of the engineering industry. In substance, however, the plan was hardly radical and called merely for state regulation and joint consultation in industry, in effect a continuation of the system established during<sup>25</sup> the war.

- 
21. Report of Proceedings of the National Committee (hereafter RFNC)  
1944, p. 255.
  22. RFNC, 1945, pp. 214-15.
  23. See, for example, RFNC, 1944, pp. 254-56.
  24. RFNC, 1944, p. 254.
  25. Richter, pp. 45-46.

### 3. Partisan and Parliamentary Activity

The rules set the AEU "political objects" not explicitly related to the social transformation goals listed. As Rules 45 and 46 make clear, these objects include the election of Union members to Parliament on behalf of the Labour Party and raising money for a political fund to be spent for election campaigns and propaganda. These rules lay down the mechanics by which these goals may be achieved. In general, partisan and parliamentary activity was not pursued as an end in itself, nor as a means of bringing about basic social change. It was used, intermittently, to protect and enhance the organization and the members' conditions of employment.

After the 1901 Taff Vale decision, which undermined the legal protection of union funds and officials, the interest of the ASE (and of other unions) in the election of Labour members to Parliament rose sharply, only to subside again after the 1906 Trade Disputes Act rectified the situation.<sup>26</sup> The ASE leadership's continued verbal attachment to the Party and Parliament was, in part at least, "a bureaucratic diversion: to obscure the failure of the national organization to cope effectively with the 1898 Terms of Settlement" with the employers<sup>27</sup> after the Union's defeat in the 1897 lockout. Since Labour representation in Parliament did not prevent Government intervention in industrial disputes on the side of the employers, the reversion to reliance on the

---

26. Richter, pp. 36-37.

27. Richter, p. 38. For the crucial aspects of the Terms see below pp. 177-78.

Union and its bargaining power gained even greater impetus.

The employers' attack on the Union in the 1922 lockout led to a resurgence of official interest in parliamentary action. In October 1922 the Executive Council circulated a letter to the branches calling on the members to support Labour in the forthcoming elections. "The defeat in the lock-out was due, the letter stated, to 'superior power of the employers, the hostility of the coalition-ridden House of Commons and was in part due also to the numbers of the Labour Party in Parliament'".<sup>29</sup>

On the whole, however, the interwar period was one "of generally diminished union interest in politics".<sup>30</sup> The official history draws a picture of growing political concern as the economy, the Union and the workers' conditions began to recover in the mid-1930s,<sup>31</sup> but this interest seems not to have led to much political action on behalf of the Labour Party or with regard to Parliament. Thus, despite the rise in the AEU's membership after 1933, little seems to have been done to increase the number of members paying the political levy. Only in 1943 did the National Committee (the Union's supreme policy-making body), with the strong and active encouragement of the Executive, call for a campaign to mobilize the members in support of the Party.<sup>32</sup>

28. Carew, pp. 43-44.

29. Jefferys, pp. 229-30.

30. Richter, p. 41.

31. Jefferys, pp. 247-48.

32. Jefferys, p. 251.

Since the absolute number of contributors was more or less stable, the proportion of the membership paying the levy had declined steadily as the total membership rose. In 1943 "scarcely 10 per cent. of the membership (were) paying the political levy".<sup>33</sup> The campaign soon bore fruit, and in 1945 the figure was 24.66 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

The Union's increased commitment and the leadership's desire for it seem to have stemmed from a number of factors. The AEU's promotional material for the political levy campaign stressed the element of prestige strongly. It said, in effect, how can a union so strong industrially be so weak politically?<sup>35</sup> The leadership also may have been trying to compensate for the decline in its power within the Union by providing itself with new functions and roles in the political sphere.<sup>36</sup> It seems likely, too, that the Executive was interested in strengthening the Party financially so that Labour might be in a position, once the war ended, to win an election. A Labour Government was an important factor in the full-employment programme which was the basis of the AEU's "national" line. The strengthening of the Labour Party, the President told the members at the 1943 National Committee, is one of the elements that "will become increasingly important when the questions affecting the change-over from war to peace and of reconstruction policies come to the fore".<sup>37</sup>

---

33. See AEU Financial Report, 1920/21-1945; RPNC, 1943, p. 222.

34. Richter, p. 246.

35. See Journal, 1944-1945.

36. Compare Richter, pp. 99-100.

37. RPNC, 1943, p. 22.

#### 4. Organizational Growth and Maintenance

In terms of the maintenance and growth of the organization the rules postulated nothing less than:

The organization of all workers qualified for membership, the development of the most cordial relations with other unions in the industry with a view to the bringing into existence of one union for the foundry, engineering, shipbuilding and kindred trades. (38)

The AEU was imperfect by definition as long as this objective was not achieved. Organizational growth and maintenance, thus, was explicitly accepted as a continuous and basic task of the Union. The importance attached to this task is confirmed by a glance at Table 1. In the prewar period it was the second most frequently cited issue dealt with by the Executive.

Pursuit of this goal, however, was hampered both before and after the 1920 amalgamation by a strong conservative streak among large sections of the membership. It had not been easy for the Engineers to accept that their organization would have to change to cope with the changing industrial and economic setting. They had regarded their original union, the ASE, with a pride verging on smugness.

39

The engineers' own high status and good conditions were based on their monopoly of certain skills and their ability to limit the supply

---

38. Rule 1:2.

39. See, for example, Jefferys, p. 89, for an especially illuminating illustration of this attitude.

of skilled labour through their control of apprenticeships. Technological innovation, however, progressively eroded the differences between skills and opened many parts of the manufacturing process to unapprenticed workers. The Engineers first tried to extend their monopoly to the new types of work, but they failed in the attempt.<sup>40</sup> The ASE's defeat at the hands of the employers in the 1897 lockout showed that it could no longer adequately defend its members' jobs, wages and conditions.<sup>41</sup> To regain its leverage with the employers the Society had to extend its control over the actual and potential rivals for the skilled engineers' jobs. This meant, on the one hand, amalgamation with other craft unions in order to remove the basis for intercraft demarcation disputes and, on the other, admission of noncraftsmen to the Society in order to control the conditions under which they were employed in the shops.<sup>42</sup>

Amalgamation was pursued fairly consistently throughout the first two decades of this century, and in 1920 the Amalgamated Engineering Union was formed. Efforts to extend the amalgamation continued through the years that followed but with little success.

The admission of semi-skilled and unskilled workers evoked a great deal of hostility among the rank and file. In 1926, for example,

---

40. Richter, pp. 31-32.

41. Jefferys, pp. 150-51.

42. It must not be forgotten that for many union activists industrial unionism had an important social and political dimension as well as, or even instead of, that of protecting skilled men's jobs.

the Union established new sections to cater for noncraftsmen, but many  
branches refused to admit them as members.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, once the  
AEU's membership began to grow in the mid-1930s, it was in these new  
sections that growth was most rapid.<sup>44</sup> The last formal bar against  
any kind of engineering worker fell in 1943 when, after a ballot of  
the membership, women were admitted to the Union. By the time the war  
ended, the vision of a single union for all workers in the engineering  
industry apparently had been accepted by the AEU rank and file, almost  
fifty years after the idea had first been enunciated.

Pursuit of the goals of organizational growth and maintenance  
also took less explicit forms than those we have been discussing up to  
now. Thus the policy of full employment adopted during the Second  
World War was also a policy for organizational protection and enhance-  
ment. If the members could be assured of jobs, the AEU could be assured  
of members, while a great demand for labour put the Union in a better  
bargaining position vis-à-vis the employers.<sup>45</sup> The Union's political  
activity and much of its pressure group activity were directly  
concerned with protecting the organization.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, whatever other  
purpose they served, many Union activities, by helping the members,  
enhanced their commitment to the Union and so contributed to the  
maintenance of the AEU.

---

43. Jefferys, p. 236; compare p. 166.

44. Jefferys, pp. 208, 241-42.

45. See above pp. 78-79.

46. See above pp. 83-84 and below pp. 90-91.

5. Other Types of Activity

Another sort of activity that the AEU engaged in was "pressure group" activity, the representation of the interests of the organization and its members to state authorities. Although the rules did not explicitly provide for this type of action, it was, nonetheless, a constant, if often unpublicized, feature of Union affairs. Engineers had long experience of lobbying the Government and state agencies, of acting as an agent of the state and of participating in formal policy-making and advisory bodies. This activity revolved around questions of organizational growth and maintenance, social welfare benefits and conditions of employment. Often it stemmed not from any initiative of the Union but from the extension of state power and intervention in social and economic affairs and from conflicts between the Union and the Government, the courts or the employers.

Thus, although partisan political activity was prohibited in the early days of the ASE, "when the issue was obviously concerned with the status of trade unions as such no objections were raised to (General Secretary William) Allen's methods of putting pressure on the Liberals and of constant lobbying and Parliamentary agitation"<sup>47</sup>.

The Society became a formal agent of the state after the passage of the National Insurance Act of 1911 which covered health and unemployment insurance. Under the terms of the Act the ASE "became an

---

47. Jefferys, p. 81.

'Approved Society' through which benefits could be paid to the members".  
Thus, in 1926, of £1,087,439 distributed by the AEU in unemployment  
benefit, £391,184 came from the "State Unemployment Refund".<sup>49</sup>

During the First World War and even more during the Second, the ASE's lobbying role was institutionalized through its participation, at the Government's invitation, in various advisory bodies, while its administrative role was extended from the distribution of National Insurance benefits to include the overseeing of Union-employer-government agreements to boost munitions production and keep industrial  
disputes to a minimum.<sup>50</sup> In the Second World War this participation was a concomitant of the "national" line which legitimized it.

The Engineers did not conduct all their pressure group activity directly or by themselves. The Trades Union Congress was a very important channel for such action. Indeed, the ASE joined the TUC specifically in order to use it as a vehicle for lobbying Parliament, to protest the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 which "declared picketing  
and all allied activity to be illegal".<sup>51</sup> The TUC was also used in order to resolve disputes between unions and to arrange and change relationships among them. Thus the Engineers used the good offices of  
the TUC in their continuing amalgamation efforts.<sup>52</sup>

48. Jefferys, p. 81.

49. Report of the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, 1928.

50. Jefferys, pp. 174-87, 259.

51. Pauline Gregg, A Social and Economic History of Britain, 1760-1972,  
seventh edition (London, 1973), p. 346; Jefferys, pp. 82-83.

52. Jefferys, pp. 162-63, 228-29, 232-54.

The AEU constitution even allowed the TUC General Council a modicum of control over its use of the General Strike weapon, but the Union refused to delegate any part of its collective bargaining role to the TUC. It thus firmly rejected the 1927 Mond-Turner talks on industrial relations.<sup>53</sup> In 1941 the General Secretary wrote that the AEU rejected "directives from the T.U.C. General Council, ... from the Congress, ... from even a special conference of Trade Union Executives<sup>54</sup> if one should be called" with regard to wage policy.

On the other hand, the AEU did prove increasingly willing to present a common front with other unions when entering negotiations with the employers. Although it preferred to stay out of formal and more binding groupings like the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU), it joined with it and other unions and groups of unions in presenting claims. In 1942 it joined with the Foundry Workers and the CSEU in the National Engineering Joint Trades Movement. One important difference between such groupings and the TUC, it should be noted, was that the former were often regarded as a preliminary to further amalgamation.<sup>55</sup>

To sum up, the main purpose of the AEU throughout the period before 1945 was the improvement of its members' conditions of employment; its main method of achieving this was through direct collective bargaining with the employers. Exceptions to this direct negotiation,

53. Jefferys, p. 238; see above pp. 77-78.

54. Journal, August 1941, p. 201.

55. See Table 2 above and Jefferys, pp. 163-64, 191, 219, 263.

in the sense of bargaining coalitions with other engineering unions, were seen as temporary expedients pending further amalgamation. With the War and the adoption of the "national" line, many problems pertaining to conditions of employment were thrashed out in tripartite advisory and control bodies and in JPCs. But these types of action did not involve matters normally dealt with in Union-employer negotiations.

56

The JPCs, the increased interest in the Labour Party, the increased talk of postwar social change indicate no change in direction, no sudden increase in concern for social transformation. On the contrary they were concomitants of the "national" line and signals of the intention of the leadership to pursue this policy in the postwar period. On one level the "national" line meant collaboration. It also meant creating the most favourable conditions --- that is full employment --- for maintaining membership and giving the Union a strong hand in its dealings with the employers. It was, too, a means of strengthening the collective bargaining system through which the Union carried out its function of improving its members' wages and the conditions under which they worked.

---

56. Carew notes exceptions to this (pp. 158-59) but the JPCs' role was never binding, only advisory, as he points out.

B. The Division of Labour and Distribution of Power in Rule and Practice

The drafters of the AEU constitution were concerned to limit the extent to which the leaders of the Union would be able to revise the division of labour and distribution of power in their own favour. They sought "to put the maximum control of policy in the hands of the members and to prevent the undue influence of" --- and, one might add, abuses of power by ---<sup>57</sup>"paid officials". The main constitutional mechanisms for achieving this were: 1) direct triennial election of all full-time officers; 2) disciplinary procedures; 3) separation of powers among the Union's national organs; and 4) distribution of power and tasks between the centre and the regions.

1. Re-election

All full-time officials of the AEU from the President and the General Secretary to the District Secretary were directly elected for three year terms by the rank-and-file members of the relevant territorially-based constituency; the members had to attend one of the fortnightly meetings of their branch during the election period in order to cast their ballot. At the end of his term of office an incumbent could stand for re-election and could continue to do so until he retired at the age of sixty-five.

---

57. Harrison, p. 142.

The premise upon which the election rule is based is clear: the members will re-elect officials who do their duty and carry out policies approved by the rank and file and will reject the officers who do not. The sensible official will, therefore, carry out his constitutional duties faithfully and will not seek to apply policies contrary to those desired by his constituents. It seems an ideal means of ensuring popular control and preventing official abuses. The Union's history provides no basis either for confirming or for rejecting the validity of the premise, however.

According to one prominent member of the ASE/AEU the continual elections which characterized the Union were "a weariness of the flesh to members" and did nothing to add "dignity and responsibility to those  
58  
elected". Moreover, it has been suggested that direct election, by providing each official with his own constituency to which he could claim ultimate responsibility, could in fact disrupt constitutional  
59  
authority relationships within a union.

The evidence of the deterrent effect of periodic elections is mixed. On the one hand, since 1920 no incumbent of either of the top two posts in the AEU has been defeated in a bid for re-election, although the sitting General Secretary of the ASE was defeated in 1913. 60

---

58. Robert Young, quoted by W. McLaine, "Shall We Learn a Lesson from Russia?", Journal, October 1936, p. 22.

59. V. L. Allen, Power in Trade Unions (London, 1954), p. 181.

60. J. David Edelstein and Malcolm Warner, Comparative Union Democracy (London, 1975), pp. 172-74; see H. A. Clegg, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, second edition (Oxford, 1972), p. 91.

This tendency to re-elect the incumbent may not be solely (or even) a result of rank-and-file satisfaction with the incumbent and his policies. Clegg points out that "to defeat the incumbent would be to sack him from his job, perhaps to rob him of his pension". This is not something a working man and a trade unionist would do willingly. On the other hand, Clegg notes, many managers maintain "that the conduct of many full-time officers of the Engineers is noticeably <sup>61</sup> influenced by the approach of election day".

## 2. Disciplinary Procedures

The AEU constitution outlined a number of methods and measures for disciplining members, whether paid officials, lay officers or ordinary rank-and-file members, for neglecting their duties, refusing to obey instructions, embezzling Union funds and so on. Provision was made for members to oversee and observe the activities and behaviour of their superiors, peers and subordinates in the Union hierarchy, to report lapses and impose sanctions ranging from fines to expulsion.

The Engineers' top leadership was not immune from this system. In 1896 the Executive Council dismissed the ASE's General Secretary, John Anderson, for "willful neglect of duty". <sup>62</sup> In 1932 the President, W. H. Hutchinson, was dismissed after a rather bizarre case. He had been invited to address a Peterborough District Committee celebration

---

61. Clegg, p. 82.

62. Jefferys, p. 141.

but embarrassed his hosts and their guests (who included some of the town's notables) by being so drunk when he arrived that he could not even speak coherently. The District Committee and the Peterborough 1 Branch complained; the former demanded his expulsion from the Union, the latter merely his removal from office. Their grounds were that he "had brought the union into discredit" and "that he was not a fit and proper person to hold that office". Ultimately, the Final Appeal Court, the Union's highest judicial organ, decided in favour of the Branch and Hutchinson was dismissed.<sup>63</sup>

In general, however, there seems to have been an unwillingness to resort to disciplinary measures in dealing with abuses by top officials, even in later years when such abuses were particularly blatant.<sup>64</sup> It seems unlikely that fear of punishment was ever much of a deterrent.

### 3. Separation of Powers

The third way in which the drafters of the AEU's rules sought to ensure rank-and-file control of policy and to prevent abuses by officials was through the separation of powers at the centre, at the national level of the Union's structure. The organization was endowed with what might be called without too much exaggeration separate legislative, executive and judicial branches.<sup>65</sup> Both in rule and in

63. Journal, September 1932, pp. 10-12.

64. Edelstein and Warner, pp. 289-91.

65. Edelstein and Warner, pp. 286-89.

practice, however, the distinctions between the structures were somewhat blurred. Therefore, the effectiveness of the scheme in preventing abuses is debatable; as a system of ensuring rank-and-file control of policy, however, it could not succeed. The formal separation of powers is summarized in Figure 1

The AEU's supreme policy-making body was the National Committee (NC),<sup>66</sup> a rank-and-file body which was not elected, as were the full-time officials, by the members voting at their branches, but by a complex system of indirect elections.<sup>67</sup> Strictly speaking, the National Committee was not representative of the mass membership but of the regional lay officers of the Union. Thus any control the NC might have exerted over policy would more correctly have been called lay-officer than rank-and-file control.

In the event, its control of policy was limited, despite the breadth of its powers under the rules. It could review and pass judgement on the performance of the Executive which was obliged to carry out its decisions. It had the power to "initiate any policy which (it thought) beneficial to the Union", and, every five years, it sat as the Rules Revision Meeting to consider constitutional amendments.

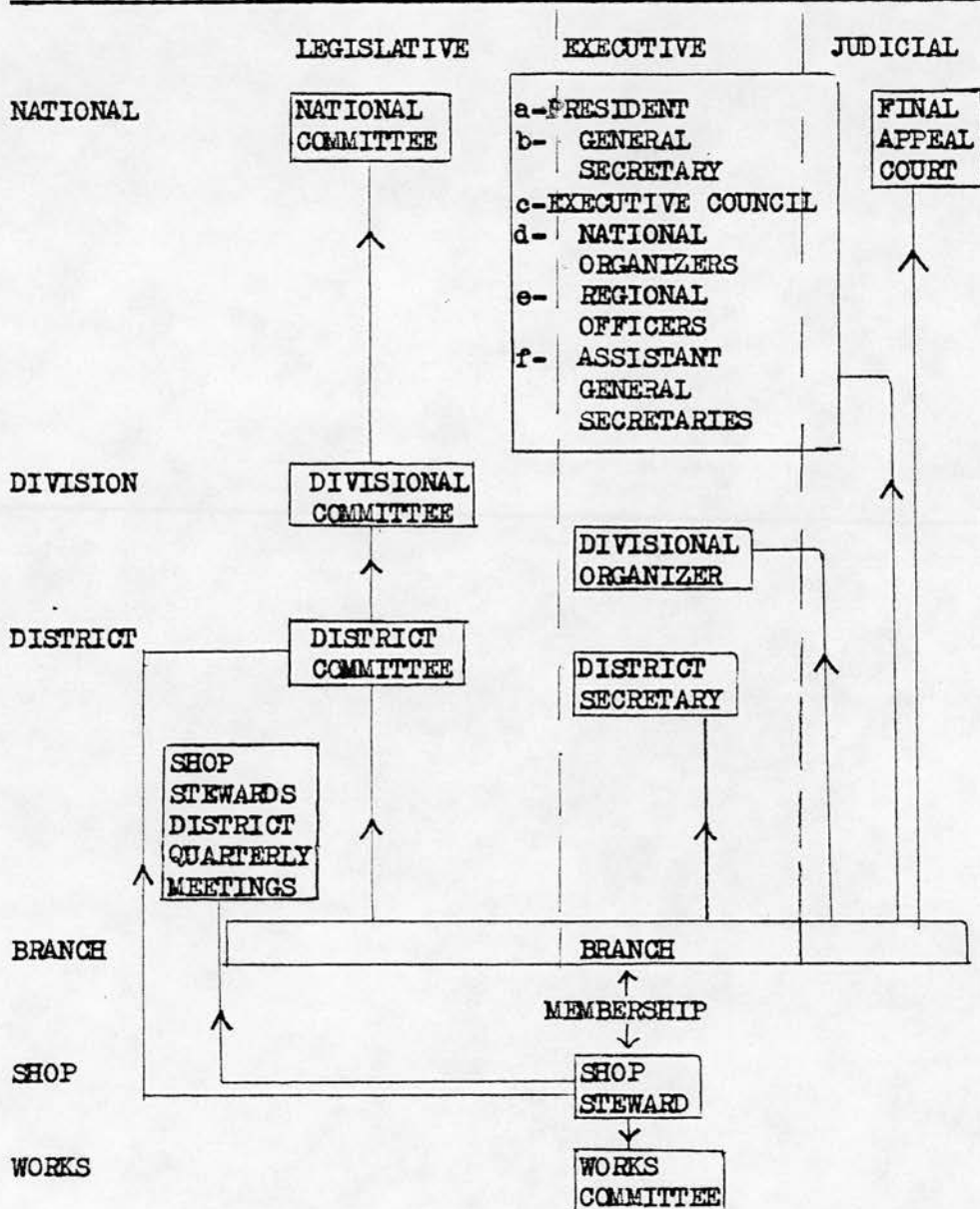
Nevertheless, the mere fact that it was a part-time rank-and-file body militated against its ability to use its powers fully. Every year the NC met for ten days to consider the Executive's report on the pre-

---

66. References to rules regarding the NC are drawn from Rule 14 throughout the following discussion unless otherwise specified.

67. Rules 14:1, 13:1-3, 6.

FIGURE 1: AEU STRUCTURE AND INTERNAL DIVISION AND DISTRIBUTION OF POWERS



The overlapping of broken lines means that functions of both types are performed. The EC carries out tasks of all three types, for example. Solid lines with arrows indicate the electoral base of a body or officer. Thus, the Divisional Committees elect the National Committee.

vious year and to approve or reject resolutions suggested by branches and District and Divisional Committees. Given the distance between the original proposers of resolutions (in the branches, districts and divisions, not in the NC) and the day-to-day operation of national Union affairs and given, furthermore, the lapse of time between the first discussion of the resolutions in the regions and their ultimate consideration by the NC, the policy proposals could well prove unworkable or irrelevant in the end. In terms of collective bargaining, the increasing tendency to resort to inter-union cooperation made control of conditions of employment policy by the Committee even more difficult; the unions had to bargain amongst themselves before they even approached the employers.<sup>68</sup> The NC could be (and often was) recalled to hear reports on negotiations and to issue fresh instructions, but it could not conduct negotiations itself.

The fact that the Committee sat for only ten days a year meant that someone had to be available to take decisions on the myriad matters that might arise during the rest of the year. Therefore, the Executive Council (EC),<sup>69</sup> a body that sat throughout the year, also had policy-making functions. The Council was made up of eight directly elected full-time officers. Seven were elected from regional constituencies into which the country was divided. The eighth, the Chairman of

---

68. Richter, pp. 99-100.

69. References to the EC are drawn from Rule 15 throughout the following discussion unless otherwise specified.

the EC and President of the AEU, was elected from a constituency of all the members of the Union.

The EC was charged with the "general executive government of the Union" and was obliged to carry out the decisions of the National Committee. Its duties involved organizational maintenance, negotiating the conditions of employment of the members, the administration of the benefits system and political and partisan activities. It could suggest policies to those formally responsible for making them and could participate in those bodies' discussions. It could also make policy in its own right: "where the rules do not provide to the contrary (the Council may) do such things as are in (its) opinion necessary or expedient for the welfare or good government of the Union". Moreover, in case of a problem arising on which "the rules are silent", the EC had "the original jurisdiction to give a decision on the matter". The Council was given an explicit judicial function, too, as the court of second appeal from branch decisions.

70

In practice the EC's tasks could not but be broader than those laid down in the rules. When it was engaged in collective bargaining, despite any instructions it might receive from the National Committee, the Council made policy as it went along in the light of its assessments of developments and of the pressures of other unions, the employers and the state.

The President of the Union was Chairman of the Council and had an important role in his own right.<sup>71</sup> He could influence the decisions of policy-makers on the basis of two closely related resources: information and access. He attended and/or presided at meetings of the whole range of policy-making and representative bodies in the Union.<sup>72</sup> These meetings provided him with the opportunity to glean information about developments and opinion among the rank-and-file activists and to use the information in interventions in the discussions of these bodies and behind the scenes in order to influence their decisions.<sup>73</sup> He also gained information from his access to all of the Executive Council's correspondence and from his role as the Union's chief negotiator with the employers.

Perhaps more important than this potential influence was the direct impact he could have on policy. For example, in the case of a tied vote on the EC, it was the President who made the final decision. In industrial relations matters his constitutional role as chief negotiator could be decisive. While the NC might set the objectives, strategy and tactics were his province. With the extension of the Union's pressure group role, moreover, the task of representing the Union fell in large measure, but not exclusively, to the President. The President's influence over the outcome of policy, therefore, was crucial and growing.

---

71. References to the role of President are drawn from Rule 15:2 unless otherwise specified.

72. Rules 14:6, 43:1.

73. See Allen, Power in Trade Unions, pp. 112-13.

The rules did not give the General Secretary the same opportunity for independent action as they did the President, but they did give him both the means and the opportunity to exert great influence on those formally responsible for establishing and executing policy. In a formal sense he was the Union's chief clerk. This meant that he was the centre of the Union communications system, its chief intelligence officer and chief propagandist.<sup>74</sup>

No other members of the Union had access to as much information about all aspects of the Union's activities. As Union secretary he could learn about many of the AEU's national and regional concerns through his attendance at meetings of policy-making and -executing bodies from the Executive Council to the TUC delegation. As chief clerk he was in charge of all correspondence to and from the national headquarters. He could learn much of the concerns of members of the Executive both from his attendance at their meetings and from his daily access to them in the corridors of the General Office. Furthermore, he had access to fuller and better information on conditions and developments in the regions than any other officer. As chief administrative officer, bookkeeper and electoral officer he received information on all aspects of the AEU's activities in the regions and among the rank and file. Much of the information was standardized in form; much was not. Much of the information he received was published for general

---

74. References to the role of General Secretary are based on Rule 16 unless otherwise specified.

circulation among officials or the general membership; much was not. In short, for his intelligence-gathering value alone the General Secretary could be a very useful ally to any officer.

His value as an ally and, consequently, his influence were enhanced by the fact that he was the Union's chief publicist, the editor of its monthly publication, the Journal. He could select and reject material for publication and deny the use of the Journal to the proponents of dissident ideas. The General Secretary, therefore, had at his command the means of influencing the Union's decision makers and its attentive public, its electors and activists.

Clearly the members of the executive branch had a great deal of room for manoeuvre in their activities, but they did not always exploit it. They seem to have accepted their subordination to the National Committee or, at least, not to have openly flouted its authority. There is no evidence of systematic Executive disobedience to rank-and-file decisions, and generally the leaders seem to have made an honest effort to execute their orders. It has thus been said, for example, that "more often than most leaders, the AEU's President has (had) to go to the rostrum (at the TUC and the Labour Party Conference) to support policies of which he disapproves".<sup>75</sup>

There are a number of apparent reasons for the Executive's

---

75. Harrison, p. 146.

"restraint". One, which should not be underestimated, is the leadership's commitment to the democratic ideals of the movement. Until the economic recovery of the mid-1930s the AEU was still essentially a craft union, and afterwards, even as more and more unskilled and semi-skilled workers joined, the skilled men continued to furnish the Union with its officers and activists. To use Turner's terms, the Union changed from an "exclusive democracy" to an "aristocracy". In both cases the relationship of the craftsman lay member to the craftsman paid officer has certain special characteristics. "There is little distinction of status ... between the members" and "from the members' viewpoint, the official is very much one of themselves: his specialist qualities are largely an extension of the intimate knowledge of their occupation's conditions and practices which all its members possess in large measure." The full-time officer "seems more definitely to be regarded as a paid, if respected, servant of the union".<sup>76</sup> The pre- and post-1945 leaders of the AEU were socialized into this conception of their role and behaved accordingly when they assumed office.

Roles, however, are determined not only by traditions but by continuing relationships. How the incumbents of other offices treated the Executive and how the members of the Executive acted towards each other was crucial. The National Committee, though often willing to be

---

76. H. A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy (London, 1962), pp. 287-90. The "aristocracy" differs from the "exclusive democracy" in that it includes members who are not craftsmen, who tend to play a less active role in union affairs and who do not share in the special relationship with the leaders.

persuaded by the Executive, was not averse to rejecting the President's advice, criticizing the national officers and, at times, rejecting the collective agreements they had negotiated.<sup>77</sup>

When the Executive was engaged in negotiations with the employers or representations to the Government, it rarely, if ever, was represented by only one member. Almost without exception, there were a number of EC members involved or one of them would attend along with the General Secretary or divisional and district officials and representatives.<sup>78</sup> With surprising frequency, they attended en masse. Their behaviour, thus, was generally overseen and observed. As we shall see when we turn to the post-1945 period, little could be done to stop the Executive, if its members could agree on a course of action. Without such unity, however, independent action or secret negotiations outside the formal bargaining framework would have been of little avail and, indeed, risky for anyone who participated in them.<sup>79</sup> For the collective leadership of the AEU comprised ambitious men who were quite willing to make political gains at the expense of their fellows and always contained a minority representing the communist and leftist opposition.<sup>80</sup>

There are, no doubt, other reasons for the Executive's apparent

---

77. Richter, p. 100.

78. See the "Abstract Report of Council's Proceedings" in each issue of the 1921, 1931 and 1941 Journal.

79. On this type of action see Tony Lane, The Union Makes Us Strong (London, 1974), pp. 243-44.

80. See material cited in Chapter IV, footnotes 2 and 88, for discussions of some of the members of the Executive active before and after the Second World War.

docility, for example, a concern for re-election and perhaps even a fear of disciplinary action. Moreover, however little control the NC may have had in practice, its decisions had the cachet of legitimacy. On important and controversial matters the NC's approval would be useful in obtaining the acquiescence of recalcitrant members of the rank and file. It would have been impolitic, therefore, to flout the authority of the NC when the leaders themselves might someday have to use this authority for their own ends. On relatively unimportant matters docility was, consequently, the rule. On important issues, as we shall see more clearly in Chapter IV, there were ways of avoiding executing a decision while yet seeming to obey. Furthermore, if the EC did not obey, it could see its decisions and agreements rejected by the NC or overruled by the independent, directly-elected rank-and-file judiciary, the Final Appeal Court. The Executive's actions in matters about which it had not received instructions were subject to similar controls.<sup>81</sup>

While there were thus restraints on their behaviour, the leaders of the AEU were not weak men, mere tools of the rank and file. For the NC could not control policy. Through most of the year and on most matters the Executive could conduct its business generally free of outside interference. National Committee and Appeal Court rejection of Executive action was the exception, not the rule. The Executive had a broad compass in which it could and did use its initiative.

---

81. Rules 19-20.

Nor was it without influence on rank-and-file policy-makers. On the contrary, these men could hardly have reached the positions they held had they not earned some respect from their fellow members or had they not known how to arrange transactions and deals in order to attain their ends. Their consequent influence was reflected in NC decisions. Two dramatic instances of the Executive's persuasive powers occurred at the peak of rank-and-file opposition strength in the Union: the 1928 NC resolution attacking the Minority Movement<sup>82</sup> and the 1947 resolutions in support of Ernest Bevin's foreign policy.<sup>83</sup>

To sum up, then, it can be said that the division of labour and distribution of power at the centre of the AEU did not put effective control of policy in the hands of the rank and file. If members of the Executive did abuse their power, they were very careful to cover their tracks and to abide by the formal, constitutional requirements. On the whole, however, there seems to have been very little reason for such abuses. Their power and influence, though not unquestioned, were sufficiently extensive.

#### 4. Regional Distribution of Power

The distribution of tasks and power between the national centre and the organization's regional organs was the fourth way the drafters of the rules sought to ensure rank-and-file control of policy and to prevent official abuses. The regional structure of the Union is illus-

82. Journal, June 1928, pp. 9-10.

83. Harrison, pp. 144-45.

trated in Figure 1 above. Outside the national centre there were full-time officers, Divisional Organizers (or "Organizing District Delegates", as they were known for most of the prewar period), responsible for the organization within a given territory.<sup>84</sup> Directly elected by the members in the division, their main duty was to negotiate on behalf of the regional rank-and-file bodies, the District Committees (DC), in their division. District Secretaries, too, that is, the secretaries of DCs,<sup>85</sup> might be full-time officials. Under the rules these officers were responsible to the Executive. However, they also had an independent electoral base and were dependent on the cooperation of the DCs in order to operate effectively. For example, they could not intervene in a district matter unless invited by the DC.<sup>86</sup> Some conflict with their constitutional responsibility and consequently some degree of autonomy<sup>87</sup> could easily arise.

Under the rules the DC's powers constituted an important check on the power of the Executive and an important source of independent<sup>88</sup> action. The DC was composed of representatives of the branches and shop stewards in the district. It could negotiate with employers about all conditions-of-employment questions arising in the district. Its authorization was necessary for the appointment and terms of reference

---

84. References to the role of DO are drawn from Rule 17 unless otherwise specified.

85. Rule 13:26.

86. Rule 17:3.

87. Compare Allen, Power in Trade Unions, p. 181.

88. References to the role of the District Committee are to Rule 13 unless otherwise specified.

of shop stewards, for resort to strike action and for the intervention of the EC and Divisional Organizers in district affairs.

On the other hand, the Divisional Organizer had to be included in DC deputations to the employers "wherever possible", and most DC decisions required Executive approval if they were to be enforceable on the membership "by fine ... suspension from benefits, or ... expulsion".

In general, as long as the DC acted constitutionally and in accordance with national agreements, there was little the Executive could do to intervene. Even officially requested intervention or the suppression of unconstitutional DC action could not be undertaken lightly, however. Thus in 1924 the EC was asked to help settle a dispute in Southampton. The militant strike committee, which opposed the intervention, spread rumours that the DC had never extended the necessary invitation. Telegrams to the EC and the employers, denouncing and repudiating the Executive and any agreement they might reach, followed and did little to bolster the centre's credibility in the negotiations. <sup>89</sup>

In 1936-37 the EC avoided for several months suspending the Barrow District Committee, which was contravening a national agreement, while the leadership advised, argued, wheedled and ordered. <sup>90</sup> Had the Executive intervened prematurely, it might have alienated the rank and file and the dispute might not have ended. It might also have drawn the ire of the NC which represented the AEU's lay officialdom and which

89. Journal, July 1924, pp. 50-52.

90. Journal, February 1937, pp. 51-55; The Times, 11 January 1937, p. 16.

could have overturned the EC's decision. The NC's role as defender of the activists in the districts and the shops had been established very early in its history. In 1922 it had requested that the EC reconsider its suspension of the Sheffield DC. It did not have to repeat the request; the EC soon reversed its earlier decision.<sup>91</sup> Other factors which may have inhibited gross interference by the Executive in the districts were mentioned earlier in relation to the National Committee: the collective nature of the leadership and the fact that the DC's willing support would be helpful in other circumstances and should not be risked lightly.

Although there were thus objective and subjective barriers to EC interference, the districts' positive policy-making and -executing role had long been undermined. In the ASE negotiations about conditions of employment had been the province of the DCs. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the centre of negotiating activity began to shift to the Society's national officers. More and more district matters were referred to the national centre for resolution in negotiations with the employers' representatives. In part, this was because the employers' representatives wanted it this way. In part, too, the national officers considered that the centralization of bargaining was the correct response to the development of a better organized and more sophisticated apparatus by the employers, an apparatus which the districts could never match. It soon became evident that the centrali-

---

91. Journal, December 1922, p. 3.

zation of function necessitated a centralization of power, for the districts did not yield their prerogatives easily; during the first decade of this century, a wave of three-sided conflicts, pitting the local union organizations against the employers and the national officers, culminated, in 1908, in the resignation of the General Secretary out of exasperation with the unruliness of the Society. <sup>92</sup>

To maintain the bargaining role that it considered vital to the interests of the members and the organization, the centre had to be sure of the members' discipline, but the very removal of the bargaining system from the regions to the national level created and abetted indiscipline. On the one hand, it lengthened the time lag between the eruption of a dispute and its ultimate resolution. On the other, even when a settlement was reached, it lacked legitimacy and authority. The District Committees, which were elected annually and reported regularly and personally to the branches, appeared to be subject to the members' control and so had a claim on the loyalty of the rank and file. The national officers, however, seemed remote from any popular control and consequently could not call on the same store of loyalty.

One of the responses to this problem was the movement to reform the Society by creating a lay policy-making body. <sup>93</sup> It would serve to control the actions of the officials and to invest their decisions with the authority necessary to evoke discipline and ensure the officers' own

---

92. Jefferys, pp. 167-68.

93. Jefferys, pp. 167-69.

standing as interlocuteurs valables. This body was established at amalgamation in 1920 as the National Committee.

A concurrent trend was a centrifugal one of attempting to exercise rank-and-file control over policy by determining it in the workshop through the institution of the shop steward. Shop stewards had become increasingly common since the end of the nineteenth century and, in 1896, were incorporated into the ASE's apparatus.<sup>94</sup> The AEU's rules show clearly how the stewards were intended to represent the Union to the men as well as to the management.<sup>95</sup> A steward's appointment had to be approved by the DC and he was responsible to it. Apart from any tasks the Committee might assign him, the rules called on the steward to keep the DC informed of conditions and events in the shop and to enforce Union discipline, membership and agreements there. He could negotiate with management "on any question arising in the shop ... provided that no question involving a principle, change of practice or stoppage of work shall be determined in any shop until it has been reported to and ratified by the District Committee". He was required to act in accordance with "the rules and principles" determined by the Executive Council and the DC.

During the First World War the relationship established between the national Executive and the employers and the Government marked the triumph of "a national policy and approach to all problems ... over the

94. Jefferys, pp. 165-66.

95. References to the constitutional role of the shop stewards are drawn from Rule 13:17 unless otherwise specified.

local and parochial outlook". At the same time, however, "new ideas were developed, chiefly by shop stewards, as to the role and functions of the Society".<sup>96</sup> They were a focus of resistance to the institutional power of the centre and to the reformist and "collaborationist" policies of the national leadership. The shop stewards provided the cadres for the Syndicalist movements in Britain (and to some extent the reverse was true). From now on, far more clearly than before, the institutional struggle for rank-and-file control over policy would be inextricably linked (but not identical) with the struggle over the substance of Union policy.

In the event, the first shop stewards' movement faded soon after the First World War, and the institution of the steward, too, became less common.<sup>97</sup> In the years that followed, collective agreements "on the main issues of wages, working conditions and the rights of trade unions were national in character".<sup>98</sup> The settlement imposed by the employers after the 1922 lockout provided for a highly centralized disputes procedure which sanctified the national Executive's bargaining role.

Regional resistance to the overriding authority of the Executive, as at Bristol in 1924 and Barrow in 1936-37, could be and was success-

96. Jefferys, pp. 165-66.

97. Branko Pribicevic, The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control, 1910-1922 (Oxford, 1959); James Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement (London, 1973); G. D. H. Cole, British Trade Unionism To-day: A Survey (London, 1945), pp. 168-71.

98. Jefferys. p. 189.

fully suppressed, though the EC did not like to make its supremacy too  
99 obvious. The Council did try, in negotiations with the employers  
throughout the interwar years, to strengthen and develop the position  
100 of the shop stewards. There was no necessary contradiction between  
this attempt and the EC's policy of centralization. A disciplined shop  
steward who carried out his duties according to the rules would be a  
definite asset to the organization.

The character of the opposition in the Union underwent a change  
in the interwar years. Although the syndicalist streak remained strong  
and left-wing socialists of various types were also active, the  
communists assumed a larger and, for much of the period, a dominant  
101 role in the opposition. The leadership of the Union did its best to  
discredit the Metal Workers' Minority Movement, the Members' Rights  
Movement and the Aircraft Shop Stewards' National Council, which pro-  
vided the institutional framework for the opposition at various times  
over the years. These groups could never be eradicated entirely,  
however. The opposition continued to pursue and press for more  
102 militant and less compromising policies towards the employers.

- 
99. On the Bristol dispute see the Journal, September 1924, pp. 8-9; October 1924, pp. 6-7; November 1924, pp. 28-29. On the Barrow dispute see above pp. 109-110.
100. A. I. Marsh and E. E. Coker, "Shop Steward Organization in the Engineering Industry", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 1 (1963), 170-90 (pp. 175-76).
101. Roderick Martin, Communism and the British Trade Union Movement, 1924-1933 (Oxford, 1969).
102. Martin; Carew, pp. 96-148; Journal, January 1925, p. 53; March 1928, p. 78; June 1928, pp. 9-10; April 1929, pp. 8-18; August 1931, pp. 4-15; May 1932, pp. 6-7; February 1933, p. 10;

The recovery in certain sectors of the economy, particularly in certain sectors of the engineering industry, and the Communist Party's shift to a united front policy after 1933 strengthened and spread the office of shop steward, on the one hand, and the internal opposition which found its base among the stewards, on the other. <sup>103</sup> The Second World War, however, provided them with their greatest opportunity: the stewards could prove themselves invaluable to the overworked officials and to the members in the shops, the overwhelming majority of whom were new to the industry and the Union; the political opposition, by pursuing a collaborationist policy and apparently enforcing it in the shops with the help of its adherent stewards, demonstrated and increased its power and influence vis-à-vis the official leadership.

The AEU's leaders cooperated with the Government and the employers in seeking to boost war production, but they could not control unrest and grievances in the many thousands of shops employing the many tens of thousands of new members. Uncontrolled, such unrest could have seriously disrupted production. Throughout the war, strikes, though illegal, continued to occur. In comparison with the situation in the previous war, however, the overwhelming impression is one of industrial

---

July 1934, p. 2; August 1935, pp. 7-8; February 1937, p. 67; June 1937, p. 225.

103. Carew, pp. 96-148.

104. And, under the terms of the Essential Work Order, the stewards were, like all workers, protected from unjust dismissal; Marsh and Coker, p. 176.

peace. For this the communists took much of the credit. Although the statistics for industrial unrest in the metal trades show no relationship between strike activity and the shifting industrial policy of the communist shop stewards before and after the German invasion of the USSR,<sup>105</sup> the impression was strong in the AEU that the CP was in fact in control. Thus an official document of the Union reported: "Throughout the ranks, the autumn of 1941 'marked the turning point from a period of cynical or angry passivity, bred of frustration, to one of action'."<sup>106</sup> Whatever the political opposition's actual impact, it at least seemed to be able to deliver the goods.

The opposition's apparent strength was based on the strength of the shop stewards among whom it was strongly represented. The stewards' influence grew as they showed how valuable, if not indispensable, they were to the workers. While it would be wrong to ascribe the change solely to the activities of militant stewards, a larger and larger part of the workers' pay came to be determined by local, works and shop agreements in the late 1930s and even more during the war itself.<sup>107</sup> In this way and through their other work, the shop stewards could reinforce their standing among the members; it is hardly surprising

---

105. K. G. J. C. Knowles, Strikes (Oxford, 1952), pp. 54-56; J. F. B. Goodman and T. G. Whittingham, Shop Stewards, revised edition (London, 1973), p. 41; H. A. Turner, "The Trend of Strikes: An Inaugural Lecture" (Leeds, 1963), pp. 11-13.

106. Quoted by Jefferys, p. 253.

107. K. G. J. C. Knowles and T. P. Hill, "The Structure of Engineering Earnings", Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin, 16 (1954), 272-328 (p. 293).

that for many workers the shop steward was the Union.

It was ... on the local scale that the value of trade unionism to the workers in relation to the (Essential Work) Order was perhaps most clearly demonstrated. The complicated procedure of form filling, visits to the Labour Exchange and appearances before the National Service Officer and Appeal Boards, which had to be embarked upon whenever a worker wished to change his job, or remain in his old one when his employer wished to dismiss him, called for expert advice which shop stewards and branch officers, supplemented by district officials, were able to supply. (109)

The steward proved his worth to the organization as well by taking some of the administrative load on his own shoulders; "branch and district officials found themselves unable to handle the growing membership and they were forced, often reluctantly, to permit stewards to perform traditional branch functions".<sup>110</sup> With more members to deal with and more work for the officials in dealing with state and employer representatives in tripartite bodies, some of the burden of collective bargaining was shifted away from the centre to the factories and districts; "a large increase in the number of Works and Local Conferences took place",<sup>111</sup> with the results for the workers' earnings noted earlier. Control of policy on conditions of employment was moving away from the centre and back to the rank and file.

The national Executive did not stand idly by, however, and tried to ensure some continuing control and supervision. The number of Divisional Organizers was increased from twenty to twenty-six in 1941,

108. Compare Allan Flanders, "The Importance of Shop Stewards", New Society, 14 February 1963, pp. 13-14 (p. 13).

109. Jefferys, p. 258.

110. Walter Galenson, Trade Union Democracy in Europe (Westport,

while in 1943 the new office of Regional Officer was established in each of the seven Executive divisions. In January 1945 (significantly as a last resort), the number of full-time District Secretaries was raised from seven to ten. Furthermore, from 1943 on periodic conferences were held of DC representatives and full-time officers so that the former might "hear (the DCs') opinion on vital questions of policy" and, no doubt, so that the DCs might hear the officers' views.

To sum up, then, the aim of the drafters of the AEU rules was only partially fulfilled. Abuses of power by the officials were, apparently, prevented, but their "undue influence" was not, as collective bargaining and power were increasingly centralized. Organizational centralization, in part a product of procedural agreements imposed by the employers, was also the response preferred by the national leadership in coping with the strong, centralized and sophisticated employers' organizations. The centralized structure was also considered the logical response to increasing Government intervention in industrial relations, especially during the First World War.

The resurgence of the shop stewards as an institution and as an opposition movement in the late 1930s and during the Second World War was not necessarily a threat to the centralized system which the leadership continued to think vital. The convergence of interests

---

Connecticut, 1961), p. 46.

111. Jefferys, p. 259.

112. Jefferys, p. 262.

between the movement and the official leadership for most of the later period seemed to ensure the maintenance of what the leaders wanted, a disciplined body of stewards carrying out national policy in the shops. However, the conditionality of this convergence was all too clear to the leadership.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, given the leaders' belief in the correctness of centralized bargaining and action and given changing circumstances which would disrupt the convergence of interests between the political opposition and the leadership, conflict was almost inevitable.

#### C. Communication as a Tool for Furthering the Executive's Interests

We have seen that in the period before 1945 the leadership of the AEU dealt mainly with the following matters in terms of their three main areas of concern. With regard to the attainment of organizational goals, they were interested principally in maintaining and enhancing their members' conditions of employment through collective bargaining. With regard to organizational growth and maintenance, they sought the expansion of the Union to include workers of all degrees of skill in the engineering industry. In their pursuit of these two objectives and in response to changes in the economic and political setting during the Second World War, they came to pursue a "national" line which

---

113. The Times, 1 June 1940, p. 3; RFNC, 1942, pp. 287-88.

entailed a demand for full employment in the postwar period. With regard to the third set of concerns, the distribution of power and tasks, the leadership, in response to changes in the environment, sought the centralization of power and negotiating authority in the Union.

Now given the dispersal of power and authority in the Union, the Executive could not simply take a decision and assume that it would be obeyed. There were, as we have seen, competing centres for the obedience of the rank and file, centres which might collaborate with the national leadership for a time but which did not have to do so. In order to pursue its goals in the manner it wished, the national leadership needed the cooperation and acquiescence of the competing power centres. It needed the legitimacy their blessing would bring and the persuasive powers they could bring to bear on the general membership. From this standpoint the most important power centres were the National-Committee and the shop stewards. Whatever other tools the Executive may have had to obtain their cooperation, communication and persuasion, the affecting of the receivers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, were among the most important. To transmit their arguments the leadership had two channels (among others) which are open to observation by the outsider: the direct contact afforded by the annual meeting of the National Committee and the Union Journal.

As noted earlier, the President, General Secretary and some members of the EC attended NC meetings and could intervene in the

proceedings, though they could not vote. Here they could and did try to influence the policy-makers' decisions directly and explicitly.

The Journal was, under the rules, the exclusive domain of the General Secretary:

He shall ... issue a (Monthly) "Journal" in which shall be published any original decision given by the Executive Council, upon which the Rules are silent.

The "Journal" may contain anything of interest to the members of the Union and ... shall be open to receive suitable contributions from members or others appertaining to our trade and organization. The General Secretary shall be responsible for the conduct of the "Journal". (114)

Michels considered trade union journals instruments for the leaders' pursuit of personal power and authority, the third type of concern outlined earlier. He wrote that the "labour press, and this applies equally to trade-union journals" are used "for the conquest, the preservation and the consolidation of power on the part of the leaders" and are, therefore, "full of panegyrics concerning the personalities of the leaders".<sup>115</sup> If Michels was right, the AEU Journal was a remarkable exception. The absence of any attempt to create a cult of personality of the leader fits in with our earlier description of the AEU as an "exclusive democracy" turning into an "aristocracy". The craftsman lay member's sense of equality with, and aspirations to control of, the craftsman paid officer did not permit the personalization of the Union that could occur in a "popular bossdom"

---

114. Rule 16:5.

115. Robert Michels, Political Parties, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1915), p. 139.

--- as Turner expressed it so aptly ---like the TGWU. Indeed, even the most cursory comparison of the AEU Journal and the TGWU Record for the years 1945 to 1951 shows how strong was the cult of the leader in the latter union. References to and articles about the comings, goings, doings and sayings of the General Secretary, Arthur Deakin, are a constant feature of the Record. In the AEU Journal the President and the members of the Executive Council were sure only of figuring in the "Abstract Report of Council's Proceedings" which was drafted by the President and in which the participants' names were usually omitted. The General Secretary, as editor, contributed a monthly column of news and opinion and selected the other contributions, but he was no more built up as "leader" than anyone else.

In a sense the mere reporting of the Executive's activities may be a means of glorification, especially when the reports show the Council's members hobnobbing with cabinet ministers and other members of the elite. Very often, however, one gets the impression that the detailed descriptions of negotiations with the employers, of claims and counterclaims, arguments and counterarguments, are not an invitation to admiration but an attempt to deflect rank-and-file ire by demonstrating how hard the Union's negotiators tried. The detail of the summaries is particularly great when it is the President himself who is conducting the negotiations, perhaps because he was the most

vulnerable to attack and easiest to blame for the all-too-frequent failures and defeats suffered by the Union.

The Journal played no part in Union elections except as a means of informing the members that an election was about to take place, of recording the names of the candidates and reporting the vote. Evidence was found in later years of the use of the Journal to publicize the incumbent or his favoured successor or of launching vicious attacks on the opposition in the run-up to an election. <sup>117</sup> One problem with the first charge is that what the President, for example, does is by definition more newsworthy than what anyone else does. Furthermore, as Undy points out, in the specific case cited, the outgoing President --- who did not need the publicity --- got more "plugs" than the "heir <sup>118</sup> apparent" who did. In any case, there is no evidence of such biased reporting before 1951, possibly because there were no readily identifiable heirs apparent.

The Journal, of course, was used to attack the internal opposition, and in 1928 and again in 1933 such attacks were published about <sup>119</sup> the time of presidential elections. The first of these was a response to a particularly blatant flouting of the election publicity

117. Ken Coates, "The State of the AEU", in The Crisis of British Socialism (London, 1971), pp. 167-74 (p. 173); Edelstein and Warner. pp. 303-05.
118. R. Undy, "The Electoral Influence of the Opposition Party in the A.U.E.W. Engineering Section 1960-75", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 17 (1979), 19-33 (p. 33).
119. Journal, March 1928, pp. 7-8; February 1933, p. 10.

rules by the Metal Workers' Minority Movement, so it hardly seems to have been part of a premeditated campaign by the official leadership (always assuming, of course, that the accusations were true). The second attack dealt with the Movement's use of Union channels to distribute its propaganda, a perennial sore point with the leadership. The Journal frequently contained attacks on the rank-and-file opposition during the interwar years, and, given the frequency of elections in the AEU, it is surprising that such attacks did not coincide more often with important election campaigns. <sup>120</sup> The leadership's concern seems not to have been only or particularly with elections but with policy as well and with the opposition's apparent ability to hamper the execution of policies determined by the centre. Indeed, it seems that the Journal was even intended by the rule-makers as a propaganda instrument for nationally determined policies.

According to the Union rule book, one of the reasons for establishing the Journal was the need for a vehicle in which to publish "any original decision given by the (EC) upon which the Rules are <sup>121</sup> silent." The lack of any substantive difference between decisions of this type and those disseminated through the Union's other communication channels leads one to doubt this reason. Such decisions are neither more nor less likely to affect the ordinary member than those relayed to branch secretaries by post. Still, the leadership did use

---

120. See above, this chapter, footnote 102.

121. Rule 16:5.

the Journal for ordinary downward communication of this type. The "original decision", task directives and explanations, as well as procedural instructions, appeared, as did articles about the history of the Union and the British Labour Movement, portraits of trade union and Labour Party leaders, past and present, essays on economics and so on. These educational articles clearly were intended as a means of deepening the members' commitment to the organization and its purposes.

The second reason cited in the rules for establishing the Journal is contained in the statement that "the 'Journal' may contain anything of interest to the members of the Union and ... shall be open to receive suitable contributions from members or others appertaining to our trade and organization". It was, in short, to be a forum for discussion and debate of Union affairs. <sup>122</sup> The Journal was used in just this way, and many sides of many questions were published in it. This freedom of expression was not unrestricted, however, and the General Secretary, who was "responsible for the conduct of the 'Journal'", used his editorial prerogatives to exclude certain opposition elements from this platform.

The only explicit instance of such exclusion, in 1925, was reported in the Journal itself. <sup>123</sup> Tom Mann, a former General Secretary himself and a leader of the Minority Movement, submitted an article about the MM for publication and was refused. The General Secretary,

122. Journal, January 1976, p. 20.

123. Journal, February 1925, p. 53.

A. H. Smethurst,

assumed full responsibility in refusing to publish the article as submitted by Bro. Mann, believing that the best interests of the society would be served by the membership taking their share of the work under the provisions provided for in our rule book. To create a movement outside the union is to disintegrate, and if ever there was a need for unity in our ranks surely it has been during the past few years.

The article was rejected, then, because it was antagonistic to the interests of the organization, its maintenance as a single and united movement. In calling for the members to carry out the tasks assigned them by the rules, Smethurst was also underlining his concern for the maintenance of the power distribution in the Union.

Although such an explicit statement of editorial policy was never to be repeated, it was implicit in the Executive's warnings against the use of Union funds and facilities on behalf of "external" organizations, like the Minority Movement, to which the AEU was not affiliated.<sup>124</sup> One factor behind this opposition to externally controlled bodies was the Union's traditional independence. An AEU controlled by the MM (or the TUC or a permanent coalition of engineering unions) could not engage freely or directly in its primary function of collective bargaining about the conditions of employment. Another factor was that, as a rival for the loyalty of the worker on the shop-floor and in the districts, the internal opposition could hinder the peaceful application of settlements reached at the national level.

---

124. See, for example, Journal, February 1933, p. 10; January 1941, p. 7.

Given the Engineers' tendency to re-elect their leaders, it was not the "mere" holding of office but the ability to use that office, that is, policy and organizational considerations, which led to the denial of opposition access to the Journal and to the attacks launched on the internal opposition in its pages.

This policy of exclusion was not absolute. Shortly after the Mann episode, two articles by Jack Tanner, another prominent member of the MM, appeared.<sup>125</sup> The subject --- the opening of the Union to unskilled workers --- and Tanner's stance --- he supported it --- undoubtedly made his contribution more palatable. One might have thought that the General Secretary would be wary of allowing a leading member of the opposition to "plug" himself in this way, and in fact Tanner's name appears only on the second article. On the other hand, total exclusion simply would have given the opposition a weapon to use against the official leadership.

The General Secretary's monthly editorials were one of the principal vehicles for the expression of Executive opinion in the Journal. These "Editor's Notes" were a fine mixture of news and opinion about all kinds of things of concern to the Union. If there was no official policy on an issue, the Secretary would either wait for Executive or NC guidance or voice his own views. Once the EC or NC had decided a policy, he would back their line. Only rarely, as in 1942, when the National Committee demanded the immediate opening of a second

---

125. Journal, March 1925, pp. 50-51 and April 1925, pp. 58-60.

front in Europe did the Secretary dare disagree. The then General Secretary, Fred Smith, told the members: "Make your further contributions towards the strategy of the war by refraining from tendering advice upon subjects for which you do not possess knowledge or technique."<sup>126</sup>

The AEU's leaders, therefore, used the Journal to influence the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of its receivers. Who were its receivers, however? Certainly not the entire membership. If the Journal ostensibly was not aimed at specific groups in the Union, the manner of its distribution ensured that in practice its readership was restricted. Copies of the Journal were sent to branches where the members could pick them up (or, before 1927, buy them). Branch attendance gave rise to complaints and arguments in the AEU almost continuously since the amalgamation.<sup>127</sup> The fewer the members to attend meetings, the fewer the magazines picked up, the smaller the proportion of the members reached by the leaders' message (assuming it was read).

In 1925 £1298 14s. 7d. was collected from sales of the Journal at 1d. a copy,<sup>128</sup> that is, a total of 311,695 copies sold during the year, or less than 26,000 a month. In addition, "approximately 4,000 copies (had) to be supplied free of charge to branch and other officials".<sup>129</sup> So 30,000 was the average circulation. Even assuming

126. Journal, September 1942, p. 230.

127. Journal, March 1921, pp. 97-98.

128. Journal, September 1926, p. 45.

129. Journal, July 1926, p. 58.

that each copy was passed on to at least one other member, it is highly unlikely that a majority of the AEU's 234,323 members ever saw the Journal. From 1927 on all members paid 1d. a month for the Journal as part of their subscription and had only to attend their branch meetings in order to pick it up. Branch attendance thus becomes an indicator of the potential readership. The estimated attendance for the years 1920 to 1945 is twenty per cent of the Union membership. Since this estimate is based on the average poll in Union elections, which always took place at meetings of the branch, and since important elections probably drew more voters, this figure is probably an over-<sup>130</sup>estimate. The publication and circulation figures for later years are even worse, however, and reports of Journals piling up at branches<sup>131</sup> or thrown out are not uncommon.

The mere fact, however, that the Journal readership was restricted to a small number of branch attenders (and anyone they might show their copy of the Journal) tells us something about the Executive's audience. It is these branch attenders who constituted the hard core of the Union's attentive public and of its participating public as well. At branch meetings they could learn about national union and branch affairs and about the Union's activities in other shops and at district level.

<sup>130</sup>. Political and Economic Planning, British Trade Unionism (London, 1948), p. 180.

<sup>131</sup>. David F. Selvin, "Communications in Trade Unions: A Study of Union Journals", British Journal of Industrial Relations 1 (1963), 73-93 (pp. 74, 78-79); Journal, December 1975, p. 562.

Consequently, they were more likely to be knowledgeable about AEU policies and their execution and about the Union's activists, the candidates for lay and full-time office. They were the constituency to which all elected members were ultimate responsible and upon whom all ultimately depended for advancement. Given the tendency for shop stewards to attend far more frequently than other members, according to studies of later periods in the Union's history,<sup>132</sup> a relatively large proportion would be concerned with the actual application of policy in the shops. Branch members and stewards, as electors and candidates for the DCs, were also responsible for policy at district level.

In general, then, the likely readers of the Journal were an important target for Executive communications. They were the very members whose support the leadership needed to carry out its policies and to resist the encroachment and challenges of the internal opposition. The Journal, moreover, was the centre's only direct link with most of these members. Other channels led to branch and district officers and officials who might, or might not, pass on the information as they received it.

It was particularly important to reach these attentive and active members since they were also the target of communications from other sources. An organization is neither closed nor enclosing. Informal communication systems exist alongside formal ones and the members are

---

132. Government Social Survey, Workplace Industrial Relations (HMSO, 1968), p. 25; Clegg, p. 81n.

also parts of systems completely outside the organization. The internal opposition, with its external links, could make use of both types of communication, for example.

133

To sum up, communication from the national officers to rank-and-file members, in the form of personal statements by the President at National Committee meetings and of articles in the Journal --- the focuses of our study here --- served a number of purposes. These included the ordinary downward communication aims of issuing and explaining instructions and procedures and raising the members' commitment to the organization. They also involved the furnishing of information to policy-makers and attempts to influence their policy decisions. Finally, these communications also involved attempts to maintain power relationships in the Union, in both an organizational and a personal sense, and to preserve the unity of the organization itself. The Journal, thus, was a tool used by the leaders in their pursuit of their three principal organizational concerns: goal attainment, organizational maintenance and the distribution of power.

---

133. In later years it was the leftist opposition that would complain of intervention by external (that is, the national) media in Union affairs. See, for example, "Interview with Bob Wright", Marxism Today (September 1978), 271-78 (p. 273).

CHAPTER IV

THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING OF COMMUNICATION: 1945-1951

A. Leadership and Role Fulfilment

As we have seen, by 1939 certain patterns of behaviour and modes of thought had become prevalent and habitual among the Union's leaders. These patterns had proved persistent despite changes in personnel and opposition from vocal sections of the rank and file and thus formed part of the role expectations of any individual who entered the Union's executive branch.

This is not to say that these patterns were immutable. It should be clear from the preceding chapter that the AEU was nothing if not an adaptive organization, reacting to changes in the external setting by changing itself rather than by trying to change that setting in any fundamental sense. The organization's prevailing patterns of behaviour had evolved as responses to technological, economic and political changes in a wider society more than to the leaders' ambitions and attitudes. When different pressures emerged during the Second World War, the earlier patterns were disrupted to some extent, although the leadership tried to minimize certain aspects of the disturbance.

Under the first postwar Labour Governments, various and sometimes countervailing pressures undermined some patterns and reinforced others. Thus the leaders' operative indifference to social transforma-

tion was buttressed by a Government which, as we saw in Chapter II, while eager for reform and concerned for the welfare of the mass of the people, showed little interest in forcing fundamental social change. The leadership's centralizing proclivities were strengthened by their conception of the necessity of full employment and of the dependence of full employment on the prosperity of the national economy. At the same time full employment gave added impetus to centrifugal tendencies in the Union.

The two main spokesmen for the AEU's national leadership, the President, Jack Tanner, and the General Secretary, Ben Gardner, were --- when not required by the NC to support opposing policies --- faithful exponents of the attitudes and patterns of behaviour prevailing among the national officers. It is wrong, given the nature of decision-making and of power relationships in the AEU at the time, to ascribe any major significance to the personal beliefs and attitudes of either of these men, as Richter does in Tanner's case.<sup>1</sup>

Even before his election to the Executive, Tanner had not consistently championed only those views consonant with the syndicalism of his young manhood. The views he expressed had changed over time, and they changed further after he became President in the summer of 1939. While a biography of Tanner is sadly lacking and beyond the scope of this thesis, it seems fair to say that he usually propounded the views

---

1. See, for example, Richter, pp. 45, 221.

of the group or organization to which he devoted most of his time and effort. After 1939 that group was the Executive Council of the AEU.<sup>2</sup>

Once he had championed the workshop organization against the Union's centralizing national officialdom, called for workers' control of industry on the basis of strong shop and works organization, attacked the Union leaders and the Labour Party and called for the use of the strike weapon to attain political objects.<sup>3</sup> A little later he had become a leading member of the communist-dominated Minority Movement which organized the internal opposition to the official leadership and rejected direct workers' control.<sup>4</sup> It was with the help of the communists and the left that he was elected President, but by the summer of 1940 he was attacking the communists for their anti-war policy and for trying to mobilize support among the shop stewards.<sup>5</sup> After retiring from Union office, he became editor of the anti-communist trade union newspaper, IRIS News.

2. A biography of sorts may be cobbled together from the following sources, with the emphasis on the earlier part of his career: Journal, April 1929, p. 17; August 1931, pp. 4-5; April 1954, p. 106; April 1965, p. 135; The Times, 4 March 1965, p. 14; Carew, pp. 103-06, 294; James Klugmann, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 2 volumes (London, 1969); Martin, passim., especially pp. 5-19, 50-51, 110-13, 133-36; Hinton, pp. 324-26; L. J. Macfarlane, The British Communist Party (London, 1966), pp. 60-61; Hugo Dewar, Communist Politics in Britain (London, 1976); Pribicevic, pp. 107-08.
3. See his editorials in the Shop Stewards' Movement Journal, Solidarity, 1918-1921; for example, June 1918, p. 2; February 1919, p. 1.
4. Martin is the best published source on this period in the development of the MM.
5. The Times, 22 May 1940, p. 3; 1 June 1940, p. 3.

Far less has been published about Gardner and he himself published far too little during the earlier part of his career to enable one to judge whether he had undergone similar metamorphoses. The little that is available indicates that he had not.<sup>6</sup> In any event, after becoming General Secretary in 1943, he "co-operated loyally with his presidents and kept a sensitive finger on the pulse of the membership".<sup>7</sup>

For both men the only apparent dissonance in the policies they pursued and propounded with those favoured by the Executive arose from their obedience to the directives of the NC. Given their potential influence within the Executive, they may well have agreed generally with its official policy. In the final analysis, however, whether they did or not is not of critical importance to what they said in public.

## B. Organizational Goals, Operations and Maintenance

### 1. Conditions of Employment Goals

The leadership of the AEU emerged from the Second World War with its order of priorities generally intact. Its main objective was maintaining and improving the members' conditions of employment through collective bargaining. A glance at Tables 1 and 2 above shows that this

6. Journal, May 1956, p. 133; B. C. Roberts, Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain (London, 1956), p. 535; The Times, 7 April 1956, p. 11.

7. The Times, 7 April 1956, p. 11.

goal and this method continued to occupy most of the Executive's reported attention, although, increasingly, collective bargaining took place in cooperation and coordination with other trade unions. <sup>8</sup>

During the war, the AEU leaders had shifted from their prewar policy of limited confrontation and adopted instead the "national" line of limited collaboration with employers and the Government. The initial adherence to this line had been made possible, in large measure, by full employment during the war. The AEU's leaders wished to maintain full employment after the war as well. The 1945 victory of the Labour Party constituted a part of the answer to the leadership's wishes since Labour pledged full employment in an economy geared to maintaining a high level of exports and economic expansion. It also made possible the continuation of the "national" line. Indeed, this line was a necessary factor in the Union's full employment policy. If full employment is the principal objective and deemed necessary to the Union's successful pursuit of its other goals, the pursuit of short-term interests must be tempered to accord with the basic aim. If national economic expansion is deemed to be the instrument for maintaining full employment, it too must take priority. In these circumstances the national interest is consonant with the interests of the worker-members. Collaboration with others seeking this interest, be they employers, bureaucrats or politicians, becomes not only possible but a positive

---

8. See above, pp. 74-75.

virtue. Moreover, fundamental changes in the structure of the economy and anything else that might disrupt expansion are to be avoided.

Tanner made the point clear to the members of the 1949 NC: "Our members' welfare --- like all others' --- is ultimately dependent on national conditions, and any decisions we make, supposedly in the members' interests that are not also in the national interest must ultimately react to our members' detriment." Maintenance of the "national" line was made easier by the lack of any significant counter-vailing pressure from the internal opposition, which continued its own policy of collaboration. In the event, the AEU leadership, which had come to accept the "national" approach rather later than many other unions, expounded upon it with the fervour of the convert.

In the immediate postwar period, the AEU Executive did not perceive or make explicit any essential short-term contradiction between the needs of the nation and the material benefit of the worker. Thus in February and March, 1946, the General Secretary called for higher priority to be given the production of household goods as an incentive to increased production of all products by the workers. Yet once the

9. RPNC, 1949, p. 242.

10. See, for example, Journal, November 1946, p. 322; March 1947, p. 66; September 1947, pp. 257-58; November 1947, p. 322; April 1948, p. 98; July 1948, p. 202; December 1949, pp. 353-54; August 1950, p. 229; September 1950, pp. 261-62; March 1951, pp. 65-66; July 1951, p. 201; September 1951, pp. 257-58.

11. Journal, February 1946, p. 33; March 1946, p. 66.

dependence of the workers' condition on the prosperity of the nation was accepted, it was but a short step to the position that anything that might harm the nation was not in the workers' interest. This viewpoint was all the more acceptable as the delicacy of the nation's position and of the workers' position in it was highlighted by the fuel crisis of the winter of 1947, the convertibility crisis of the following summer, the increase in military expenditure and so on.

From 1947 on, the Labour leadership and other sections of British society came to see a major source of danger to the national economy in wage rises. Wage restraint or a Government-imposed wages policy was touted as the solution.<sup>12</sup> In the summer of 1947, Tanner attacked the notion of a Government-imposed policy and was echoed by Gardner who called Government intervention in collective bargaining "a usurpation of the rights of Trade Unions".<sup>13</sup> It was not wage restraint as such that they opposed but its imposition by the Government. The necessity of restraint is implicit in Tanner's statement that "We are quite competent and ... prepared ... to adjust our demands ... in accordance with national needs".<sup>14</sup> The NC did not agree, however, and called for large wage rises.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, when, after much lobbying by the Government, the TUC General Council adopted a "voluntary policy" of wage restraint in

---

12. See above pp. 42-43.

13. Journal, October 1947, p. 290.

14. RPNC, 1947, p. 268.

15. Journal, September 1947, p. 271.

the winter of 1947-48 and called a meeting of trade union Executives to approve it, the AEU "voted against the recommendations".<sup>16</sup> Despite the constraints imposed by the rank-and-file policy-making bodies, the AEU leaders continued to preach restraint to the members in the pages of the Journal and at National Committee meetings.<sup>17</sup>

As Britain's economic difficulties mounted, culminating in the huge devaluation of sterling in the autumn of 1949, the General Council formulated even stricter wage guidelines. Devaluation and social service cuts, however, also made it more difficult to "sell" restraint to the workers. The lack of severe restrictions on profits and dividends did not help the Government and General Council's case either. The AEU and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, furthermore, were committed to a £1-a-week wage claim. In the event, they found themselves among the majority at the 12 January 1950 meeting of union Executives who voted against acceptance of the General Council plan.<sup>18</sup>

Even then calls for restraint persisted, but now they were coupled with demands for the Government to make wage restraint more acceptable by doing something about prices, profits and dividends. Yet, while the AEU leaders did not go as far as the leaders of some unions

16. Leo Panitch, Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 20-29; Journal, April 1948, pp. 97-98.

17. See, for example, RPNC, 1948, p. 225; RPNC, 1949, p. 241; Journal, April 1949, p. 97; July 1949, p. 194.

18. Journal, January 1950, p. 2.

who spoke explicitly of the importance of high profits to the nation  
and the national economy,<sup>19</sup> they did demand Government action of a  
type based implicitly on such an analysis, which was consonant, of  
course, with their "national" approach. Thus, at the meeting of the  
1950 National Committee, Tanner spoke of the value of wage restraint  
to "the country's economy" and pointed out how much more company profits  
were now being paid in taxes than before the war. His short-term  
solution to the problem of too-high profits was not their total  
expropriation by the state. Instead, he called for price controls to  
limit the need and possibility of expanded profits. He also suggested  
"a legal limitation of dividends, with the proviso that any surplus  
earned by companies over and above the limit should be shared in  
agreed proportions between workers and employers"; in short, profit  
sharing.<sup>20</sup> He repeated this suggestion the following year.<sup>21</sup>

Panitch has suggested that the success of the wages policy was  
due to the loyalty of the leaders of the trade unions to the Labour  
Party and to the influence of the Party hierarchy.<sup>22</sup> This is indeed a  
plausible explanation, but it must be remembered that the Executive  
shared at least some of the premises, in the form of the "national"  
outlook, that made persuasion easier. Wage restraint was a corollary  
of the proposition that the condition of the workers depended on the

19. Panitch, p. 30.

20. RPNC, 1950, pp. 237-38.

21. RPNC, 1951, pp. 287-88.

22. Panitch, pp. 30-31.

condition of the national economy as it was then organized. In a capitalist economy, insofar as wage rises "unjustified" by greater labour productivity are inflationary, they are harmful to the nation and must, therefore, be restrained.<sup>23</sup> As we shall see later, wage restraint also dovetailed with other policies and interests of the AEU leaders.

One of the other corollaries of the "national" policy was the necessity of increasing production and productivity. This point was hammered home with numbing repetitiveness. Tanner thus noted that "for us production transcends everything",<sup>24</sup> while Gardner wrote:

It is as certain as anything can be that to overcome the immediate difficulties of our own country we must depend upon our own efforts. That is why our own Union Executive has felt it necessary to impress upon our membership responsibility for assisting industry to attain the production targets set ... in the Government's Export Programme. (25)

Similar statements had been made before and would be made again in later years.<sup>26</sup> In the interests of increased production, the TUC General Council and the AEU Executive Council called for the "suspension of numerous workshop practices and customs to secure maximum output (in

23. Compare RPNC, 1950, p. 237.

24. Journal, August 1947, p. 235.

25. Journal, November 1947, p. 235.

26. Journal, February 1946, p. 33; April 1946, p. 97; November 1946, p. 322; March 1947, p. 66; June 1947, p. 166; April 1948, p. 98; July 1948, pp. 225-26; August 1948, p. 258; October 1948, pp. 304-05; December 1948, pp. 353-54; April 1947, pp. 97-98; August 1949, p. 235; October 1949, pp. 289-90; November 1949, p. 322; April 1950, p. 102; November 1950, p. 326; March 1951, p. 65; July 1951, p. 201.

order to meet) the clamant needs for engineering products to renovate and expand our own national economy and to meet the urgent needs of the whole world".<sup>27</sup> They called, too, for the acceptance of greater mechanization in order to permit greater productivity.<sup>28</sup> In the post-war economic conditions, increased productivity was no longer seen to pose the same threat to employment as it had done before. Indeed, insofar as it contributed to national prosperity, it was deemed to be in the workers' interest.

Apart from the acceptance of the need for wage restraint and increased productivity, another hallmark of the AEU leaders' pursuit of their conditions of employment goals was their emphasis on a "new wages structure". Before the war the AEU had "pressed for a national agreement to establish grade rates for particular machines", but with little success.<sup>29</sup> The postwar "new wages structure" was based on a different approach to the problem, more in keeping with the changed nature of the Union and the changed economic conditions. Before the war it had been thought necessary to protect the skilled members' jobs by making it just as financially unattractive to hire an unskilled man as to hire a skilled one to operate a given machine. When the Union contained many more unskilled and semi-skilled workers and when it seemed possible to ensure that there would be jobs for all workers in the industry, it

27. Journal, November 1946, p. 322; compare September 1947, p. 258.

28. RPNC, 1945, pp. 220-21; RPNC, 1950, pp. 244-45.

29. Branson and Heinemann, p. 113; see also Jefferys, p. 246.

became possible to press for a widening of wage differentials. These had narrowed considerably over the years and were substantially narrower than in other industrialized countries.

The new plan had emerged from a 1944 National Committee resolution demanding a change. Together with the National Engineering Joint Trades Movement and then with the CSEU, a framework was developed and approved by the CSEU Executives at their 1949 Annual Meeting. It called for the establishment of a six-grade scheme with a differential between the lowest and top grades of about 30 per cent of the basic wage.

These proposals found the employers willing to negotiate, but the discussions were repeatedly interrupted by other issues, emergencies and claims, like the shorter working week, the fuel crisis and the £1 claim. Tanner had explicitly opposed the £1 claim, not on the grounds that it ran counter to the policy of restraint favoured by the Executive, but because "the pressing of this immediate claim would lead the employers to defer consideration of the proposed new wage structure". At the next meeting he told the NC that he had been proved right. The £1 claim had inhibited discussion of the new wages structure, and the minimal progress on the claim in no way made up for the loss.

Obviously, the Executive emphasized the New Wages Structure part-

30. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1949, p. 59.

31. The Times, 20 June 1944, p. 2.

32. The Times, 9 May 1945, p. 2; RPNC, 1945, pp. 222-23; CSEU Annual Meeting, 1949, pp. 58-70.

33. The Times, 25 June 1949, p. 2.

34. RPNC, 1950, p. 238; compare RPNC, 1951, pp. 280-81.

ly in order to serve the interests of the Union "aristocracy", its skilled members. In serving their interests, moreover, the leaders also sought to maintain the skilled members' commitment to the Union and the leadership. The leaders argued, too, that especially in a time of restraint, the expansion of differentials was a necessary, and not necessarily very costly, incentive to increased production. It was a contribution, therefore, to the strengthening of the national economy.<sup>35</sup> The New Wages Structure was thus seen and/or represented as being consistent with the Executive's "national" orientation. As we shall see later, this policy had other functions as well.

## 2. Welfare Benefits

While the Union's conditions of employment goals continued to be the AEU leadership's major preoccupation, far less importance was now attached to the organization's welfare role, as Table 1 in Chapter III indicates. This change was a direct result of the extension of state social services. The Union ceased to act as the Government's agent in the administration of the National Insurance scheme.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, even the benefits still provided by the Union became less attractive to the members because they were less necessary. The state schemes were seen to provide adequately for pensions, funerals and so on, and the pre-war tendency continued for new members, even skilled ones, to join "less-skilled" sections of the Union, in which lower subscriptions bought fewer

35. For example, RPNC, 1946, p. 211; RPNC, 1950, p. 239.

36. Journal, March 1948, p. 67.

benefits.

### 3. Social Transformation

Just as there was continuity in the primacy attached to the Union's conditions of employment objectives, so, too, was there continuity in the low priority attached to social transformation goals. There was a great deal of talk of socialism, but the leadership nonetheless left little doubt as to the relative operative importance of socialism and of the more traditional goals. In their statements to the National Committee and in the pages of the Journal, they stressed that, since the period that they were going through was a transitional one, since they were still only en route to a socialist society, the Union's role as defender of the worker would remain supreme and unhampered. Of course, in performing this function, the organization would take into account the needs of the community as a whole.

The clearest statement of this view was made by Tanner in his address to the 1946 NC, the first held under the new Government. The election of a Labour Government, he said, "introduces new values, new considerations in relating our own policy to the overriding needs of the national plan", but the Union would brook no dictation from any authority on the way these values and needs were to be incorporated into its considerations. The trade unions must remain the "authorities on the subject of wages and hours". "We make this reservation", he continued,

---

37. Jefferys, p. 208.

"we must make it --- not in any narrow sectarian spirit, but as a guarantee against the many pitfalls and dangers on the road to  
38  
socialism."

These "new values, new considerations" would lead, of course, to certain changes, but they were changes of policy or, as Gardner put it, "of trade union practice", not of purpose or function. Full employment and the need for the "maximum output of the most modern mechanized industrial equipment" meant that those "traditional trade union practices (that) involve a limitation of output ... are obsolete, as the unions can better protect the interests of their members now than in the old  
39  
days of ruthless and unscrupulous capitalist exploitation".

The situation thus seemed straightforward enough during these first years after the war. In mid-1949, however, Tanner told the NC that the transition to socialism actually placed more constraints on the Union's behaviour than had hitherto been conceded. The Union and its achievements, he noted, were products of the capitalist system and of an attempt to cope with it, not of any effort to change its "fundamental laws". The Union could hardly act as if these laws did not exist, so "most of our present demands are necessarily of a capitalist nature". Consequently, "we must not confuse ourselves by imagining that they (our demands) contain some virtuous socialist principle". Nevertheless, he continued, "we must also relate our demands to our

38. RPNC, 1946, pp. 215-16.

39. Journal, September 1947, p. 258.

socialist objective and take the greatest care not to endanger our transition to socialism by demands more suited to capitalism as it was in this country 50 years ago."<sup>40</sup>

On closer examination, however, this apparent reversal of priorities turns out to have been nothing of the kind. Tanner's statement, in fact, was part of a plea for wage restraint which, as we have seen, had less to do with building a socialist Britain than with assisting the expansion of the capitalist economy. The post-1945 Executive Council had no more than its predecessors made the transformation of society its primary objective.

A full-scale demonstration of the leadership's operative indifference to or ambivalence about such elements of socialism (in its various contemporary conceptions) as planning, workers' control and nationalization is beyond the scope of this thesis, but some parts of the arguments and attitudes regarding these factors should be noted.

Planning, which, according to the leadership, was feasible only within certain limits,<sup>41</sup> was conceived, not as an element of a socialist society, but as a tool of reconstruction. It was an aid in establishing the expanding national economy necessary to full employment.<sup>42</sup> This conception accorded with the Labour Government's own lack of interest in developing a coherent planning system.<sup>43</sup>

40. RPNC, 1949, pp. 245-46.

41. See RPNC, 1945, p. 220; The Times, 16 June 1948, p. 3.

42. RPNC, 1945, p. 220; Journal, July 1945, p. 225; The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5.

43. See above, pp. 44-45.

The Government also relegated the controls that might have made planning something more than mere prediction, projection or indication to the status of necessary but temporary evils of the period of reconstruction. As far as the Union was concerned, one of the controls, the direction of labour, was not only an evil encroachment on the operations of trade unions, but unnecessary too.<sup>44</sup> Other types of controls were deemed useful, however, in the special circumstances of reconstruction or the "semi-war" conditions of the Korean War.<sup>45</sup> Controls, thus, were related not to principles but to circumstances. The relevant circumstance, moreover, was not the building of a socialist Britain but remedying the disruption of the capitalist economy.

Even though the AEU leadership saw only limited value and limited possibilities in economic planning, it evinced great interest in the formal planning apparatus. In late 1945, for example, the NEJIM called for the establishment of an Engineering Advisory Board, "to assist the Government to draw up and carry through a practical plan for the engineering industry".<sup>46</sup> The AEU Executive treated the notion very seriously. Tanner even wrote letters to The Times about it and called for a body with a permanent chairman and secretariat, a body which would, moreover, involve unions, employers and consumers.<sup>47</sup>

Without a system of controls actually to direct production, the

44. Journal, December 1945, pp. 353-54.

45. RPNC, 1948, pp. 218-19; RPNC, 1947, p. 269; RPNC, 1951, p. 288.

46. The Times, 9 November 1946, p. 5.

47. The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5; 9 November 1946, p. 5.

Planning Board envisaged by the Engineering leadership would have produced little more than an indicative plan. The close involvement of the unions, employers and consumers, however, might have made the plans more realistic and more coherent than in the existing "planning system" in which "the makers of ... machinery (were) sometimes consulted, the British user rarely (was), and the organized worker who (made) the machines never".<sup>48</sup>

The Minister of Supply rejected the engineering unions' ideas and decided instead to establish an Engineering Advisory Council which was little more than the sort of body that Tanner characterized as a forum for "polite conversation round a table every two months".<sup>49</sup> The unions agreed and appointed representatives to the Council but continued to express their dissatisfaction. At the 1948 Annual Meeting of the CSEU Executives (the AEU had joined the Confederation in 1947), the AEU and the Foundry Workers sponsored a resolution calling for the Government to establish a co-ordinated and integrated planning structure for the engineering industry. The new structure would include sectoral subcommittees and parallel regional and district committees and involve<sup>50</sup> the workers in the shops through JFCs.

Since the function of such structures and planning was not to create a socialist economy, one must look for another reason for the

48. The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5.

49. The Times, 9 November 1946, p. 5.

50. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1947, pp. 56-57; 1948, pp. 85-86.

leadership's concern to involve the unions and the workers in the planning system. One such reason, suggested by Tanner himself, was that the system would help create trust and so increase production:

It is worse than useless to lecture the man who, on the analogy of past experience, fears that by increasing his efforts now he will merely "work himself out of a job". The positive way to convince him that a policy of expansion is being genuinely pursued is to enable him to participate in drawing up and carrying out a plan for full employment....  
In the production drive to-day it is idle to expect the same response, initiative and creative improvisation which characterized the industrial war effort. It is, indeed, hopeless, when no one knows where or how his individual endeavour fits into the scheme of things. (51)

Involvement of the workers and their representatives at all levels in the planning and management of industry thus had little to do with socialist planning or workers' control, but was intended, as the JPCs had been during the war, to help meet the overriding national need for increased production.

As the 1948 AEU-AUFW resolution indicates, involvement in planning councils and JPCs were all part of the same programme. Most of the JPCs had lapsed shortly after the war, when they were no longer  
52  
required by the Government. There were various reasons for their decline, but the principal one seems to have been that no one thought  
53  
them worth fighting for. Yet the Union leadership consistently preached the involvement of workers in the planning and management of

51. The Times, 9 November 1946, p. 5.

52. William Monaghan, "The Shop Steward in British Industry", Co-existence, 3 (1966), 75-86 (pp. 85-86).

53. Compare Managhan, pp. 85-86.

production. There were, however, changes in emphasis and interpretation. The stress on immediate and direct involvement through JPCs and planning boards,<sup>54</sup> gave way to a concern for the promotion of individual workers to managerial positions, to training working people for these positions and to training shop stewards in order to make them capable participants in JPCs.

This change was reflected in the remoulding of the Union's education programme. The rather broad and unfocussed courses offered by the AEU's week-long summer schools in 1946 and 1948 gave way in later years to courses with a narrower focus and a clearer emphasis on the members' role in the Union and the Union's role in the national economy. The earlier courses had included lectures and discussions on the history of the Union, trade unionism and politics, engineers and reconstruction, the causes of unemployment, the history of the international trade union movement, the "Working Class Plan for Britain" and so on. In 1949 the summer schools offered only three courses: 1) the part of the trade unions in reconstruction; 2) "Planning Labour Britain", and 3) the structure and operation of the AEU. In 1950 week-end schools were introduced, and they concentrated on the structure and functions of the Union, while summer schools that year dealt with "industrial management".<sup>55</sup> A similar pattern was followed in subsequent years.

54. RPNC, 1945, pp. 215-16; RPNC, 1946, pp. 210-11; RPNC, 1947, p. 271.

55. Journal, October 1946, pp. 304-05; November 1948, p. 332; April 1949, p. 100; October 1950, p. 315; January 1951, p. 10.

The emphasis on management training seems to have been a response to increasing dissatisfaction among activists in the rank and file, particularly in the internal opposition, with the lack of change in management personnel and methods in the nationalized industries. At the 1949 NC, for example, a resolution was passed which called for the nationalization of the engineering industry and its control "by elected committees of workers and technicians"<sup>56</sup>. Yet the following year, Tanner spoke of the need "to help members to equip themselves to exercise ... control" of the nationalized industries and to democratize these firms by extending joint consultation, "leading to active participation in management", the creation of "adequate machinery for training and promotion within them and ... greater working class representation on the Boards"<sup>57</sup>. The contrast with the National Committee resolution is striking. The leadership's approach was not even gradualist; it did not envisage anything more than "active participation" in management and the integration of individual workers into existing managerial structures. Anything else might have disrupted an already disrupted economy and endangered the full employment which was now the leadership's principal operational goal. It would also have established competing centres of power, disrupted patterns of authority in the Union and, ultimately,<sup>58</sup> challenged the Union's very *raison d'être*.

56. Carew, p. 166.

57. RPNC, 1950, pp. 235, 244.

58. See below pp. 177-78.

Nationalization seems to have been regarded as even less useful and important than planning, but the leaders continued to expound on its virtues in response to NC and other rank-and-file resolutions. The Executive did not reject nationalization out of hand. It was suitable to some industries, as Tanner told the National Committee in 1945:

We know that some basic industries --- mainly fuel and transport at this stage --- can never be organized effectively under private ownership and that their future development, on the only lines which will meet to-day's requirements, depends primarily on their nationalization. (59)

Other basic industries eventually would be nationalized, but in engineering all that was really required was some planning and the continuation of controls. The point of nationalization was evidently to develop an industry so that it might effectively serve "to-day's requirements".<sup>60</sup> Bringing industry under popular control was thus a means, not an end.

In the summer of 1948, Tanner told the assembled National Committee delegates that nationalization was no panacea for Britain's difficulties and, in effect, questioned its value as a means of "efficient administration, ... equitable distribution of our own resources".<sup>61</sup> The NC, however, voted "for 'immediate' nationalization of the steel industry",<sup>62</sup> and the Union's spokesmen fell into line.<sup>63</sup> Even so, Gardner continued to write in the Journal of the alternatives

59. RPNC, 1945, pp. 220-21.

60. Compare Journal, September 1948, p. 258.

61. RPNC, 1948, p. 224.

62. Harrison, p. 145.

63. See, for example, Journal, September 1948, p. 258.

to nationalization as a system of "social ownership".

In accordance with Union policy, the AEU Executive voted for a carefully worded resolution moved by the Draughtsmen and the Foundry Workers at the 1949 CSEU Annual Meeting. The resolution instructed the Confederation Executive to conduct an inquiry into the engineering industry in order to discover which sections were suitable for nationalization and which for other kinds of public supervision and control. The ensuing study took two years and had as its terms of reference the criteria determined by the 1944 Post-War Reconstruction Report of the TUC General Council. These criteria were so carefully constructed as to be ideologically neutered. For example, they raise the possibility of selective nationalization of individual firms in order to ensure competition within an industry. The CSEU's Plan for Engineering, which emerged from this study, could not help but be a moderate document.

65

By 1951, however, nationalization was being presented by many in the Labour and Trade Union Movements as an issue that would frighten the voter. The AEU Executive, nevertheless, obeyed Union policy and supported the Plan, until the Labour Party Conference of October 1951, held after the General Election had been called, when Tanner came down firmly on the side of the "consolidationists". He polled the members of the Union delegation and announced that the time was not ripe for the

64. Journal, January 1949, p. 2; March 1950, p. 70.

65. CSEU, Plan for Engineering (London, n.d. (1953?)).

immediate implementation of the Plan. The proximate cause for this reversal seems clear: Tanner and his delegates were won over to the belief that nationalization was a danger to the Party's electoral chances. This should not be seen, however, as a sacrifice of principle on behalf of the Party, certainly not as far as the leadership is concerned. As we have seen, the Union Executive did not attach much value to the principle of nationalization. They may even have regarded the imminent election as a good pretext for shelving the issue.

In general then, the postwar AEU leaders showed as little practical interest in social transformation as the prewar Executives had shown. Measures dubbed "socialist" were supported and advanced but in very diluted form and with the intention not of achieving the Union's "socialist objectives", as Tanner called them, without attaching too precise a meaning to the term, but of furthering the goals relating to conditions of employment.

#### 4. Partisan and Parliamentary Activity

The Union's traditional attitude to the Labour Party was one of intermittent instrumentalism, and Richter's description of the 1945-1951 periods ranks it with the periods of dormancy of the relationship. In comparison with later periods this is perhaps so. In comparison with previous years, however, this period emerges as one of greatly heightened activity. This is demonstrated most clearly by Table 3, below. The activity began, as we have seen, during the war and took the form of the

---

66. See above p. 48; Richter, p. 47.

the mobilization of the members to contract in to the Political Fund and generally to support the Labour Party.

In the wartime advertisements for the contracting-in campaign it was the stated aim to match the Union's industrial power on the political front. The implication was that the Union thus would somehow be able to influence policy, but the main appeal was to considerations of prestige. The postwar advertisements developed the main theme that the increase in the Political Fund would ensure the maintenance and expansion of the social services. <sup>68</sup> It is likely that, since the Party already was committed to the extension of the social services and already had begun the process, influence within the Party's councils with regard to this issue was not a vital consideration. To ensure better social services it was necessary, rather, to ensure that the Party continued in power. Contracting-in to the Political Fund would do that by helping to fill the Party's coffers.

Of course, once the 1946 Trade Disputes Act and Trade Union Act changed the basis of contribution from those who contracted in to those who failed to contract out, it became easier to get money to the Party. However, the Union also faced the problem of what to do with the huge sums left over after the membership had been affiliated to the Party. It is in this area, in channelling money to the Party rather than in trying to influence its policies by greater activism within it, that the

---

67. Richter, pp. 45-48.

68. Journal, 1946. There was an advertisement and very often one or two short articles on the subject in each issue of the Journal.

TABLE 3: THE POLITICAL FUND AND POLITICAL SPENDING IN THE AEU,  
1944-1951 (a)

YEAR	POLITICAL LEVY RECEIPTS £	TOTAL FUND (b) £	PAYMENTS AND ALLOCATIONS			TOTAL EXPENDI- TURE (c) £
			NATIONAL AFFILIATION FEES £	GRANTS TO DCs £	CONSTITUENCY MAINTENANCE GRANTS £	
1944	9240	19857	2831	1482	483	7025
1945	11627	24458	3853	3665	504	15187
1946	12262	21535	1000	4892	871	8733
1947	24364	37165	16401	5003	754	23535
1948	48043	61675	15544	7655	687	33233
1949	51610	70053	14858	13191	1613	50927
1950	51121	80247	14515	12681	2197	40021
1951	50200	90588	14656	13193	3725	48512

Source: AEU, Financial Report, 1944-1951.

(a) All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

(b) Levy receipts plus other receipts (interest, etc.) plus balance as of 31 December of the preceding year.

(c) Total payments and allocations including items not mentioned in the table.

AEU concentrated its partisan and parliamentary activities. In 1946, the last year of the contracting-in system, almost 29 per cent of the members paid the Political Levy. In 1947, over 82 per cent did. The amount paid in affiliation fees rose accordingly. Special grants were made to the Party's General Election Fund and for other purposes: £2000 in 1945, £5900 in 1948 and £15,900 in 1949. Direct election

69. Richter, p. 246.

expenditure by the Union itself was just short of £3500 in 1945, over £7240 in 1950 and almost £13,863 in 1951. As Table 3 shows, more and more money was allocated to District Committees to spend locally on branch affiliations to the Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), propaganda and the like.

Money spent on constituency election agents and/or on maintenance grants to CLPs also rose dramatically after 1948. <sup>70</sup> This was due, in part, to a change in Union policy with regard to its Parliamentary Panel, that is, its candidates for selection by CLPs as their candidates for Parliament. In 1946 one of the AEU's sponsored MPs had suggested that the rule according to which the Panel was "selected by and from the members paying the Political Levy" <sup>71</sup> be changed to give the Executive Council control of the selection process. He maintained "that centralized control of the Parliamentary Panel at Head Office was necessary in order to obtain the type of candidate who would win the approval" of a CLP. He argued that more MPs would match on the political front the Union's strength on the industrial front. <sup>72</sup> The success of the programme is indicated by the increase in maintenance grants after 1948, as shown in Table 3. The increase in spending under this heading shows that more Panel members were being accepted as constituency candidates. The programme, apparently, was less successful in later

---

70. These and the preceding data are drawn from the AEU Financial Report, 1944-1951.

71. Rule 45:3.

72. Richter, p. 54.

years, however, and it was not until 1958, after the ceiling was raised<sup>73</sup> on the maximum permissible grant, that the 1951 figure was surpassed. It should be noted that the ceiling had also been raised in 1947<sup>74</sup> to enable the Party to take advantage of the extra money coming to the union Political Funds under the terms of the 1946 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act and to enable the unions to shift their extra money into Party coffers.

Clearly, as Richter points out, considerations of Union prestige were involved in the desire to increase the number of AEU-sponsored<sup>75</sup> MPs. This is evident in the arguments used by the initiator of the plan. Such considerations, apparently, were also a factor in the original campaign to increase contracting-in, as the advertisements used in it show. Richter has also argued that increased spending was due, in part to the growth in the Fund itself: some use had to be found for<sup>76</sup> money that could not be spent on non-political activities. This was, no doubt, an element in the case, but it must not be forgotten that the Union and its leaders had sought to raise more money and had been allocating more money to Party and political purposes even before 1947. Thus they cannot be said simply to be coping with an issue that they had not consciously tried to create.

The increased support for the Party was related to policy issues, too. As the original contracting-in campaign showed, it was a matter of

---

73. Harrison, pp. 80n, 83.

74. Harrison, p. 80n.

75. Richter, p. 54.

support for the party of the social services. It was support, also, for the party characterized by the spokesmen of the Executive as the party of full employment. The Conservatives, in contrast, were the party of unemployment. While the Labour Government's employment policy was criticized occasionally, the target of that criticism was the inadequacy of the methods used; no doubt was expressed about the sincerity of the political leadership's devotion to the cause of full employment.<sup>77</sup> In his 1949 National Committee speech, Tanner reviewed the achievements of the Labour Government:

Perhaps the greatest thing of all has been the maintenance of full employment. Some critics have suggested that it is not Government policy that is responsible for this, but the general demand for our products in world markets. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without the control and planning of economic policy by the Government, we should have experienced, long before this, as high a level of unemployment as exists in many European countries and in the U.S.A.... I have not the slightest doubt that if the British people were foolish enough to return the Tories to power again, unemployment would soon be a major problem for us once more. (78)

In addition to fulfilling this basic goal, the Labour Government furthered the interests of the trade unions directly by protecting and enhancing the system of free collective bargaining. The 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Union Act not only inhibited trade union political action. The act "forbad general strikes and most sympathetic strikes,

---

76. Richter, p. 70.

77. See, for example, RPNC, 1945, p. 218; RPNC, 1946, p. 210; RPNC, 1948, p. 222; RPNC, 1949, p. 243; RPNC, 1950, pp. 232-33; RPNC, 1951, pp. 281-82.

78. RPNC, 1949, p. 232.

imposed fresh restrictions on picketing, and forced the Civil Service unions to leave the T.U.C. and the Labour Party". It is hardly surprising that in the run-up to the 1945 election Gardner reserved some of his harshest criticism of the Conservatives for Churchill's refusal to consider repeal of the 1927 Act, "one of the most shameless and unscrupulous pieces of class legislation that even the Tory Party has ever enacted". It was the Labour Government which removed these disabilities in its 1946 Act.

The Labour Government, moreover, refrained from imposing a state wage control policy and settled for voluntary restraint in 1948 to 1950. Even after the unions rejected restraint, the Government rejected control by legislation. This was appreciated by the unions, and, in a generally unsympathetic account of the 1951 Budget, Gardner took the trouble to emphasize the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement that

the Government had come definitely to the conclusion that the established system of industrial wage regulation machinery can be trusted. It puts its faith in the sense of responsibility which it believes to have been engendered on both sides of industry, as a result of the free development of voluntary collective bargaining during a century or more. (81)

The AEU leadership thus had ample grounds for its support of the Labour Party. This generalized loyalty to the Party, however, did not entail loyalty to all aspects of Party policy. The AEU spokesmen did

79. Eric Wigham, Trade Unions (London, 1956), p. 38.

80. Journal, April 1945, p. 97.

81. Journal, May 1951, p. 130.

82. Compare B.C. Roberts, "Trade Unions and Party Politics", Cambridge Journal, 6 (1953), 387-402 (pp. 394-95).

preach to their members about loyalty to the Party and sometimes even  
went so far as to preach loyalty to Party policies. In 1945 the  
Executive circulated a notice forbidding members who campaigned on  
behalf of anyone but official Labour Party candidates "to indicate  
their office or any position they may hold in the Union". This  
instruction was based on the Union's affiliation to the Labour Party  
under the rules. In 1950 another notice, which cited as its authority  
a 1949 National Committee resolution expressing support for Labour in  
the forthcoming elections, stated that it was the Union's duty to oppose  
the opponents of Labour candidates and policies and that it was incum-  
bent on branch secretaries to forbid "correspondence from opposition  
bodies to be submitted to the Branches".

The Executive's spokesmen, however, do not seem to have been  
bound by this injunction themselves. They criticized Labour policies  
quite freely and unselfconsciously, except when elections seemed  
imminent. As in the case of wage restraint and the de-emphasis of  
nationalization, the AEU leadership tended to support those Labour Party  
policies in which they believed or to which they were half converted  
already. It was in relation to such policies that the leaders invoked  
loyalty to the Party. This suggests that the Executive had another use

83. For example, RPNC, 1947, p. 267; RPNC, 1949, p. 239.

84. Journal, August 1945, p. 227.

85. Richter, p. 96.

86. See, for example, RPNC, 1950, pp. 237-39; RPNC, 1946, pp. 210-11;  
RPNC, 1947, pp. 265-66; RPNC, 1948, pp. 219-20.

for Labour: the maintenance of internal discipline.

This does not mean that the Party leadership was totally without influence on the members of the EC. The complexity of Party-Union relations clearly involved the exposure of each side to influence by the other. The speed and firmness with which suggestions of a state wage-control system was slapped down<sup>87</sup> and the criticism of Government policy by the Union leadership, however, show that there were clear limits to whatever influence the Party may have had on the AEU Executive. (The Government's rejection of a state scheme, on the other hand, clearly demonstrates its own sensitivity to pressure by the trade unions.) Indeed, there was nothing in the history of AEU-Labour Party relations or of the individual members of the Executive Council that would lead one to think otherwise. In the past the Union had used the Party, from time to time, to advance Union interests. While there were Labour Party members among the EC, there were also members of the Communist Party and fellow travellers.<sup>88</sup> Once the AEU Executive had adopted its "national" line, however, persuasion by the Party was easier because the area of basic agreement was broader than it had been.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, on some issues, as we shall see, the AEU leaders publicly supported Party policies for reasons entirely different from those which had led the Government leadership to adopt them.

87. Journal, October 1947, p. 290.

88. On Tanner see Chapter IV-A above. On the political line-up in the postwar period see The Times, 9 February 1948, p. 5.

89. Contrast Panitch, pp. 30-31.

5. Pressure Group Activity and Organizational Growth and Maintenance

Goals

As the discussion thus far has shown, organizational growth and maintenance goals continued to be an important consideration in the leadership's postwar policies. Amalgamation was pursued consistently and loyally but with little success, except in 1945 when the 6000-strong Amalgamated Society of Vehicle Builders, Carpenters and Mechanics became the Vehicle Builders' section of the AEU.<sup>90</sup> Other engineering unions tended to be wary of the AEU and its proposals. Thus of the thirty-two unions invited to a meeting on amalgamation in May 1951, "only eight<sup>91</sup> attended". Given the failure of the direct approach, the Union continued to seek more unified action by other means. In 1946 the members voted overwhelmingly in favour of joining the CSEU. While it was agreed that the Confederation was not entirely satisfactory, Gardner stressed "the fact that historically such bodies have done useful work<sup>92</sup> in paving the way towards large scale amalgamations of kindred unions". The CSEU thus became the principal channel for collective bargaining with the employers. The Confederation was also used as a pressure group to lobby the Government and the TUC about policies of particular importance to the engineering workers and their industry. Thus the questions of trade with the USSR and of nationalization, planning and control in

90. Journal, July 1945, p. 193.

91. RPNC, 1951, p. 279.

92. Journal, October 1946, p. 289; compare RPNC, 1947, p. 270.

the engineering industry were pursued through the councils of the  
93  
CSEU.

The other main channel for political lobbying was the Trades Union Congress. In contrast to earlier periods when the AEU had zealously opposed any significant centralization of power in the TUC General Council,<sup>94</sup> and although it continued to except collective bargaining from the tasks the TUC might fulfil, the leadership in 1947 called for the delegation of powers "so that the General Council can act with the speed required, subject to the endorsement of affiliated unions afterwards if necessary". Tanner argued that the

General Council must be able to speak and act more authoritatively, representing millions of workers, not only to outside bodies, but to the workers themselves. The need arises from the changing situation, which is inescapable, and not from any academic or autocratic motive. (95)

Since the AEU leadership now shared the "national" outlook of most British trade union leaders, such a delegation of powers presented far fewer difficulties than it would have done before the war. Indeed, such a delegation of powers can even be seen as an attempt to further "national" interests by making it more difficult for AEU members and for the members and leaders of other unions who did not subscribe to the new line to block cooperation between the trade union movement and the Government.

---

93. See Journal, July 1946, p. 232; December 1946, p. 353; April 1947, p. 105; September 1947, p. 262; January 1948, p. 7; May 1948, p. 134; June 1948, p. 167; September 1948, p. 263; and above Chapter IV-B-3.

94. See above Chapter III-A-5.

It was generally as representatives of the TUC and occasionally  
of the CSEU<sup>96</sup> that the members of the AEU Executive sat on the various  
tripartite advisory councils, panels and boards established by the  
Government. Richter writes that in the 1950s and 1960s "the unions  
were not interested in serious instrumental use of the representation  
they obtained on planning and industrial training boards"<sup>97</sup>. A similar  
attitude prevailed in the AEU in the late 1940s, when Tanner spoke  
disparagingly of the existing tripartite advisory councils.<sup>98</sup> As we  
saw earlier, however, the potential value that the leaders apparently  
saw in such bodies was less substantive than symbolic, that is, as a  
means of gaining the members' confidence in the policy of collaboration.

#### 6. Summary

This section has demonstrated that during the period 1945-1951  
questions of conditions of employment were the chief concern of the AEU  
leaders. A concern for social transformation, on the other hand, was  
not a primary operative objective of the leadership. Whatever the  
ideological attitudes of the individual members of the EC, collective  
action by the Executive, the nature of the policies it supported and the  
manner in which it advanced them, show that the leaders were more  
occupied with working within a tempered capitalism than with building a  
socialist Britain.

---

95. RPNC, 1947, pp. 270-71.

96. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1947.

97. Richter, p. 54. *Italicized in the original.*

98. The Times, 9 November 1946, p. 5.

This did not keep the AEU's spokesmen from using the "building of socialism" as a major theme in communications with their members. Tanner's NC addresses tended to give that theme great prominence. In general, the objective of social transformation was used to justify the "national" line and its corollaries like wage restraint. I do not wish to imply that the EC spokesmen were insincere. Tanner seems to have believed quite honestly that the "national" line was consistent with socialist change.<sup>99</sup> The question of sincerity is not of major concern to us here, however. What is important is that socialist arguments were used to justify policies that did not conform obviously and unequivocally with socialist ideas (as opposed to practice by socialist parties) prevalent at the time.

This use of the "socialist" argument to justify "national" policies is most clearly demonstrated in Tanner's 1949 National Committee speech. The heart of the speech is an appeal for wage restraint, and it is in this context that the contradiction between socialist objectives and short-term economic advantage is pointed out.<sup>100</sup>

These factors, the leaders' direct involvement in enhancing Party finances and the nature of their pressure group activities through the TUC and the CSEU indicate how much of a mistake it would be to underestimate the AEU Executive's political interests and concerns. Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter III show that political and pressure group

99. Compare Richter, p. 49.

100. See above pp. 146-47.

action took up but little of their reported work; this does not mean that it was unimportant to them. State intervention in the economy was crucial to the Union's full employment policy. "If we are to get and maintain full employment and produce efficiently", Tanner said in 1946, "the Government's powers must be used to the full."<sup>101</sup> It was accepted that the Labour Party was predisposed to use "Government powers" and in a way less dangerous to the workers than the Conservatives. The transfer of funds to the Labour Party was meant to help the Party attain power. At least the dangers of Tory rule would be avoided; at best policies beneficial to the workers would be instituted. If influence had to be exerted, the Union at least had the advantage of a greater area of basic agreement than it had with the Tories. In these circumstances, there was little pressure to establish new channels of influence. Attempts to affect Government policy were best carried out by those bodies, like the TUC and the CSEU, which had traditionally been used in Union lobbying. It was only later, when the possibility of a more radical Party leadership arose, and with it the spectre of differences in principle between the unions and the Party, that the Union turned to action within the Party apparatus.<sup>102</sup> Thus, while the value attached to political action was clearly limited, to argue that there was no interest in politics by the AEU leadership because there was no belief in the efficacy of political action is wrong in both premise and conclusion.<sup>103</sup>

---

101. RPNC, 1946, p. 210.

### C. Power Distribution Goals

Just as the themes of full employment and the "national" line were central to the ends sought and means used by the AEU Executive during the years 1945-1951, so the related theme of centralization of tasks and powers ran like a red thread through the system of functional and power relationships within the Union itself. As we saw in Chapter III, the centripetal forces set in motion in the late nineteenth century had been dominant through most of the interwar period. The recovery and development of certain sectors of the engineering industry in the mid-1930s and the far greater impact of the war set in motion countervailing forces which increased the control of the workshop organization over the terms of employment of the workers in the shop and increased their independence of the central authorities. Nevertheless, by and large the labour discipline needed for war production was maintained. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this thesis, although it seems fair to say that neither the authority of the national officers nor (despite the fact that many believed it) the parallel authority of the communist-dominated internal opposition was an important factor in it.

The original impetus for centralization had come from a reaction

---

102. See Richter, pp. 137-39.

103. See Richter, pp. 45-48, 221.

104. See above pp. 115-16.

to and was reinforced by developments in the organization's setting. The leadership's conversion to the "national" policy during the Second World War gave even more force to their perception of the need for centralization. Cole argued that the British trade union leaders' acceptance of policies of restraint

has been forced on them by their knowledge of the precarious condition of the British economy, despite the high profits which have been made; but it is very difficult to explain the necessity to their members, and this difficulty forces on them the need to establish a strong central discipline and to damp down any militant tendencies among their followers.... (106)

Such a policy does not merely require, or seem to require, a centralized disciplinary system. When it is the good of the nation that is involved, a central authority must also make policy for the organization as a whole. Only such a central authority is capable of judging the overall situation and of dealing with other centralized bodies like the Government and the employers. The corollary of strengthening the authority of the national officials is to weaken the competing centres of power, the workshops.

It was, in fact, on this oblique approach of weakening the periphery that the national officials tended to concentrate their arguments and actions. Their stated objective was to make the Union more efficient. Thus, shortly before the 1945 Rules Revision Meeting, Gardner claimed that the Union was inefficient. Union officers, he

---

106. Cole, p. 22.

said, were so overburdened with "heavy administrative tasks and responsibilities" that they could not deal "expeditiously" with "matters of urgency". He did not mention that many of these onerous duties had been carried out successfully by shop stewards during the war, and he did not suggest that these responsibilities be permanently shifted to the shop organization. That would have been inconsistent with the customary attitudes and the "national" outlook of the leadership. To have shifted these tasks back to the centre would, indeed, have overburdened it, but to leave them in the hands of the stewards was not an option either. Instead, he suggested that these powers be delegated to other full-time officials:

Some sort of intermediate machine is required between Branches and Districts and Executive Council to reduce the amount of detailed correspondence now receiving the attention of the governing authority. It may be desirable and possible for the Regional Officer, located in the E.C. Division, to act as a kind of Sub-Executive Councilman and to deal with many matters, only remitting to E. C. those involving high policy. (107)

In his 1946 NC speech Tanner referred to the progress made by the Rules Revision Commission set up by the previous year's Meeting. He, too, stressed the need for efficiency. He asserted that

it is very desirable to have machinery that preserves control by the rank and file, but our constitution limits the initiative and restricts the activities of the Executive Council and other officers to an extent, in relation to modern trends, that upsets the desired balance between democratic control and efficiency --- even safety. (108)

107. Journal, May 1945, pp. 129-30.

108. RPNC, 1946, p. 214.

The Executive, however, did not want to make its assault on the powers of the shop and regional organization too obvious, nor did it want to overburden itself. So, when resolutions were presented to the 1951 NC, "calling for national negotiations on behalf of members whose wages and conditions have been adequately catered for in the past by local officials and District Committees", Tanner rejected them as a "waste (of) the time of the national officials and the money of the Union".<sup>109</sup>

The EC succeeded in persuading the Rules Revision Meeting of the virtues of centralization only in relation to the Parliamentary Panel.<sup>110</sup> However, in 1945 the Meeting had amended Rule 15:18 to permit the Executive to call for the election of new full-time officers as and when they were necessary.<sup>111</sup> This power of appointment was to form one part of the three-pronged centralization policy that the Executive pursued. The three elements of this policy were the strengthening of official structures, the disciplining of disruptive elements and the reinterpretation of National Committee policies.

The strengthening of the full-time officers' cadres was reflected in the transformation of lay posts into full-time ones, the creation of new offices and the redistribution and rationalization of tasks among full-time officers. From December 1945 on more and more

109. RPNC, 1951, p. 280.

110. See above pp. 158-59.

111. Journal, February 1946, p. 38.

District Secretaries became full-time officers. The EC was not particularly enthusiastic about this source of manpower, however, and stuck firmly to the guideline that only when a district's membership rose above 4000 would its secretary become a full-time officer.<sup>112</sup>

Apparently, it feared that full-time District Secretaries would be too hard to control. Indeed, in order to assert its authority and ensure discipline, the EC resorted to the exemplary punishment (that is, to the second prong of its centralization offensive) of two full-time District Secretaries who had failed or refused "to give effect to Executive Council's instructions". Their punishments, fines and suspension, and their signing of "an undertaking to abide by the Rules of the Union and the Executive Council's instructions" were publicized in the Journal.<sup>113</sup>

In February 1946 the EC announced that, in accordance with revised rule 15:18, it was calling for the election of Assistant Divisional Organizers in nine of the Union's twenty-six divisions. The new officers would, "subject to the Executive Council's approval, be under the direction and control of the Divisional Organizer, and their duties will include attendance at conferences, meeting employers, conducting negotiations, attending at D. C. meetings and dealing with correspondence".<sup>114</sup> These appointments seem to have been an attempt to

112. Journal, December 1945, p. 356.

113. Journal, July 1948, p. 195; January 1951, p. 3; February 1951, p. 36.

114. Journal, February 1946, p. 38.

increase official supervision of the District Committees and to stop the loophole in the rules according to which the DC might, in an emergency and when the Divisional Organizer was unavailable, negotiate without any full-time officials being present.<sup>115</sup> Again, the point was to undercut the power of the lay officialdom of the AEU.

In May 1947 an attempt was made to rationalize the tasks of the three National Organizers. Henceforth, instead of acting merely as generalist trouble-shooters in district negotiations, they would "be located at the General Office and ... be Secretaries of the Union's Advisory Committees".<sup>116</sup> These were internal Union bodies which grouped lay and full-time officials who were concerned with employers in specific industries, with individual large firms like ICI and with certain Government ministries which employed members of the Union. The Advisory Committees had existed for certain sectors, like the railway shopmen, at least since the early 1920s. Their action had previously been only intermittent, however. By extending to these bodies the bureaucratic framework, the Union gave them greater continuity and also absorbed them into that framework so that they could be better controlled.

The extension of state welfare schemes and the end of the Union's role as agent of the state in administering national insurance made possible another reallocation of duties. Hitherto, one of the

---

115. Rule 13.

116. Journal, March 1947, p. 68.

Assistant General Secretaries had been responsible for "trade union" affairs and the other for insurance. The latter role was now redundant so the 1947 Rules Revision Meeting "amended Rule 16, clause 1, to read: 'there shall be ... two Assistant General Secretaries ... who shall be allocated such duties, including Political and Educational, as defined by the Executive Council.'<sup>117</sup> It is noteworthy that it was after 1948, when the new rule came into effect, that the character of the Union's educational programme was changed.<sup>118</sup>

Much of the disciplinary action taken by the Executive pertained to the breaking of the rules about electoral procedures, ranging from tampering with the returns to negligence. The EC's responses varied with the seriousness of the offence and the frequency of similar offences. More severe punishments, like suspension from office and the deprivation of the right to hold office, were explicitly intended to be exemplary.<sup>119</sup>

The third prong of the Executive offensive against centrifugal forces, the reinterpretation of National Committee resolutions and Union policies in such a way as to transfer functions and power from the shops and the regions to the centre, seems to have been the favourite one. It was, in any event, the one the leaders pursued most

117. Journal, January 1948, p. 3.

118. See above pp. 151-52.

119. Journal, February 1945, p. 35; May 1945, p. 131; June 1945, p. 163; August 1945, p. 227; May 1949, p. 131; December 1949, p. 357; March 1950, p. 73; February 1951, p. 36.

consistently and to which they devoted the most effort. Two important examples of such reinterpretation were the New Wages Structure, discussed earlier, and the attempt to develop a new Procedure for the avoidance of disputes with the Engineering Employers' Federation.

As we saw, the New Wages Structure was initiated by a 1944 NC resolution which was based on a concern to expand differentials among skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled grades. In 1945 the Executive presented a framework scheme, but its aim was more than simply to establish proportional relationships between the grades. "The avowed object is to abolish the varying rates that now obtain in different parts of the country", the General Secretary wrote. <sup>120</sup> Under the terms of the EC's proposals, "instead of the present system of district rates, bonus and differential payments, there would be three main grades of workers each with a guaranteed weekly wage". What the Union wanted, <sup>121</sup> Tanner said, "was to establish national standards".

Four years later, however, when the CSEU had finally developed a six-grade scheme, Tanner had learned the value of circumspection. When questioned by the representatives of the Confederation District Committees about the implications of the proposals for district bargaining, his replies were soothing and evasive. In fact, the scheme left only very limited room for bargaining in the districts and the shops and that <sup>122</sup> chiefly with regard to the top grade of skilled worker. The local

120. Journal, July 1945, p. 194.

121. The Times, 9 May 1945, p. 2.

122. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1949, pp. 58-70.

wage bargaining function would thus be minimized, while the centre's would be expanded. (This scheme, it should be noted, referred to time-workers' rates, but the leadership was concurrently trying to standardize the rates for piece-workers too, thus further undercutting one of the principal tasks and sources of power of the shop stewards.<sup>123</sup>) In discussing the CSEU scheme with the 1950 NC, Tammer noted that it bore on two concerns: the narrow differentials between craftsmen and other workers --- a theme he developed in detail --- and, almost in passing, "the great disparity between the earnings of our members in different districts"<sup>124</sup>.

The Procedure debate provided another opportunity for centralization through reinterpretation. Since 1898 the Union's relations with the Engineering Employers' Federation had been governed by a procedure that at one and the same time provided formal confirmation of the ultimate authority of the Executive in the Union and fed unrest and dissatisfaction in the shops. Under the Procedure for the avoidance of disputes, disputes which could not be resolved in the framework in which they arose (shop, works, district) were referred to the next higher instance (works, district) until they reached the Central Conference. There representatives of the EC and, later, of the CSEU Executive dealt with national representatives of the Employers' Federation. Only

123. RPNC, 1945, p. 222.

124. RPNC, 1950, p. 238.

when Central Conference registered a failure to agree, when Procedure was exhausted, could the original parties to the dispute resort to methods other than negotiation.<sup>125</sup> This Procedure was confirmed by the 1922 agreement with the employers, which also affirmed the right of management to manage without interference by the workers.<sup>126</sup>

Partly in order to circumvent the long, drawn-out process,<sup>127</sup> which far too often ended in a failure to agree, the workers involved would resort to unofficial strikes which "were often unannounced and unapproved, and sometimes even unrecorded by union, employer or government officials".<sup>128</sup> Tanner, it is said, regarded the argument that the Procedure was too lengthy and inefficient as a mere pretext and that opposition to the system was "politically inspired".<sup>129</sup>

Rank-and-file activists, however, objected both to the Procedure and to the exclusion of workers from exercising some control of managerial functions, and they sought more power for shop stewards.

The 1946 National Committee ... demanded that J.P.C.s be given real authority and executive powers and that joint machinery be established at all levels of industry so as to give the workers an opportunity of joint participation in management .... And in 1947 the E.A.T.S.S.N.C. (Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards' National Council) adopted a policy that J.P.C.s be given statutory powers to examine books, figures and programmes and that managements be obliged to consult J.P.C.s and shop steward committees on all questions of production. (130)

125. Richter, p. 116.

126. Jefferys, p. 226.

127. Thus in 1951, 59 of the 125 items discussed at Central Conference ended in a failure to agree. See Journal, 1951, "Abstract Report of Council's Proceedings" for each month.

128. Richter, p. 116.

129. Richter, p. 116.

The response of the Executive, working through the NEJTM and later through the CSEU, was to emphasize the "participation" aspects of the opposition to Procedure. In 1947 the Confederation developed a new scheme which would eradicate the distinction between negotiations involving stewards and works committees and the consultative JPCs. It suggested setting up a hierarchy of committees running from the works to the district to the national level. On these committees employer and union representatives would negotiate about traditional questions of conditions of employment and about "all other questions affecting the industry".<sup>131</sup> The employers, not surprisingly, rejected the scheme.<sup>132</sup> At the 1949 CSEU Annual Meeting a revised draft proposal<sup>133</sup> was submitted and approved. In this plan the works and district levels of the original proposals disappeared entirely; it dealt exclusively with the structure of the proposed Central, that is, National, Council. This, then, is what the NC's original intention to strengthen the position of the steward in the workshop and of the workers vis-à-vis management came to: rank-and-file members were to be given neither greater autonomy from higher union structures nor greater control over their own conditions in the shops. If any section of the Union organization was to benefit, it was the national Executive.

In the discussion of the scheme at the CSEU Annual meeting, one

---

130. Carew, p. 170.

131. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1947, pp. 74-75.

132. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1948, pp. 195-96.

133. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1949, pp. 86-89.

delegate complained that "the proposed constitution was too elaborate. What was wanted was machinery that would deal quickly with disputes as they arose in the workshop." Tanner, who was chairman of the committee which elaborated the scheme, replied:

despite many attempts, no progress had been made in obtaining improvements to the Provisions for Avoidance of Disputes, and the Executive Council (of the CSEU) were now concerned with getting a complete new set-up of industry. In his opinion, just to approach the employers and say we wanted a quicker method of settling disputes would not be satisfactory. (134)

Of course, from the type of proposals that the leadership put forward, it seems clear that they really were not interested in a system for settling disputes rapidly if it meant too much local autonomy. Nor, as we saw earlier and as the ease with which the Executive dropped the works and district parts of the scheme shows, did the leaders want to see a radical system of workers' control established. When faced with rank-and-file resolutions demanding such things, they were able to interpret and re-interpret their instructions in such a way that they did not have to bargain with the employers about these subjects seriously, if at all, and so did not have to undermine their own power. They also could add features to NC resolutions, as in the case of the centralizing aspects of the New Wages Structure, to further their own interests. If the employers had been more cooperative, this third prong of the leadership offensive probably would have been the most effective of the three.

134. CSEU Annual Meeting, 1949, p. 262.

During the period 1945-1951 the balance of power in the AEU was still in doubt. Indeed, the national leadership's position seemed to be somewhat stronger than the regional organization's and the political opposition's. The evidence available is indirect and incomplete or too gross, but it does suggest that, whether because of the Executive's centralization offensive or of some other factors, the centripetal forces were at least holding their own.

Some of the evidence is provided by the record of industrial disputes during this period and is summarized in Table 4.

---

TABLE 4: INDUSTRIAL STOPPAGES IN METALS, ENGINEERING, SHIPBUILDING AND VEHICLES, 1945-1951

---

YEAR	NUMBER OF STOPPAGES BEGINNING IN EACH YEAR	WORKERS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY INVOLVED ('000s)	WORKING DAYS LOST THROUGH ALL STOPPAGES IN PROGRESS ('000s)
1945	591	123	528
1946	449	162	1084
1947	291	111	579
1948	266	107	898
1949	250	50	285
1950	227	61	294
1951	318	103	514

---

Source: Central Statistical Office, Annual Abstract of Statistics, 89 (1952).

---

The most striking feature of the table is the decline in stoppages from 1945 to 1950. The number of workers affected and the number of working days lost indicate greater variability in the magni-

tude and, perhaps, the bitterness of the disputes. Here too, however, 1949 and 1950 were the trough of the cycle. It would appear from these figures (assuming that the number of unreported and unrecorded strikes was negligible) that by 1949 the more militant shop and works organizations were "under control", and that it was only the improvement in the workers' bargaining power<sup>135</sup> and the inflation and other dislocations brought about by the Korean War which led to another increase in unrest. It is unclear whether one can attribute this muting of conflict to any action by the national officials. The quieter years overlap with the years of wage restraint (1948 to early 1950), so the relationship with this policy can hardly have been direct. Nor can any other policies pursued by the Union be seen to have had a direct impact on the behaviour of the rank and file during these years.

The stewards' influence and importance seem to have declined somewhat in the immediate postwar years. In part this was due to the removal of employee protection as the repeal of the Essential Work Order of 1941 exposed many stewards to victimization by the employers.<sup>136</sup> In any event, the relative decline in the importance of the stewards as wage bargainers is clearly indicated by the available data.<sup>137</sup> For pieceworkers, who comprised the majority of the skilled workers covered by the data (69.9% in 1942, 60.8% in 1948),<sup>138</sup> the proportion of

135. Through the increased demand for labour.

136. Carew, p. 169.

137. Knowles and Hill, p. 293.

138. K. G. J. C. Knowles and D. J. Robertson, "Earnings in Engineering, 1926-1948", Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin, 13 (1951), 179-200 (p. 187).

earnings derived from agreements negotiated at other than the national level declined drastically in importance after 1942, from 47 per cent in that year to 31 per cent in 1948. The precise date of the turnaround is unclear. By 1953 the proportion had risen again to almost 39 per cent.<sup>139</sup> Knowles and Hill contend that this second turnaround took place in 1951-52, as a result of the increased demand for labour in the arms-related engineering industries and (in motor vehicle manufacture) of increased productivity. For the minority of skilled workers paid according to time rates, non-nationally negotiated payments grew in importance steadily but slowly. For unskilled workers supplementary payments declined in importance very slightly and very slowly.<sup>140</sup> Obviously the stewards had not yet learned to exploit the system of payment by results to increase their control "over the pace and intensity of work and (the workers') level of earnings" and thus to increase their own influence on the shopfloor.<sup>141</sup>

The evidence that the stewards were less important as wage bargainers should not be taken as evidence that the stewards were not important at all. As in the Second World War, their functions were far wider than mere wage bargaining. In this connection, it is significant that the major local and works disputes that erupted into strikes in these years revolved not around wages questions but around such issues

139. Knowles and Hill, p. 293.

140. Knowles and Hill, p. 293.

141. Contrast Carew, p. 173.

as victimization, redundancies, dilution, deskilling and the like. Clearly, in the years 1945-1951 the struggle for power between the national organization and the rank-and-file activists in the shops and the works was still undecided.

Can the changes in the militancy of the engineering workers be attributed in any way to communist influence? As we saw in Chapter III, although changes in CPGB policy seem to have had little impact on the level of strikes in the metal industries during the war, the communists themselves claimed to have had great influence over the workers, and these claims were widely accepted. During the years just after the war, the communists apparently continued to dominate the organized opposition within the Union, the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council (EATSSNC). Thus EATSSNC continued the wartime policy of collaboration and expounded on the view "that co-operation in the interests of efficient production was the overwhelming need".<sup>143</sup>

However, the communists' change of policy after Britain and the moderate trade union leaders' acceptance of the Marshall Plan resulted in a similar shift in policy on the part of the Shop Stewards' Council.

Since the AEU leadership persisted in its "national" line, the organized shop stewards were, in effect, going back into opposition. Their reaction to policies aimed at increasing production and productivity was now hostile. In 1948 the TUC published a document on

142. Knowles, Strikes, p. 238; Carew, pp. 168-70.

143. Carew, p. 165; Compare "Shop Stewards' Plan for Industry", The Times, 17 March 1947, p. 2.

productivity which called, inter alia, for the training of shop stewards in such matters as "the elements of production and costing". EATSSNC replied that these things had nothing to do with the stewards' main job which was "to ensure that agreements are observed as minimum conditions, and to build on them, to make sure there are no 'nons' in the shops, and to ensure the greatest degree of unity among all sectors in the factories against the employers".<sup>144</sup> The days of collaboration were well and truly gone.

However, a glance at Table 4, above, shows that there was no clear relationship between communist and EATSSNC policy, on the one hand, and industrial unrest, on the other, in the early postwar years, just as there had been none during the war itself. Certainly the number of strikes in the industry did not increase after 1947. As for the intensity of strikes as measured by the number of workers affected and by the number of working days lost, 1946 was by far the worst of these early postwar years, and the internal opposition was still cooperating at the time. The pattern of strikes in 1948, however, may have frightened the official union leadership, for, although there were fewer strikes and fewer workers affected than in the preceding year, the strikes that did occur seem to have been fought more bitterly: many more working days were lost in this the first full year of the opposition's reversion to the anti-"national" line. While the evidence

---

144. Quoted by Carew, p. 172.

for the entire period, from the outbreak of war in 1939 until 1951, indicates that the increase may well have been coincidental, one cannot reasonably expect the leadership to have known this or to risk acting as if it were. There was too much at stake from their standpoint. To have ignored the communists would have seemed foolhardy if not foolish, but rather than resort to communist-baiting and -bashing, the AEU leaders, apparently because of their perception of the internal opposition's influence, adopted a more subtle approach in which communication played a significant part.

#### D. Communication as a Tool for Goal Attainment

As we have seen, the principal method used by the leadership to deal with the shopfloor organizations and the internal opposition was the three-pronged centralization programme. At the same time they sought to mobilize the support of the interested and active members of the Union by using the communication channels they controlled. They thus eventually denied the internal opposition access to the Journal, and they expounded continually on the virtues of their own policies. Direct attacks on the communists and their shop steward supporters, however, are noteworthy for their rarity in Gardner's editorials. In Tanner's NC addresses attacks on the policies of the Communist Party became standard after 1948, but it was not until 1952 that he attacked it and the "National Council of Shop Stewards which, as everyone knows,

is under Communist leadership",<sup>145</sup> explicitly and directly for the policies they pursued within the Union itself. The most striking feature of the leaders' propaganda was that it was not aimed at undermining support for opposition policies by attributing them to some communist Satan. Instead, it was concentrated on presenting arguments on behalf of the Executive's own policies of cooperation, restraint, productivity and (more rarely) organizational maintenance. That is, the leaders argued in terms of their goal-attainment and organizational-maintenance concerns rather than in terms of power distribution. As we have seen, however, especially after 1947, the leadership's goal-attainment, organizational-maintenance and power-distribution goals were almost inextricably entwined. This policy orientation does not mean that the leaders' arguments were entirely reasoned and logical: they tried, for example, to create a positive image of certain actors, like the Labour Party, and to associate their own policies with these bodies.<sup>146</sup> As we shall see later, they also used negative models in relation to other issues.

The policy of denying the opposition access to the Union's communication channels, as we saw earlier, had been a prominent feature of policy during the interwar years. Denial was never absolute, however; as long as the opposition spokesman agreed with the leadership view of a certain matter, he might be permitted to publish an article

---

145. RFNC, 1952, p. 260.

146. See above pp. 162-63.

147  
in the Journal. In the postwar period the internal opposition's continued collaborationist policy meant that there was no reason to exclude its publicists. After 1947, even though the opposition renounced collaboration, the official leadership continued to display remarkable tolerance. Thus in the November 1948 Journal there appeared an anti-communist diatribe by one, Bro. W. J. Hiscox, which demanded increased productivity (as the Executive wished) in order, as the title put it, to "Make the Communists See Red!"<sup>148</sup> Two months later Gardner permitted a communist member to publish a rebuttal and to defend communist policies.<sup>149</sup> Hiscox was given the last word, however, in another article the following month.<sup>150</sup>

By 1950 there was no longer room for such tolerance, or perhaps there was no longer considered to be any need for it. The notice mentioned earlier, forbidding the circulation of non-Labour Party material through Union channels, was published in that year.<sup>151</sup> This document was not, as Richter would have it, "unprecedented".<sup>152</sup> Indeed, the expression of opposition opinion seems to have been tolerated more than it had been during the interwar period. The 1950 circular may have been chiefly an attempt to help the Labour Party in an election year. However, the similarity in format and content of this EC state-

- 
147. See above Chapter III-C.  
148. Journal, November 1948, p. 330.  
149. Journal, November 1949, p. 17.  
150. Journal, February 1949, p. 46.  
151. See above p. 162.  
152. Richter, p. 96.

ment to others issued between the wars leads one to think that it was not only criticism of the Party but of themselves that the leaders were trying to stifle. From this standpoint the Executive was using the Party to further its own intra-organizational ends, just as it used the Party to further its ends in the wider British society. Similarly, the demands for loyalty to Party policy and not merely to the Party, an injunction the leadership spokesmen themselves ignored, were associated, as in the case of wage restraint, with attempts to drum up support for

the policies they supported. The positive image of the Labour Party thus was used to make their own policies (or those they shared with the Party) more palatable. They themselves contributed to the creation of this image by their emphasis on the achievements and benefits of Labour rule. Their criticisms of the Party and its policies were criticisms of detail, not of principle, and never attributed ill-will to the political leadership but, at worst, a lack of understanding. Another way of making more acceptable the policies the leaders supported was to stress their "socialist" character.

These aspects of Executive argument --- reasoned statements about specific policies and why they were needed, subdued criticism of the Labour Government, an account of the Government's achievements, the socialist nature of the desired policies and the socialist objectives

---

153. See above Chapter III-C. The similarity to the notice published in the Journal, February 1933 (p. 10) is particularly striking.

154. See above Chapter IV-B-4.

155. See above Chapter IV-B-3.

of the Union --- were nowhere more skilfully intertwined than in  
156  
Tanner's 1949 National Committee speech. It is in that same  
address that we find the first explicit attack by either of the  
leadership spokesmen on the British communists. Tanner did not bother  
to attack their policies as they affected power relations within the  
AEU. Given the nature of the NC and its own relationship with the  
157  
Executive Council, it probably would not have done the President  
much good to claim that the communists' actions tended to undermine  
Executive authority. Instead, he dwelt on the broader implications of  
the communist policy of militancy in opposition to wage restraint and  
on the need for the workers' "willing acceptance of self-discipline  
and loyalty". The danger the communists posed was not merely to  
anything so mundane as the members' conditions of employment but to the  
whole fabric of society.

The communists, he said, reject the notion of a peaceful  
transition to a more just society. "They don't want it to (succeed),  
and they are doing everything possible to prevent it." They are trying  
to achieve "the breaking down of the nation's economy, the weakening of  
the Labour Government, in the hope that with the consequential scarcity,  
unemployment and dis-satisfaction of the people, the workers will turn  
to them". He said too:

Their policy and philosophy is to commandeer the means of  
production and distribution and the liquidation of all those

---

156. RPNC, 1949, pp. 239-51.

157. See above Chapter III-B-3.

who oppose them.

This means planned insurrection --- possibly Civil War --- certainly the forcible overthrow of the Government as took place in Czecho-Slovakia and the setting up of a dictatorship of the Communist Party. (158)

This was the trap that the members might fall into unless they learned "willing acceptance of self-discipline and loyalty". A little later in the same speech Tanner warned against allowing the Union to be "captured" by any outside group, for "we must remember that the A.E.U. ... is first and all the time a Trade Union". It was the prospect of communist-inspired violence, however, that he raised again in his 1950 speech and yet again in 1951. Thus, once Tanner had determined to make communism the object of attack in order to mobilize support for his own policies, he showed very little restraint.

In the Journal Gardner refrained from attacking the communists too explicitly or too often. Attacks on, or more precisely criticisms of, the British communists and their allies occurred only very rarely in his own editorials. Articles by other members of the Union or by other contributors were not subject to the same constraints. For the most part Gardner remained above the fray, in public at any rate. When he did refer to the communists he would sometimes lump them together with the Conservatives, damning them by association. Thus in

158. RPNC, 1949, p. 247.

159. RPNC, 1949, p. 249.

160. RPNC, 1950, p. 245; RPNC, 1951, p. 284.

161. For example, see the articles by Hiscox cited earlier and by Bro. W. F. Hopkins, Journal, July 1949, p. 205.

the first Journal to appear after Tanner's 1949 NC speech, Gardner referred explicitly to the British communists in a negative fashion for the first time. He wrote of the "Dismal Desmonds" of the right and the left, the communists and the Conservatives who "are trying to persuade our own people and the country that we are a suffering and decadent nation, on the verge of collapse and annihilation".<sup>162</sup> The following month he accused the communists and Conservatives of "playing the same game".<sup>163</sup> Like Tanner, however, he did not use the argument that the communists and their allies were undermining Executive authority; criticism centred on their impact on national policies and politics.<sup>164</sup> It was only in an unsigned full-page article entitled "Democracy Run Mad!" that the policy of those who "believe in the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'" to deprive EC of its formal authority over the workshop organization was ever publicly assailed.<sup>165</sup>

The general indirection of the attacks on the communists, that is, the emphasis on the impact of CPGB policies on the nation as a whole, was due, in part, to the leadership's awareness that the authority of the centre was not one of the values nearest to the heart of the attentive and active Union public. It would be wrong, however, to say that they used other arguments only because they could not use

162. Journal, July 1949, p. 193.

163. Journal, August 1949, p. 226.

164. Journal, 1949, p. 193; August 1949, p. 226; March 1950, p. 70; August 1950, p. 230.

165. Journal, July 1949, p. 207.

this one. After 1947 communist policy ran directly counter to everything the AEU leaders believed in and deemed necessary for the good of the members and the Union: the "national" line, cooperation in pursuit of national prosperity, closer interest in and association with the Labour Party, support for certain policies propounded by the Labour Government, like wage restraint and increased productivity. The communists attacked this fundamental approach on all fronts, in the factories, the Unions and the electoral system. It was by attacking leadership policy that the communists and the internal opposition challenged the leaders' authority and power.

In the circumstances, it is the tolerance and restraint shown by the Executive in their public statements that is surprising. This was not due to any underestimation of communist influence; Tanner's and Gardner's statements would indicate that they took the threat seriously. Indeed it was probably this perceived strength that led to their caution. As late as June 1948 Tanner was still addressing very conciliatory statements to the internal opposition.<sup>166</sup> As late as January 1949 Gardner let the communists state their own case in the Journal. The criticisms, when they came, were very broad and general. Direct attacks on the internal opposition might have alienated more members than they convinced. Many trade union leaders apparently believed that a campaign against the communists in the Unions directed

166. RPNC, 1948, p. 223.

by the Executives would or could be ineffective, inefficient and unjust.  
167

The centralization of power and functions may be seen from this standpoint as an attempt to limit the freedom of action of the regional and shopfloor structures and their ability to disrupt the Executive's pursuit of its own policies. Similarly, the leadership's educational and propaganda programme concentrated on limiting the impact of communist activity by educating the mass of shop stewards to accept the norms dictated by the General Office; by dealing, in other words, with the entire problem of shop steward autonomy rather than with the aggravating problem of communist militancy. Thus the post-1948 education programme stressed teaching the stewards their proper role within the Union and the Union's proper role in society. The EC's stress on involving the Union in the "planning" process had a similar purpose.  
168  
169

In their statements the AEU leaders tried to close the gaps left by their policy of constraining the membership. The EC's problem was to persuade the rank and file to use their remaining room for manoeuvre "wisely". Rather than criticize the opposition, the leaders tended instead to emphasize the correctness and suitability of their own policies. Criticism was generally removed to a level outside the Union

---

167. The Times, 10 February 1948, p. 5.

168. See above, pp. 151-52.

169. See above, pp. 149-51.

and to an issue (peaceful social change) on which a broad consensus could be assumed to exist. In the circumstances, restraint, tolerance and an emphasis on the justice of their own case was the most sensible and responsible course that the spokesmen for the leadership could take.

#### E. Summary and Conclusions

During the period 1945-1951 the AEU leadership pursued two closely connected objectives; one in relation to its external setting, the other in relation to power within the Union itself. The former, which we have characterized as the "national" line, was a new departure for the AEU, or rather an attempt to pursue the traditional policy of protecting the members' jobs and incomes in new circumstances. One outcome of this policy was the increased involvement in Labour Party affairs. Despite the Party's importance, the leaders were not about to subordinate their own interests to it. On the contrary, they sought quite clearly to use the Party to serve their interests with regard to both the "national" line and power relations in the Union.

The "national" policy itself also fit in with and reinforced the historical centralizing proclivities of the AEU leaders. Centralization was conceived as a means of ensuring the unified pursuit of Executive policies. Accordingly the Executive tried to lessen organizational dependence on the shop and regional lay structures and officials by strengthening the full-time officialdom, reinterpreting

rank-and-file policy and exercising disciplinary powers. Although it is probably going too far to suggest that these actions were part of a well-prepared and integrated attack on the internal opposition and local autonomy, they do reflect a basic concern to assert the authority of the centre and to undermine that of the shop stewards and the internal opposition.

Education and propaganda, too, were used to further the national officers' interests and policies in the face of centrifugal and opposition forces. The basic aim was to establish a willing acceptance of the "national" line, its corollaries and the policy of centralization. The chosen course involved exploiting the Labour Party's association with the Union and with the specific policies concerned as well as the historically inoperative but ritualistically endorsed socialist objectives of the Union. The apparently dead provisions of the Union's constitution could be revived in the proper social, political and economic setting to provide symbolic satisfaction when substantive satisfaction was deemed impracticable. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, the explanation of policy and propaganda on behalf of the Executive's policies also involved the exploitation of actors and relationships outside the United Kingdom and the projection of particular images of the world and of Britain's place in it.

---

170. Compare Edelman.

CHAPTER V

THE CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION: BRITAIN AMONG THE NATIONS

Communication, as I pointed out in the introductory chapter, is a tool of organization. In Chapters III and IV we looked at what the AEU's leaders were trying to achieve and how they were trying to achieve it. Because they were faced with formal and informal competing power centres in the organization and by a membership whose lives were not defined solely by the Union, the leaders could not simply issue orders and expect automatic and instinctive compliance. To attain their ends they tried to restrict and constrain their members' behaviour, to make it difficult for them to behave otherwise than in the desired manner and to compel them to act "correctly". These trends are reflected in their attempts to centralize power and to undermine their opponents and competitors.

They also used the communication channels available to them to try to persuade the members to accept the policies they propounded. This attempt to change the members' attitudes, knowledge and behaviour through communication was important to the leaders because there were limits to the constraints and compulsion that could be imposed in a voluntary organization like the AEU. Even within those limits, however, exclusive reliance on the tools other than communication would have been costly and, perhaps, even counterproductive.

Messages about the international system played a conspicuous

part in these leader-to-rank-and-file messages. Consequently the image of international affairs that emerged was less a function of a disinterested analysis of world politics and economics than of the immediate objectives of the leadership and of power relations within the AEU. In general the international setting figured in intra-organizational communication insofar as it was or could be shown to be related to or to affect the objectives, modes of action, division of labour and distribution of power of the Union. The international setting was thus a resource that the leadership could exploit in order to further its aims within the organization. Since the most important of the AEU's operative objectives were related to the protection and improvement of the members' conditions of employment through collective bargaining, the Executive's spokesmen focused on this theme and described how the international setting affected the engineers' welfare and the Union's ability to protect it. This relatively straightforward, framework, however, was complicated by the Union's other formal, historical and contemporary objectives: by ideological and partisan considerations and by the relations between the Executive and activists in the rank and file.

A. The International Setting as Scapegoat

The international system depicted in communication from the leaders to the rank and file in the AEU in the years 1945-1951 was essentially and overwhelmingly hostile, a source of hardship and difficulty that could not be contained or controlled. Even if sometimes it could be seen to give with one hand, it seized with the other. This projection of an image of danger, if not evil, beyond the country's boundaries was a concomitant of the "national" line which the Union leadership had adopted during the war.

In the image projected by the AEU's leaders, the world outside the UK could have adverse effects on the members' work and welfare because Britain was a trading nation, dependent on imports of food and raw materials and on exports of its manufactures in order to pay for<sup>1</sup> them. Wars, conflict, greed and ignorance among nations all affected Britain's international commercial and financial relations, which in turn affected the way the worker performed his job, the goods he could buy, the size of his wage packet and his very employment.

---

1. Journal, February 1946, p. 33; March 1946, p. 65; April 1946, p. 97; March 1947, p. 66; September 1947, pp. 257-58; March 1948, p. 66; April 1948, pp. 97-98; October 1948, pp. 304-05; April 1949, pp. 97-98; October 1949, p. 290; November 1949, pp. 321-22; April 1950, pp. 101-02; July 1951, pp. 193-94; RPNC, 1948, pp. 214-20; RPNC, 1949, pp. 242-43; RPNC, 1951, pp. 286-87. Sometimes the impact on particular industries was direct. See the discussion of rearmament below.

Although, as we have seen, some time passed before the AEU leadership realized the contradiction between its "national" line and the short-term material benefit of the members, it realized fairly quickly that there was a necessary conflict between production for export and production for domestic consumption. It was obvious that in a world of severe shortages, priorities must be determined. The Government gave priority to exports in order to right the balance of payments and to prevent inflationary price rises.<sup>2</sup> The General Secretary, Gardner, on the other hand, argued that exports must not be expanded at the expense of domestic consumption. After six years of austerity, he said, high priority should be given to the production of household goods in order to give the workers an incentive to increase total production. He repeated this point a month later in response to sharp criticisms by the national press and others.<sup>3</sup>

By early 1947 the members were being told that the problem was more complex: the domestic market was competing with the export market for capital equipment as well as for consumer goods. This difficulty and its implications were brought home to everyone by the Fuel Crisis of the winter of 1947, when the lack of coal led to a sudden but short-term rise in the number of unemployed. Gardner commented:

---

2. See above Chapter II.

3. Journal, February 1946, p. 33; March 1946, p. 66.

The Government is faced with an inescapable dilemma. Production for export, especially of machinery, is a necessity of the situation. We cannot pay for what we import in food and raw materials without a very great expansion in the volume of our exports. Yet machinery that is sold abroad is urgently needed at home, particularly by the fuel and power industries.  
(4)

Tanner had voiced doubts about the validity of the policy of priority for the export of capital equipment in a letter to The Times a few months earlier.<sup>5</sup> Gardner did not express doubts or offer the Government advice in his editorial but merely pointed to the difficulty of the situation.

The only apparent solution was to try to increase production enough to meet the demands of the home and foreign markets. Gardner had already noted the necessity of this course of action and its impact on the way the engineer did his work. Both the TUC General Council and the Union's own EC, he reported, were calling for the "suspension of numerous workshop practices and customs to secure maximum output (in order to meet) the clamant needs for engineering products to renovate and expand our own national economy and to meet the urgent needs of the whole world".<sup>6</sup>

As Britain's economic plight worsened during 1947, international difficulties were seen to cut even closer to the bone. After the UK's retreat from its disastrous experiment with convertibility, Gardner wrote:

4. Journal, March 1947, p. 66.
5. The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5.
6. Journal, November 1946, p. 322.

Frankly, we are up against it now, in deadly earnest. We have to accept the consequences of our inability to buy food and raw materials freely from most countries that require to be paid in dollars....

So we are faced with the certainty that our imports of food from the United States and other dollar countries will have to be cut down; and, in fact, have been cut down. Reserve stocks of food cannot be drawn upon beyond a certain limit. Rations, therefore, will have to be cut.

Since, Gardner continued, there is a limit to how much rations can be cut, it is urgently necessary to increase exports, particularly of engineering products, in order to earn the dollars to pay for these vital imports.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to affecting what manufactures and food the worker could buy and what he could produce and how he was to produce it, Britain's international trading position could affect his earnings too. Thus in a sympathetic discussion of the TUC General Council's 1948 wage restraint policy, Gardner interpreted its arguments in the following manner. To cut Britain's trade deficit the country had to sell more abroad and to increase sales production had to increase while prices had to be competitive. "Increases in wages, unless accompanied by improvements in manufacturing methods, are necessarily a cause of prices going up."<sup>8</sup> In other words, the end of the international sellers' market,<sup>9</sup> long predicted and long feared by the Union leaders, meant that wage rises would have to be limited. Similar arguments were

7. Journal, September 1947, pp. 257-58.

8. Journal, April 1948, p. 98.

9. The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5.

used after the massive devaluation of sterling in the autumn of 1949, when Gardner again gave a sympathetic account of the General Council's<sup>10</sup> new wage restraint proposals.

Finally, to complete the picture of the problems the engineering worker faced as a result of Britain's international economic difficulties, Tanner pointed out that his very job could be affected if raw material imports had to be cut because Britain could not pay for them: the outcome would be "large-scale unemployment".<sup>11</sup> He made this point in the course of a discussion of the necessity of Marshall Aid.

In general, therefore, the impact of the outside world on the life of the British engineering worker was seen to be pernicious. It placed his job and his earnings in jeopardy, limited the food he could buy for himself and his family, as well as his general standard of living, and put pressure on him to change the way he worked. All this was seen to be the result of Britain's dependence on foreign sources of food and raw materials. Yet industrial Britain had long been dependent on foreign sources of supply and had still managed to prosper for a good deal of the time (or rather the British in aggregate had prospered; the condition of individuals and groups was another matter). The question that begged to be answered, therefore, was: Why had Britain's international economic situation become so difficult?

Oddly enough, the articles and statements by the AEU's leaders

---

10. Journal, December 1949, pp. 353-54.

11. RPNC, 1948, p. 215.

do not indicate that the question was at all obvious to them. Or perhaps they thought the answer too obvious to mention. In his March 1946 editorial, Gardner noted that British industry's main problems were "the manpower position", that is, the shortage of labour, "industry's immediately pressing needs", namely capital equipment, "the country's financial circumstances in relation to the American dollar loan, and the export-import situation".<sup>12</sup> This statement is suggestive but can hardly be called an analysis of the situation. In the spring of 1947, in a defence of the Labour Government and of the Union's links with the Party against Conservative and Liberal attacks, Gardner attributed the Government's economic and political setbacks to "the fuel and power crisis, the bad weather, the disturbed international outlook, and the divisions inside the counsels (sic) of the Allied Governments ...."<sup>13</sup> In an earlier editorial Gardner had noted that the fuel and power crisis was due to the need to supply capital equipment to foreign buyers at the expense of the domestic market, especially the coal and electricity supply industries.<sup>14</sup> Thus the country's problems were attributed, in the main, to factors beyond Britain's control: its dependence on foreign suppliers, acts of God and the relations among states. This theme was expanded and elaborated as the UK's difficulties were seen to impinge increasingly on the lives of the people.

12. Journal, March 1946, p. 65.

13. Journal, May 1947, p. 129.

14. Journal, March 1947, p. 66.

In an editorial published after the 1947 convertibility crisis, Gardner wrote:

The causes of the crisis are complex .... But the major decision taken by the Government to suspend the free exchange of currencies (which was a condition of) the Anglo-American Loan Agreement, emphasizes the salient fact --- that the United States, holding the whip hand, has used it to its own ultimate disadvantage, as well as to the detriment of the rest of the world. America has not yet learned what it means to be a creditor nation ....

The £937 million loan, Gardner continued, could not be used to buy food and raw materials, because it was almost all gone. The Government had not been prodigal with the money, but "other countries that earned net balances on trade with this country claimed payment from our reserves of dollars under the convertibility clause of the Anglo-American Loan Agreement." <sup>15</sup> The "they" upon whom Britain's troubles could be blamed was becoming more concrete and more definite.

Gardner's summary of the situation is striking, not only because the United States is saddled with the blame, but because he does not deem it necessary to ask, for example, why the loan was needed in the first place, what shortcomings it was supposed to make good. Also striking is what is included, the selection of information about the loan itself. The Americans are represented as mean creditors --- "holding the whip hand" --- who would suffer as a result of their own folly --- they use their position "to (their) own ultimate disadvantage" --- while "the British people ... learn ..., the hard way what it

---

15. Journal, September 1947, p. 257.

16

means to be in debt". Such statements may make gripping melodrama, but they do not constitute much of an explanation. Rather, they seem to be an attempt to evoke an emotional response from the members.

17

The US loan had never been popular in Britain. One of the AEU's sponsored MPs had commented, after the parliamentary debate on the loan and the associated Bretton Woods agreement, that the "general feeling" in the House of Commons was "that while the loan was necessary ... (it) bore few marks of generosity".

18

The problem was, apparently, that the loan was not the free grant that the British thought their due. The Americans were certainly guided by considerations of their own advantage in setting the terms for it, but, if Britain's expectations had not been so great, the terms might have appeared magnanimous. There was no interest to be paid on the \$3750 million loan for the first five years, and thereafter it was to be repaid over fifty years with interest at two per cent. Interest payments could be waived if Britain's economic difficulties were too great. Furthermore, \$20,000 million of British debts under Lend Lease were cancelled, while an additional \$6000 million of Lend Lease goods were sold to the UK for \$532 million. Goods already ordered or en route to Britain under the wartime agree-

19

20

16. Journal, September 1947, p. 257.
17. Northedge, Descent ..., p. 44.
18. Journal, January 1946, p. 10.
19. Northedge, Descent ..., p. 41.
20. Thomas G. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 159-73.

ment were also sold at a low price. To be sure, the fact that interest had to be paid meant that the debt repayment would hurt most in the early and, therefore, more difficult years, but, given the domestic political pressure in the United States, it was a remarkably generous arrangement.

There were, however, conditions attached to the loan, including the free convertibility of sterling. The UK also had to agree not to apply quotas to dollar imports, to dismantle the Imperial Preference system and, as a more general measure, to ratify the Bretton Woods agreement in order to stimulate world trade. These terms were based on American self-interest and unwarranted optimism about the speed of Britain's recovery. When, in reaction to the 1947 crisis, the British effectively reneged on their promise not to discriminate against American goods and coordinated their policies more closely with other Sterling Area countries, the Americans did not remind them of their earlier agreement. The probable "impurity" of the United States' motives does not detract from the fact that it was letting London off the hook.

Furthermore, although in the end the convertibility clause was to have a disastrous impact, it was not the only reason why the loan

21. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, p. 163.

22. Northedge, Descent ..., p. 41; Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, pp. 169-71.

23. See above pp. 49-51.

24. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, p. 163.

25. Strange, pp. 62-63.

ran out so quickly. Free convertibility may have been the coup de grâce, but the loan had been haemorrhaging badly even before it was instituted. British export earnings, impressive though their expansion had been, had not expanded enough. The fuel and power crisis of the winter of 1947 was another drain on reserves. "Occupation costs in Germany siphoned off considerable sums. Inflation in the United States meant that Britain had to pay more in dollars for American goods, and this further pinched British funds." Indeed, in the first half of 1947<sup>26</sup> the UK spent \$1450 of the loan. Crosland, looking back on the crisis from the peace of opposition, wrote that between July 1946, when the loan was first taken up, and August 1947, \$3350 million were spent.

Of this, \$2345 millions were required for net dollar expenditure by the U.K. (i.e. about 70 per cent); \$620 millions for the net dollar requirements of the (Sterling Area); while \$385 millions represented the conversion of sterling into dollars by third countries mainly in Europe. (27)

It hardly seems possible to sustain the image of ogre America or even of ignorant and unfeeling America that the AEU spokesman's discussion of the episode implies. The information just cited was freely available and freely reported and used by the Government's own<sup>28</sup> spokesmen in their explanations of events. One cannot deny that the

---

26. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, pp. 172-73.

27. Crosland, p. 70.

28. Crosland, for example, cites articles published in The Banker in the autumn of 1947; Crosland, p. 70. Much of the information could also be gleaned from Parliamentary debates, ministerial statements and press reports. All the following references are to 1947 issues of The Times: 1 July, p. 4; 9 July, pp. 4, 6; 16 July, p. 4; 17 July, p. 4; 23 July, p. 4; 25 July, p. 5; 30 July, p. 3; 2 August, p. 5; 5 August, p. 5; 7 August,

external reasons for the crisis were crucial, whether America was to blame or not. However, as even certain contemporary economists recognized, much of the fault lay not in the international setting but in Britain itself.<sup>29</sup> The growth in production was indeed great but was still inadequate in terms of the contry's needs, and this inadequacy had a long historical background. As we shall see, for a number of reasons it would have been impolitic to raise these issues at this time. Attacking the United States was, from this standpoint, an easy option.

Gardner returned to the subject of the source of Britain's difficulties later in the year, as the Government and the TUC General Council advanced policies of greater austerity, stricter rationing, more production for export, more manpower for high priority industries, longer working hours and price regulation. The General Secretary now refrained from casting blame on the United States, or indeed from making any specific statements at all beyond asserting that the crisis was not the Government's fault; "neither (did) it arise from any slackening of the great body of the working people. The crisis is world wide. No one country can solve it by unilateral action."<sup>30</sup> The reason for this change of emphasis is clear from the context of the statement: a discussion of the talks that were then being conducted in

---

p. 4; 8 August, p. 4; 21 August, p. 4; 22 August, p. 4;  
23 August, p. 4; 25 August, p. 4.

29. See, for example, Balogh, The Dollar Crisis, pp. xxiii-xxiv, 28-32; Hawtrey, pp. 98-105.

30. Journal, November 1947, p. 321.

Europe about the American proposals for what would become the European Recovery Programme. Since, as we shall see in Chapter VI, the Executive wished to ensure rank-and-file support for ERP, it would hardly have done to blame the potential donor for their troubles.

Gardner did not attempt a more detailed investigation of the problem until the following spring when the immediate threats and dangers were passed. In an editorial about the need for wage restraint, he pointed out that Britain used to be able to pay its own way in the world, buying food and raw materials abroad with the proceeds of its exported manufactures:

But even before the war we could not pay wholly for our imports by our exports. We made up the balance of overseas payments by our "invisible exports"....

Our "invisible" credit of hundreds of millions has turned into a deficit, through our forced sale of foreign investments, loss of shipping, reduction of earnings from financial and insurance business, and our heavy borrowing ....

The loss of these invisible earnings was due to the exigencies of the war. The consequent necessity of ensuring the competitiveness of British exports which now had to bear the burden of paying for imports, he pointed out, was the reason for the TUC and the Government's wages policy.<sup>31</sup> The reason for the inadequacy of British exports before the war was not something Gardner thought to dwell on.

In addition to the war there was another development beyond Britain's control which exacerbated an already difficult situation:

---

31. Journal, April 1948, p. 97.

the terms of trade had turned against British manufactures. The General Secretary told his readers that in 1947 Britain's "increased exports brought us only three-fourths of the amount of imports we obtained prewar. This was because prices for the goods we buy abroad have gone up against us."<sup>32</sup>

The former importance of invisibles would not have been news to regular readers of the Journal, since it had been pointed out by a contributor in the spring of 1947.<sup>33</sup> Nor should the worsening of the terms of trade have surprised attentive members of the British public. Government ministers had stressed that this was the prime cause of the American loan crisis.<sup>34</sup> The cause of Britain's woes could no longer be personified in the Americans, but it was still something external, something beyond the UK's control.

While Gardner had been more or less consistent in developing this line, pronouncements were less unbalanced. Nevertheless, for him too, the international setting was the major source of difficulties. In his first NC speech after VE-Day (but before the General Election), Tanner rejected the arguments of those who claimed "that Britain can only hope to regain her export trade at the expense of wage cuts and a reduced standard of living at home". He pointed out

---

32. Journal, April 1948, p. 97.

33. Journal, May 1947, p. 143.

34. See above, this chapter, footnote 28.

that "only the poor organisation, our obsolete and inefficient plant, our out-of-date methods give rise to the high price of British raw materials which go into our finished products for export". This situation could be remedied by the removal of the "monopoly strangle-<sup>35</sup> holds" on the basic industries like coal, iron and steel. Britain's trade difficulties, therefore, would seem to derive not from any external factors but from internal ones: from the system of ownership ---not of all industry but certainly of a part of it. It was again in a discussion of the members' wages that Tanner noted the following year that "Production suffers if industrial organisation and equipment is (sic) poor and antiquated."<sup>36</sup> Thus, when defending the Union's wage claim or, more generally, the members' right to a living wage, in a context in which the contradiction between the interests of the workers and the employers was clear and unavoidable, the President could respond to the employers' arguments by pointing out, implicitly or explicitly, that they were to blame for Britain's troubles since they were responsible for the organization and equipment of industry. It would be wrong, therefore, to ask the workers to pay for the employers' shortcomings by cuts in their standard of living.

As Tanner came to accept the relevance of wage restraint, however, he no longer had any interest in making debating points in this way, and he came to adopt a line similar to the one that Gardner had

---

35. RFNC, 1945, p. 221.

36. RFNC, 1946, p. 211.

been propagating, again largely in the context of discussions of the need for wage restraint. As early as the summer of 1947, before the convertibility crisis broke, Tanner moved to the external-forces argument. He told the NC:

we have less positive financial and economic influence abroad, at the present time when the success of our national plan is increasingly dependent on the policies and prosperity of other countries. (Our) economic rehabilitation depends ... on foreign conditions. (37)

The following year he carried the argument even further, after a hurried genuflection in the direction of the internal sources of Britain's problems. He told the National Committee that the "recent war ... precipitated the present crisis in our affairs, (but) we have been drifting towards it for years". It was not only the two world wars but "the mismanagement between them" which "lost us a large part of our former influence in world affairs, and in the world's markets".<sup>38</sup> He did not elaborate, however, on this theme of mismanagement or on the relationship between "influence in world affairs, and in the world's markets", that is, between political and economic relations. Instead, he listed the external factors involved, most of which Gardner had already dealt with: the loss of income from invisible exports, the cost of political and military commitments abroad and the deterioration in the terms of trade, all brought about by the war. It was, therefore,<sup>39</sup> vital, he argued, that Britain join Europe in accepting Marshall Aid.

37. RPNC, 1947, pp. 261-62.

38. RPNC, 1948, p. 213.

39. RPNC, 1948, pp. 214-15.

A few months later, in a special article for the Journal, he rehearsed these points, omitting, however, any mention of domestic mismanagement. He stressed the worsening of the terms of trade as a result of the global increase in demand for food and raw materials in war-ravaged Europe and among the "backward peoples" of the developing world. Consequently, other "countries are no longer forced to send us their products at any old price". Britain could "no longer dictate the terms of trade and obtain cheap food and raw materials in return for expensive machinery and manufactured goods". Tanner stressed these national difficulties in order to persuade the members to accept the unsatisfactory award decision of a Court of Inquiry on the new collective agreement with the Employers' Federation. National circumstances made it necessary for the membership to acquiesce in the award and not to allow their dissatisfaction to be exploited "by outside interests (trying) to incite our members to fall back on direct  
40  
action".

It was in the context of an explicit plea to the members to show restraint in their wage demands that, in the summer of 1949, Tanner laid even greater emphasis on uncontrollable external factors as the cause of the UK's problems.

Our national resources are dependent on world conditions ....

We are dependent on foreign supplies for most of our necessities. (The deterioration in the terms of trade) is a

---

40. Journal, October 1948, p. 304.

situation of which we have little control .... (There) is little we can do to compel other countries to change their views or their ways (with regard to raw material prices).

(We) do not control world conditions and cannot, therefore, promise freedom from emergencies and crises. (41)

While Tanner refrained from erecting any particular non-British actor into the source of the UK's economic woes, Gardner returned to the American theme in the autumn of 1949:

Our problem is to a very considerable extent the problem created by America's economic and political unreadiness to act internationally as this country acted when its industries were producing for the world market, when its capital resources were available for large-scale capital investment abroad and its financial and shipping services were on a scale that added enormously to the balancing of its trade. (42)

It is obvious that America is being blamed for doing, or rather not doing, something. The precise nature of its sins are unclear, however. After all, the US was giving Britain and the rest of western Europe substantial aid under the ERP and was investing considerable sums there too. Much of its production was directed to overseas markets, <sup>43</sup> and, since the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, it had assumed responsibility for some of the UK's overseas commitments. Neither its motives nor its actions can be said to have been any more or less virtuous than Britain's in its days of glory, so Gardner's statement seems, on the face of it, absurd. Nevertheless, Gardner charged much "of the trouble in the world to-day" to

41. RFNC, 1949, pp. 242-43. Emphasis in the original.

42. Journal, October 1949, p. 290.

43. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, p. 6 and 6n.

this change in the relative position of this country and other highly industrialised countries. The changes themselves can be traced mainly to the direct effects of the war on our economy. Some of the difficulties, however, were and still are, a reflection of the changing pattern of world trade. (44)

One can argue about the importance of the direct effects of the war, but otherwise these last statements are acceptable enough. They do little to clarify the attack on the United States, however.

Again the context of the discussion is important. These remarks occur in an article --- interested but sceptical in tone --- about production methods and productivity in the United States. Indeed, Gardner's argument is that, because so much of Britain and the world's problems are due to external factors, lessons about American production methods are of limited value. The acerbic comments about the United States thus are meant to underline the point that it has little to teach the rest of the world. British national amour propre was closely involved in this and, as we shall see later, other expressions of belittlement of the experience of others. The outcome, in any case, is an argument in which the war, the United States and the changing patterns of trade are deemed responsible for Britain's decline, which has in turn been detrimental to the whole world.

In late 1948 another international factor came to be included in the concatenation of elements affecting economic conditions in the UK: the growing political and military tensions between the Soviet

---

44. Journal, October 1949, p. 290.

Union and its erstwhile allies to the west. Despite the importance which the AEU attached to trade with eastern Europe,<sup>45</sup> the EC's spokesmen did not discuss the manner in which the division of Europe hindered trade and reconstruction during the period under review. Instead, they dealt with the direct impact of East-West tensions on the allocation of resources in Britain itself, that is, with the allocation of workers, money, goods and services within the country between consumer and capital goods manufacture, exports and imports and armaments and social welfare. What is most striking about their discussion of these factors, however, is that the attitudes expressed by the AEU spokesmen were rather more ambiguous than those regarding the international system in general.

The increased level of conflict between East and West was marked by the British Government's embarkation on a rearmament programme in the late summer of 1948. On 14 September Herbert Morrison, the Lord President of the Council, told Parliament of the Cabinet's "decision on measures to strengthen the Armed Forces in view of the deteriorated world situation". Members of the armed services due for release were to serve an extra three months while recruitment was accelerated and the Civil Defence forces were reorganized. Furthermore, the "improvement of the equipment position, especially in the fields of air defence, armour and infantry weapons would be accelerated". The wartime stocks that the forces still relied on "were becoming depleted

---

<sup>45</sup>. See below Chapter VI-A.

and partly obsolete". The repair and renovation of these stocks was being speeded up, "and the Service and Supply (Departments) were increasing their manpower for this purpose". Aircraft were to be an important element in the programme. In this regard, Britain

had to meet not only (its) own production needs, but also those of other countries, including the members of the Western Union, who were using British types. Extra work would be required in some factories and measures would be adopted to double the present rate of output of certain fighters, whilst older types of fighters in store would be reconditioned. (46)

In his first editorial to appear after this statement, Gardner summarized these points and clarified their implications for the members of the AEU. The lead-in to this discussion was a review of the findings of the 1948 Court of Inquiry and the consequent debate within the Union of the Court's recommendations. The Union, he said, might not have gained much for its members in material terms, but it had made important procedural advances and was establishing a way of working within the system to achieve its ends. More specifically, it had "gained the advantage of being able to press for the improvement of the wages structure of our industry in a constitutional, orderly and practical way --- as a strong and responsible body of organized workers should do, in these difficult and dangerous times".<sup>47</sup> In the circumstances, this was the best way open to the Union, and there was no place for organizational indiscipline and militancy, for the "direct action"<sup>48</sup> that Tanner warned against in the same issue.

46. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 7 (11-18 September 1948), 9504.

47. Journal, October 1948, p. 290.

He pointed out that the cessation of demobilization and the acceleration of recruitment would have "a considerable effect upon our manpower problem", that it would exacerbate the labour shortage in certain industries. A new Schedule of Reserved Occupations, that is, of workers not subject to conscription, would have to be drawn up. This would ensure, on the one hand, that essential industries did not run short of workers and, on the other, that many members of the AEU would be spared the necessity of doing National Service.

The need to manufacture more armaments, Gardner told his readers,

involves inevitably a diversion of some of the nation's resources from the recovery programme; it means that a good deal of America's economic aid will be similarly diverted; and as a consequence it seems that the re-equipment of British industry for production to meet consumers' needs will be slowed down or temporarily halted again.

Nevertheless, amid the gloom, Gardner could point to one bright spot: there would be no need to worry about unemployment "since the recovery programme combined with rearmament and remobilisation must of necessity make more work than the workers available are able to do." The overall effects could not be good, however, "for the national economy cannot stand that kind of stimulus, since it will seriously intensify the current distortions and dislocations." <sup>49</sup> These statements by the General Secretary are an implicit recognition, very rare in the period of the "national" line, that the interests of the workers

---

48. See above p. 214.

49. Journal, October 1948, p. 290.

and of the national economy as a whole might not always coincide.

In relation to the first part of his editorial, Gardner's discussion seems a rather peculiar attempt to use the tensions between the Great Powers and the concomitant rearmament policy as both carrot and stick; as a warning to the membership that "difficulties and dangers" make it all the more important to maintain discipline and as an indication that since they need not fear for their jobs, direct action was out of place.

This theme faded from consideration in the two years that followed because there were no major new departures in Britain's rearmament programme during that period. <sup>50</sup> Indeed, in October 1949 cuts of £30 million in defence spending were announced in the wake of the devaluation crisis. <sup>51</sup> Opposition to military expenditure did attract some support among some members of the Labour Party and other groups. There was, in addition, a campaign under the aegis of the World Peace Committee, concerned principally with atomic weapons. <sup>52</sup> It was against this backdrop that a number of "peace" resolutions found their way on to the 1950 National Committee agenda.

These resolutions were probably in Tanner's mind when he conducted his survey of developments "in the international sphere"

- 
50. Although on the diplomatic level military planning had culminated in the establishment of NATO.
51. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 7 (22-29 October 1949), 10297-98.
52. The Times, 23 August 1949, p. 2; 24 October 1949, p. 2; Journal, August 1950, p. 230.

during his opening statement to the NC. The survey was an attack on Soviet policy which, he said, was an important factor in the level of international tension. He argued:

The result is that enormous sums are now being spent in every country on armaments. This is a most tragic situation, for this expenditure can be ill-afforded and is one of the chief hindrances to economic recovery and standards of life everywhere --- including the Soviet Union. We can but hope that some agreement will yet be reached which will lead to the international control of atomic energy and a vast reduction in the defence expenditure of all countries. (53)

He thus sought to undercut the peace campaigners' attacks on the British Government's arms and military policies. Tanner was saying, in effect, that although rearmament is a bad thing, Britain alone can do nothing about it. The National Committee apparently agreed and passed two resolutions, one calling for international disarmament negotiations, the other congratulating the Labour Government for its contribution to the "efforts to end the danger of atomic warfare".<sup>54</sup> Tanner himself seems to have been voicing little more than the conventional pieties, rather than any serious concern for the effects of rearmament, which had not, after all, been as great as expected --- yet.

The Korean War, which broke out less than a fortnight after Tanner made this speech, changed all that. "A rapid and sweeping build-up of the armaments of the United Nations has to be undertaken",

53. RPNC, 1950, p. 239.

54. Journal, August 1950, pp. 241-42.

Gardner wrote, and the "position of the Unions in our group of trades will be deeply affected by large-scale industrial mobilisation". A new Schedule of Reserved Occupations might be introduced, but, given the lack of any major pool of unemployed, the supply of manpower to the armaments industry would be more difficult. Furthermore, JFCs would have to be developed "on a more effective scale than in the last war war".<sup>55</sup> Gardner did not question the need for rearmament, and he pointed out that, although it would create difficulties, it would also present the Union and the workers with opportunities which they might exploit for their own benefit.

The emphasis on the opportunities offered by rearmament was evident in Gardner's editorials. "None of the Unions will be left untouched by the measures the Government is taking to meet the possibility of general war resulting from the conflict of arms in Korea." Again he stressed the importance of developing "the consultative and advisory machinery for industry". It will be recalled that, about this same time, the CSEU was elaborating its plans for greater involvement by the unions, particularly at the executive level, in the decisions of the employers. Given the experience of the Second World War, the outbreak of war in Asia must have seemed to the leaders an opportunity for advancing the interests of their organizations.

Gardner could not deny, however, that there were drawbacks to rearmament. Some "of the country's limited resources" would have to be

---

55. Journal, August 1950, p. 229.

diverted from the recovery programme.

The full effects of this diversion will not be felt immediately. But the more we spend on preparations for war, the less will there be available for developing the Welfare State. On the other hand, we may find some consolation in recognising that a goodly proportion of the £3,400,000,000 it is proposed to spend will go in wages and salaries. Raw materials must be sought, munitions must be manufactured, transport must be provided --- and all this means employment and employment means wages. (56)

The phrasing and style suggest that Gardner could indeed find some consolation in this. Given what we have learned of the operational objectives and priorities of the AEU leadership, it is hardly surprising that this should be the case. The Union was "about" jobs and wages more than it was "about" anything else. However, given the formal and oft-expressed concern for socialist values and the perceptions of the strength of the communists and their allies in the Union itself, displays of enthusiasm for rearmament would have to be tempered and the evil effects of the process would have to be given some prominence.

It was the negative attitude that prevailed in subsequent statements, especially following the January 1951 upward revision of the defence estimates for 1951-54 to £4,700,000,000. Insofar as the programme caused disquiet among the AEU leadership, it was the scale rather than the fact of rearmament that did so. There were, however, no demands for unilateral cuts in spending, and the Executive spokesmen

---

56. Journal, September 1950, p. 261. It was announced on 12 September 1950, after this editorial appeared, that £3,600,000,000 would be spent over 1951-54; Eatwell, p. 140.

concentrated on ways of overcoming the difficulties it entailed. For difficulties there were. Nevertheless, Gardner, in particular, refrained from attributing the problems to the rearmament programme itself; rather, it was economic circumstances that often seemed to be making rearmament harder. Thus, in February 1951, Gardner wrote that industry faced "serious problems" in its attempts to cope with "the task of rearmament".

One is the (shortage) of manpower (in the war-related industries); another is the shortage of essential raw materials; the third is the shortage of fuel and power supplies; and there is a fourth, which is conditioned by these shortages --- namely, the question of priorities as between the essential and less essential needs of the situation. (57)

These were fundamentally the same points as those the General Secretary had raised in his discussion of the comparatively small rearmament programme of 1948. Gardner stressed that these problems, in fact, were soluble. Once the NATO and OEEC talks --- which were then being conducted "for setting up international commodity groups to deal with raw material problems" --- were completed and other measures were taken domestically, these difficulties would be overcome and the "relatively <sup>58</sup> small and scattered pools of unemployment" would be absorbed as well.

It was again with ways of removing the impediments to the rearmament programme that Gardner dealt in his next statement on the subject. The projected increase of expenditure to £4,700,000,000 for

57. Journal, February 1951, p. 33.

58. Journal, February 1951, p. 34.

three years, "not counting what must be spent for stockpiling food and raw materials", drew no other comment than that a "very large proportion of these vast sums ... will affect mainly our own group of trades".

Sections of the industry, especially those producing aircraft, vehicles, radio and radar equipment, and machine tools will have to be turned over progressively to arms production, and therefore those sections now engaged in producing goods for current consumption will have to take some of the strain of producing components and the like .... They will also have to expand exports, as some other industries, too, such as textiles, will be called upon to do. Obviously, the sections of our industry that are concentrated upon arms production cannot also be producing for export: so the rest of industry must do this. (59)

In other words, the capital goods production of heavy engineering firms would have to yield to arms production. The manufacturers of light-engineering consumer goods and of other products would have to do some munitions work too and direct their consumer products to the export market. Provided one can get through Gardner's nicely understated formulations, the implications are clear: there would be few capital or consumer goods for the domestic market.

Even after the 1951 Budget resulted in cuts in the Health Services and three ministerial resignations, Gardner understated the impact of defence spending on conditions of employment and standards of living. He was critical of the resignations but sympathetic to the ex-Ministers' criticisms of the effect of the defence estimates on the "economy". The "solid ground" of their argument, he said, was the

---

59. Journal, March 1951, p. 65.

contention that "the immense amount of money provided for the defence programme cannot be spent without wasteful, extravagant and futile attempts to buy raw materials and essential equipment which is simply not available".<sup>60</sup> Nowhere, however, did Gardner say that the introduction of prescription charges was due to the size of the defence budget. Perhaps he thought it obvious, or perhaps he did not want to make it too clear. After all, guns did signify jobs and wages, and when weighed against the social services, greater importance was attached to the former.

Rising prices, one of the principal factors in the trade unions' inability to maintain the policy of wage restraint (as Gardner pointed out<sup>61</sup>), were again to become the focus of interest in 1951. Once again, it was Britain's reliance on imported food and raw materials, its status as a trading nation, which made it so vulnerable to the western nations' rearmament policies. The General Secretary wrote of the reflection of the rise in "world prices for both raw materials and food ... in this country's wholesale prices" and of the consequent "necessity ... for a return to the wartime system of international commodity controls ... in view of the situation arising among the countries that are building up a concerted system of defence for the free world." Again there is an understatement of the link between military spending and the raw materials scramble by the western

---

60. Journal, May 1951, pp. 129-30.

61. Journal, July 1951, p. 193.

countries, especially by the United States. Any doubts about the worthiness of the enterprise are dismissed by pointing out its essential nobility, as "defence for the free world".<sup>62</sup>

Tanner, in his 1951 National Committee address, offered stronger criticism of the programme. Again, however, it was with the scale not the fact of rearmament itself that he found fault. He pointed to the deterioration in the economy over the preceding year, to the fading "hopes of steady improvement in our standard of living", and ascribed it to "the marked deterioration in the international situation". The tensions between the Great Powers, which were due to Soviet policy, were the cause of and justification for western rearmament. He was, however, worried by the "scale and tempo" of the British plans. He maintained that Britain's "economic stability" and capacity to "continue the great social advance" set in motion by Labour were threatened by the massive allocations to the arms build-up. This threat was bad not only in itself, but because improvements in the British people's standard of living and the UK's ability to offer aid to "peoples who are at a lower stage of development than ourselves brings support to our cause and is a deterrent to attack." The cuts in the Health Service as a result of the defence programme were consequently to be deplored. Living standards were also being eroded by the rise in prices as a result of the growing demand for raw materials by all

---

62. Journal, July 1951, pp. 193-94.

states, especially the USA.

The criticisms are clear and straightforward, unusually so when compared with Gardner's, but the prescriptions Tanner offered for resolving these problems are singularly muted. The £13 million gained through Health Service charges could have been raised through taxation, he said. The US could continue its subsidies for arms and equipment. The unions could help to raise productivity and to channel manpower to the essential arms and export industries. There is no demand for cuts in the defence estimates.<sup>63</sup> It might be argued that the demand is implicit, indeed obvious, in the argument. Given that the President does list the things that ought to be done, however, the omission is glaring and indicates a certain ambivalence in Tanner's attitude. The leaders' ambivalence is even more strikingly apparent in another of Gardner's editorials in which he attacked the "Bevanite" arguments for defence cuts and quoted approvingly Gaitskell's denial of any link between price increases and Britain's arms programme.<sup>64</sup>

It was only in September 1951, in a criticism of the TUC General Council's inability to offer any guidance on the question of wages and inflation (that is, its refusal to suggest further wage restraint), that one of the negative effects of rearmament was stated clearly and concisely. Gardner condemned the TUC statement "that a fall in the standard of living in the circumstances created by rearmament and

---

63. RPNC, 1951, pp. 284-85.

64. Journal, August 1951, p. 226.

rising world prices can only be countered by increased production" as platitudinous --- "almost a cliché". On the contrary, he argued, there is simply no way of improving living standards because rearmament "requires a large and increasing diversion of labour, raw materials, and equipment for production for the home market, of goods and services which contribute to our present standard of living". Little "increased production of consumer goods" is possible "for the next three years".<sup>65</sup>

Gardner did not, therefore, conclude that the arms programme be cut. He accepted it as a given of the situation. Unrestrained wage claims were his target, and he spoke of the Government's ability to keep prices in check, and of the potential value of increased taxes on profits, a capital gains tax and the limitation of dividends. Such measures would indicate that all classes were sharing in the burden and would make wage restraint more palatable. In this wage-restraint context, Gardner's statement about the impact of rearmament on consumer goods production may have been intended to imply that there was little sense in higher wages when there was little to spend them on and, perhaps, that any wage rises would simply drive prices even higher.

In general, the negative impact of international political tension on the workers' conditions of employment and standard of living through rearmament was presented in a rather muted fashion by Gardner and (albeit differently) by Tanner. Gardner tended to understate or even to deny the bad effects. Tanner pointed to the effects but

---

65. Journal, September 1951, p. 257.

concluded that they were something the members must adjust to rather than something to be eradicated by cutting defence spending. For both such expenditure was inevitable given the nature of international political tensions, tensions which, it was emphasized, were in no small measure due to Soviet policies.

The differences between Gardner's and Tanner's discussions of the issue may have been due to the latter's more radical background before becoming President.<sup>66</sup> As we have seen, however, the general policy line that he espoused during this period was hardly radical. It is more likely that the differences were due to differences in the medium and the audience they had to deal with. The nature of the NC and its membership<sup>67</sup> meant that if Tanner had not raised these points someone else would have. By presenting them himself, he could put them in the best possible light and draw the most limited conclusions. By accepting some of the opposition's arguments he could cut the ground from under them. Gardner, who did not have to worry about immediate responses to his statement by third parties (that is, someone other than the reader), did not have to make the same sort of concessions as Tanner.

The reason for this generally muted reaction is apparently that rearmament was not only unavoidable but desirable. The leadership's support for the build-up is evident in their concern to resolve the

---

66. See above Chapter IV-A.

67. See above Chapter III-B-3.

problems entailed in realizing it. Of course, the long-maintained organizational habit of trying to cope with reality rather than to change may have helped make this the easier response. Patriotism may well have contributed to this attitude as well. The fact that it was Labour Government policy also may have been an important consideration; the return of the Conservatives to power did nothing to temper the Executive's support for the policy, however. It seems that, as in the case of wage restraint, if the Labour leaders were persuasive, the Union's leaders were eminently persuasible. For, apart from any nationalistic considerations, the policy ensured the maintenance of the policy of full employment in the engineering industry, and that was, after all, the Executive's fundamental and overwhelming concern. The point about jobs had been made in Gardner's earlier statements on the issue, but --- for internal political and ideological reasons --- had disappeared from public consideration. In the circumstances, the leadership adopted the safest public attitude: they criticized the scale of the programme but refused to question its necessity.

One can understand the leadership's willingness to risk a secondary concern like the welfare state. It seems odd, however, that they should accept putting at risk the whole policy of reconstruction, intended to ensure employment in the short and long term, by supporting a rearmament policy that could promise, at best, only short-term

---

68. RPNC, 1952, p. 264.

advantages. The AEU Executive, on the other hand, may have reckoned that staying out of the rearmament race presented greater short and medium term dangers than staying in. As we have seen, they recognized Britain's dependence on foreign markets and recognized too the global inflationary situation engendered in part by the raw materials scramble. What sort of market for its exports could Britain have had in such circumstances, assuming that it could outbid the Americans for raw materials? What effect would low demand have on British engineering jobs? In these circumstances, a rearmament programme that would take up the slack demand may well have seemed the most logical course to follow.

The falling expenditure on many kinds of consumer goods in the United States during at least the first part of the Korean War indicate<sup>69</sup> that such calculations, if they were made, were not far wrong. Moreover, during the latter part of 1950 and the beginning of 1951, there was a continuous rise in the number of unemployed in the UK. In general, however, the metals, engineering and shipbuilding industries, which were the main beneficiaries of the rearmament programme, ran<sup>70</sup> counter to this trend as employment in them increased.

Gardner's mixed response to the 1948 rearmament programme can perhaps be understood in a similar way. At the time Britain's own

---

69. See H. S. Houthakker and Lester D. Taylor, Consumer Demand in the United States: Analyses and Projections, second edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970), pp. 61-144.

70. Central Statistical Office, Monthly Digest of Statistics, 72 (1951), Table 25, p. 18; Table 28, p. 21.

prosperity depended on that of the United States, through Marshall Aid. There were, however, continued and widespread apprehensions among members of the Labour Left and among trade unionists that the American bubble would burst, that America would crash into another depression and drag its dependents down with it. <sup>71</sup> From this standpoint, rearmament could be seen as a form of insurance and therefore desirable despite the difficulties it entailed.

Finally, the prospect of an industrial war effort conjured up for the leadership the image of opportunities for the organization to expand its influence in industry and in the wider society. This, after all, had been the experience of the war just ended.

While these factors may have tended to bolster support for rearmament, others introduced an element of ambiguity. The Union's formal and, as we saw, oft-verbalized social transformation goals, and the leadership's wish to undercut the arguments of the internal opposition and, on one occasion, the usefulness of the argument to the discussion of wage restraint --- these factors led the Executive's spokesmen to play down the positive aspects and to criticize the build-up. It was, in many ways, a symbolic response which relieved the leadership of the need to take any undesirable action --- like non-cooperation, for example.

---

71. Leon D. Epstein, Britain---Uneasy Ally (Chicago, 1954), pp. 104-05.

Thus, for a variety of reasons, the image that emerged from these discussions and explanations of Britain's economic decline and difficulties in the postwar world was one of a country buffeted by the uncontrollable winds of fortune, winds which came almost invariably from outside the United Kingdom. Even when an attempt was made to de-emphasize one foreign source of problems (international political tensions), another (world prices) arose to take its place. There were occasional references to "mismanagement between the wars" or "the employing classes'" unwillingness to accept lower profit margins.<sup>72</sup> From time to time, in the course of discussions about the nationalization of a specific industry, bad management and restraint of production<sup>73</sup> by the employers were blamed for the industry's difficulties. The problems of the economy as a whole, however, were attributed to the effects of the wars, world prices, international tensions and so on: The AEU leadership thus ascribed Britain's industrial and trade difficulties and their consequences for the life and livelihood of the British worker to external factors, to developments beyond the control of the British government and people.

Indeed, it seems to have been important to them to assign the blame for Britain's parlous state to non-British actors and forces. It is impossible, of course, to deny the importance of external factors in

72. RPNC, 1950, p. 236.

73. Journal, May 1946, pp. 129-30; July 1947, p. 193; August 1947, p. 225; November 1948, pp. 321-22; August 1949, p. 226.

the UK's economic problems, but it is significant that the Executive's spokesmen should stress them while de-emphasizing the problems' domestic roots, of which they were clearly aware. Tanner had acknowledged, after all, that Britain had been "drifting" towards the economic crisis "for years" and had pointed to interwar "mismanagement" and to "poor and antiquated" equipment and organization. There is, moreover, implicit acknowledgement of the domestic sources of the problem in the discussions of proposed solutions; as we shall see, most deal with domestic matters. Implicit in positing solutions based on increased productivity and production, the suspension of restrictive practices and the introduction of more up-to-date and simply more mechanization is an awareness that low production and productivity, restrictive practices and mechanization were part of the problem.

The tendency to stress foreign causes seems to have derived from a number of factors. One of these was the specific context of the statements. This is clear, for example, in the case of some of Gardner's statements which defended the Labour Government from attacks by the Conservatives and others, as in the aftermath of the convertibility crisis.<sup>74</sup> Tanner, in his arguments for wage increases, could blame employer incompetence for industrial difficulties, but when he pleaded for wage restraint, the causes were "denaturalized".<sup>75</sup> Evidently, therefore, the image projected of Britain's relationship with the

---

74. Journal, May 1947, p. 129; September 1947, p. 257.

75. See above pp. 211-16.

outside world was not part of a well thought-out plan, of a special concern to project this image and not another. Rather, in the course of arguments about other matters important to the Union, ammunition was drawn from wherever possible. There was, thus, a certain haphazardness about the arguments, resulting in inconsistencies and discontinuities. It is all the more striking, therefore, that the inconsistencies were so limited, that there was so little tendency to blame domestic actors and forces for current problems, even when it was the Labour Party that was being defended.

The major exceptions to this tendency occurred in the run-up to elections or when elections were expected. Then the interwar sins of the Conservative Party and the hardships they caused were recounted and rehearsed. Even here, however, there was a peculiar development. In 1945 the links between the Conservatives and the employing classes and their common responsibility for the woes and disasters of the 1920s and 1930s were made explicit.<sup>76</sup> Later the Tories were still blamed, but they were now presented as an almost totally deracinated grouping, whose social base and the class basis of whose policies were hardly mentioned.<sup>77</sup> The denial or disregard for the class basis of British political and economic relationships was reflected elsewhere, most notably in the explanations of the causes of Britain's current difficul-

75. RPNC, 1945, pp. 218-19.

76. Journal, August 1949, p. 226; July 1950, p. 198; November 1950, p. 326; October 1951, pp. 290 and 292.

ties. Indeed the attribution of difficulties to external forces during the postwar period seems to have been a substitute for the class-based explanations of the interwar years.

Even at the height of the global depression, the international roots of the UK's economic problems were minimized: if British engineering was uncompetitive, the AEU's leaders would claim, it was the fault of the employers. The perceived causes of the problems of Britain's engineering industry are evident from the following summary of suggested improvements made in 1931 by the President of the AEU, W. H. Hutchinson: "It is ... in financial reorganization, in the saving of capital charges, in the rationalising of directors, in the administrative efficiency of the industry ... that the engineering employers have the greatest opportunity of helping the industry back to prosperity."<sup>78</sup>

In the early part of the war Tanner and the General Secretary, Fred Smith, continued this theme of blaming the employers and the Tory Government for the difficulties and shortcomings of British industry in the war effort. Thus, after the swift defeat of British, Commonwealth and Greek forces on Crete by an airborne German assault, Tanner charged:

The retreat from Crete ... had its roots in the mismanagement on the home front. (We) have a right to expect that if we make our utmost efforts to produce munitions, those efforts shall not be turned to nought by a group of incompetents.... We repudiate any responsibility for delays and checks in production. The fault lies with the Government and the employers. (79)

78. Journal, August 1931, p. 56. See also: February 1924, p. 56; March 1924, p. 46; June 1924, pp. 9-11, 45; July 1924, p. 46;

As the system of consultation developed during the war, however, changes occurred. Tanner never entirely repudiated the theme of "those who, in their own financial interests, still impede production",<sup>80</sup> but now he differentiated between good capitalists and bad capitalists, between those willing to cooperate with the workers in order to improve war production and "the obstructive kind of management". Tanner now argued that many of the production difficulties were due to the "improvisational" nature of the industrial war effort, "and the uneasy feeling that we have not developed our full productive capacity has had its effects on managements as well as men".<sup>81</sup>

At the same time Tanner began to speak of a new postwar role for the trade unions; it was, in fact, at this point that the Union leadership embraced the "national" line.<sup>82</sup> "In the past", Tanner told the assembled National Committee delegates in 1942,

Trade Unions have mainly been protective and defensive organisations, and in regard to many matters, quite negative. We must become more positive and constructive in our outlook and approach to the issues now confronting us and those that will arise in the future.

If we are to stand still, deeply entrenched behind our traditional rights and ... traditional grievances, while history is marching forward at a terrifying pace, overturning as it goes all the accepted social, political and technical

---

February 1925, pp. 12-13; March 1925, p. 16; April 1925, p. 47; June 1925, p. 48; December 1925, pp. 13-14; January 1931, pp. 35-38; August 1931, p. 44; January 1932, pp. 39-40; May 1932, p. 29.

79. RPNC, 1941, p. 227; compare Journal, June 1940, p. 194; February 1942, p. 33.

80. RPNC, 1942, p. 291.

81. RPNC, 1942, p. 291.

ways to which we are accustomed --- causing Tory Governments to conclude alliances with a Socialist State, upsetting all preconceived ideas and changing, less perceptibly, perhaps, the methods of production on which we base ourselves --- if we were to stand still we would not be left to play a decisive part after the war, but would be swept aside.

The enemy, Tanner said in a vein more populist than socialist, would then be the "powerful vested interests", the "great monopolists" who seek "enormous and destructive powers ... in what they claim to be the National interests of post-war Britain, but which would actually be harmful to the country".

Tanner's 1942 National Committee speech marks the public turning point in the development of the leadership's attitudes to cooperation with the employers and lays the groundwork for the "national" line. It is noteworthy, that, in the same month that the President gave notice of the new departure in Union policy, the General Secretary published an editorial summarizing the progressive views of a number of capitalists --- the chairman of Courtaulds, the Federation of British Industry and the London Chamber of Commerce.

The "national" line was developed through the war as the leaders followed the path of collaboration with the "progressive" employers. The "monopolists" and "monopoly capitalism" were attacked, but Tanner also spoke of "going forward ... in co-operation with the democratically-minded managements".

---

82. See above Chapter III-A-1.

83. RPNC, 1942, pp. 299-301.

84. Journal, June 1942, pp. 145-46.

85. RPNC, 1943, p. 221, 217.

the attacks became more explicit, but, as the General Election approached, it was the Conservative Party, with its base among the capitalists, which was portrayed as the arch-villain. <sup>86</sup> These attacks subsided again after the war. Talk of progressive capitalists and obstructive capitalists vanished. All employers were now people to be cooperated with in pursuit of the greater good of the nation as a whole; the "national" line had reached maturity.

The pursuit of the "national" policy had to be based on the assumption that the specific objectives pursued were shared by those with whom one collaborated. The goodwill of the Labour Government could be taken for granted, even though it might go about things in the wrong way from time to time. The question of the employers' goodwill could have presented certain public relations difficulties: How could one cooperate with those who, it had always been claimed, were the cause of so much hardship and so many problems? During the war the solution had been to preach that there were good capitalists as well as bad ones, that many employers had seen the light and been converted. In the postwar period the solution was to suppress or minimize the issue of employer responsibility for current problems and to focus instead on external causes. By locating the "enemies" of economic recovery and social progress outside the country, short-term collaboration with the employers could be justified on the grounds of a convergence, if not a

---

86. RPNC, 1944, p. 252; RPNC, 1945, pp. 218-19.

congruence, of interests. By disregarding the role of the owners and employers in bringing about the current difficulties, a basis could be established for longer term cooperation. The Executive's spokesmen, in effect, were denying the reality of a conflict of interests between workers and employers and, consequently, denying the relevance of more radical policies.

The location of the source of Britain's economic difficulties abroad served to divert attention not only from more radical analyses of the role of the employers but also from more traditional analyses of the role of the Union and its responsibility for the condition of the British engineering industry. The basic inefficiencies and uncompetitiveness of the industry could certainly be traced to the employers' incompetence, but the Union's own policies had not helped either. Tanner's 1942 statement about the need to forsake "traditional grievances" indicates that he knew this; the suggested solutions to the problem show that the leadership was generally aware of it. <sup>87</sup> The AEU's interwar policy of non-cooperation, justifiable at the time as a means of saving jobs, could not but have contributed to the industry's long-term shortcomings, and so could not be justified in terms of the post-war <sup>88</sup> "national" outlook. The earlier attitude and these policies were best forgotten as the Union advanced into the new age. By providing the

---

87. See below Chapter VI.

88. See above pp. 76-78. On the resistance to mechanization between the wars see, for example, Jefferys, pp. 245-46; V. L. Allen, Trade Unions and the Government (London, 1960), p. 280.

members with a contemporary external enemy, the Union leadership was drawing a veil over its former more consistent hostility to the employers and over the consequences of that policy for engineering.

#### B. The Necessity of British Resurgence

However useful the image of a beleaguered and helpless Britain in a hostile world, however much it served the purposes of the Union leadership, it could not, in fact, be sustained. There were two main reasons for this. One was, as we have seen, that the leadership did not have a consistent and coherent policy of painting the outside world in the blackest shades: emphases changed in the context of different arguments. The underlying concern in projecting this image was not so much to assign the blame to foreign actors and international forces as to ensure that it was not attached to domestic actors; the hostile international system was a means not an end. As I pointed out earlier, the international setting was a resource which could be used in various arguments and contexts, and not in all circumstances was it useful to portray it in so harsh a light.

Furthermore, it was important not to overdo the image of Britain's helplessness, for, if the country's difficulties were indeed insuperable, what was the point of all the sacrifice and hardship? A better tomorrow was a necessary justification for current deprivations. Formal ideology, the leadership's perceptions of the internal opposition

and its need to mobilize the members' support for its policies led the Union's Executive spokesmen to temper somewhat the image of Britain's place in the world. Britain battered and bruised would rise to pre-eminence and prosperity once more.

Accordingly, there developed a secondary image of the international setting, one which was less difficult and might even be helpful or a source of inspiration. <sup>89</sup> This image was itself tempered by another tendency: that of stressing the UK's independence and achievements and the inspiration which it offered the world and which the world sought from it. The positive aspects of the international setting had themselves to be muted in order to highlight Britain's own merits.

In late 1945 Gardner commented on the negotiations with the Americans about the ill-fated \$3,750 million loan and maintained that Washington must not try to impose too many conditions on it. He pointed out that although "two world wars (had) transformed (Britain) from a creditor to a debtor nation and wrested from British industry its primacy in industry and international trade", the trade unions would support the Government's refusal to allow the UK "to be made the economic fief of any country". They rejected "any financial arrangements with the United States which will make this country dependent upon and subservient to the economic royalists and Big Business interests of the United States". The US Congress, financiers and industrialists were

---

89. On this image see below Chapter VI.

warned "that we are going on with our programme of socialisation  
90  
whether America likes it or not". Again, it will be noted, the inter-  
national setting, or at least the American part of it, was shown to be  
91  
hostile to the British experiment.

This assumption was not constantly or consistently maintained, however, for one way of demonstrating the value and importance of Britain's economic and social development, was to portray it as an example for the whole world. Thus in 1947 Tanner cautioned against Britain's alignment with either the United States or the Soviet Union. It was not necessary from Britain's standpoint or desirable from that of the rest of the world:

And we are not so helpless as our economic situation would imply. We are giving the world an example of a great experiment of planning with freedom. All progressive peoples are hoping for our success as much as we are determined on it, for it would have profound effects throughout the world ....

If there is one thing that we, and only we, can do in this international situation, it is to give a courageous socialist lead. (92)

Britain, downtrodden though it may be, is the site of the New Jerusalem and, consequently, a light unto the nations. It could and, indeed, had to act, therefore, independently in world affairs. The context of the statement was a discussion of aid for reconstruction. Tanner was

---

90. Journal, December 1945, p. 354.

91. There were indeed hostile elements in the US who were prominent in the debates about the Loan. See Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, pp. 169-71.

92. RPNC, 1947, pp. 262-63.

calling on the Government to use its influence to ensure the participation of the Soviet Union in the Marshall Plan --- the better to prevent American intervention in Britain's "socialisation". In the course of the argument, however, he suggested that whatever America's attitudes, other countries supported the UK and its Government.

Tanner returned to the theme of exemplary Britain in a warning to his members about the pitfalls on the communist route to socialism and, more particularly, about the consequences of communist militancy in the Union. The communist path, he said, is the path of violence. There is, however, another course, and Britain is showing the way.

There is another aspect --- an encouraging aspect --- of the great experiment our movement has initiated in this country. We have been told that the peoples of other countries are watching --- not only with interest, but with hope for its success. I have found this to be true, during the recent visit to the United States, among people of various classes. Not only are they interested and hopeful of the outcome, but they were glad it was the British, with their stability, self-control and tolerance, who were making the attempt. We are --- they believe --- the nation most likely to succeed --- blazing the trail for others to follow. (93)

By mid-1949, then, even America was looking to Britain.

Gardner, too, resorted to this type of argument, though he did not stress it in the same manner. In discussing the new Labour Party manifesto in 1949, for example, he reviewed the Government's accomplishments since 1945 and remarked that the UK's welfare state was "the envy  
94  
of the whole world".

93. RPNC, 1949, pp. 247-48.

94. Journal, June 1949, p. 161.

The Executive's spokesmen often referred to Britain's independent achievements, to what it had achieved without outside help or over and above what could be explained by the help received from the US or any other source. The context was generally a defence of the Labour Government's policies against the opposition on the left and the right. All the work and sacrifice, Tanner and Gardner were saying, was in fact paying off. To counter the arguments of "both the Communists and the Tories (who) are trying to persuade our own people and the country that we are a suffering and decadent nation on the verge of collapse and economic annihilation", the President and General Secretary would mark the progress made in increasing manufactures and exports and eliminating the trade deficit, eradicating unemployment, expanding agricultural production, ensuring the health of the people and building houses. <sup>95</sup>

Another way of making the same point was to compare conditions in Britain with those abroad and remark, for example, that the British were so well off because of Government policy and cooperation of the workers, or that the British would be a lot worse off were it not for the Labour Government. Thus, in discussing the Government's housing programme --- and housing was a particularly sore point among large

---

95. Journal, July 1949, p. 193. See also: October 1948, p. 290; December 1948, pp. 353-54; February 1949, p. 34; April 1949, pp. 97, 108; September 1949, p. 257; February 1950, pp. 33-34; September 1951, p. 258; RPNC, 1948, p. 220; RPNC, 1949, pp. 244-45; RPNC, 1950, pp. 232-34; RPNC, 1951, pp. 281-82.

sections of the population during the latter part of the period under  
96  
review --- Gardner remarked: "Though material has been in short  
supply, more has been achieved in this field than in the rest of  
Europe put together, and more even than in the wealthy United States of  
97  
America." A few months later he pointed out how much more British  
production was increasing than the rest of Europe's and how Britain's  
98  
industrial productivity was growing more quickly than the USA's.

Sometimes, too, conditions in other countries were used as a  
warning against certain courses of action. Thus the violent policies  
of the communists were compared with the Labour Party's promises of  
99  
peaceful change. The political divisions in the US over the Korean  
War and rearmament were contrasted with the unity of views in the UK  
despite the resignation of Bevan and his colleagues. Gardner commented  
that "it would be tragic beyond words if disagreement inside our  
Government or our party unloosed such controversies as those that dis-  
100  
tract and divide the American Congress and people."

Even when they drew models of behaviour and policy from the  
international setting, the Union's spokesmen would often downgrade them.  
They would make unfavourable comparisons on another matter or claim that,  
of course, all this was known anyway, or that the lesson was of limited

---

96. See Eatwell, pp. 128, 130, 152.

97. Journal, June 1949, p. 161.

98. Journal, November 1949, p. 322.

99. RPNC, 1949, p. 247.

100. Journal, May 1951, p. 130.

relevance to Britain's situation. Similarly, the importance of foreign assistance in the country's recovery was said to be rather limited.

Thus when a communist member of the Executive Council, J. R. Scott, wrote about the benefits of mechanization in the United States, he also pointed out that in socialist societies the position on pay and production was necessarily better than in America.<sup>101</sup> Clearly, such unfavourable comparisons stemmed from Scott's political position. However, ideology, or rather the formal ideology of the Union, and the reluctance to alienate the internal opposition were reflected in similar statements by Gardner and Tanner.

There was thus a distinct reluctance to cite the American production model; for about the first half of the period under review the relevance of American industrial experience was rarely considered. At times this reluctance seems irrational and wilful. In his 1947 NC address Tanner said: "Unlike the American problem of distribution, the problem for the rest of the world is production." Presumably, therefore, the US had managed to overcome the production problem, but the President did not suggest that anything of relevance might be gleaned from the American experience. Instead, he cited the Soviet system of pay incentives and "other Russian methods" which "could usefully be considered for adoption here."<sup>102</sup> As a short-term and partial solution to the production problem during the transitional reconstruc-

101. Journal, January 1946, p. 12.

102. RFNC, 1947, pp. 265, 269.

tion period, incentives could well have been useful. However, they could not have replaced technological change as a long-term solution; Tanner's own statements since 1942 had made this clear enough. As for the incentive system referred to --- a payment-by-results scheme with "a steeply rising scale for each article produced above an agreed norm <sup>103</sup> norm" --- it hardly seems relevant to the sort of mixed economy that Labour, with the support of the AEU Executive and moderate unionists in general, was trying to establish. By raising the marginal cost of each additional unit, the idea, indeed, seems designed to ensure that managements would try to limit production were they ever forced to accept it.

In this case, there was clearly no direct intention to upgrade the image of the UK. The antipathy to capitalist and wealthy America and the concomitant willingness to look instead to the USSR despite the doubtful relevance of its methods are symbolic responses to the dictates of formal ideology and the perceived strength of communists and fellow travellers in the Union itself. The latter group, thus, was paid off for its support of the "national" line. Such statements required no substantive action, which the employers in any case would have rebuffed very firmly, but showed that the leaders' collective heart was in the right place. The impression that Tanner was consciously exploiting a symbolic pay-off in order to avoid doing anything more

---

103. RFNC, 1947, p. 265.

radical is strengthened when one considers that during the war he had referred explicitly to the lessons that might be learned from the Americans.<sup>104</sup> Only after the development of the Marshall Plan and the communists' return to opposition did the USA regain some of the respectability it had had during the war, and could it once again be used as a model.

Even then it was used at first reluctantly and warily. In 1948 Sir Stafford Cripps proposed the establishment of an Anglo-American advisory body, the Anglo-American Council on Productivity (AACP), to be composed of British and American employer and trade union representatives. The Council would "bring to bear upon the problem of increasing production the best scientific and technical experience available on both sides of the Atlantic". Gardner's first response was tepid. "American industry may have something to teach us", he said, but the "American experts" who were to come to Britain to study conditions there must not "have any prejudices, either ideological or political". The US, he continued, tended to look down on Britain's recovery efforts.

(Yet) British industry has been making progress even without financial or economic aid from America ... under the guidance of a Labour Government, and through the co-operation of the Trade Unions. We should ... resent it very deeply if the proposal to set up (this body) is taken as an admission of economic backwardness on our side; or is taken from the American side as a mandate for the experts and technicians to tell us where to get off. But we are willing to learn. (105)

104. RPNC, 1943, p. 223.

105. Journal, August 1948, pp. 225-26.

The sensitivity to criticism evident in this statement, the assertion of the validity and value of Britain's own experience and success, show that more than ideological or political sources of antipathy to the United States were at work here. Gardner's appeal was based also on a sense of damaged amour propre; it was degrading in some way for Britain to look upon America as a model. This need for self-respect, for asserting one's own value and importance, may have been a factor in the statements about Britain's achievements referred to earlier as well.

However important this emotional factor may have been, one must not forget that such statements were also useful in defending the AEU leadership's policies, particularly those shared with the Labour Government, and in justifying the people's sacrifices, the rationing, the austerity and the wage restraint. The depreciation of the American model, of the magnificent industrial achievements of a capitalist country, similarly served both rational and nonrational ends. It soothed British pride and communist and fellow-traveller prejudices. Furthermore, so long as even a minimum of controls were considered necessary, it preempted any argument from the right that wartime controls be dropped in the UK as they had been in America.

Thus in September 1948 Gardner quoted approvingly from Flora Hancock's presidential address to the TUC. She had said, in referring to the AACP, "that we invented many of the productive techniques which other countries have carried farther". Gardner commented "that if

industrial leadership is in question, this country is surely not behind other countries in the practice of collective bargaining for the improvement of wages and conditions of employment".<sup>106</sup>

Later that same year the General Secretary wrote that the AACP's American members maintained that the higher productivity of industrial workers in the United States was due mainly to more extensive "use of industrial power and higher mechanization"; the Americans suggested that more power tools be used in British factories. Gardner made no direct comment but noted that an earlier meeting of British trade union Executives, convened by the TUC General Council had come to "much the same conclusion".<sup>107</sup> In other words, the Americans were not telling them anything they had not already known. What use, then, was the AACP?

A few months later an editorial reported on the organization of "productivity teams" under the auspices of the AACP. The teams would travel to the US in order "to study factory administration, organisation, lay-out methods and operating conditions" in various industries. Gardner noted, after summarizing the improvement in Britain's export performance: "We may have something to learn from American technology; but assuredly we have nothing to be ashamed of in what our industries are accomplishing under present conditions."<sup>108</sup>

106. Journal, September 1948, p. 258.

107. Journal, December 1948, p. 354.

108. Journal, February 1949, p. 34.

Similarly, although the Executive's spokesmen acknowledged the importance of Marshall Aid and, as we shall see later, were determined to "sell" the Plan to their members, they also felt it necessary to ensure that the workers did not take the aid as a signal that they might relax their production efforts. The result was a muting of the image of dependence that a stress on ERP might have entailed and an emphasis on a picture of the UK pulling itself up out of the quagmire. Thus in the summer of 1948 Tanner remarked that, despite the dollar aid, the onus was on the British people to achieve the nation's industrial and economic reconstruction. <sup>109</sup> A little less than a year later Gardner remarked that without US aid, the country's economic problems would have been "immensely more difficult, if not insurmountable". Once he had made this point he moved on, not to a detailed description of what help the money had been, but to an extended discussion of the "sustained national effort to increase production". His purpose in the article was in part to vindicate the policy of restraint pursued by the unions in 1948 and to encourage further progress in production. <sup>110</sup>

To sum up, statements were made about the UK and its relationship with and standing among other states which tempered the image of the country's helplessness and haplessness in a hostile world. The reasons

109. RPNC, 1948, p. 216.

110. Journal, April 1949, p. 97. Compare Gardner's special article in the same issue: "How are we getting on? Progress Report on Britain's Economic Recovery", p. 108.

for this were numerous: patriotism and national amour propre; the wish and need to defend the Executive's policies and those policies of the Government which it approved; the need to mobilize the members' active support for these policies; the dictates of the Union's formal ideology and the wish, during the first postwar years, not to alienate the internal opposition and indeed to offer them symbolic pay-offs for their continued cooperation. All these factors helped create the image of a Britain which could overcome and was overcoming its difficulties. Present circumstances might be beyond its control, and it would have to adapt to them, but it was pulling itself up by its own bootstraps and would maintain its leading position in the world. Britain, according to this view, could, would and did act independently and rely on itself for its own salvation.

The emphasis in these discussions on the achievements of "Britain" may reflect one of the aspects of the "national" line. The premise that the good of the worker depends on the prosperity of the nation means that aggregate improvements can be used to indicate progress when the individual may be able to see little or no improvement in his own lot. The AEU leaders did not neglect to point out the way the individual worker benefitted from Labour rule. For many workers, however, especially those who had been employed in the expanding industries before the war, their personal material condition may not have seemed all that much better. <sup>111</sup> The nation's economic progress

---

111. Thus, while the average weekly earnings of engineering workers

was thus, in some measure, a substitute for current hardships and a promise of better times ahead for the individual, whose prosperity depended on that of the nation. Aggregate advances could thus be used to furnish symbolic satisfaction when little could be offered in the way of material advantage to the individual.

The cumulative effect of this image of a resurgent and independent Britain on those willing to listen to Executive statements could not but have been to encourage a belief in the country's continuing Great Power role and standing, a belief that the postwar decline was somehow an aberration. The inclination to such a view was reinforced by the tendency to minimize the importance of the deep domestic roots of the national crisis and to locate the "enemy" outside Britain. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the country, nothing that more machines and wage restraint and the like could not set right.

From such a standpoint, participation in a united Europe is unnecessary and undesirable; high levels of defence spending are acceptable; a Suez invasion, an independent nuclear deterrent and the deployment of the Royal Navy east of Suez and/or a "Third Force" policy are right and proper; and a conception of unilateral disarmament by Britain

---

increased by 43.3% between 1938 and 1948, consumer prices rose by 43.7%; Knowles and Robertson, p. 195; Feinstein, T133. This, of course, does not take into account the effects of different levels of taxation and the "social wage", but the redistribution impact of these factors had not been negligible before the war either; Derek H. Aldcroft, The Inter-War Economy (New York, 1970), pp. 371-74.

as an example other countries would follow is eminently logical. Again, as in the case of the "hostile world", it was not the Executive's primary intention to project an image of Britain restored to its "rightful" place. The image was the outcome of the needs of other arguments. However, the fact that such an image emerges so clearly probably reflects a fundamental belief among the AEU's spokesmen. They were not alone; the attitude was implicit in the policies of the Government and the various oppositions to the left and the right in this and later periods. By adding their voice to the chorus, the AEU's leaders may have helped to perpetuate the attitude among those members of the rank and file who were attentive to them and to discourage alternative images of Britain's capacities and capabilities. For reasons which had little to do with foreign policy considerations, the AEU leadership helped to maintain a certain image of the country's ability to act internationally and thus helped to maintain its public's acquiescence in the general course of British policy, exemplified by the actions mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, a policy which was itself unsuited to the UK's capacities.

112

---

112. See, for example, the material cited above, Chapter I, footnote 5.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION:

THE EXTERNAL ELEMENTS OF RECONSTRUCTION AND THE SELLING OF THE COLD WAR

The role of the British and, to a greater extent, the American trade unions in fighting the cold war abroad has been dealt with in a number of studies.<sup>1</sup> There was, however, also a domestic dimension to the unions' cold war activities. Among other things, the leaders of the the AEU, in their statements and messages to their own constituents, joined in the cold war chorus and echoed the ideas transmitted by other sources in the wider society. They thus confirmed the image of a world divided, of a Soviet Union hostile and aggressive and of an America, if not downright friendly and progressive, certainly less hostile and reactionary than it had previously been painted.

The leaders of the AEU may have come to believe in or to accept Labour's foreign policy out of loyalty to Britain, the Labour Party or Ernest Bevin.<sup>2</sup> However, they did not make anti-Soviet and pro-American statements purely out of national, partisan or personal loyalty. On the contrary, such statements were closely related to the Executive's

1. See, for example, Allen, Trade Union Leadership; Walter Kendall, The European Labour Movement (London, 1975); Joseph C. Goulden, Meany (New York, 1972); Hero and Starr; Lewis L. Lorwin, The International Labor Movement (New York, 1953), and others listed in the Bibliography below.
2. Allen, Trade Union Leadership, p. 295; Eatwell, p. 135; Harrison, pp. 144-45, 217-20, 223-24.

pursuit of their own primary objectives at the time: to the mobilization of the members' support for the "national" line, for policies of reconstruction and full employment in the face of an internal opposition that threatened those aims.

Harrison pointed out that a trade union leader is generally reluctant to take a firm (and public) stand on political issues, despite his "wider discretion on political than on major industrial questions" and his consequently greater "scope for autocracy".

(Just) because political issues are usually less important to him, he is less likely to commit his power and prestige to getting his way. In unions torn by political and religious factions, the leadership finds it morally impossible to fight for its views on every resolution. It is usually ready to give way on some to ensure victory on those it considers really important. (3)

In order for a leader to take a firm stand on a political issue, that issue would have to be of major importance to his own goals and concerns as a trade union leader.

On such crucial issues as wage restraint (the TUC General Council thus) fought pitched battles; on peripheral questions, such as Greece or Spain, it was good tactics to talk left and accept extreme resolutions, in order to keep goodwill for more important battles. The leadership could not move too far or too fast. Voting on foreign policy matters was often profoundly influenced by such tactical considerations: it might have differed markedly had anything vital been at stake. (4)

In the early postwar period the AEU leadership seems to have acted in a similar fashion vis-à-vis its own National Committee in criticizing Labour and US policy on Greece, Spain and Eastern Europe.

3. Harrison, pp. 185-86.

4. Harrison, p. 223.

5. RPNC, 1947, pp. 263-64.

Probably this was due less to a desire to retain the goodwill of the internal opposition, which in any case pursued a collaborationist policy, than to a wish to offer it symbolic payment for its collaboration. In other words, in exchange for leftist and communist support on vital matters like reconstruction, the Executive propagated leftist and communist views on matters, like Greece and Spain, which were of less importance to the organization.

Particularly after 1947, however, such criticism of Government foreign policy became less and less frequent and the EC's spokesmen made statements that came closer and closer to the Government line. This change coincided with the internal opposition's renunciation of collaboration. There was thus no incentive for making pro-Soviet, anti-Bevin pronouncements. What incentive was there, however, for taking the opposite tack? Was a new type of exchange with a new partner in operation now? Or was it that foreign policy was no longer the "peripheral" issue that it had been?

Writing about two different situations, Harrison suggests various reasons for trade union leaders to take firmer public stances on political and foreign policy issues. He argues that the TUC General Council's "falling support for extremist views from 1948 onwards was partly a genuine reflection of changing attitudes within the movement: but also the discrediting of the Communists enabled the leaders who had consolidated their positions to turn and fight motions they would have had to let pass in the immediate post-war period". There are two problems

with this approach, one more general, one, perhaps, more strictly applicable to the AEU. The first has already been mentioned: the fact that there is no longer any advantage in following one course does not mean that there is necessarily an advantage in taking the course diametrically opposite. There is, after all, the option of saying nothing at all in order not to exacerbate an already difficult situation. Nor can it be said that the AEU Executive had consolidated its position in the organization. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter IV, the outcome of the tug-of-war between the centre and the shopfloor, which was complicated by the resumption of hostilities between the official leadership and the internal opposition, was more in doubt than it had been for many years.

Elsewhere, Harrison writes that the 1951-55 period was "a rare exception" as trade union executives proved willing to take firm political stands. "Several union leaders, considering that the controversies over the rearmament programme, nationalization, or the European Defence Community, involved the whole future of the (Labour) Party, committed their strength at (the Party) Conference and within their own organization to an unprecedented degree." <sup>7</sup> As Richter points out with respect to certain of these issues, the leaders' concern was not exclusively with the "whole future of the Party" but at least equally with how that future might affect the unions' ability to carry out their

---

6. Harrison, p. 223.

7. Harrison, p. 186.

primary function. We have seen too that the Executive's position on Government policy was at least as much a function of the relevance of specific policies to the EC's main concerns as to the enunciation of these policies by the Party leadership.

It seems logical that the enunciation of anti-Soviet and pro-American views, therefore, might fall into this same category of issues relevant to the trade union concerns of the EC: conditions of employment, organizational maintenance and the internal distribution of power. Indeed, the direct and immediate interests of the Union and its members, as these were understood by the Executive, seem to have been closely involved in such statements. The AEU leaders' expressed opinions about America and the USSR varied with the perceived utility of these countries and of favourable or hostile images of these countries to Britain and the engineering workers' economic well-being through trade, aid and the maintenance of full employment. Favourable attitudes about the relationship with the USSR were expressed as long as Soviet trade was considered vital to reconstruction. Hostility to the USSR was expressed when it was considered a threat to this goal. The image of an aggressive USSR was also valuable justification for the maintenance of the rearmament programme which, as we have seen, seems to have been thought important to ensuring full employment. An improvement in America's image developed as ERP came to be considered vital to

---

8. Richter, pp. 138-39.

recovery, and more favourable images of the USA were projected when that country seemed to provide a useful illustration of the operation and success of the "national" line.

#### A. Trade, Aid and Shifting Attitudes to the USSR

A central part of the solution to Britain's economic problem proposed by the AEU's leaders was export. Britain had to produce more goods for sale abroad in order to buy the goods its people needed in order to survive and to produce more manufactures. Britain's overseas trade had been disrupted during the war for a number of obvious reasons --- the difficulties of transport, the need to switch most production to what was essential to the war effort and so on. After the war Britain had not only to try to recover its former markets but to develop new ones to make up for those it could not recover and for the losses in invisible overseas earnings. The Executive spokesmen's discussions of these matters are in part reports on the progress made in carrying out the resolutions of the National Committee: reports, in other words, on what the leaders were doing for the members' prosperity. In part, too, these discussions may have reflected a concern to pander to the prejudices of communist and fellow-travelling opinion in the Union. In any event, for the AEU, the most likely and potentially most valuable trading partner seemed to be the Soviet Union. Tanner told the National Committee in 1946:

Britain needs exports, yet trade with the Soviet Union and the rising democracies of South-East Europe is at a standstill. It is in the interests of Britain as a whole and of engineering workers in particular, to develop long-term, stable markets for engineering products. The Soviet Union offers such a market on a vast scale. (9)

The USSR was not only a market for British manufactures; official AEU policy, Gardner reminded his readers later that year, was "to do whatever possible to extend credit facilities and exchange raw materials and manufactured goods on deferred terms". Eastern Europe was important not only because it needed the goods that the UK had to sell, but also because it produced the food and timber Britain needed to feed its people and rebuild their homes.<sup>10</sup>

A great deal of the Union's lobbying activity, generally conducted through the CSEU in direct approaches to ministers and officials, dealt precisely with this problem.<sup>11</sup> It ceased in the summer of 1948, however, and was not resumed until later years even though, in 1949, the NC instructed the Executive to encourage trade "between this country and the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern democracies".<sup>12</sup>

One of the reasons for rank and file support of increased trade with the Soviet Union seems to have been fear of Britain binding itself too closely to American capitalism. In 1947 the NC voiced its "alarm" at "the signs of an impending slump in the U.S.A." and expressed its

9. RPNC, 1946, p. 209.

10. Journal, December 1946, p. 353.

11. Journal, April 1947, p. 105; September 1947, p. 262; January 1948, p. 7; May 1948, p. 134; June 1948, p. 167; September 1948, p. 263.

12. Journal, August 1949, p. 242.

fear "that the Labour Government's present trade policy tends to take this country with it (the USA) if and when this occurs". To prevent such an eventuality Britain should diversify its trade and enter into "trade agreements with European and other socialist countries".<sup>13</sup> As we saw earlier the leadership, too, may have been prey to such apprehensions and so may have shared this reason for seeking increased trade with the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

The principle reason for the importance attached by the leadership to trade with the Soviet Union during this period, however, was probably the perception of the importance of such trade in the interwar years. Then trade with Russia had been one of the main themes of AEU pressure group activity and there were frequent demands for trade treaties with and export credits for the USSR. Engineering components were seen as a particularly large component of this trade. After the war Tanner noted: "We would have been far worse off in the great depression if orders from Russia had not proved the salvation of sections like machine tools and electrical equipment."<sup>15</sup>

The potential value of Soviet trade was distinctly and increasingly limited by a number of factors in the early postwar years. The wartime damage to the USSR's economy and its own reconstruction priorities meant that the Soviets had relatively little to sell abroad. Immediately after the war much of the volume of the Soviet Union's

13. Journal, September 1947, p. 275.

14. See above pp. 232-33.

15. RFNC, 1946, p. 209.

"imports", particularly of capital goods, was composed of reparations from Germany, and this lessened the demand for British engineering goods. This might not have affected the longer term prospects had not political factors intruded. Particularly after 1947 the relative and absolute value of Soviet trade was lessened by the growing importance of the dollar and sterling countries and of western Europe, by the restrictions on "strategic" trade with the USSR and by the concomitant integration of the eastern European economies with that of the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup>

While the possibility of developing the Russian market lasted, however, it helped to give a rosy glow to perceptions of relations with the USSR. Good political relations were deemed vital to good commercial ties. Thus, as a prologue to the statement quoted above about the opportunities offered by the Soviet market, Tamer said:

A most important factor is solidarity between British workers and the Soviet people. While politicians and press lords have blown hot and cold on Anglo-Soviet friendship --- as it suited their hook at the time --- we have adhered to that principle as our policy.

Never was it more vital to reiterate and fight for our policy of solidarity with the Soviet Union. It is at once a bread-and-butter issue and a question of life and death. Without it the future prospect is black indeed.

He then went on to speak of the importance of Soviet trade and warned: "We cannot afford to become too exclusively dependent on the capitalism of the United States. A sinister warning is the anti-labour legisla-

---

16. Sergej Mawrizki, Aussenhandel der Sowjetunion Gestern und Heute (Bern, 1976), pp. 132-48. See above pp. 51-52 and below pp. 270-73.

tion now being imposed on the American Unions by President Truman." This last point is apparently a reference to the Taft-Hartley Bill which was to become law in 1947. Truman actually opposed the Bill, and Congress had to carry it over his veto. The perceptions of desirable relationships with America and the USSR thus seem to have been strongly coloured by the Union's official socialism, including a sense of socialist internationalism, and perhaps, too, by a wish to provide the communist and fellow-travelling activists with a symbolic reward to the policy of reconstruction. Mixed with these motives, however, was a strong, if not overwhelming, instrumental streak: the USSR would make a good trading partner and so would help in the realization of the prime objective of industrial reconstruction and expansion in order to ensure full employment.

On the whole, it must be said, operative ideology was a relatively unimportant factor in determining attitudes to the Soviet Union. This point is brought home most clearly when one notes how little interest the leadership evinced for the Soviet model of economic and political organization. The system of payment by results mentioned earlier is an exception to this general indifference.<sup>18</sup> In general, there seems to have been little worth learning from Socialist Russia.

Discussion of the USSR tended to revolve around relations between that country and Britain, whether in terms of trade or, as we

17. RPNC, 1946, p. 209.

18. See above pp. 248-49.

shall see later, of political and military action. In this the post-war leaders displayed a remarkable degree of continuity with their interwar predecessors. Under the leadership of General Secretary Arthur Smethurst and Presidents Brownlie and Hutchinson (till about 1933), the focus of interest in the Soviet Union was almost solely as a market for British goods to help pull British engineering out of the slump. Statements about the Soviet Union's economic and social progress were used to demonstrate that the demand for British manufactures<sup>19</sup> existed. Under their successors, General Secretary Smith and President Little, this sort of interest dropped off as the engineering industry recovered, but an increasing number of favourable reports about the Soviet Union, not always or usually written by the Executive's spokesmen, were published in the Journal.

In 1936 and 1937 Union delegations visited the USSR, and long and detailed reports of their generally favourable findings were published.<sup>20</sup> How much of this publicity was due to the Executive's prior pro-Soviet leanings and how much to the leaders' response to Soviet and communist courting during the period of the United Front is unclear.

19. Journal, February 1924, p. 56; September 1924, pp. 11, 40-41; January 1925, pp. 46-47; September 1925, pp. 37-38; May 1926, pp. 51-52; August 1926, p. 45; June 1928, p. 49; July 1928, pp. 55-59; January 1929, p. 38; April 1929, p. 43; May 1929, pp. 38-39; June 1929, pp. 33-36; October 1929, pp. 5-8; November 1929, pp. 7-8, 41-42; August 1930, pp. 36-39; July 1932, pp. 31-34; September 1932, pp. 34-35; October 1932, pp. 30-32; December 1932, pp. 8-9.

20. Journal, January 1933, pp. 6-8; February 1933, pp. 38-39; April 1933, p. 39; July 1933, pp. 34-35; August 1933, pp. 31-32; December 1933, pp. 39-40; March 1934, pp. 7-8; June 1934,

Still, it was to the instrumental vision of the relationship that Little returned in his 1939 National Committee speech. He spoke of Soviet economic progress since the first five year plan fifteen years before: "Having regard to this development, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that both as a market for our goods and as an ally against Nazi-ism, the Soviet Union is of tremendous importance to Britain today."<sup>21</sup> Inasmuch as Fascism was generally perceived as a greater threat to trade unionism than to the United Kingdom (and this is indeed the tone of discussions of the issue throughout the prewar period), the organization-centredness of the instrumentalism is self-evident.<sup>22</sup>

The instrumental basis of the perceived relationship with the Soviet Union is clear in Tanner's 1947 statement to the National Committee. Again he expressed the commercial reasons for the Union's wariness of the United States. In the Soviet trading relationship, it seems, Britain would be able to exercise greater control. The UK could exercise greater control over its commercial relations with the United States too, but even so, one gathers, the balance is less

---

pp. 7-8; December 1934, p. 8; March 1935, pp. 9, 11, 24, 26; October 1935, pp. 16-19; November 1935, pp. 24-28; December 1935, pp. 31, 35; November 1935, pp. 20-21; June 1936, p. 23; July 1936, p. 18; August 1936, pp. 18-27, 36; January 1937, p. 8; July 1937, p. 280; August 1937, p. 320; August 1939, p. 338; September 1939, p. 372; October 1937, pp. 398-409; February 1939, pp. 54-55.

21. Journal, July 1939, p. 286.

22. And compare Carl F. Brand, The British Labour Party: A Short History, revised edition (Stanford, 1974), p. 190.

favourable to Britain.

We dare not tie ourselves exclusively to (either America or the USSR, he said) but, apart from any ideological considerations, it is Russia that is in dire need of favour and the U.S.A. is not. The mighty dollar has become almighty. One nation, the U.S.A., has almost everything for which the rest of the world hungers.... Although we are short of dollars, we are in a better position to make a good bargain with the United States, since the Americans cannot afford to lose such a market as Great Britain.... The European trade policy of the Government, with which we have been associated, is now bearing some fruit and the trade talks now developing with Russia, Poland, Yugoslavia and other countries are most encouraging. (23)

Although it was not trade alone which led the Union Executive to comment on the USSR during this early period, comments on other aspects of Soviet life and relations with Britain tended to be vague and general. Thus Tanner's discussion of the findings of an AEU delegation to Russia in 1946 were limited to mentioning: the difficulties of travel in abnormal conditions, the "increased mutual understanding and closer relations with the Russian people generally and Engineers in particular" which resulted from the trip,<sup>24</sup> the wartime suffering of the Soviet people, their consequent desire for peace and the payment-by-by-results scheme.<sup>25</sup> Detailed reports of the delegation's observations were published, but not in the Journal where they would have received greater publicity. The absence of such an article, in sharp contrast to the prewar custom, may have been due to nothing more sinister than the space limitations imposed by paper rationing. It did little, however,

23. RPNC, 1947, p. 263.

24. Journal, January 1947, p. 10.

25. RPNC, 1947, pp. 264-65.

to create a view of the USSR based on something more than its value as a market. Although such a "commercial" view tended to lead to the expression of favourable attitudes to the relationship with the Soviet Union, its very instrumentalism meant that when the utility of the USSR declined, the pro-Soviet statements could be discarded relatively easily.

It is not surprising that opinions expressed about the USSR by AEU leaders should have been of this type. Whatever other reasons there may have been for individual members of the Executive to speak well of the Soviet Union --- internal politicking and jockeying for power and so on --- from the standpoint of their collective assessment of the goals and interests of the Union, commerce was the most important aspect of the relationship. Since, as we have seen, they were but little occupied with building a Socialist Britain, and certainly not one in which there was planning and control of any significant kind, the Soviet Union had little value as a model. With the end of the war, its value as an ally also declined but did not yet disappear entirely.<sup>26</sup> There was thus little reason other than the commercial one for the AEU leaders to use their communication links with the active rank and file to discuss that country during this period.

The commercial orientation was central to the thinking about the Soviet Union among the active membership as well as among the leaders.

---

26. See below pp. 282-83.

This is evident from Gardner's summary of the genesis of the 1946 tour of the USSR.

In 1943 the National Committee unanimously agreed to a resolution welcoming the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of May 1942. One paragraph of the resolution provided that the AEU should send delegates to Russia when such a visit became practicable. This resolution was re-affirmed at the National Committee meeting of 1944, and one of the objects of the Delegation was "to develop relations with the Soviet Trade Unions." ...

The subject ... was further discussed at the ... 1945 and 1946 (NCs) with the terms of reference extended to include an instruction to do whatever possible to extend credit facilities and exchange raw materials and manufactured goods on deferred terms. (27)

Once the members could turn their attention to the problems of peace, trade relations came naturally to the fore. In stressing the commercial basis for relations with the USSR, the Executive's spokesmen, in effect, were doing little more than demonstrating their efforts to carry out the expressed will of the members.

As we have seen, the importance attached to the Soviet market was one of the arguments Tanner raised in opposition to the Government's leaning too heavily towards the US or the USSR. As the value of the Soviet market seemed to diminish thereafter, there were fewer statements attributing value to the maintenance of good political relations between East and West. The decline in the apparent importance of Soviet trade was due, in large measure, to the increasing importance of the American and western European markets. This growth was due, in turn, partly to sheer economic need --- as Tanner had pointed out, America

---

27. Journal, December 1946, p. 353.

did have "almost everything for which the rest of the world hungers" --- and partly to the pressures of the developing western economic, political and military alliance (ERP, OEEC, Western Union, NATO). In the Union's interest group activities, in lobbying and in tripartite committees, more and more attention was paid to the problem of expanding trade with these other countries.

Thus Tanner reported in June 1947 that the CSEU Engineering Group Council had agreed on the necessity of directing "a higher proportion of exports to the hard currency countries of North America, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal and Philippines."<sup>28</sup> The Council realized that this would not be easy but considered it vital. The dollar loans from the United States and Canada were running out at an alarming rate,<sup>29</sup> while trade negotiations with the USSR proceeded at a snail's pace, the price of imports from America rose and the only immediate sources of supply of food and raw materials were the hard currency countries. The development of these markets, therefore, was an urgent matter. It was necessary to meet a short-term emergency that could not be met through the Soviet market, which in any case was viewed as a potential stable long-term market.<sup>30</sup> For a time, therefore, interest in East European and other markets could be maintained simultaneously, since the utility of each of them was perceived to be different. From mid-1948 on

28. Journal, June 1947, p. 166.

29. See above, this chapter, footnote 11.

30. See above, this chapter, footnote 9.

discussions of and references to trade dealt mainly with the United States, Canada, France, Europe as a whole and the dollar countries in general. <sup>31</sup> Specific references to Soviet trade in statements directed at the membership ceased after September 1948, even though the 1949 NC <sup>32</sup> called for its expansion.

Given the centrality of trade in the development of the positive image of relations with the Soviet Union, it is hardly surprising that when --- for reasons to be discussed below --- the Executive deemed it necessary to discredit the Soviet Union, the members' attention was directed to Moscow's attempt to use trade as a political weapon against Tito's Yugoslavia.

The trade blockade which they (the Soviets) have applied against Yugoslavia is particularly noxious. The Soviet leaders have always claimed that differences in the political system of other countries should not prevent the development of the widest trade agreements. We in the A.E.U. have agreed with that principle, and we have done our utmost over many years to see it applied in trade between Britain and Russia. (33)

To sum up, the AEU leadership stressed the value of developing commercial links with the USSR as an outlet for British manufactures and a source of raw materials, partly in order to demonstrate the Executive's obedience to National Committee instructions and partly to demonstrate the importance of increased production for export. To this commercial perception of the relationship was added a political dimension: the

31. Journal, May 1948, p. 134; January 1949, pp. 6-7; May 1949, p. 135; September 1949, p. 264; January 1950, pp. 6-7; February 1950, p. 39.
32. Journal, August 1949, p. 242.
33. RFNC, 1950, p. 239.

Executive spokesmen maintained that good political relations with the USSR were necessary to the development of trade. This does not mean that the members of the Executive favoured good relations with Moscow only because they saw the links as economically necessary. However, given their perceptions of the Union's interests and the best way of advancing them, it was logical that they should stress the narrow instrumental basis of the relationship in their public statements. Their role as trade union leaders concerned overwhelmingly with goal attainment, organizational maintenance and power gave them no other basis for such discussions in the trade union context, or at least no other basis on which so limited a resource as the members' attentiveness could be spent. When other markets came to be seen as more valuable, overt concern with the Soviet market and Soviet friendship waned; pro-Soviet publicity simply was less necessary. It does not follow from this that the relationship now had to become hostile; the development of the image of the aggressive Soviet state was due to other factors. However, the fact that the USSR was no longer as useful as it had been in the attainment of the Union's goal of national recovery and reconstruction for full employment meant that there was less of an impediment to the development of such a hostile image.

B. Aid and Changing Attitudes to the American Link

Perceptions of trade patterns and of the contribution of trade to national reconstruction and full employment led the Executive's spokesmen to voice their support for closer relations with the USSR. America's domination of international trade was one of the factors that led to the expression of less friendly and even hostile opinions about the United States. From 1947 perceptions of the importance of foreign aid and particularly of the European Recovery Programme (ERP) to reconstruction and full employment were to lead to a revision of these expressed attitudes. Despite their suspicions of the United States' offer, the AEU's leaders came to consider it vital to the fulfilment of their goals.

The Executive never denied the need for aid; rather, they suspected American motives and feared that conditions would be attached to the assistance as they had been to the loan two years earlier. The Union leadership may have been persuaded of the acceptability of Marshall Aid because their fears about such conditions had been allayed. It seems more likely, however, that once persuaded of the importance of the assistance, their suspicions became less relevant. If this is so, then one may begin to suspect that the suspicions they voiced were not real, but simply a way of providing symbolic satisfaction for ideologically-orientated activists and supporters of the Soviet Union.

In any event, in trying to convince the active members that it

was in their best interest to support the aid, the AEU spokesmen did their best to allay their members' fear about American policy. Consequently, the earlier hostile image of the United States was softened somewhat. This new view of America later made possible a sympathetic discussion of its industrial expertise and these discussions were in turn the basis of a more sympathetic picture of the United States as a whole. Without the softening of the American image in the attempt to sell Marshall Aid to the members, however, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to resort to the American model of industrial production.

It was thought necessary to convince the members to accept ERP because the workers' cooperation was considered vital to reconstruction. The disruption of industry through strikes and political unrest or the workers' refusal to acquiesce in continued rationalization and mechanization because of opposition to Marshall Aid would have rendered any amount of foreign assistance useless. Such disruption and resistance seemed a real possibility when the British communists followed the Cominform line in rejecting ERP and terminated their collaboration with the official Union leadership. The examples of France and Italy, where the communists' return to opposition led to a wave of strikes and unrest, and the perceptions, however unjustified, of communist strength and influence in the Union could not but have given the leadership pause. To prevent similar developments in Britain and in the engineering industry because of communist and leftist proselytization

and propaganda, the Executive continued the policy of undercutting the Union's regional lay structures and strengthening the official ones.<sup>34</sup> It also embarked on a propaganda campaign of its own to mobilize the members' support for the American plan. It must be borne in mind, throughout the following section, that however much Britain needed the aid, American money was always portrayed as a secondary factor to the effort and sacrifice of the workers themselves.<sup>35</sup>

In their propaganda the Executive's spokesmen concentrated, as they generally did, on explaining their view rather than on trying to discredit the opposition. They did not neglect the latter method entirely, but direct attacks on communists in the AEU were few.<sup>36</sup> There were, instead, hostile statements about the communists' foreign sponsors and colleagues in the Soviet Union and the World Federation of Trade Unions.<sup>37</sup>

One difference between Tanner and Gardner does become evident in the arguments that we shall examine in the rest of this chapter. Gardner in his editorials is usually more forthright than Tanner. The President was more prone to make equivocal statements, to make his disagreement sound like understanding. Again this may have been due to political and ideological differences between the two men. Apart from these differences of expression, however, there is no evidence of policy

---

34. See above Chapter IV-C.

35. See above Chapter V-B.

36. See above Chapter IV-D.

37. See below Chapter VI-D.

conflicts between the two leaders. Tanner, as I pointed out in Chapter IV, pursued moderate policies while voicing radical platitudes. There is a similar tendency on his part to be more conciliatory with the opposition while mobilizing support for policies consistent with the Labour Government's cold war line. This difference in approach between Tanner and Gardner may well have been due to the different contexts in which they were operating and the different channels of communication that they were using. Nobody could talk to Gardner in the pages of the Journal without his permission. Tanner did not have the same protection against contradiction in putting his arguments to the National Committee. He also had to take care to avoid alienating the NC members whose support he might need on other issues; hence his more conciliatory approach on political matters, his unwillingness to allow differences on specific issues to turn into across-the-board opposition.

When US Secretary of State George C. Marshall on 5 June 1947 publicly raised the idea of the Programme that was to bear his name, he "said simply that the United States would help any European nation recover through a joint reconstruction program".<sup>38</sup> The British Government leapt at the opportunity and the TUC General Council followed suit. The AEU Executive's public doubts and suspicions took longer to abate. It was not that the EC did not want the dollars promised under the plan;

38. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, p. 28.

rather, they voiced fears about America's motives and the plan's political implications. Since the United States at the time also was being saddled with a large measure of the blame for the UK's economic difficulties,<sup>39</sup> the general tenor of discussion about the US was thus maintained.

The developing cold war was not the subject of major comment. Union statements on the issue, however, generally were more sympathetic to the USSR than to America. Since the conflict was not yet directly relevant to the Union's interests and concerns or to the conduct of arguments and debates within the AEU, comment was not really necessary. In his 1946 address to the NC Tanner made some very general, reassuring and platitudinous comments on foreign affairs in what seems like a pro-forma statement of support for the Labour Government. He did not present detailed arguments in favour of the policy but called on his audience to reserve judgment.

He spoke of the threat posed by the question of the "control of atomic power" but pointed to the Baruch Plan put forward by the Americans as "evidence that a solution is being attempted". He warned against "undue pessimism" and cited approvingly Foreign Secretary Bevin's statement that, given the level of international conflict and hostility over the preceding decades, "it is fortunate that the present situation is no worse". The nations were not heading in the wrong

---

<sup>39</sup>, See above Chapter V-A.

direction "but ... we are not going in the right direction quickly enough." As for Britain's own foreign policy, he said:

It appears that diplomacy still could not be as open as could be wished. Within these limitations it is not only fair, but also intelligent, on our part to trust the Government, at least for as long as it is necessary for the results of their policy to reach fruition. (40)

Tanner thus offered neither a stirring defence of nor a ringing attack on Bevin's policies.

By the summer of 1947 such blandness could no longer be sustained. The deterioration in relations between East and West had become far more public, and that very spring the United States had enunciated the Truman Doctrine. In Tanner's speech to the National Committee that year, he attacked British foreign policy for leaning too much towards the USA. He also admitted, however, that the UK had only limited room for manoeuvre: "the basis and the potentialities of our foreign policy depend on our economic recovery to regain some of our lost initiative and independence abroad". Certain aspects of American policy made it an undesirable ally, notably its attempts to use its wealth to further its foreign policy objectives. Although "Roosevelt's America" had "encouraged us to believe that American capitalism had learned the lessons of the last decade, that rampant dollar imperialism leads to disaster", these hopes were now dashed. "American capitalism, invigorated by victory and the power obtained as a consequence, appears to have

---

40. RFNC, 1946, p. 208.

learned little." Thus the House of Representatives had voted for massive cuts in foreign aid "just when (it was ) most needed" and had "decreed that no aid should be given to countries dominated by the Soviet Union". It was not only Congress but "American statesmen" too who had "spoken to the same effect, and American reaction to the recent political events in Hungary has the same interventionary character."<sup>41</sup>

It is interesting that, while condemning the Americans for using their wealth to further their objectives internationally, Tanner called for Britain's economic reconstruction, for the recovery of its wealth, as a necessary prerequisite for the successful pursuit of its aims. There was evidently assumed to be a qualitative difference between the foreign policy aims and methods of the two countries: Labour Britain would never use its wealth in the same manner as Truman's America. Yet on the very issue of Hungary raised by Tanner, Britain could just as easily have been accused of "interventionary" policies as the United States, although its public reactions were less far-reaching than Washington's.<sup>42</sup>

It was the attempt to use aid to constrain and guide political developments in the receiving countries that the Union's leaders found most reprehensible in America, perhaps because it was the type of

41. RPNC, 1947, p. 262.

42. The Times, 3 June 1947, p. 4; 4 June 1947, p. 4; 5 June 1947, p. 4; 9 June 1947, p. 4; 12 June 1947, p. 4; 13 June 1947, p. 4; 16 June 1947, p. 4; 19 June 1947, p. 4.

pressure to which the UK itself was most open. Ostensibly, the AEU leadership feared that, under American pressure, the full-employment and governmental guidance aspects of the UK's recovery policy would have to be dropped, and the Union and its members would suffer.

It was against this backdrop that the American Secretary of State's offer was first judged and suspected to be a ploy for greater US control of the internal development of the recipient countries.

Tanner thus told his audience at the 1947 NC:

(There) is no doubt that the American conception of a United Europe is more like Churchill's than the one we want. We have to wait and see what Mr. Marshall and the U.S.A. mean by a United Europe. Friendship with Russia, which Mr. Churchill and his friends refuse to consider, is essential. The inclusion of Russia, as of Germany, in any plan for European development, is necessary to its success, and for our own freedom to establish a socialist economy. (43)

The inclusion of the USSR in the programme, Tanner said, was a guarantee against American exploitation of aid to limit the course of Britain's economic development. He also claimed that the UK could use its position as a major market for American goods to assume a more independent line. However, given his statement in the same address about the objective limitations on British foreign policy initiative and independence and the need for the Soviet Union to balance American dollar imperialism, one may wonder how much he believed in the UK's independent capacities. Indeed, one may wonder to what extent these statements of suspicion of America, faith in Britain and friendship for

---

43. RFNC, 1947, p. 262.

the USSR were sincere or were merely attempts to soothe ruffled nationalistic and pro-Soviet feelings in the Union. All these factors, including sincere opposition to possible interference in British full-employment policies by the United States (which is thus viewed in a manner reminiscent of attitudes to the International Monetary Fund in more recent years), were probably involved.

The doubts about American "intervention" were further stoked by the US tendency to intervene only against the left. Tanner recognized that, on this point, Britain's policies were just as distorted as America's:

Pressure has been used and sharp protests have been made, by Great Britain and the U.S.A., about the actions of the Governments of Balkan countries against reactionary forces, still active in those countries. But Franco can still suppress, imprison and murder with impunity.

Domestic trends in the United States were seen to reflect the same reactionary line; the Taft-Hartley Act, "a vicious attack on Trade Union rights and freedom" was the most notable example of this. "How", Tanner asked, "can the rest of the world trust the might of the United States, and really believe it stands for democratic institutions, when it attacks the whole basis of the freedom of its own people?"<sup>44</sup>

By the following summer, however, all doubts were either dealt with or forgotten, and the importance of the Soviet guarantee was swept under the rug. This condition was dropped, or rather, disappeared as if

---

44. RPNC, 1947, p. 264.

it had never been raised, and the AEU spokesmen resorted to arguments, some of which they cannot but have known to be spurious. One suspects, therefore, that the leaders did not decide in favour of ERP because their fears were allayed, but because they thought the aid was too important to lose. The basic premise of the leaders' argument was that Europe needed US aid in order to buy food and raw materials, because world trade had not yet recovered sufficiently for the Europeans' exports to earn them the currencies those countries needed if they were to pay their own way in the world. American aid, thus, was a stopgap measure to permit Britain and Europe to maintain high levels of production. It was thus a crucial factor in maintaining the course of reconstruction and full employment in the short and medium term. Without the food and raw materials that only American dollars could buy, British living standards would suffer and British industry would grind to a halt. It was of this point that the AEU Executive wished to persuade the members.

After the summer of 1947 statements by Executive spokesmen, notably by the General Secretary, became less hostile to ERP. With time Gardner grew enthusiastic. Even his first comments were favourable in tone if not in substance. He thus noted the convening of the meeting of the sixteen European states which were to form the OEEC, in order to "frame a plan for recovery which would enable each country to lift it-<sup>45</sup>self out of the morass with American help". The difficulty of the

---

45. Journal, November 1947, p. 321.

current situation, the primary importance of self-help in resolving it and the secondary importance attached to foreign assistance --- all these themes are present in the statement, and all were fundamental to the AEU leaders' discussions of Britain's place in the world, as we saw in Chapter V. By fitting ERP into this framework, Gardner was already attaching positive value to it, albeit not explicitly. A month later, despite the fact that the British trade union movement had not taken a formal decision on Marshall Aid, he remarked that the TUC General Council supported it.<sup>46</sup> On the whole, he seems to have adopted an approach favourable to the plan but overlaid with a formal "wait-and-see" attitude.

By the time Gardner came to write the "Editor's Notes" for the January 1948 edition of the Journal, he no longer had to pretend that the Union Executive was not in favour of the Plan, for the TUC General Council had decided officially to back it. He now cast subtlety to the winds and referred to the report drawn up by the conference of the countries willing to accept ERP as "a European Five-Year Plan so vast and intricate that it cannot be achieved without the direct and sustained effort of the working class in all the countries concerned". It would be "unthinkable", he continued, for "the trade union movement" to "shirk or shrink from carrying out each country's share" of the plan.<sup>47</sup> "Our own organised movement will assuredly respond." The hard sell

46. Journal, December 1947, p. 354.

47. Journal, January 1948, pp. 1-2.

of the Marshall Plan and, with it, the shift in the image of the USA were about to begin.

In making up his mind, or more precisely in helping his readers to make up theirs, about the Plan, Gardner gave great weight to the attitudes and influence of American trade unions. In December 1947 he had written that the opinions of the American unions on the issue were "a little obscure", for although it was "announced that they are in favour ... a recent visitor from one of the C.I.O. unions ... informs us that the C.I.O. is against it, because of 'political implications.'" <sup>48</sup>

The following month, however, when no longer required to observe a formal neutrality on the issue, he set about removing any doubts about the attitudes of the American unions. He pointed out that both the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) were represented on the Harriman Committee. This was a committee of American notables set up by the Truman Administration at the behest of Senator Vandenberg with the formal aim of gathering information and studying the effects of the Plan. It had the additional purpose of providing the Plan with a suitable imprimatur for its presentation to Congress and the American public. <sup>49</sup> The participation of the American unions in what was ostensibly an advisory committee (rather like the ones proliferating in Britain at the time) was cited in order to prepare the Union public for the official cleansing of the Plan and

48. Journal, December 1947, p. 354.

49. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, pp, 222-23.

the discovery of the purity of American motives in making the offer. After all, if the American workers' organizations were engaged in formulating the scheme, it could not conceivably be detrimental to the interests of the workers of other countries. The Executive's opinion of the value of such bodies was forgotten.<sup>50</sup> How the power of the trade unions and American democracy were undermined by the Taft-Hartley Act apparently was not considered relevant in this context. Now it was useful to have US unions considered strong and the United States thought democratic.

In the February issue of the Journal Gardner noted that his earlier statement about unease in the CIO with regard to the Marshall Plan had been refuted in communications he had received from the United States. His correspondent had stressed the "whole-hearted" and "staunch support given to the Plan by both the American trade union organizations".<sup>51</sup> He then reproduced a lengthy extract from a speech by CIO President Philip Murray explaining "the reasons for American labour's support of the Plan. In this extract Murray (and in quoting him, Gardner) stressed the USA's good intentions and goodwill in offering assistance. He also developed the theme of American trade unions, understood to be operating in a democratic context, as guarantors against any American attempt to exploit the Plan for political purposes.

The American worker, Murray said, supported Marshall Aid because

---

50. See above Chapter IV-B-5.

51. Journal, February 1948, p. 33.

of his traditional American sympathy for the underdog and his awareness that "what helps our neighbors helps us". At the October 1947 convention of the CIO, he continued, a resolution on US aid was unanimously adopted by "more than 600 delegates ... from all the unions in the basic industries and in the white collar field".

We said that "under no circumstances should food or any other aid by any country be used as a means of coercing free but needy people in the exercise of their rights or independence and self-government, or to fan the flames of civil warfare."

That is a clear-cut statement from a great group of American citizens who have a considerable voice in the conduct of their government's affairs. (52)

As a careful reading of this statement shows, the resolution passed by the CIO convention was not so much a statement of willingness to render assistance as a warning to the Administration not to use aid for political purposes. Even though George Meany, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL, and James Carey, his opposite number in the CIO, were actively engaged in selling the Plan to the American public, <sup>53</sup> there was a great deal less unanimity in the US labour movement than Gardner's correspondent would have had him believe. Before the October 1947 CIO convention, the President, Murray, had maintained in public a neutral stance on the issue. Most of the relatively strong communist contingent at the convention would have opposed a resolution of firm support for ERP in the form it was taking in the summer of 1947, that is, over

---

52. Journal, February 1948, p. 33.

53. Paterson, Soviet-American Confrontation, pp. 222-23; Goulden, p. 135; Hero and Starr, pp. 33-35.

Soviet opposition and without the participation of the eastern European countries. The resolution passed was thus a lukewarm formulation which did not deal specifically with Marshall Aid but called in general terms "for aid for recovery while warning against infringement on the sovereignty of European states". "So mild (was the resolution) that even the communists and pro-Soviets ... spoke, or at least voted, in favor of it".<sup>54</sup> Indeed, only by making non-intervention a central clause could the resolution obtain such broad support. It was not until late January 1948, shortly before its representatives were due to testify before the Senate Committee on the issue, that the CIO's support for the Marshall Plan became specific and explicit. The decision to support ERP was made not by the Convention but by the Executive Bureau, the counterpart of the General Council of the TUC.<sup>55</sup>

Murray's statement and the extracts Gardner quoted from it were thus misrepresentations of the actual state of affairs in the CIO. By creating the impression of greater unanimity than in fact obtained, they swept under the rug serious doubts about the Plan, doubts expressed mainly by communists but by others as well. By denying, in effect, the persistence of opposition in America, Murray and his British colleagues were trying to suppress opposition among their respective audiences. For if the American workers had no doubts about the Truman Administration's motives and purposes, there was no reason for anyone else to be

---

54. Hero and Starr, p. 35.

55. The Times, 24 January 1948, p. 4.

suspicious. As a reading of even the British press would have shown, however, there were still doubts and opposition to the Plan in the CIO.<sup>56</sup> It thus hardly seems likely that the AEU leadership could have been convinced of America's goodwill by the purported unanimity of union opinion in favour of ERP. Nor could they have been convinced by the unions' purported role as guarantors of non-intervention (particularly in the light of their earlier expressions of opinion concerning the state of American democracy). Rather, it seems that because they considered the aid necessary and wished to convince their members that it was, they sought to demonstrate the USA's honourable intentions. This was the purpose of the references to the unions. At the same time, in portraying the unions as able to safeguard the interests of other countries through their participation in the American political system, the AEU's spokesman, implicitly at least, was revising the earlier more hostile assessment of the United States.

The AEU leadership thus had embarked on a campaign in favour of ERP, and the American unions were a useful element in it. Gardner made the point sharper and more explicit two months later when he wrote that "the bona fides of the Marshall Plan were guaranteed by all sections of the American Trade Union Movement".<sup>57</sup> The most important argument in favour of Marshall Aid, however, was simply that it was considered vital to the Union's primary objective of national reconstruction for full

---

56. The Times, 24 January 1948, p. 4.

57. Journal, April 1948, p. 98.

employment. Thus Gardner wrote in the late winter of 1948: "if we do not get some material help under (ERP), our position as a nation will be desperate indeed. We shall be fools and worse if we shut our eyes to these facts. Whether we like it or not trade union policy must be based upon these facts."<sup>58</sup>

Tanner made the point even more forcefully when he faced the NC that summer. The alternative to the Marshall Plan, he argued, was a further cut in essential food and raw material supplies which could lead only to hardship and unemployment and, consequently, to even greater hardship.

No government dare refuse such aid, unless the terms of such aid prevented our recovery or robbed us of our independence, and if we did not have such aid we should be more at the mercy of the U.S.A. anyway --- or any other power.

Furthermore, the European trade unions were agreed, and the American unions ensured, that there would be nothing to fear from the United States on that score. Again the unions of other countries were used to establish the "bona fides" of ERP, and again the influence of the American unions was deemed crucial. Tanner did not recant completely his earlier opinions of the United States. The implications of such a recantation are there, but, because his approach to the opponents of ERP was more conciliatory, he avoided making the change explicit. Thus, while expressing understanding for the suspicions, fears and motives of the opponents of ERP, Tanner registered his disagreement.

---

58. Journal, March 1948, p. 66.

The trade union representatives of the countries at the London Conference of Trade Unions in March (1948) on the European Recovery Programme recognised the dangers threatening the economic life of all their countries --- including the U.S.A. --- if U.S. aid was rejected. After a full and careful consideration they found that the dangers were much less, and the benefits greater, in accepting U.S. aid. ...

The American ... trade unions ... united and (threw) the weight of their influence into all the stages of the discussion of the Marshall Plan because they regarded it as the last hope of maintaining world peace.

Not only were the unions of the Marshall countries and the United States convinced of the greater danger of not accepting aid, but through their and the American unions' active participation, any ill effects of the Plan would be minimized.

Arrangements were made for the full co-operation of all the trade union centres in the countries concerned, as well as the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. of America, for trade union participation with Governments operating the plan and in safeguarding our collective interest and the maintenance of at least the normal economic and political freedom and personal liberty to which we are accustomed. (59)

The discussion of the international trade union conference expands the illusion of unity from the American to the western European context, for this conference did not unite "all the trade union centres in the countries concerned". The important communist-dominated centres of France and Italy, for example, stayed away. It would not have been helpful from the AEU leaders' standpoint to emphasize this fact. Unity and unanimity among western unions about ERP was a useful propaganda point for a leadership intent on selling the Plan to its public. Any

59. RPNC, 1948, pp. 215-16.

60. The Economist, 13 March 1948, p. 408.

sign of disunity, therefore, had to be covered up, as it had been in Murray's statement on the CIO. There was no room for any doubt in the importance of the aid and the goodwill of the donor.

The AEU Executive thus used two arguments in favour of ERP: sheer necessity and the lack of any ulterior motive on the Americans' part. To demonstrate the latter point it was necessary to revise or, more accurately, to forget, earlier hostile images of a United States engaged in "dollar imperialism". The American unions were useful in demonstrating the purity of Washington's motives and were presented as guardians of the interests of the world's workers in the USA. The attribution to them of such a role, however, implied an attack of selective amnesia about earlier statements regarding America. The anti-democratic Taft-Hartley Act might never have existed, for, if the unions were deemed to be playing a central role in the American political process with respect to ERP, the Act could not have undermined American labour or American democracy to any significant extent. An aspect of the hostile image of the United States thus was quietly forgotten because it was useful to do so. The tempering of the earlier image of the USA was not explicit, but it was real enough.

In other sections of the British Labour Movement the sale and/or explanation of American benevolence during this period involved the projection of an image in which the United States itself was beginning its march to socialism. How else, after all, could Washington's apparently disinterested goodwill be understood? Surely no capitalist

state prone to dollar imperialism could act this way. None of the AEU's official spokesmen ever went as far as this, but each in his own way contributed to the rehabilitation of the United States.

In the summer of 1948 the internal Union debate about Marshall Aid was officially closed. The National Committee of that year passed a resolution in "appreciation" of American "material assistance" with the standard reservation, to show that they had not abandoned their principles, that "such aid is freed from any economic or political conditions".<sup>62</sup> This innocuous resolution dovetailed with the Executive spokesmen's own statements and gave the appearance that radical opinion had been taken into account. However, it also meant that, come what might, as far as the AEU EC was concerned, there would be no conditions of any kind attached, even, one suspects, if there actually were. From now on Marshall Aid was taken for granted and, insofar as the matter was raised at all, it was in the context of discussions of Britain's progress under it.<sup>63</sup>

---

61. Epstein, pp. 107-11.

62. Journal, September 1948, p. 275.

63. See above Chapter V-B.

C. Reconstruction and the American Model

The AEU leaders' ERP campaign softened the image of America. As a result, the inhibitions --- which derived from ideology, nationalism and the Union's internal politics --- about using a favourable image of the US to further other arguments, were breached, but not destroyed. Although the AEU spokesmen continued to belittle the American experience and to question its relevance to their problems,<sup>64</sup> they did become more willing to cite the United States' industrial experience as a model worthy of study if not always of emulation. Within certain limits, therefore, the rehabilitation of the United States, begun in the battle over Marshall Aid, continued in the battle to boost production and productivity.

Despite the fact that the outside world was conceived as the source of the UK's problems, the solutions proposed by the President and General Secretary did not actually involve attempts to change the international setting. Generally, they proposed domestic measures, the most fundamental of which was increased production for export. This suggestion, in fact, is the leitmotif of the recovery programme and was<sup>65</sup> stated and restated at every opportunity.

While it is easy to say that production must be increased, it is

---

64. See above Chapter V-B.

65. See above Chapter IV-B-1.

not so easy to achieve it. During the first part of the period under review, when Britain still benefitted from a sellers' market for its manufactures, AEU leaders saw the problem as getting the equipment,<sup>66</sup> materials and manpower to the important export industries. The leadership understood that this was essentially a short-term, indeed, a stopgap approach, although one might question if they made it clear enough to the members at the time.<sup>67</sup> With the end of the sellers' market, the emphasis changed sharply; it was not only increased production but increased labour productivity that had to be attained, Tanner told the 1949 National Committee:

In the present crisis, increased productivity, reducing costs, is essential to full employment. The end of the sellers' market --- so long anticipated --- is now here and the demand for our goods is shrinking. Buyers are becoming more independent and choosy --- particularly as regards price and quality. We have to face keener competition. (68)

The AEU leaders' statements presented increased mechanization as the best way of increasing productivity and singled out the United States as the obvious model of the benefits of mechanized mass production. As we saw earlier, there were certain difficulties in using the American model, and they were never fully overcome.<sup>69</sup> Still, the acceptance of the Marshall Plan apparently made the US somewhat more respectable. In July 1948 the General Secretary was moved to remark approvingly on an American business consultant's assessment of Britain's

66. The Times, 4 August 1945, p. 2; 27 August 1945, p. 5; 14 February 1946, p. 2; 7 October 1946, p. 5.

67. Journal, August 1945, pp. 225-26; The Times, 7 October 1946, p. 5.

68. RPNC, 1949, p. 243.

economic problems, which the consultant "summarises ... by saying that workers in this country work harder than their fellows in America for less money because they work less efficiently". The fault was not the workers' but lay in their lack of power tools, the lack of standardisation, the poor lay-out of work and the balance of flow technique to ensure that everyone is working at the same speed".<sup>70</sup>

Even so, Gardner's first reaction to the proposed Anglo-American Council on Productivity was distrust and suspicion of the motives and opinions of "American experts".<sup>71</sup> To a great extent the AACP was able to circumvent this prejudice against being studied and told what to do by foreigners by doing away with the "American expert". Productivity teams composed of British worker and management representatives were sent to the US to examine the situation for themselves and to draw their own conclusions. One excuse for minimizing the value and importance of the AACP's reports, thus, was neatly avoided. As a result of the Productivity Teams, the United States was given more and more favourable publicity in the pages of the Journal than it had had since the war. In the period 1945-1951 a great deal of space was devoted to the Teams; there were reports on the selection of participants, the involvement of

---

69. See above Chapter V-B.

70. Journal, July 1948, p. 193.

71. See above pp. 250-52.

the AEU or other CSEU representatives and the Teams' findings.

The leaders' imagination was especially captured by the Productivity Teams when they themselves were members. Thus, in September 1949, Gardner announced that he was going to represent the CSEU on one and embarked on a long disquisition on the importance of circulating the Teams' findings as widely as possible in industry. In the next issue of the Journal, the editorial was devoted to demonstrating how crucial was the Gardner Team's area of study: the use of power-operated tools and mechanical handling devices. To support his contention, he cited some of the findings of the first Team to complete its report, the Steel Founding Mission.

As Gardner pointed out, the Steel Founding Team's findings showed that there is more to mechanization than machines. He did not stress the point here, but in subsequent reports gave it greater and greater prominence. For the present, he was content to note that the Steel Founding Team's findings showed "that the fundamental causes of high productivity are mainly psychological", a belief that everyone benefits

72. Journal, March 1949, p. 74; May 1949, p. 136; June 1949, p. 167; July 1949, p. 199; September 1949, pp. 257, 266; October 1949, pp. 289-90; November 1949, p. 328; December 1949, p. 363; January 1950, p. 7; April 1950, p. 268; October 1950, p. 298; November 1950, pp. 325-26, 331; December 1950, p. 366; February 1951, p. 43; March 1951, p. 74; April 1951, p. 104; May 1951, p. 135; July 1951, p. 199; August 1951, p. 221; September 1951, p. 263; December 1951, p. 366.

73. Journal, September 1949, p. 257.

74. Journal, October 1949, pp. 289-90.

from increased productivity. Another of the Team's conclusions, similarly mentioned in passing, is that American foundry workers were "conspicuously unskilled by British standards" and that there was "greater economy in the use of skill".<sup>75</sup> The first point is clearly consistent with the leadership's "national" outlook. The second point illustrates one of the corollaries of that policy, the progressive de-skilling of labour in the industry. This issue, so vital to the AEU "aristocracy", was not treated explicitly and fully by the leadership who only hinted at it by speaking of the need not to obstruct progress.

A few months later Gardner cited the report of another Productivity Team, the one concerned with the cotton spinning industry. He raised the same matters as he had in the earlier editorial but shifted the emphasis. Now he dwelt on the psychological factors and their consequences. The basic factor in the success of American industry was that "the management, supervisory staff and operatives ... understand that the higher standard of living and security of employment depend on producing more at a lower cost rather than less at a higher cost". The American unions recognized this, and they and the workers were consequently willing to try out "new devices and set-ups". Moreover, management cultivated this readiness on the part of the workers by trying to maintain good relations, ensuring adequate two-way communication between management and the shopfloor, particularly through "publicity at

---

75. Journal, October 1949, pp. 289-90.

mill level" to keep the workers informed. However, there is little  
joint consultation in Works Councils or Production Committees".<sup>76</sup>

He stressed the same points even more forcefully in his discussion of the findings of his own Mechanical Aids and Handling Team. This Team was set up because earlier missions had

been impressed by the technical equipment of American industry, the relatively higher standards of output, of wages, and standards of life in America --- and that, nevertheless, the American worker does not work harder or for longer hours than his British counterpart.

Mechanical handling devices cut costs and raised productivity and thus contributed to raising "the workers' standard of life".<sup>77</sup>

Gardner emphasized that the methods used in the United States were known and available in Britain, but they were used in the USA because those involved in American industry believed in the importance of cutting costs and raising productivity. He noted that new techniques were made acceptable to the workers "by a relatively simple wages structure, the rate for the job, shorter working hours, and social security provisions."<sup>78</sup>

Gardner was enthusiastic about his Production Team's findings. Indeed, given the tone of most previous statements about the United States, the rather uncritical attitude expressed here is almost shocking. Gardner himself seems to have been surprised by the American industrial

76. Journal, April 1950, p. 102.

77. Journal, June 1950, p. 165.

78. Journal, June 1950, pp. 165-66.

worker's high standard of living; he certainly gave it great emphasis and remarked that workers in the USA "undoubtedly get more out of life than do workers in this country." Evidently, getting more out of life involved higher material standards and more leisure. The General Secretary's enthusiasm was such that he did not try to deal with any of the possible costs of the American system. Were the social security provisions, deemed so important in making mechanization acceptable, a hint that there was little job (as opposed to employment) security in the advanced industries of the United States? Gardner omitted any mention of the unskilled nature of most of the work in these industries, although he had done so in other reports, and did not show what this might mean for the skilled workers of the UK.

Some time later Gardner reported on another Productivity Team in which a member of the AEU Executive had participated. This Team was charged with studying the role of the unions in attaining and maintaining American industry's higher productivity. "Basically, the team recommends the British unions to co-operate in the application of 'scientific management'". The Team had found that some US unions were using the techniques of scientific management themselves "as a means of protecting and furthering the widest interests of their members". Gardner cited the experience of a number of American unions in this field but dwelt particularly on the achievements of the United Automobile Workers of America (UAW). The UAW has "a time-study and engineering department at its headquarters" and "regards time study as the raw material for

collective bargaining". Gardner cited a case in which the UAW had used its technical expertise and "reorganised (a) foundry, increased the furnace capacity, and installed new moulding and core making equipment" in order to help a firm meet a wage claim.<sup>79</sup> Clearly this was more than the "pure and simple" business unionism, which the old ASE had practised since its inception.<sup>80</sup> This was the American version of the "national" line in action. It is little wonder, therefore, that Gardner's approach was so uncritical.

In the last editorial in which he devoted extensive space to the Productivity Teams and the industrial methods of the United States, the General Secretary cited a statement by "our own President (Bro. Jack Tanner) (who) put things in their right perspective". Tanner said,

inter alia:

New ideas and new methods are being introduced under the stimulus of the (ACCP's) activities --- not only, or even mainly as a result of the study of America's "know how," but from the interchange of ideas between British firms, industrialists and Trade Union leaders.

The point of the statement is made clear by Gardner's comment: "It is in this sober and matter-of-fact way and not in the Tory Party's way, that we shall win through."<sup>81</sup> Government policy was to seek reconstruction through a consensus of all the social groups.<sup>82</sup> To defend the Government and its policy against Tory attacks and the presumed Conserv-

79. Journal, August 1950, pp. 230-31.

80. Richter, pp. 32-33.

81. Journal, November 1950, p. 326.

82. See above Chapter II.

ative policies of riding roughshod over the rights of the workers, the AEU leaders once more had to stress the great progress Britain had made in its own way, without relying on others.

With this in mind, the role of the lengthy and uncritical discussions of the Productivity Teams' findings becomes more understandable. The US was not really being used as a model to be copied. There is no reason to doubt the Secretary's and the President's claims that those involved in British industry were aware of all these things before they went to America. Indeed, Tanner had been speaking of the need to cooperate in technological change since at least 1942.<sup>84</sup> The purpose of the Productivity Teams and of the reports on their findings was to show the workers and members a picture of their future, to illustrate what life would be like if they helped realize the leaders' productivity policy. Increased productivity was a corollary of the "national" line and, as the American example showed, was possible only if there were widespread acceptance of the collaborationist approach (assuming, of course, that radical policies of either the left or the right are out of the question). Since the purpose of the exercise was to sell the active members a certain policy, the image of the United States was necessarily a rosy one. The costs of change were minimized or simply not mentioned. The fact that the Journal was the medium for this sales pitch meant that there was no danger of an

---

83. See above pp. 160-61, 256.

84. RPWC, 1942, p. 300.

immediate response which might have added some shade to the image. It is significant that Tanner did not deal with the AACP and the findings of its Productivity Teams in his NC speeches. In those circumstances he would have had to make balancing statements himself or heard them made for him by one or more of the delegates. When, on one occasion, he did mention the observations of an AEU delegation to the US, his comments were more nuancé.

During our visit to the United States, we were struck by the drive to increase production and productivity by the American Unions and workers. They employ their own production efficiency experts. They co-operate with employers to increase production and then go out after their share of the increased earnings. Whatever we may think of such a policy we have, as a nation, to face their competition to win our daily bread. (85)

The AEU Executive cannot have thought this policy too abhorrent since they had been advocating it consistently for some time. Gardner could admit this more freely and, therefore, could paint a glowing picture of life and work in America. His primary objective was not to create sympathy for the United States but to mobilize the members' support for the Executive's policies. Such mobilization was all the more necessary because the internal opposition was now assailing the policies of cooperation which it had earlier supported and was attacking wage restraint. Thus the same factors and, to some extent, the same policies which had resulted in the development of the image of the hostile world now helped to temper it somewhat with regard to the USA.

---

85. RFNC, 1949, p. 243.

D. Aid and the International Trade Union Movement:

Laying the Groundwork for Anti-Sovietism

The American and western European non-communist trade unions were not the only labour organizations that the AEU leadership used as ammunition for propaganda on behalf of Marshall Aid. While those unions were used to bolster the positive argument, to demonstrate how good the Plan was, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was used to press the negative argument, to discredit the opponents of ERP. Moreover, as the Federation sank under the weight of unresolved conflicts, power and organizational maintenance concerns reinforced the need to discredit the international movement. In the course of these arguments, the WFTU was associated with the USSR and its communist instruments so that, on the one hand, the Soviet link was used to damn the Federation and, on the other, the Federation became a vehicle for attacks on the USSR and on communists in general.

In large measure the WFTU came to be used as a resource for attacks on opponents of Marshall Aid because it could not be used as a resource for support of the Plan. The imprimatur of the WFTU, the confederation of most of the major national trade union federations in the world, would have been a useful addition to the arguments in favour of American assistance. The WFTU's approval was unlikely, however, just because it did group most national federations, communist and non-communist, from communist-ruled states and from other countries.

The proponents of Marshall Aid thus faced two unsavoury prospects: that the Federation would take no position at all on the issue or that it would declare open opposition to ERP.

In the tense circumstances of the period, the failure of the WFTU to take a position would have been construed, not as a declaration of indifference, but as evidence of deep division within the international labour movement. Inaction by the WFTU would have meant, all too clearly, that a significant proportion of the world's workers' organizations had serious doubts about US aid. We have already seen how, in their accounts of events in the United States and western Europe, the EC's spokesmen suppressed information about trade union disunity. A neutral stand by the WFTU would not have permitted such suppression. There would have been no bland resolutions to reinterpret and distort, no majority whose views could be played up while minority opinion was ignored. The prospect of an anti-ERP stance, particularly by a plenary congress of the Federation, would have been even worse for the AEU leadership's cause. Given the manner in which the Soviet trade unions and their supporters had been exploiting the Federation apparatus and framework to propagate their and the Soviet Government's policies and ideas in various countries, such a defeat for Marshall Aid must have seemed not only possible but probable. Given the Executive's perceptions of communist influence in the AEU, it was important to

86. Allen, Trade Union Leadership, pp. 292-94.

prevent the opponents of ERP from exploiting the WFTU for their own propagandist aims. So the leaders chose to discredit the Federation, to limit its usefulness as a weapon for the other side. As the mere fact of conflict in the WFTU came to be seen as the basis of attacks on the moderate leadership of the British trade union movement, it became all the more necessary to discredit the international organization.

The need to discredit the WFTU led naturally to an acquiescence in its destruction. This does not mean that the AEU's leaders were firmly determined on the necessity of breaking up the WFTU. Nor does it mean that their concern to fight for ERP and for their own standing in the Union was the sole reason for the bitterness of their attacks on the Federation. Other factors too were important; these involved, no doubt, disappointed ideals and the frustrated attempts to integrate the International Trade Secretariats (ITS) in the WFTU and the Federation Secretariat's unilateral action in drawing up a statute for Trade  
87  
Departments which would compete with the ITS. Here, however, I shall deal mainly with the political and organizational aspects and uses of the WFTU.

Neither the TUC nor the AEU Executive seems to have come to the conclusion as quickly as the Americans did that it was important to discredit the Federation. One American attempt to undermine the Federation came from outside its ranks and another from within. The external

---

87. Allen, Trade Union Leadership, pp. 289-312.

actor was the American Federation of Labor which had not succumbed to the heady atmosphere of the wartime alliance and victory, as had the rival Congress of Industrial Organizations and the British TUC. The latter two had joined in establishing a global trade union federation that included the Soviet and other communist labour federations. The AFL maintained its historical close links with the TUC but would have<sup>88</sup> nothing to do with the State-dominated unions like the Soviet ones.

The Marshall proposals presented the AFL with the opportunity to destroy the World Federation. The AFL seized the chance and invited the representatives of the national centres of the unions in countries which had accepted Marshall Aid to a conference in order to have them pledge their support to the programme. Attendance at such a conference would have indicated a clear split between these unions and the communist-dominated ones. At the very least, it would have demonstrated the irrelevance of the WFTU to what, for many trade unionists, had<sup>89</sup> become the central issue confronting the movement.

The Soviet trade unions and their supporters were not idle either. One of the regular meetings of the WFTU's Executive Bureau, a small body roughly parallel to the EC in the AEU, was due to be held in November 1947. Just before this meeting, the Soviet trade union spokesmen and the press in the USSR indicated that there would be "strong ... attempts to have all 'moderate' or 'reformist' trade unionists removed from

88. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, p. 230.

89. The Times, 17 November 1947, p. 5.

influential posts" in the WFTU and to use the organization to further  
the Cominform programme of opposition to ERP.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, the  
Soviet organization was still not willing to countenance the break-up  
of the Federation: that would have been playing into the AFL's hands  
and would have robbed the Soviet unions of their access, through the  
WFTU, to workers' organizations in many parts of the world, including  
Britain's colonies. Nevertheless, the threat to remove reformists and  
moderates cannot but have been seen as an attack on the CIO and TUC  
representatives, among others, in the Executive Bureau.

Faced with these pressures from its rival American federation  
and from the Soviet movement, the CIO leadership "recognized the  
danger"<sup>91</sup> and concluded that the WFTU could not be neutral on the  
Marshall issue. The CIO, therefore, requested that the Executive  
Bureau place the matter on its agenda. The communists tried to avoid  
doing this, and the British, apparently not yet aware of the problems  
involved, agreed with them. Gardner echoed the official TUC line in an  
editorial. The differences over Marshall Aid and the deadlocked  
negotiations with the ITS constituted threats so grave as to "imperil  
the development of the W.F.T.U. on its present basis". Therefore, he  
said, they were not fit subjects for discussion in the Bureau but could  
be settled only by the full Congress.<sup>92</sup>

90. The Times, 19 November 1947, p. 4.

91. The Times, 17 November 1947, p. 5.

92. Journal, December 1947, p. 354.

This apparent naivete may have been just that. Other factors seem to have been involved in determining this attitude, however. Firstly, when he wrote these words in late 1947, the AEU did not yet have an official policy on ERP. Secondly, the British trade union movement had invested a great deal in the WFTU and had a big stake in its success. The TUC had invested in the Federation not only money but a great deal of prestige too. It had rejected the advice of its old ally, the AFL, in founding the WFTU. Walter Citrine, the General Secretary of the TUC, had been the Federation's first president, and on his translation to the National Coal Board in September 1946, he was replaced by Arthur Deakin, General Secretary of the TGWU. The WFTU thus constituted another field of action for the leading lights of the British movement, and the honours that the latter reaped in the field contributed to its prestige at home among its own members. Harrod's analysis would imply that membership in the WFTU was seen as a way of reinforcing the status of the leaders vis-à-vis the general membership and the British economic and political elite. <sup>93</sup> Indeed, in an editorial comment on the early meetings of the new Federation in 1945, Gardner well expressed the pride in and defiance about the TUC's participation in the international grouping:

The British TUC is manifestly resolved to co-operate in bringing about a stronger and wider international organization of the trade unions, and it is not to be deterred in the task by the refusal of the (AFL) to countenance it in any way. However much we may regret the attitude of the (AFL) the British Trade Union Movement has nothing to regret or to apologise for in the effort

---

93. See above pp. 26-27.

it initiated, which the Paris meetings have advanced a farther stage towards completion. (94)

Great things had been expected and hoped for the WFTU. Most important were its "claims ... to be closely associated with the work" of the United Nations. Without the WFTU, Gardner had once argued, "the work of the Economic and Social Council cannot proceed", nor can the the imposition of economic sanctions by the Security Council succeed "without the full consent and co-operation of the Trade Union Movement" since "the burden of sanctions would primarily fall" on the workers. The "close consultation and collaboration" of the unions through their international organization in the work of the Trusteeship Council was also considered vital. In short, Gardner and the official British labour movement as a whole visualized an extensive political role for the WFTU.

95

Given these investments, returns, expectations and attitudes it could not have been easy for the British trade union leadership to admit that the Federation was not even able to keep its own house in order --- that it could arrive at no agreement with the ITS or that its Executive Bureau could not even discuss Marshall Aid. Hence Gardner's assertion that a plenary session of the Federation Congress should handle these issues --- an assertion that the Congress could handle and resolve them, that it was still possible to achieve something within the

---

94. Journal, October 1945, p. 290.

95. Journal, February 1946, p. 34.

WFTU. The prestige of the "reformist" and "moderate" British trade union movement and its leadership was at stake. The expression of continued faith in the WFTU and the desire to avoid an open breach in the Executive Bureau were thus part of a concern to maintain the active membership's commitment to the organization and support for their leaders. Organizational maintenance and power considerations made it hard to use the WFTU as a resource for argument.

Not for long, however. At the November 1947 meeting of the Bureau, Deakin, the British representative, announced a change of heart. He now supported a discussion of Marshall Aid "sooner rather than later". The issue was not resolved at that meeting, and the TUC General Council then announced that unless the Bureau thrashed the matter out by mid-February 1948 "it would consider itself free to meet the national trade union centres of the sixteen countries which accepted the principle of the Marshall Plan and to discuss it with them". The WFTU's General Secretary said no meeting was possible before 1 April. The General Council said that was too late "because it expected the American aid legislation to pass through the United States Congress during the first week of April and thought it important that the trade union movements in Europe should express an opinion on the proposed legislation before it became law". The TUC then went ahead with an international conference of its own, not the one the AFL intended to organize, in March 1948 and ERP received the endorsement the British sought.

96. Allen, Trade Union Leadership, pp. 295-96.

The change of heart by Deakin and the TUC seems to have derived from the belief that any action or inaction by the WFTU on ERP posed a threat to a policy that the British labour leaders now considered vital to reconstruction and full employment. The opposition could have used the WFTU's response as an argument in its own behalf. The concern to have ready a public endorsement of the programme before the US Congress voted on the issue may have resulted from the same sort of beliefs that led the Government to stress the "self-help" aspect of Marshall Aid.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the General Council would have been just as humiliated by the WFTU's inaction on or rejection of the TUC's ERP policy as by the break-up of the Federation. The world would have been treated to the spectacle of an organization, in which the TUC had invested so much, spurning the British movement's policy on an issue it considered vital. Thereafter, relations in the WFTU continued to deteriorate; early in 1949 the non-communist members left the Federation.<sup>98</sup>

The inhibitions about using the WFTU as a resource in arguments over Marshall Aid, however, had lapsed a year before the final break. The pretence that the issue might yet be resolved in the WFTU framework was now dropped. Like the General Council, the AEU Executive accepted the necessity of a meeting of the OEEC union federations to endorse the Plan. The Executive, however, had to avoid accusations of supporting the splitting of the movement; splitting was and is, after all, one

---

97. See above pp. 55-60.

98. Allen, Trade Union Leadership, p. 311.

of the more heinous crimes in the British code of trade union practice.

With organizational and personal considerations clearly to the fore, Gardner expressed himself in the following manner in January 1948:

Can we expect the Executive Bureau of the W.F.T.U. to give the necessary lead and undertake the necessary organisation of such a conference? The W.F.T.U. is disabled by its own divisions. That is the brutal truth. Can we afford to blink the truth? Is it any use to keep up a pretence of unity or the possibility of common action on this major issue of policy? (99)

The TUC and the moderate British leadership in general could not be accused of splitting: the movement was already split and the movement's organization was consequently irrelevant.

Gardner continued in this vein the following month as he again defended the British trade union movement against the charge of splitting. The TUC had been a loyal member of the Federation, had supported it financially (to the tune of £15,000 a year) and had acted in accordance with its principles. It gladly would continue to support the Federation if the WFTU were "making its full contribution to the maintenance of world peace, to the recovery of nations from the exhaustion and devastation of war, and to the formulation of a coherent policy of co-operation among the nations". The Federation was doing none of these things: it could not even agree to an Executive Bureau meeting "to consider the implications of the European Recovery Programme from the Trade Union standpoint."<sup>100</sup>

After the London conference of European trade unions, Gardner

---

99. Journal, January 1948, p. 2.

100. Journal, February 1948, p. 34.

again denied that it was "a move to split the International Trade Union Movement". The TUC could not be accused of splitting the movement over Marshall Aid because the movement was already "divided" on the issue. The WFTU was thus immobilized. "Does that mean that nothing at all could be done by the Trade Union Movement in the countries that are prepared to co-operate in carrying out the Recovery Programme?"<sup>101</sup>

The image of a divided and ineffective WFTU was thus exploited for defensive purposes. By destroying illusions he himself had nurtured about the possible extent and import of international trade union solidarity, the AEU's spokesman was defending the TUC General Council and its supporters in the AEU Executive from charges of splitting and abetting splitting.

The WFTU could be used as an offensive weapon too, however. By examining the source and nature of the divisions in the Federation, the Executive's spokesmen tried to discredit the opponents of ERP. In February 1948 Gardner had written that the conflict between Britain and the United States, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union, on the other, "raises the question of Anglo-Soviet relations" in the WFTU. The nature of this "question" --- which was reflected inside the TUC as well --- was that of

A tug-of-war... between those who would swing the weight of the British trade unions to the support of Soviet Russia and against the Anglo-American policy of co-operation for Europe's economic recovery; and those who believe that the policy of appeasement

---

<sup>101</sup>. Journal, April 1948, p. 98.

will be of no avail and that the immediate responsibility of the Trade Unions is to assist the effort to overcome the economic crisis and set Europe on its feet again. (102)

Gardner thus imputed by innuendo ill-will to the opponents of Marshall Aid in Britain and abroad. The use in the first clause of the word "appeasement" to parallel the "support of Russia" cannot but have evoked one image among that generation of trade unionists. The opposition between "appeasement" and support for "the effort to overcome the economic crisis and set Europe on its feet again" is no less clear.

The argument was emotional, and there was no pretence of subtlety. It used anti-Sovietism to discredit the opponents of Marshall Aid. The opponents of ERP in the WFTU were supporters of the new nazi-type threat posed by the Soviet Union. They were ranged against those who wished only to reconstruct Europe with American assistance. If this was the source of the divisions in the WFTU, no blame could be attached to the leaders of the British trade union movement. On the contrary; morally they could take no other stand. Moreover, since this conflict, as Gardner pointed out, was reflected inside the British unions, the ill-will of the AEU's internal opposition was demonstrated. The position of the official leadership thus was enhanced while that of the opposition was undermined.

This was the only occasion on which a clear link was established between support for reconstruction and anti-Sovietism. The image of a

hostile USSR, useful as it may have been in discrediting the opposition, was not used again in this context. For much of the next eighteen months little at all was said for good or ill about the Soviet Union. Moreover, Tanner, in his 1948 National Committee address, adopted a very conciliatory tone towards the USSR and its internal opponents. While he stressed the necessity of American aid and the manner in which the unions of the United States guaranteed against abuses, he also called for the involvement of Moscow in the economic development of Europe. Soviet participation in ERP, as a guarantee against American intervention, was forgotten. Instead, the Russians were to be involved in Europe's agricultural development through their proposed involvement in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN.<sup>103</sup>

It seems that the image of a hostile USSR was purposely avoided ---despite its usefulness and despite the fact that the Executive held no brief for the USSR --- in order not to antagonize the communists and fellow travellers in the organization. The Executive seems to have been intent not to burn its bridges. Perhaps the leaders thought reconciliation with the communists possible. It is more likely that the real object of the more conciliatory line adopted by Tanner was not the hard core of communists in the Union but those, particularly the shop stewards, who were deemed to be subject to communist influence.<sup>104</sup>

Many trade union leaders in 1948 feared that an anti-communist offensive

103. RPNC, 1948, p. 218.

104. See above Chapter IV-C.

by the Executives would backfire. An attack on communist union activists, after all, could be construed (and, if the communists had anything to do with it, would be construed) as an attack on shopfloor autonomy. Thus it was felt best not to supply the communists with such ammunition.

Anti-Sovietism, similarly, may have been considered as likely to play into the hands of the internal communist opposition. Given the undeniable link between pro-Sovietism and communism at the time, an attack on the USSR could be construed as an attack on the CP and its members. Pro-Sovietism was not, however, the exclusive province of the communists. Indeed, the impression seems to have been strong in the AEU and in the British trade union movement generally that pro-Sovietism had been one of the hallmarks of the resurgent shop stewards' movement during the war and had become a basic value of the British unionized

106

workers! The Executive, therefore, may well have thought it best not to tamper with this attitude, the strength of which they probably over-

107

estimated.

It is tempting to argue that having once drawn explicit parallels between inter-state, inter-union and intra-union conflicts and being now inhibited from discussing the first and last of these, the Executive's spokesmen used their continuing discussions of the problems of the WFTU

---

105. See above pp. 193-94.

106. Jefferys, p. 253; Epstein, pp. 89-90; Bill Jones, The Russia Complex (Manchester, 1977).

107. Knowles, Strikes, pp. 54-56.

as vehicles for coded attacks on the USSR and the internal opposition. While the leaders of the AEU were not lacking in deviousness and subtlety,<sup>108</sup> such an analysis ascribes too much to them. Nonetheless, even if Gardner had not drawn the parallels, would any politically attentive and organizationally active Engineer not have read broader implications into the leaders' statements on the deteriorating relations in the WFTU? The question is of course unanswerable. It is safe to say only that the implications are there for those who wished to see them.

At the 1948 National Committee it was resolved "to make it plain that on no account will (the NC) tolerate any attempt to split or render weaker" the WFTU.<sup>109</sup> In a discussion of the agenda for the forthcoming Trades Union Congress Gardner piously recorded his agreement with this statement. He expressed the hope that Congress would demonstrate the "unanimous" wish of the British trade union movement "to preserve the basis of the world organisation the T.U.C. took the initiative in formulating three years ago".

The General Secretary did not stop at this bland statement of goodwill, however. He returned again to the earlier defensive theme in order to deny the British unions' responsibility for the condition of the Federation. Following the maxim of the nature of the best defence, he proceeded to affix blame elsewhere. In a tone more of sorrow than

---

108. See above Chapter IV-C.

109. Journal, September 1948, p. 271.

of anger he said that the WFTU's original purposes had been perverted. He did not name the culprits but proclaimed that it was up to the TUC to "bring all sections of the international movement back to its prime purpose", namely, "to unite ... the trade union bodies of freedom-loving nations irrespective of race or creed, or of political, religious or philosophical distinctions". The Federation, he claimed, was "meant to be an industrial and not a political organisation". Such a statement may seem odd in view of Gardner's assertions almost three years before of the WFTU's rightful role in the UN, but "political" in the traditional trade union sense means "partisan" and should be understood in this way here.

Gardner does not say who was using the international body for partisan purposes but comments: "It is a thousand pities that trade unionists in any country should have reason to fear its influence to be detrimental to the movement's ideals of freedom and democracy." <sup>110</sup>

The WFTU was thus a subversive organization. Particularly after the Czechoslovakian coup earlier that year, it could not have been hard for any reader of the western press to identify the villains in the decline of the WFTU as the USSR, the Soviet trade union movement and communists and fellow travellers in all countries. Little subtlety of thought is required to discern the anti-communist and anti-Soviet implications in Gardner's statement, but the implications are just that, implications

and no more, and they are clearly secondary to the defensive functions of the argument.

By November 1948 Gardner's assessment of the WFTU's chances of survival were very pessimistic. Again he sprang to the defence of the British trade union movement and its moderate leadership. It was "obvious", he said, "that the usefulness of our International Trade Union Organization is gravely compromised" by the deadlocked negotiations with the ITS and the deepening and increasingly public political rift within the Federation. The General Council which, he reminded his readers, had "shown much patience and skill in avoiding a final breach", had been given a free hand, by the Congress at Margate, to settle the matter as it saw fit.

After the split Gardner refrained from any mention of the issue and it was left to Tanner to defend the General Council --- and the AEU Executive --- to the 1949 National Committee. The "trouble", he argued, stemmed from the same factors which had "immobilised previous Trade Union internationals in times of crisis --- excessive nationalism and the subversion of Trade Union activities to political objectives". The identity of the subversives became clear when he noted:

The fact remains that the W.F.T.U. has been used as a vehicle of political policy and propaganda and a study of its literature and activities will reveal the nature of those politics. The 1948 May Day Manifesto of the W.F.T.U. contained a condemnation of national Trade Union movements which had supported Marshall Aid, although the Chairman and members of the Executive Bureau and Executive Committee represented such movements.

---

111. Journal, November 1948, p. 322.

Despite such provocations the AEU Executive had worked conscientiously and diligently within the ITS of engineering workers, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), to reach an agreement with the WFTU. The door to a merger was not closed by the IMF or by any other ITS but by the Federation which had tried to bypass the ITS by finalizing the regulations for the proposed Trade Departments and writing "all the National Centres asking for particulars of individual unions which could supply delegates to represent various trades in the W.F.T.U. Trade Departments".

(Thus) the doom of the latest attempt to build a strong Trade Union International was sealed by the determination to subvert --- by fair means or foul --- a Trade Union organisation to a political policy and objective upon which there can be no agreement so long as the cleavage in world political ideologies continues.

This international subversion had important domestic consequences and implications since "freedom and independence (are) vital to all Unions". Tanner warned the members: "Collectively we must recognize that should our Union be captured by any group ... it must split off into factions so that in the end --- as workers --- we shall be far worse off than before."<sup>112</sup>

While the implicit attack on the USSR is obvious, particularly in the reference to the Marshall Plan, Tanner's main concern was to draw a moral from the sad history of the World Federation that could be applied to relations within the Union. The split in the WFTU was a

<sup>112</sup>. RFNC, 1949, pp. 248-50.

warning against a similar subversion of the AEU. Although Tanner  
113 and communists in general 114 explicitly for the  
first time at this session of the NC, the parable of the WFTU was the  
closest he came to a public attack on communist activities in the Union  
before 1952.

However useful attacks on the WFTU had been in order to defend  
Marshall Aid and the standing of the moderate trade union leadership,  
it was not particularly important or useful to discuss the International  
Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), established by non-communist  
and non-Catholic trade union centres after the collapse of the World  
Federation of Trade Unions. The fact that the ICFTU existed and that  
the TUC was involved in its work was not even mentioned until almost a  
115  
year after its foundation. In the context of the new Confederation  
there were no charges of splitting that had to be disproved, nor did  
relations in it provide illustrative material for other organizational  
arguments.

It was only after the Milan Congress of the new body in 1951  
that its existence led to any sort of commentary, not in order to defend  
or praise it but to attack the WFTU and all it stood for. Gardner re-  
ported a message sent to Milan by the World Confederation suggesting  
cooperation between the two bodies "for the defence of the workers'  
vital interests". The General Secretary quoted at length from the

---

113. See below Chapter VI-E.

114. See above Chapter IV-D.

115. Journal, July 1950, p. 205.

ICFTU's "blunt and emphatic" reply. He may thus have been giving vent to his own pent-up hostility and bitterness towards the communists (assuming he had any). The context of the discussion, however, was an argument about the good or bad intentions of the Soviet Union in its international policy. We shall try to determine in the next section of this chapter why this argument came up at this point. Here it is important to stress that in a reversal of the situation in February 1948 Gardner was now using the WFTU to discredit the Soviet government. In other earlier statements the anti-Soviet implications of attacks on the WFTU had been, in general, mere by-products and decidedly secondary to the main purpose. Now the anti-Soviet campaign was explicit and primary. While Gardner did not neglect the organizational and personal defence aspects in assailing the WFTU, they were now the secondary points. The hypocrisy and ill-will of the Soviet Union's puppet trade union federation (that at least is how Gardner portrayed it) was used to demonstrate the hypocrisy and ill-will of the Soviet puppeteer and the evils of the Soviet system.

Gardner noted that the ICFTU's statement that the WFTU was now seeking a rapprochement "with those who yesterday you (the WFTU) were calling representatives of the 'yellow' international, and for whom, according to your press and the Communist radio stations, you have nothing but contempt". If the World Federation is sincere, the Confederation reply continued, it should admit "the dishonesty of these statements in plain terms".

But the (ICFTU) went further. It challenged the W.F.T.U. to show what it had done, or is doing in the Communist-controlled countries to improve the conditions of the workers. Instead of trying to solve the problems of the free countries ... why don't you do something for your own members in the Communist-controlled countries? Why don't you do something to abolish concentration and slave labour camps where they still exist? As a free organization we take orders from no government --- can you say the same? We can only open discussions with free organizations which are not under the tutelage of outside forces. Can you claim to be such a free trade union organization? (116)

Thus the USSR, like its tools, was not only insincere but evil. It was a land of concentration camps, a land in which trade unions operated not for the good of the worker but in the interests of an evil regime.

By the time Gardner wrote this editorial, anti-Sovietism had been adopted by the AEU leadership and was being used in its statements to its members to advance objectives bearing directly on the basic functions of the Union. Although in this editorial the anti-Soviet intent was explicit, attacks on the WFTU in earlier years had always had anti-Soviet implications, and no great discernment was required to perceive them. So even though there were strong inhibitions against taking the anti-Soviet line for most of this period, the arguments about the WFTU laid the groundwork for the later public adoption of this attitude. The image of a Soviet Union whose friendship was vital to recovery through the expansion of trade gave way to that of a USSR that was subversive, aggressive and cruel even to its own population. It is the more explicit development of this theme that we shall now turn.

---

116. Journal, August 1951, p. 226.

E. Aid, Rearmament and Anti-Sovietism

We saw in the previous section that Gardner had once used an explicitly anti-Soviet line in attacking the opponents of Marshall Aid. For various reasons this argument was then suppressed as a more conciliatory tone was adopted vis-à-vis the internal opposition. In 1949, however, the anti-Soviet line was relaunched. From then on, attacks on the USSR were used in two main types of argument: anti-communist ones and pro-rearmament ones.

Gardner attacked the Soviet Union explicitly for the first time in February 1948 in the course of a discussion of the American Labour Movement's support for Marshall Aid and of the base nature of the opposition to European recovery by the USSR's supporters in the WFTU and the UK trade union movement. He took as his keynote Bevin's "blunt and sharp analysis of the aims of Russian policy" and spoke sympathetically of the Foreign Secretary's determination to conclude an alliance with the western Europeans. It cannot be stressed too often that the intention of the attack on the USSR was to discredit the opponents of Marshall Aid in the WFTU and the TUC. Otherwise the lengthy discussion of Soviet policy served little purpose from the Union leaders' standpoint. Gardner said that the importance of the Anglo-Soviet conflict "from the Trade Union standpoint" lay in its implications for "the question of Anglo-Soviet relations" in the WFTU and for relations inside the British trade union movement with regard to US aid and European

reconstruction. The attack was a defence of Government policy, but Gardner did not defend the policy because it was the Government's or the Labour Party's. As we have seen, that was not the AEU Executive's way. The Government, it is more logical to say, was defended because of the policy which was considered useful by the AEU Executive. This is a very clear example of the way in which the convergence of Union and Government interests resulted in a congruence of their public policies: Gardner's support of Marshall Aid led to his support for Bevin's anti-Sovietism and the proposed western European Union. On the other hand, Bevin's anti-Soviet line and his plans for a western alliance were based, obviously and naturally enough for a Foreign Secretary, on strategic  
117  
considerations.

Consequently, while voicing misgivings about the possible results of the "division of Europe into two armed camps", Gardner went on to point out that Bevin had placed the "responsibility for this menacing aspect of international affairs ... squarely upon Soviet Russia". Britain could not be at fault since "its aim was the exact opposite of the policy that sought to cut Eastern Europe off from the West and to turn the Eastern states of Europe into ... an exclusively self-contained bloc under the control of Moscow and the Communist Party".

The General Secretary rejected the view of those who maintained that Britain's foreign policy was "at the same time anti-Soviet and

---

117. See above Chapter II.

pro-American to such an extent that Socialist Britain is following at the heels of capitalist America". He continued:

There is a simple and practical test, we suggest, that must be applied, a twofold test: one is to ask how far the present policy of Soviet Russia is to secure the domination of Europe by bringing one after another of the Eastern States under its influence and control? The other test is whether there is anything in America's offer of aid to Europe which justifies rejection of the European Recovery Programme? (118)

As we have seen, the second question was soon answered in the  
119 negative. As the tone and emphasis of this editorial make clear, 120  
Gardner was inclined to answer the first question in the affirmative.  
Indeed, given the wish to establish broad support for the Marshall Plan,  
these questions, once posed, could not be answered in any other way.  
Subsequent consideration apparently indicated that the first question  
ought not to have been asked, but that was a matter of tactics not  
121 principle. Once Gardner had decided on the tactic of mobilizing  
support for Marshall Aid by discrediting its opponents, however, this  
question, or one very like it, and this answer were inevitable. He had  
to be a cold warrior. Tanner, on the other hand, by adopting a more  
conciliatory line, by refraining from questioning his opponents' motives,  
was able to evade the wider issue. Eventually, however, even he had to  
come off the fence.

While the explicitly anti-Soviet line was suppressed, the projec-

118. Journal, February 1948, pp. 33-34.

119. See above Chapter VI-B.

120. See above pp. 287-88, 314-16.

121. See above pp. 316-18.

tion of attitudes consistent with the cold war was not. Thus in a discussion of the need for wage restraint later that year Gardner sought to illustrate an argument by referring to the "difficulties and dangers" the nation faced in its international relations. He spoke of the newly announced rearmament programme as a sad necessity but a necessity nonetheless.<sup>122</sup> Implicitly, then, Gardner accepted and proclaimed the inevitability of the antagonism between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and of the division of Europe into antagonistic military camps. Again, this was not his intention. He wanted to tell his members why they should restrain their wage claims. A certain image of international affairs fit in with his argument. In contrast to his statement earlier that year, there was no attempt to apportion blame this time. Nor was there, however, any mention of the possibility of reconciliation.

The Executive's official spokesmen may have remained aloof from the cold war fray, but the membership did not. The pages of the Journal, for example, were opened to articles by rank-and-file members that dealt with the developing Anglo-Soviet conflict. The articles were not all critical of the USSR; pro-Soviet articles were published as late as<sup>123</sup> 1949.

The tone of leadership communications began to change in the

---

122. Journal, October 1948, p. 290.

123. Journal, December 1948, p. 365; January 1949, p. 17; February 1949, p. 45; February 1949, p. 46; July 1949, p. 205; November 1949, p. 329.

summer of 1949 when policy, organizational and power concerns combined to lead Tanner to assail the communists in his speech to the National Committee. We have seen how he used the communist takeover of the WFTU as a moral tale to warn the members of allowing the consequences of allowing their Union to fall under communist control. The more general attack on the communists was part of a discussion of the need for the Union to educate the members to a "willing acceptance of self-discipline and loyalty" in the society as a whole and the Union in particular.<sup>124</sup> The explicit argument was that indiscipline and disloyalty endangered peaceful social progress. The lead-in to this part of the speech, a discussion of the need for wage restraint, and the emphasis on the need for discipline in the Union, indicate that Tanner basically was trying to mobilize support for the leaders' wages policy and to reinforce the power distribution in the organization.

The communists in this context were less the perpetrators than the beneficiaries of indiscipline; they would exploit it for their own violent and dictatorial ends,<sup>125</sup> as they had done in Czechoslovakia. Tanner was using the communists to scare his members back into line; if they did not accept wage restraint and obey their leaders the communist bogey would get them. One taboo thus was broken, but those on attacking communist activists in the Union and the Soviet regime

---

124. On the manner in which the Union's education programme changed at the time see above pp. 151-52.

125. RPNC, 1949, pp. 246-47.

were still maintained. The leadership was willing to take some risks against its opponents but not too many yet. It still feared that too explicit an attack on the internal opposition or the USSR would be exploited by the communists for their own ends.

126

The following year Tanner took the next step and delivered a speech attacking the USSR. It should be noted that this took place before the outbreak of war in Korea and the announcement of the massive rearmament programme. Tanner's intention was to demonstrate the causes of the arms expenditure which "is one of the chief hindrances to economic recovery and higher standards of life everywhere". In this context it suited Tanner's purpose to speak of rearmament as an evil because he was looking for a scapegoat, deflecting attention from the apparent failure of policies which he supported. Lest anyone suggest that the obvious solution was to cut back on arms spending, he also had to demonstrate that rearmament could not be avoided: it was the result of international conflicts which were not of Britain's making. As long as the USSR maintained its current policies, Britain had no choice but to rearm, and its people had no choice but to accept the consequences of rearmament for their economic and social progress. To demonstrate the Soviet Union's aggressiveness, Tanner pointed to its treatment of Yugoslavia: "It is deplorable ... that the Soviet leaders ... should ... apply the weapon of economic blockade to a small socialist country

---

126. See above Chapter VI-D.

purely because its leaders and people want to build socialism in their own way." Tanner concluded: "These developments make it difficult to believe in the sincerity of Soviet protestations about their desire for peaceful relations with other countries, and respect for the independence of other countries."<sup>127</sup>

It must not be supposed that Tanner's behaviour was simply and purely cynical. I have found no reason to doubt that he believed in the threat of Soviet expansionism any more or less than his compatriots and contemporaries. It is not his beliefs, however, that are important here, for the mere holding of a belief is not a sufficient condition for wishing to communicate it. (Nor, of course, is it a necessary condition.) Tanner spoke about the "deplorable" nature of Soviet foreign policy because it served a purpose to do so, because Soviet policy could be shown to be responsible for the hardships faced by the engineering workers and the difficulties of the British economy, while the AEU and the Labour Government were absolved of all blame.

Tanner chose to present rearmament as an evil in his 1950 NC speech, but, as we saw in Chapter V, the AEU leaders' attitudes to rearmament were rather equivocal. Whatever else might be said against it, at least rearmament assured the members of jobs. This consideration can be said to have been the main factor which led the Union's spokesmen never to question the fundamental need for rearmament. Indeed, they did

<sup>127</sup>. RPNC, 1950, pp. 239-40.

their best to justify the policy. The obvious way to do this was by showing that rearmament was a necessary response to a hostile foreign power --- the USSR. The AEU's leaders, therefore, became cold warriors in order to justify rearmament; they became, in effect if not in intention, proselytizers on behalf of the foreign policy of Labour Party leaders who were rearmers because they were cold warriors. Again we see how the statements of Union leaders, starting from particularistic premises, could come to conform with the policies adopted for very different reasons by the Government. Henceforth, discussions of rearmament would call forth reiterations of the theme of anti-Sovietism.

Shortly after the Korean War broke out, but before the Government revealed its plans, Gardner spoke of "the certainty that preparations for war have to be made now by this country as a loyal member of the United Nations", which was now, "with the exception of the U.S.S.R. and its satellites" engaged in a "struggle to establish order and law by police action". This new situation required "a rapid and sweeping build-up" of conventional and unconventional arms:

Half of the resolutions (on the agenda of the TUC) under the heading of international affairs deal with the use of atomic weapons. The remedy proposed in most of them is that the manufacture of atomic bombs should be prohibited or made unlawful, and that all existing atom bomb stocks should be destroyed. What is to happen to the costly plant which has been set up for the production of atom bombs and to the research organization which is exploring the development of atomic energy none of these resolutions proposes any answer. The worsening of the international situation ought to bring the forthcoming Congress to a more realistic state of mind on the problem of war and peace.  
(128)

The link between the image of the hostile Soviet Union and the maintenance of the arms industry is obvious.

Later, in his September 1950 editorial, Gardner spoke again of the necessity of rearmament, for, among other things, he doubted if the people of Asia wished to substitute "for the colonial policy of western capitalist imperialism the Communist imperialism of Soviet Russia". He made the point sharper and clearer a few months later in his review of the year's events.

The United Nations are intent upon large-scale preparations to defend themselves against Communist aggression. The Communist powers seem to be in no mood for conciliation .... In this unstable situation the building up of the Western nations' defences has been carried forward.... We take the speeding up of the defence organisation of the free nations as a contribution to the easing of these (international) tensions, and as fortifying the hope that war will not come in the new year. (130)

In his National Committee speech that summer Tanner dismissed the North Korean regime as a Soviet puppet "which was established ... and is still subject to control by Russia". The invasion of South Korea was, therefore, a Soviet invasion by proxy. This conclusion had broad ramifications:

When the attack on South Korea took place, the Western Nations were forced to draw the conclusion that the same thing could happen elsewhere. They had already been alarmed at the way in which the independence of Czechoslovakia had been destroyed; and ever since the summer of 1948 they had witnessed Socialist Yugoslavia being subjected to threats and pressure of an unprecedented character by the Soviet Union and the European

---

128. Journal, August 1950, pp. 229-30.

129. Journal, September 1950, p. 261.

130. Journal, January 1951, p. 2.

"Cominform" countries ....

The Western Powers were, therefore, forced to conclude that the only way to deter further aggression was to so strengthen their defensive powers that any Government with aggressive designs would hesitate to attack. (131)

The adoption of explicit anti-Sovietism on international issues meant that this stance could be extended to domestic issues too. In his attacks on British communists Tanner could now point to the USSR as a model of what they hoped to achieve. Britain's present difficulties were a result of the war, he warned, and must not be taken as a sign that certain "people in our midst" are right when they "tell us that the methods which have brought our movement thus far on the road to Socialism are now outmoded, and ... say that we must now follow a different road --- the road that leads to Moscow." Britain's workers' movement had supported the Russian Revolution and what it promised the Russian people, but

in recent years we have been forced, reluctantly, to doubt whether what has been happening in the Soviet Union is not leading to some new form of totalitarianism instead of to Socialism. Certainly the system they have evolved is not our idea of Socialism. (132)

The General Secretary also made special use of anti-Sovietism in his attacks on those who came to be called the Bevanites. The AEU leaders' public hostility to Bevan and his group is all the more striking when one considers the broad areas of public agreement between the Executive and the Bevanites. Open disagreement revolved around

---

131. RPNC, 1951, pp. 283-84.

132. RPNC, 1951, p. 289.

the issues of party unity and rearmament.

Immediately after the ministerial resignations, Gardner dealt rather sympathetically with those of Bevan's arguments that came under the heading of "economic realism".<sup>133</sup> These included Bevan and Harold Wilson's contention "that the immense amount of money provided for the defence programme cannot be spent without wasteful, extravagant and futile attempts to buy raw materials and essential equipment which is simply not available". In addition, the budgetary "limits upon the health and other social services" and the "general effect" of the 1951 Budget on the British economy gave rise to "grave misgivings in the trade union and Labour Movement".<sup>134</sup> At the 1951 NC Tanner criticized the "speed and tempo" of the rearmament programme as well as the Health Service surcharges, basic points in the Bevanite argument.<sup>135</sup>

Nonetheless, there were differences between the AEU leadership and the Bevanites. Gardner's first reaction to the resignations was to assail them as a threat to the unity of the Party. As we saw earlier, the AEU Executive supported the idea of a Labour Government. This did not lead them to support every Government policy; far from it. Even now they were criticizing the Budget on the same grounds as Bevan and his supporters. The EC was not willing, however, to take its disagreements as far as an open breach with the Party leadership, and certainly not on the issue of disarmament upon which they were in basic agreement.

---

133. See above pp. 68-69.

134. Journal, May 1951, p. 130.

135. RPNC, 1951, pp. 284-85.

It was in order to rally support for the Party leadership, therefore, that the General Secretary attacked Bevan and his colleagues. This is perhaps the only occasion during this period, apart from election campaigns, that Gardner sought fully and frankly to mobilize the members on behalf of the Party leadership rather than merely on behalf of a Party policy with which he agreed. The threat, he told his members, was two-fold. Bevan's criticisms of Government policy might be right, but "it will be difficult to convince the main body of opinion in our movement that (resignation) was the right step to take ... in the difficult and dangerous circumstances of the time". Any resulting division would be "unforgivable". On the one hand, there were purely partisan considerations: "The Opposition would dearly like the Labour Movement split by the resignations that have taken place."

On the other hand, such a split would have grave implications for the nation as a whole and for the course of its foreign policy. He pointed to the United States as a warning to sowers of dissension in the UK:

Most of us are justly critical of the way in which the vital problems of international policy and especially the problems of the Far East have been handled in the United States. Over there, it is quite obvious that there is a split not only in the top-level leadership but in the depths of the American nation. Here, there is no such division, and it would be tragic beyond words if disagreements inside our Government and within our Party unloosed such controversies as those that distract and divide the American Congress and people over the dismissal of General MacArthur with all that implies.

Such divisions are bad, not only for the nation but, it seems, for the nature of its foreign policy. Foreign policy, Gardner seems to be

saying, is clearly a divisive factor, but national divisions can also result in bad foreign policy, like that of the United States in East Asia.

However useful the model of a United States at odds with itself, a full-fledged anti-American line, given that the subject of Party controversy was western rearmament to meet the Soviet threat, would surely have been counterproductive. Indeed, Gardner did resort to the more logical argument in order to prove his point: that given an external threat the Government's policy was correct. He thus hailed the TUC General Council's statement of support for the Government's decision. It shows, he said, "that there is no weakening in the determination expressed by last year's Congress to support the Government in a policy that is framed to resist aggression and to carry through its basic and declared intention of preventing a further world war".<sup>136</sup>

The argument is implicitly anti-Soviet. When next he turned to discuss Bevan and his followers, the argument was explicitly anti-Soviet. By the late summer of 1951 it was evident that Bevan was as concerned to maintain Party unity as anyone.<sup>137</sup> Gardner, therefore, could turn from this general issue to the more specific issue of policy of concern to him and the AEU Executive: rearmament. This was not the only matter that divided Bevan from the EC at this time. Nationaliza-

<sup>136</sup>. Journal, May 1951, pp. 129-30.

<sup>137</sup>. See above pp. 68-69 and the material cited there in footnotes 103-105.

tion was another. The Engineers' Executive was not particularly enthusiastic about this notion but was inhibited from saying so by the constraints of official Union policy. <sup>138</sup> Bevan, meanwhile, was one of the main opponents of the "consolidationist" approach which suited the AEU Executive so well. <sup>139</sup> There were fewer inhibitions about challenging Bevan on rearmament than on this issue, however.

In the August 1951 Journal Gardner discussed the agenda for the forthcoming Labour Party Conference and noted the numerous anti-rearmament resolutions which had been tabled --- all of them, he pointed out from CLPs, and not one from a trade union. To mobilize the members against the opponents of the rearmament programme he attacked the Bevanite arguments head on. He summarized their position in four points: The programme cost too much. It increased the demand for raw materials to too high a level. Britain should worry less about American isolationism than about "America's hysterical and headlong build-up of its defence programme ... since it places our own country in jeopardy as the base on which the North Atlantic defence system rests". Finally, the emphasis of British policy should be on negotiation with the USSR.

Gardner did not try to refute each of these points. Indeed, given his earlier statements, he evidently agreed with some of them.

---

138. See above pp. 153-55.

139. See above pp. 47-48; Michael Foot, Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, volume II, 1945-1960 (New York, 1974), pp. 288-89.

Rather, he remarked that they "have a strong appeal for those who allow themselves to be influenced by what seems to be a new line in Soviet propaganda". Apparent changes in the USSR's attitude to the west were augured by a Soviet initiative at the UN, a Soviet publication which propounded the thesis that would later become commonly known as "peaceful coexistence", and the WFTU message to the ICFTU discussed earlier. These developments could be interpreted in two ways, he said. If they were unconnected, they were merely propaganda and indicated no "change in the essential aims of the Soviet Union".

The alternative explanation is that the Soviet leaders are feeling their way towards a friendly understanding with the Western Powers because they realise that their policy of aggression has produced the massive reinforcement of the armed strength of the Western nations, and a hardening of their resolve to bring aggression to a standstill in all parts of the world. (140)

The possibility that the USSR might always have been seeking an accommodation with the West, even before the latter embarked on its arms build-up, was apparently so improbable that it was not worth mentioning. The basic anti-Sovietism of the position, the assumption that the USSR is aggressive and hostile, is patently obvious. Heads, Gardner is saying, the Soviet Union is wicked; tails it is evil.

The General Secretary did not pursue this anti-Soviet line as an end in itself. It had a purpose: the defence of the rearmament programme against Bevanite arguments. Although he was inhibited from saying that rearmament was a good thing, he could say that it was

---

140. Journal, August 1951, pp. 225-26.

necessary. Thus his two "alternative" explanations of the Soviets' recent behaviour lead to the same conclusion: rearmament must be maintained.

If indeed the effect of rearmament has been to convince the Soviet Union that the cold war no longer pays dividends, it would seem to justify the defence policy of the western nations. Any slackening of the effort to strengthen the system of collective security and to defend them by force of arms if necessary would be shortsighted, certainly until there are more positive assurances of Soviet Russia's peaceable intent.

On the other hand, if all this suggested talk about Russia's readiness to live at peace with its neighbours is merely more propaganda, it is obviously playing into the hands of the Soviet to slow down or halt the rearmament programme.  
(141)

To sum up, a number of factors contributed to the propagation of the image of a hostile Soviet Union by the leaders and spokesmen of the AEU during the early cold war. Patriotism, ideology and partisanship may well have contributed to the development of anti-Soviet beliefs among them, but the dissemination of these beliefs (if that is what they were) among the members stemmed from their relationship with more basic and important objectives, values and needs of the organization as these were perceived by the leadership. Anti-Sovietism played a useful part in the arguments the Executive marshalled on behalf of Marshall Aid, conventional rearmament, the UK's atom bomb programme and the unity of the Labour Party, all of which were deemed relevant to the leaders' full-employment policy. For a time internal political divisions hampered the use of this line, but eventually this impediment was

---

141. Journal, August 1951, p. 226.

removed, perhaps because reconciliation with the fellow travellers was no longer considered possible or because public opinion was already hostile to the USSR and its supporters.

To some extent this anti-Soviet line was paralleled by a developing pro-American one. Certainly the arguments on behalf of Marshall Aid reconstruction helped to present a more favourable image of the United States. America's "good-guy" image was never as clear-cut as the Soviet Union's "bad-guy" image became. After all, Britain was the hero of the leadership's world view. National pride, internal political and formal ideological constraints, as well as the usefulness of attacks on the shortcomings of American foreign and domestic policy and of its economic system and policies, all contributed a little more shade to the portrait of the USA.

In the final analysis, then, for reasons which did not necessarily have any direct connection with the cold war, the AEU leadership projected an image of the world largely consonant with the cold war policies of the British Government.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. The International Setting as a Resource of Argument and Control

In this thesis we have seen how the organizational setting determined the content of communication about international affairs in a British trade union. The interpretation of the outside world that the AEU's leaders proffered to their members were mainly the function of arguments about Union policies. These policies were related directly not to international political affairs, which still may have influenced them, but to the leaders' main organizational concern, the attainment of the Union's goals. Given the close relationship between goal attainment, organizational maintenance and the distribution of power in the AEU, arguments about the first one also served the Executive's two latter concerns. Nevertheless, these aspects were not generally explicit in the leaders' statements, which dealt expressly with the best ways of maintaining and improving the workers' conditions of employment and, more broadly, their standard of living.

Discussions about international affairs were but one facet of the leaders' arguments. These arguments in turn were, as Chapters III and IV have shown, but one of a number of modes of action used by the leaders in pursuit of their ends. In very general terms, one may say that they were part of the organizational control system. One cannot know what importance the leadership attached to argument and persuasion

as opposed to the other methods which comprised this system; it is clear only that they used these means, which complemented the other tools they used. Argument alone would have been insufficient, given the complex power and authority structure of the Union. This same complexity also meant that the other instruments in the hands of the Executive were inadequate by themselves. As it was, moreover, the Executive's control of the membership was uncertain throughout the period under review. It is this context and system of organizational behaviour and relationships that makes understandable the arguments that the leaders used and the concomitant images of the outside world that they projected.

From this standpoint the international system was a reservoir of data, a collection of examples of various kinds of behaviour which could be drawn upon to further or to illustrate an argument. Obviously it was not an unlimited reservoir; the AEU's leaders were not omniscient. Nor could the Executive's spokesmen be indifferent as to which data they used. The suitability and usefulness of a given item or event was determined not solely by its suitability to a given argument but also by the manner in which it fit or was distorted by nationalistic, ideological and internal power considerations. One example of industrial efficiency was not necessarily as good as another. For the first part of the postwar period, national amour propre, socialistic ideology and considerations of the power and influence of communists and fellow travellers in the Union made it difficult

to demonstrate a point by drawing on the experience of the United States. The "national" line also limited the Executive's ability to use certain items from the international data bank. The notion of the essential superiority of the British experience, which was an aspect of this line, was maintained in part by downgrading and/or denying the relevance of foreign actors and models. The limitations imposed by these factors, which introduced biases into and skewed the process by which information was selected for transmission, were the main bases for the consistency of the images projected. In large measure, consistency was derived from the limitation of inconsistency rather than from the positive force of the course of argument.

Contrary to the expectations raised in Chapter I, only rarely, with regard to the Soviet trade question and the role of the Union in the DMF over the WFTU affair, was argument related directly to the AEU's own international activities. Indeed, discussion of these activities was minimal; they were hardly ever thought worthy of comment by the President or the General Secretary. Sometimes, a brief notice might be printed in the Journal that visits had been exchanged with engineering unions in other countries or that international conferences had been attended. Sometimes a visit to a foreign country by an EC member or a rank-and-file member might even rate a full-page article. However,

---

1. See, for example, Journal, June 1946, p. 168; October 1946, pp. 295 and 300; January 1947, p. 10; May 1947, p. 138; July 1947, p. 203; January 1948, p. 18; October 1948, p. 305; November 1948, p. 336; December 1948, p. 360; March 1949, p. 74; August 1949, p. 237; September 1949, p. 261; June 1950,

apart from very general statements of the importance of international worker solidarity, the relevance of these exchanges to the concerns of the Union and its members was not made clear. Furthermore, whatever value such activity may have had for the TUC leadership in boosting its prestige, the fact that the AEU leaders gave it so little prominence in their discussions, would indicate that it was not very important to them. That this should be so accords with the "aristocratic" or "exclusive democratic" nature of the AEU.<sup>2</sup> Blatant attempts to build up the leaders' prestige were to be avoided.

If Chapter I was wrong in this regard, it was right with respect to nationalistic and ideological concerns: only rarely did these considerations prompt arguments which contained references to international relations and affairs. The image of a Britain triumphant, overcoming all odds by its own efforts, did emerge directly from such concerns. It will be recalled, however, that this was in fact a secondary image which arose mainly in order to temper the arguments which stressed Britain's helplessness and haplessness. Even so, the image served a primary function in relation to the leaders' goal-attainment concerns: it constituted an affirmation of faith in the future of the nation and of the workers' identification with it, of faith, that is, in the "national" line. Other instances in which

---

p. 178; December 1950, pp. 370 and 375; August 1951, p. 230;  
2. See above p. 104.

patriotism and ideology prompted such discussions are rare.

One might argue that the development of the "national" line in itself constituted an elevation of nationalism, of service to the nation, to the rank of a primary Union objective. Certainly patriotism had been an important factor in the elaboration of the policy during the Second World War. Nor can it be denied that the new conception bound together the economic interests of the nation, the workers' jobs, the organization's membership and the centralization of power in the Union. It is equally undeniable, however, that during the period under review these interests and concerns were not seen as bound together inextricably and for all time. The AEU's post-1945 leadership, after all, was of the generation which, between the wars, had turned from collaboration despite the blandishments of the employers and of large sections of the TUC leadership, when industrial and economic developments turned against the engineering worker. It does not seem logical to expect that a few short years of wartime collaboration should have wiped out entirely the habits of thought and action of a generation during which the proclaimed good of the nation was considered detrimental to the interests of the workers and their organization. The attacks on Tory interwar economic and industrial policy in Tanner's speeches late in the war show that he was still aware of the possible contradiction of interests between the workers and the "nation".<sup>3</sup>

---

3. See above p. 240.

Indeed, in an early discussion of rearmament Gardner had implicitly recognized that the economic welfare of the worker was not necessarily synonymous with the the interests of the nation as a whole, that while the latter might suffer, the former might well prosper.<sup>4</sup> It thus seems reasonable that the 1945-1951 Executive still regarded the link between the "national" and the workers' good as contingent. From this standpoint, service to the nation was not an end in itself but a strategy for the pursuit of other objectives.

It can be argued as well that the Executive's goals were the function of an ideology and that, therefore, ideology played a greater part than I have argued it did in determining the image of the outside world contained in Executive statements. The ideology involved was simply not the one contained in the rule book. Even if this were true, one could indulge in a bit of hairsplittling and say that, insofar as ideology dictates goals that dictate arguments, ideology is once removed from the communication process. More serious objections can be raised against this approach, however. The discussion in Chapters III and IV would lead one to conclude that the AEU leaders' behaviour was derived not from an overarching conception of the world and of the Union's place in it but from the cumulative impact of historical pressures and interlocking patterns of behaviour. If there was some consonance between a leader's ideology and his trade union behaviour,

---

4. See above pp. 219-20.

one may argue quite plausibly that it was practice which dictated ideology rather than the reverse.

If one accepts, however, that ideology is "characterized by a high degree of explicitness of formulation",<sup>5</sup> then we are dealing in this case not with an ideology at all but with a code of behaviour or a system of role expectations. These often clearly and directly contradicted the socialistic ideology that the leadership propounded. There is nothing peculiar in such a contradiction. Nor is it necessarily a sign of careerism, opportunism or cynicism. It is a sign, simply, that the present is inescapable. In addition to the historically determined patterns of role behaviour, the trade union leader, even one "who hoped for the dissolution of capitalism ... had to come to terms with a capitalist society in his daily round".<sup>6</sup> Jack Tanner made a related point when he told the National Committee not to confuse their economic demands with the socialistic principles they proclaimed. Whether they were aware of it or not, socialist trade unionists can and will operate on one level intellectually and on another in practice. It required a conscious effort to overcome the contradiction.<sup>7</sup> What, Hobsbawm argued in a similar vein, can trade unionists, "even the most revolutionary", do but

---

5. Edward Shils, "The Concept and Function of Ideology", in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 17 volumes (New York, 1968), VII, 66-76 (p. 66).

6. Lane, p. 228.

7. See above pp. 146-47.

fight the battle for improvement and reform according to the nature of the terrain, which is that of 'realistic' calculation in a capitalist economy and a capitalist state (?) That is to say they must compromise, make allies, and in general act as reformists. If he is to be effective in a stable capitalist economy, even the communist trade union leader must do this, whatever his private reservations and calculations. (8)

In general, therefore, it is most useful to regard nationalistic and ideological considerations as less important direct incentives for discussions about international affairs. Their importance lies, rather, in the way in which they set the bounds in which argument may occur.

The most important incentive, goal attainment, for the most part was expressed in terms related to the "national" line and its corollaries. The leaders' primary consideration, collaboration with the Government and the employers in order to further national reconstruction and thus maintain full employment through the expansion of production and exports, was at the root of most of the images of Britain and other countries and of the relations among them. The primacy of this concern and of the concomitant organizational and power considerations is demonstrated by the way in which they outweighed the wish to placate the internal opposition, national amour propre and the proclaimed socialist ideology in the struggles over Marshall Aid and rearmament.

The leaders produced an image of a hostile world which saved the system of collaboration from criticism by diverting attention away from any responsibility the employers (and the Union) might have had for

---

8. Quoted by Lane, pp. 234-35.

Britain's precarious economic standing. More specifically, the image was used in arguments to justify the corollaries of the "national" line, the personal sacrifices that had to be made and the suffering that had to be endured --- principally wage restraint. The importance of trade to national recovery led first to the development of a favourable attitude to the USSR and later, as the Soviet market became of increasingly doubtful value, to the disappearance of statements in this vein. The American offer of aid evoked expressions of suspicion at first, but when the Executive began to promote ERP as a vital element of the "national" policy, the United States' image was rehabilitated. The urge to collaborate with the employers in the modernization of British industry, another function of the "national" line, helped carry rehabilitation even further. The threat posed to Britain's recovery by the USSR's supporters in the UK and (outside the mainstream of the "national" line but still within the terms of the concern for full employment) the perception of the importance of rearmament led to the development of a more hostile image of the USSR.

In these communications from the leaders to the rank and file the international setting was a resource for the furtherance of policy rather than the subject of policy. It is, perhaps, surprising, therefore, that only rarely were models drawn from this reservoir. The outside world provided a significant model only in relation to the US system of industrial production. Even so, the use of the model in this way was strictly limited. This tendency not to look abroad may reflect

a generalized ethnocentrism. It can be seen also as a function of the "national" line, as another reflection of the concern to maintain the members' faith in Britain and their identification with the UK. In the circumstances, one might have expected greater use of negative foreign models. Apart from a very few cases, however, any inclination the Executive's spokesmen may have had to point to foreign horrors as a warning to the members was inhibited by other factors. Thus it was only quite late in this period that conditions in the USSR were used to demonstrate the objectives of communist activity in the Union.

#### B. Societal Conformity

The leaders' outside world was populated by very few countries of any significance. Indeed, a member with no other source of information would have to be forgiven if he thought that there were only two: the Soviet Union and the United States. It is not surprising that these two should have dominated the discussion. Their policies and behaviour had a greater impact on the global economy, either directly or indirectly, than those of any other country. Still, the countries left out of the leaders' projected image of the world constitute omissions as striking as the highlighting of the USA and the USSR.

Other countries were mentioned only fleetingly in the spokesmen's statements, if they were mentioned at all. Britain's colonies and such momentous developments as decolonization in South Asia, which could not

but be of major importance to the British economy, were not the subject of major discussions. Perhaps the AEU leadership, like the political elite, could not really comprehend the significance of these moves. Perhaps they were so caught up in other matters that they could not take the time for a discussion of the short and long term effects. Tanner told the members that as socialists they had to accept that the people of the developing countries would raise their raw material prices in order to improve their own standard of living and that the industrialized countries would suffer as a consequence. He also mentioned that the United States was contributing to the development plans for the British colonies. At no point, however, did he mention that the newly independent states and the colonies might not be content to remain mere suppliers of raw materials to the United Kingdom and that they would thus constitute a threat of another kind to the British worker. The leadership, thus, cannot be said to have helped the members prepare for and adjust to change in this sphere.

Europe was not the subject of more than the occasional verbal nod. Even the Schuman Plan went unrecorded by the Executive's spokesmen. This low level of apparent concern also fit in with the tendency of the political elite to place Europe relatively low on its list of priorities.

In general, in only one of the "three circles" did the image projected by the AEU's leaders indicate that Britain had to cope with

---

9. RPNC, 1949, p. 242.

10. RPNC, 1950, pp. 240-41.

drastic changes; that image related to the North Atlantic or, more accurately, to the trilateral UK-US-USSR sector. Because of the wish and need to maintain faith in Britain and, perhaps too, because of an inability to understand the depth of the changes that had taken place, even these developments in Great Power relations were deemed to be temporary. The silence about the Imperial and European circles and the nature of the discussion about this third one thus did nothing to shake the solid substratum of complacency about Britain's present and future place in the world. Tacitly and explicitly the AEU leaders' interpretations of international affairs tended to converge with the policies of recovery and reconstruction pursued by the Government in international affairs.

The convergence of voiced attitudes presents some complexities that the silences do not. As we have seen, the AEU's leaders did not preach cold warriorism because they believed in the cold war. They may have held such beliefs but the preaching stemmed directly from perceptions of the members' welfare, the needs of the organization and competition from other power centres in the Union. Economic considerations were undoubtedly a factor in the Labour Government's anti-Sovietism and pro-Americanism, notably in relation to ERP, and the Union leaders and the Government had to contend with the same potentially disruptive communist opponents at home. Nevertheless, defence and national security concerns seem to have been far more basic and crucial in the formulation of these Government policies. For their different

reasons the Union and Party leaders came to support the same policies vis-à-vis the USSR and the United States. Their agreement was based less on a community of interests than on a convergence of interests.

It is important to emphasize the basis of this agreement because it indicates the fragility of the relationship. Different interests lead very easily to different conclusions. Of course, exchanges and trade-offs can be arranged but they are not always possible. Thus, before the development of the Marshall Plan, the AEU leaders' concerns led them to stress close ties with the USSR and to condemn Government policy in relation to Greece, Spain and the USA. For a time thereafter the Union leaders' organizational and economic calculations led them to voice their agreement with Government policies based on security considerations.

The contingent nature of the agreement between the organization and the Government means that such processes as those discerned by Chittick in the United States may well have been far more complex than his analysis would lead one to think. Since, as Chittick found, an organization seeks State Department information in order to serve its own interests,<sup>12</sup> the nature of these interests determines the suitability of the propaganda supplied. Since there is no guarantee that the interests of one will converge with those of the other, the passive propaganda-channelling that Chittick found is not as passive as

---

11. See above Chapter II.

12. See above pp. 23-24.

it seems and therefore requires rather more explanation than he was able to give. Even in the United States, as we have seen, the CIO did not come out publicly and firmly in favour of ERP until it was forced to do so by a conjunction of factors, including pressures from the AFL and from the communists in the WFTU.<sup>13</sup> In the context of organizational communication the underlying unity of societal values and the interlocking of channels of communication thus may be less important than they are in relation to the press.<sup>14</sup> The autonomy of systems and organizations in a wider society must therefore be taken into account in studying the bases of any societal uniformity and conformity of messages about international affairs, and the contingent nature of the process must be recognized.

### C. A Note on Influence

One subject which surely has been noticeable by its absence in the the discussion thus far is that of the influence of the AEU leaders' communications on the members of the Union. The simplest response to any question about influence is that the answer is unknown and unknowable. No surveys were made of the knowledge and attitudes of AEU members on international affairs, so we have no material to correlate with the expressed opinions of the leaders. Even if surveys had been

---

13. See above pp. 286-90, 308-09.

14. See above pp. 30-33.

conducted, one would have been faced with the insuperable difficulty of separating the influence of one source from that of another. All that can be said is that members were exposed to the information and their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour may have been changed as a result of this exposure.

The role of organizations in shaping popular attitudes has been considered to be very great by some scholars. Powell, for instance, wrote that "the economical way to reach large numbers of people is through their associations" and cited Bernays's claim that "it is of primary importance to influence 'the key (group) leaders as a medium for reaching large groups of the population'".<sup>15</sup> Chittick found support among US State Department officials for an analysis posited by Rosenau. The officials saw nongovernmental organizations as excellent channels for "informing" greater sections of the public and thus engaging more popular support for their policies.<sup>16</sup> Halebsky noted that "intermediate structures", particularly interest groups, can offer "means of mobilization and communication" and provide "motivation and legitimation" for political mass movements.<sup>17</sup>

Empirical studies in many countries have tended to confirm the thesis that organizations can exert influence over members with

- 
15. Norman Powell, Anatomy of Public Opinion (New York, 1951), p. 135.
  16. Chittick, pp. 221-24; James N. Rosenau, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy (New York, 1961), especially pp. 83-96.
  17. Sandor Halebsky, Mass Society and Political Conflict (Cambridge, 1976), p. 87.

regard to matters which are not among the organization's primary functions. For example, Halebsky cites evidence drawn from "community studies in regard to local issues, research on the Social Credit Party in Quebec, the C.C.F. in Saskatchewan, Poujadism in France and Goldwaterism in the U.S."<sup>18</sup> Campbell and his colleagues found that members of trade unions which had long been active and insistent in the their support of the Democratic Party in America were more likely to support the Democrats than were members of other unions.<sup>19</sup>

Hero and Starr studied the foreign policy opinions of local, that is, branch, officials of the United Automobile Workers of America. The UAW's

national leadership has taken more vociferously liberal international stances, has made more vigorous efforts to communicate its foreign policy views to its local leaders, and has placed greater emphasis on union education for local influentials in this field than have most other unions ....

It was found that, while "officers and other active members of the U.A.W. locals did not differ from their counterparts in other unions" on some foreign policy issues, when it came to such matters as

cold war stance, arms control, trade with the Soviet Union, economic aid --- U.A.W. local influentials were at least somewhat more liberal than their equivalents in either old A.F.L. or C.I.O. locals. In fact, as many of the responses show, generally more liberal stances increased between 1964 ... and 1966 .... (20)

Using data about France and Germany, Ruchala found that the

---

18. Halebsky, pp. 87-88.

19. Angus Cambell et al., The American Voter (New York, 1960), pp. 311-16.

20. Hero and Starr, pp. 97-98.

establishment of intergovernmental institutions tended to be followed by the proliferation of nongovernmental transnational organizations, which was in turn followed by increased public support for European political integration. He suggests that the change in popular attitudes was a product of increased organization along transnational lines.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, the term "nongovernmental transnational organizations" and the statistical analysis are so broad that, while the study is suggestive of influence, it provides little hard evidence for it.

In the United Kingdom, as Nordlinger points out, the association between trade union membership and support for the Labour Party is one of the commonplaces of political analysis. He questions the commonly drawn conclusion that trade unionists tend to vote for Labour because of their union's influence over them. Since there is a strong association between the electoral choices of fathers and sons, Nordlinger maintains that party choices are determined before people are of an age to join unions. He therefore suggests that it is support for the Labour Party that leads people to join trade unions rather than the reverse "because of the ideological affinities, common aims and organizational interconnections"<sup>22</sup> between the Party and the unions.

Nordlinger is not alone in denying any great influence in this area by British trade unions. McKenzie and Silver found that

---

21. Donald J. Puchala, "Patterns in West European Integration" Journal of Common Market Studies, 9 (1971), 117-42.

22. Eric A. Nordlinger, The Working Class Tories (London, 1967), pp. 198-204.

"Membership in trade unions is not strongly related to working class voting choice." <sup>23</sup> Butler and Stokes found no evidence that "union journals are a major source of political indoctrination" or "that the shopfloor is a significant forum of political activity". On the other hand, they did find that unionized workers in highly unionized surroundings tend to be more politically active and to be stronger <sup>24</sup> supporters of the Labour Party. Furthermore, Crewe and his colleagues found, in a panel survey conducted over the period 1970-1974, that among respondents who in 1970 had been strongly identified with the Conservative Party, those who were also trade unionists were more likely to have abandoned this position of strong identification with those who were non-unionists.

One interpretation that might be put on this finding by Crewe is that the Heath Government's dismal economic and political performance led many people who had identified strongly with the Conservative Party to waver in their allegiance to it. Union members may have wavered more than others because their disappointment with the Tories was reinforced by the opinions held and voiced by their fellow unionists and union leaders, opinions to which they were more likely to be exposed simply because they belonged to the Union.

- 
23. R.T. McKenzie and Allan Silver, Angels in Marble (London, 1968), pp. 97-98.
  24. David Butler and Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain (London, 1969), pp. 160-62.
  25. Ivor Crewe, Bo Særlvik and James Alt, "Partisan Dealignment in Britain 1964-1974", British Journal of Political Science, 7 (1977), 129-90 (pp. 158-59).

These findings should be treated warily since the sample involved is small and other variables may account for the difference in the degree of alienation from the Conservative Party between trade unionists and others. However, the most obvious such variable, class, can perhaps be ruled out; Crewe and his colleagues found that there was very little difference between the social classes in the degree to which their support for the parties shifted between 1970 and early 1974.<sup>26</sup>

Thus one may conclude that British trade unions may not have an overwhelming influence on the electoral choices of their members or on other matters not directly related to their primary organizational purposes, but can have a significant supportive or reinforcing role. In other words, the projection of a certain attitude by a union, its leaders or its members, may reinforce an already existing tendency on the part of an individual member to adopt that attitude. One can, perhaps, expand this conclusion in the following manner: given the transmission of information and opinions by non-union sources, similar information and opinions transmitted by union leaders may reinforce a tendency to accept the information among the membership. The parallel between this hypothesis and the two-step flow of communication theory, according to which new ideas are spread by a mutually reinforcing combination of mass and interpersonal communications, is quite evident.<sup>27</sup>

26. Crewe et al., p. 167.

27. Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (New York, 1955); Anne van den Ban, "A Revision of the Two-Step Flow of Communications Hypothesis", Gazette, 10 (1964), 237-49; Rogers with Shoemaker, Chapter 6.

Still, this is merely a hypothesis. We do not and cannot know that any member of the AEU in the years 1945-1951 was confirmed in the foreign policy opinions he garnered from other sources by the convergence between this information and that he received from the President and General Secretary of his Union. The most that can be said is that such communication was a potential secondary influence of this type and that, insofar as it converged with Government policy, it tended to reinforce public support for British foreign policy in this and later periods.

Particularly after 1947 the messages transmitted by the AEU leaders to their members tended to agree with and thus perhaps to reinforce popular support for the specific lines of Government policy. More broadly, however, and even before 1947, the messages also tended to reinforce certain of the premises upon which British policy was based in this and later periods, principally those premises concerning Britain's capacity to act independently and influentially in the world. To put it in negative terms, the messages transmitted by the AEU's leaders did not help their public adjust to the changing international system which limited Britain's capacity as an international actor; did not help them adjust to the fact that given its narrow and narrowing resource base Britain could not be a power on the scale of the USSR or the United States; did not help to create a public opinion that questioned the practical as opposed to the moral bases of such policies as the independent nuclear deterrent and the maintenance for so long of British forces east of Suez. I do not wish to imply that, had public

opinion been different, the national leadership of either major party might have followed or advocated different foreign policies. Current conventional wisdom on the subject holds that public opinion does not determine what foreign policy shall be but, at most, what it shall not be.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, far from cultivating mass public opinion on foreign affairs and trying to mobilize support for its policies, the British foreign policy officialdom has generally been indifferent if not hostile to informing the public on such matters.<sup>29</sup> Some official information is passed on to a small, select "public", who may then interpret it for wider sections of the population.<sup>30</sup> British foreign policy makers have thus been able to maintain a public opinion which has generally been acquiescent if not unquestioning. The images of the outside world projected by the leaders of the AEU did nothing to disturb this acquiescence and may even have helped to perpetuate it.

28. See, for example, David Vital, The Making of British Foreign Policy (London, 1968), p. 81; William Wallace, The Foreign Policy Process in Britain (London, 1975), p. 88; "The Role of Interest Groups", in The Management of Britain's External Relations, edited by R. Boardman and A. J. R. Groom (London, 1973), pp. 263-87 (p. 282); Kenneth Younger, "Public Opinion and British Foreign Policy", International Affairs, 40 (1964), 22-33 (p. 31).
29. See, for example, Wallace, The Foreign Policy Process..., pp. 89-90, 113-16, 279-80; Peter G. Richards, Parliament and Foreign Affairs (London, 1967), p. 19n; D. C. Watt, "Foreign Affairs, the Public Interest and the Right to Know", Political Quarterly, 34 (1963), 121-36.
30. Wallace, The Foreign Policy Process ..., p. 88; Richards, p. 32.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Principal Primary Sources

- Amalgamated Engineering Union, Financial Report, 1920/21-1951
- Amalgamated Engineering Union, Monthly Journal, 1921-1951
- Amalgamated Engineering Union, Report of Proceedings of the National Committee, 1940-1951
- Amalgamated Engineering Union, Rules, 1940
- Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, Report of Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1947-1951
- The Times (London), 1921-1951

Other Sources

- Abrams, Mark, "British Elite Attitudes and the European Common Market", Public Opinion Quarterly, 29 (1965), 236-46
- Addison, Paul, The Road to 1945 (London, 1975)
- Aldcroft, Derek H., and Peter Fearon, eds., Economic Growth in Twentieth Century Britain (London, 1969)
- Aldcroft, Derek H., and Harry W. Richardson, The British Economy, 1870-1939, Studies in Economic and Social History (London, 1975)
- Alford, B. W. E., Depression and Recovery? British Economic Growth, 1918-1939, Studies in Economic and Social History (London, 1975)
- Allen, H. C., The Anglo-American Predicament (London, 1960)
- Allen, V. L., "The Ethics of Trade Union Leaders", British Journal of Sociology, 7 (1956), 314-36
- Allen, V. L., Power in Trade Unions (London, 1954)
- Allen, V. L., Trade Unions and the Government (London, 1960)
- Allen, V. L., Trade Union Leadership (London, 1957)

- Almond, Gabriel A., "A Comparative Study of Interest Groups and the Political Process", American Political Science Review, 52 (1958), 270-82
- Almond, Gabriel A., The American People and Foreign Policy (New York, 1960)
- Amalgamated Engineering Union, The Story of the Engineers: Centenary Souvenir (London, 1951)
- Anderson, Perry, "Problems of Socialist Strategy", in Towards Socialism, ed. by Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (London, 1965), pp. 221-90
- Attlee, C. R., As it Happened (London, 1954)
- Baird, John E., Jr., The Dynamics of Organizational Communication (New York, 1977)
- Bakke, E. Wight, "To Join or Not to Join", in Industrial Relations and the Wider Society, ed. by B. Barrett, E. Rhodes and J. Beishon (London, 1975), pp. 43-52
- Balogh, Thomas, The Dollar Crisis (Oxford, 1949)
- van den Ban, Anne, "A Revision of the Two-Step Flow of Communications Hypothesis", Gazette, 10 (1964), 237-49
- Barclay, Sir Roderick, Ernest Bevin and the Foreign Office, 1932-1969 (London, 1975)
- Barrett, B., E. Rhodes and J. Beishon, eds., Industrial Relations and the Wider Society (London, 1975)
- Bartlett, C. J., The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970 (London, 1971)
- Beer, Samuel H., Modern British Politics (London, 1965)
- Bell, Coral, The Debatable Alliance (London, 1964)
- Beloff, Max, New Dimensions in Foreign Policy (London, 1961)
- Beloff, Nora, Transit of Britain (London, 1973)
- Berelson, Bernard, and Morris Janowitz, eds., Reader in Public Opinion and Communication, second edition (London, 1966)

- Berrington, Hugh B., Backbench Opinion in the House of Commons, 1945-1955 (Oxford, 1973)
- Benson, J. Kenneth, "The Interorganizational Network as a Political Economy", in Organization and Environment, ed. by Lucien Karpik (Beverly Hills, 1979), pp. 69-101
- Bishop, Donald G., The Administration of British Foreign Relations (Syracuse, New York, 1961)
- Blackburn, R. M., and Michael Mann, "Ideology in the Non-Skilled Working Class", in Working Class Images of Society, ed. by Martin Bulmer (London, 1975), pp. 131-60
- Blumler, Jay G., "The Political Effects of Television", in The Effects of Television, ed. by James D. Halloran (London, 1970), pp. 70-101
- Boardman, Robert and A. J. R. Groom, eds., The Management of Britain's External Relations (London, 1973)
- Booker, H. S., The Problem of Britain's Overseas Trade (London, 1948)
- Boraston, Ian, Hugh Clegg and Malcolm Rimmer, Workplace and Union: A Study of Local Relationships in Fourteen Unions (London, 1975)
- Boyd-Barrett, Oliver, Colin Seymour-Ure and Jeremy Tunstall, Studies in the Press, Royal Commission on the Press, Working Paper No. 3 (HMSO, 1977)
- Bramson, Noreen, and Margot Heinemann, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties (London, 1971)
- Brand, Carl F., The British Labour Party: A Short History, revised edition (Stanford, 1974)
- Brown, A.J., The Great Inflation, 1939-1951 (London, 1955)
- Bullock, Alan, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, 2 volumes (London, 1960)
- Burridge, T. D., British Labour and Hitler's War (London, 1976)
- Burton, J. W., Systems, States, Diplomacy and Rules (Cambridge, 1968)
- Burton, John W., World Society (Cambridge, 1972)

- Burton, John W., "A Systems Approach to International Relations", International Social Science Journal, 26 (1974), 22-33
- Butler, David, and Donald Stokes, Political Change in Britain, second edition (London, 1969)
- Cameron, G. C., "Post-War Strikes in the North-East Shipbuilding and Ship-Repairing Industry, 1946-1961", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 2 (1964), 1-22
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, The American Voter (New York, 1960)
- Campbell, J. R., Trade Unions and the General Election (London, 1945)
- Camps, Miriam, Britain and the European Community, 1955-1963 (London, 1964)
- Carew, Anthony, Democracy and Government in Trade Unions (London, 1976)
- Carew, Anthony, "Rank and File Movements and Workers' Control in the Engineering Industry" (unpublished M. Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1971)
- Carlton, Frank T., "Labor Policies for the Struggle with Soviet Communism", American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 28 (1959), 277-84
- Cavalli, Luciano, "Il sindacato come agente di mutamento", in Materiali sull'Italia in trasformazione, ed. by Luciano Cavalli (Bologna, 1973), pp. 11-44
- Child, John, Roy Leveridge and Malcolm Warner, "Towards an Organizational Study of Trade Unions", Sociology, 7 (1973), 71-91
- Chittick, William O., State Department, Press and Pressure Groups (New York, 1970)
- Citrine, Walter M., Men and Work: An Autobiography (London, 1964)
- Clegg, H. A., The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, second edition (Oxford, 1972)
- Clegg, H. A., "Unions: The Shop Floor Leaders", New Society, 18 October 1962, pp. 13-14
- Clegg, H. A., Alan Fox and A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Volume I, 1889-1910 (Oxford, 1964)

- Clegg, H. A., A. J. Killick and Rex Adams, Trade Union Officers (Oxford, 1961)
- Coates, Ken, "The State of the AEU", in The Crisis of British Socialism (London, 1971), pp. 167-74
- Cohen, Bernard C., The Press and Foreign Policy (Princeton, New Jersey, 1963)
- Cohen, Bernard C., The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy (Boston, 1973)
- Cole, G. D. H., British Trade Unionism Today: A Survey (London, 1945)
- Cole, G. D. H., "The Labour Party and the Trade Unions", Political Quarterly, 25 (1953), 18-27
- Committee on Industrial Productivity, Second Report, Cmd. 7991 (HMSO, 1950)
- Committee on the Working of the Monetary System, Minutes of Evidence (HMSO, 1960)
- Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, Plan for Engineering (London, n. d.)
- Cook, Alice H., "Dual Government in Unions: A Tool for Analysis", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 15 (1962), 323-49
- Cooke, Colin, The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps (London, 1957)
- Corfield, A. J., "How the Unions Are Developing their Communication Systems", in Communication in Industry, ed. by Cecil Chisholm (London, 1955), pp. 202-22
- Couch, Carl J., "Collective Behavior: An Examination of Some Stereotypes", Social Problems, 15 (1968), 310-22
- Cox, Robert W., "Labor and Transnational Relations", International Organization, 25 (1971), 554-84
- Crewe, Ivor, Bo Særlvik and James Alt, "Partisan Dealignment in Britain 1964-1974", British Journal of Political Science, 7 (1977), 129-90
- Crosland, C. A. R., Britain's Economic Problem (London, 1953)
- Dalton, Hugh, High Tide and After: Memoirs, 1945-1960 (London, 1962)

- Darby, Philip, British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968 (London, 1973)
- Davies, D. I., "The Politice of the T.U.C.'s Colonial Policy", Political Quarterly, 35 (1964), 23-34
- Davison, W. Phillips, "Mass Communication and Diplomacy", in World Politics: An Introduction, ed. by James N. Rosenau, Kenneth W. Thompson and Gavin Boyd (New York, 1976)
- Deutsch, Karl W., The Nerves of Government (New York, 1963)
- Deutsch, Karl W., and Richard L. Merritt, "Effects of Events on National and International Images", in International Behavior, ed. by Herbert C. Kelman (New York, 1965), pp. 132-87
- Dewar, Hugo, Communist Politics in Britain (London, 1976)
- The Diaries of Edward Stettinius, Jr., 1945-1946, ed. by Thomas M. Campbell and George C. Herring (New York, 1975)
- Dorfman, Gerald A., Wage Politics in Britain, 1945-1967 (Ames, Iowa, 1973)
- Dubinsky, David, "Rift and Realignment in World Labor", Foreign Affairs, 27 (1949), 232-45
- Duncan, Hugh Dalziel, Communication and Social Order (London, 1962)
- Dupeux, Georges, "Les effets de la grande crise: la résistance des sociétés libérales", in Histoire économique et sociale du monde, Tome V, Guerres et crises, 1914-1947, ed. by Georges Dupeux (Paris, 1977), pp. 367-94
- Dupeux, Georges, "La reconstruction de l'Europe occidentale", in Histoire économique et sociale du monde, Tome V, Guerres et crises, 1914-1947, ed. by Georges Dupeux (Paris, 1977), pp. 509-31
- Eatwell, Roger, The 1945-1951 Labour Governments (London, 1979)
- The Economist (London), 1945-1951
- Edelman, Murray, "Symbols and Political Quiescence", American Political Science Review, 54 (1960), 695-704
- Edelman, Murray, The Symbolic Uses of Politics (Urbana, Illinois, 1964 and 1967)

- Edelstein, J. David, and Malcolm Warner, Comparative Union Democracy (London, 1975)
- Epstein, Leon D., Britain-Uneasy Ally (Chicago, 1954)
- Etzioni, Amitai, The Active Society (London, 1968)
- Etzioni, Amitai, A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organization, revised edition (New York, 1975)
- Etzioni, Amitai, Modern Organizations (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964)
- Etzioni, Amitai, ed., A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations, second edition (London, 1970)
- Farr, James N., Donald G. Paterson and C. Harold Stone, "Readability and Human Interest of Management and Union Publications", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 4 (1950), 88-93
- Feinstein, C. H., Statistical Tables of National Income, Expenditure and Output of the U.K., 1855-1965 (Cambridge, 1972)
- Feld, Werner J., "The Impact of Nongovernmental Organizations on the Formulation of Transnational Policies", Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, 2 (1976), 63-95
- Finer, S. E., Anonymous Empire (London, 1958)
- Fischer, Georges, Le parti travailliste et la décolonisation de l'Inde (Paris, 1966)
- Fisher, Allan G. B., International Implications of Full Employment in Great Britain (London, 1946)
- Fitzsimons, M. A., The Foreign Policy of the British Labor Government, 1945-1951 (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1953)
- Flanders, Allan, "The Importance of Shop Stewards", New Society, 14 February 1963, pp. 13-14
- Fontaine, André, History of the Cold War, translated by D. D. Paige, 2 volumes (New York, 1974)
- Foot, Michael, Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume II, 1945-1960 (New York, 1974)
- Forester, Tom, The Labour Party and the Working Class (London, 1976)

- Form, William H., and Warren L. Sauer, "Labor and Community Influentials: A Comparative Study of Participation and Imagery", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 17 (1963), 3-19
- Foster, John, "British Imperialism and the Labour Aristocracy", in The General Strike, ed. by Jeffrey Skelley (London, 1976), pp. 3-57.
- Fraenkel, Ernst, Oeffentliche Meinung und internationale Politik, Recht und Staat, Heft 255/256 (Tübingen, 1962)
- Frankel, Joseph, British Foreign Policy, 1949-1973 (London, 1975)
- Galenson, Walter, Trade Union Democracy in Europe (Westport, Connecticut, 1961)
- Galtung, Johan, "Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position", in International Politics and Foreign Policy, ed. by James N. Rosenau, second edition (New York, 1969), pp. 551-72
- Gamson, William A., Power and Discontent (Homewood, Illinois, 1968)
- Gardner, Richard N., Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy (New York, 1969)
- Goldstein, Joseph, The Government of British Trade Unions (London, 1952)
- Goldsworthy, David, Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961 (Oxford, 1971)
- Goldthorpe, John H., David Lockwood, Frank Bechhofer, Jennifer Platt, The Affluent Worker, Cambridge Studies in Sociology 1-3 (Cambridge, 1968-1969)
- Goodman, J. F. B., and T. G. Whittingham, Shop Stewards, revised edition (London, 1973)
- Goodwin, Geoffrey, "British Foreign Policy since 1945: The Long Odyssey to Europe", in Constraints and Adjustments in British Foreign Policy, ed. by Michael Liefer (London, 1972), pp. 35-52.
- Gordon, Michael R., Conflict and Consensus in Labour's Foreign Policy, 1914-1965 (Stanford, 1969)
- Goulden, Joseph C., Meany (New York, 1972)
- Government Social Survey, Workplace Industrial Relations (HMSO, 1968)

- Gowing, Margaret, Independence and Deterrence, Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945-1952, 2 volumes (London, 1974)
- Grant, Wyn, "Insider Groups, Outsider Groups and Interest Group Strategies in Britain", University of Warwick, Department of Politics, Working Paper No. 19 (1978)
- Gregg, Pauline, A Social and Economic History of Britain, 1760-1972, seventh edition (London, 1973)
- Grove, J. W., Government and Industry in Britain (London, 1962)
- Grusky, Oscar, and George A. Miller, eds., The Sociology of Organizations: Basic Studies (New York, 1970)
- Günter, Hans, ed., Transnational Industrial Relations (London, 1972)
- Guttsman, W. L., The British Political Elite (London, 1965)
- Haas, Ernst B., The Uniting of Europe (London, 1958)
- Hage, Jerald, Communication and Organizational Control (New York, 1974)
- Halebsky, Sandor, Mass Society and Political Conflict (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976)
- Halloran, James D., ed., The Effects of Television (London, 1970)
- Harrison, Martin, Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1945 (London, 1960)
- Harrod, Jeffrey, Trade Union Foreign Policy (London, 1972)
- Harrod, R. F., A Page of British Folly (London, 1946)
- Harrod, Roy, The British Economy (New York, 1963)
- Haseler, Stephen, The Gaitskellites (London, 1969)
- Hawtrey, R. G., The Balance of Payments and the Standard of Living (London, 1950)
- Hawtrey, R. G., Western European Union: Implications for the United Kingdom (London, 1949)
- Heaps, David, "Union Participation in Foreign Aid Programs", Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 1 (1955), 100-108

- Heilbroner, Robert L., Business Civilization in Decline (London, 1976)
- Hemingway, John, Conflict and Democracy: Studies in Trade Union Government (Oxford, 1978)
- Hero, Alfred O., and Emil Starr, The Reuther-Meany Foreign Policy Dispute (Dobbs Ferry, New York, 1970)
- Hill, Stephen, "Norms, Groups and Power: The Sociology of Workplace Industrial Relations", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 12 (1974), 213-35
- Hindess, Barry, The Decline of Working Class Politics (London, 1971)
- Hinton, James, The First Shop Stewards' Movement (London, 1973)
- Houthakker, H. S., and Lester D. Taylor, Consumer Demand in the United States: Analyses and Projections, second edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970)
- Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis and Harold H. Kelley, Communication and Persuasion (New Haven, Connecticut, 1953)
- Howell, David, British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay (London, 1976)
- Hughes, John, Trade Union Structure and Government, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Research Paper No. 5, Part II (HMSO, 1968)
- Hund, Wulf D., Ware Nachricht und Informationsfetisch (Darmstadt and Neuwied, 1976)
- Hunter, Leslie, The Road to Brighton Pier (London, 1959)
- Hyman, Richard, Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction (London, 1975)
- "Interview with Bob Wright", Marxism Today, 22 (1978), 271-78
- Janis, Irving L., and M. Brewster Smith, "Effects of Education and Persuasion on National and International Images", in International Behavior, ed. by Herbert C. Kelman (New York, 1965), pp. 190-235
- Jefferys, James B., The Story of the Engineers (London, (1945?))

- Jenkins, Peter, "Unions: What Makes the Leaders Tick?". New Society, 18 October 1962, pp. 9-12
- Jones, Bill, The Russia Complex (Manchester, 1977)
- Jones, Roy E., The Changing Structure of British Foreign Policy (London, 1974)
- Karpik, Lucien, ed., Organization and Environment (Beverly Hills, 1979)
- Katz, Daniel, and Robert E. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations, second edition (New York, 1978)
- Kelman, Herbert C., ed., International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis (New York, 1965)
- Kendall, Walter, The European Labour Movement (London, 1975)
- Key, V. O., Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups, fifth edition (New York, 1964)
- Key, V. O., Public Opinion and American Democracy (New York, 1961)
- King, Stephen, Communication and Social Influence (Reading, Massachusetts, 1975)
- Kitzinger, Uwe, The Challenge of the Common Market, fourth edition (Oxford, 1962)
- Klieman, Robert, Atlantic Crisis (New York, 1964)
- Klugmann, James, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 2 volumes (London, 1969)
- Knowles, K. G. J. C., Strikes (Oxford, 1952)
- Knowles, K. G. J. C., and T. P. Hill, "The Structure of Engineering Earnings", Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin, 16 (1954), 272-328
- Knowles, K. G. J. C., and D. J. Robertson, "Earnings in Engineering, 1926-1948", Oxford University Institute of Statistics Bulletin, 13 (1951), 179-200
- Kolko, Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, The Limits of Power (New York, 1972)
- Kornhauser, William, The Politics of Mass Society (London, 1960)

- LaFeber, Walter, America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1966 (New York, 1967)
- Landsberger, Henry A., and Charles L. Hulin, "A Problem for Union Democracy: Officers' Attitudes toward Union Members", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 14 (1961), 419-31
- Lane, Robert E., and David O. Sears, Public Opinion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1964)
- Lane, Tony, The Union Makes Us Strong (London, 1974)
- Léon, Pierre, "La mutation de l'Europe", in Histoire économique et sociale du monde, Tome VI, Le second XXe siècle: 1947 à nos jours, ed. by Pierre Léon (Paris, 1977), pp. 246-75
- Leslie, Peter M., "Interest Groups and Political Integration: The 1972 EEC Decisions in Norway and Denmark", American Political Science Review, 69 (1975), 68-75
- Lieber, Robert J., British Politics and European Unity (Berkeley, California, 1970)
- Liefer, Michael, ed., Constraints and Adjustments in British Foreign Policy (London, 1972)
- Lippmann, Walter, The Phantom Public (New York, 1925)
- Lippmann, Walter, Public Opinion (New York, 1922)
- Lorwin, Lewis L., The International Labor Movement (New York, 1953)
- Lovell, John, British Trade Unions, 1875-1933, Studies in Economic and Social History, (London, 1977)
- Luard, Evan, ed., The Cold War (London, 1964)
- McCarthy, W. E. J., The Role of Shop Stewards in British Industrial Relations: A Survey of Existing Information and Research, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Research Paper No. 1 (HMSO, 1966)
- Macdonald, D. F., The State and the Trade Unions, second edition (London, 1976)
- Macfarlane, L. J., The British Communist Party (London, 1966)

- McKenzie, R. T., British Political Parties, second edition (London, 1964)
- McKenzie, R. T., "Parties, Pressure Groups and the British Political Process", Political Quarterly, 29 (1958), 5-16
- McKenzie, R. T., and Allan Silver, Angels in Marble (London, 1968)
- MacKintosh, John P., The Government and Politics of Britain (London, 1970)
- McQuail, Denis, Analysis of Newspaper Content, Royal Commission on the Press, Research Paper No. 4, Cmnd. 6810-4 (HMSO, 1977)
- McQuail, Denis, Review of Sociological Writing on the Press, Royal Commission on the Press, Working Paper No. 2 (HMSO, 1976)
- McQuail, Denis, Towards a Sociology of Mass Communication (London, 1969)
- Mack, John A., "Trade Union Leadership", Political Quarterly, 27 (1956), 71-81
- Malament, Barbara, "British Labour and Roosevelt's New Deal: The Response of the Left and the Unions", Journal of British Studies, 17 (1978), 136-67
- Mallalieu, William C., British Reconstruction and American Policy, 1945-1955 (New York, 1956)
- Marsh, A. I., and E. E. Coker, "Shop Steward Organization in the Engineering Industry", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 1 (1963), 170-90
- Martin, Roderick, Communism and the British Trade Union Movement, 1924-1933 (Oxford, 1969)
- Mason, Edward S., "The International Economic Background", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 301-07
- Mass Observation Bulletin, 1946-1951
- Mawrizki, Sergej, Aussenhandel der Sowjetunion Gestern und Heute (Bern, 1976)
- May, Timothy C., Trade Unions and Pressure Group Politics (Farnborough, Hants., 1975)

- Medlicott, W. N., British Foreign Policy since Versailles, 1919-1963, second edition (London, 1968)
- Merritt, Richard L., and Donald J. Puchala, eds., Western European Perspectives on International Affairs (New York, 1968)
- Michels, Robert, Political Parties, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (London, 1915)
- Miliband, Ralph, Parliamentary Socialism (London, 1961)
- Milward, Alan S., The Economic Effects of the Two World Wars on Britain, Studies in Economic and Social History (London, 1970)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Years 1939-1946, Cmnd. 7225 (HMSO, 1949)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Year 1947, Cmnd. 7559 (HMSO, 1948)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Year 1948, Cmnd. 7822 (HMSO, 1949)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Year 1949, Cmnd. 8017 (HMSO, 1950)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Year 1950, Cmnd. 8338 (HMSO, 1951)
- Ministry of Labour and National Service, Report for the Year 1951, Cmnd. 8640 (HMSO, 1952)
- Monaghan, William, "The Shop Steward in British Industry", Co-existence, 3 (1966), 75-86
- Moodie, Graeme C., and Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, Opinions, Publics and Pressure Groups (London, 1970)
- Moorhouse, H. F., "The Political Incorporation of the British Working Class: An Interpretation", Sociology, 7 (1973), 341-59
- Moorhouse, H. F., "The Marxist Theory of the Labour Aristocracy", Social History, 3 (1978), 61-82
- Muller, William D., The 'Kept Men'? The First Century of Trade Union Representation in the British House of Commons, 1874-1975 (Hassocks, Sussex, 1977)

- Nairn, Tom, "The Left Against Europe?", New Left Review, 75 (1972)
- National Industrial Conference Board, Employee Communication, Policy and Tools, Studies in Personnel Policy, 200 (New York, 1966)
- Nettl, Peter, and David Shapiro, "Institutions versus Realities --- a British Approach", Journal of Common Market Studies, 2 (1963), 24-36
- Neustadt, Robert E., Alliance Politics (New York, 1970)
- Nicholas, H. G., "L'influence de l'opinion publique sur la politique étrangère en Grande Bretagne", in La politique étrangère et ses fondements, ed. by J.-B. Duroselle (Paris, 1954), pp. 107-24
- Nicholas, H. G., Britain and the United States (London, 1963)
- Nie, Norman H., Sidney Verba and John R. Petrocik, The Changing American Voter (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976)
- Nincic, Miroslav, and Bruce Russett, "The Effect of Similarity of Interest on Attitudes toward Foreign Countries", Public Opinion Quarterly, 43 (1979), 68-78
- Nordlinger, Eric A., The Working Class Tories (London, 1967)
- Northedge, F. S., Descent from Power: British Foreign Policy, 1945-1973 (London, 1974)
- Northedge, F. S., Freedom and Necessity in British Foreign Policy (London, 1972)
- Olson, Mancur, Jr., The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965)
- Onofri, Fabrizio, Potere e strutture sociali nella società industriale di massa (Bologna, 1976)
- O'Reilly, Charles A., III, "Supervisors and Peers as Information Sources, Group Supportiveness and Individual Decision-Making Performance", Journal of Applied Psychology, 42 (1972), 632-35
- O'Reilly, Charles A., III, and Karlene H. Roberts, "Information Filtration in Organizations: Three Experiments", Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 11 (1974), 253-65

- O'Reilly, Charles A., III, and Karlene H. Roberts, "Relationships among Components of Credibility and Communication Behaviors in Work Units", Journal of Applied Psychology, 41 (1976), 99-102
- Oskamp, Stuart, Attitudes and Opinions (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1977)
- Ovendale, Ritchie, "The Palestine Policy of the British Labour Government", International Affairs, 55 (1979), 409-31
- Panitch, Leo, "Profits and Politics: Labour and the Crisis of British Capitalism", Politics and Society, 7 (1977), 477-507
- Panitch, Leo, Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy (Cambridge, 1976)
- Parkin, Frank, Class Inequality and Social Order (London, 1971)
- Paterson, Thomas G., "Presidential Foreign Policy, Public Opinion and Congress", Diplomatic History, 3 (1979), 1-18
- Paterson, Thomas G., Soviet-American Confrontation (Baltimore, 1973)
- Pelling, Henry, America and the British Left (London, 1956)
- Pelling, Henry, A History of British Trade Unionism, third edition (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1976)
- Pelling, Henry, A Short History of the Labour Party (London, 1968)
- Pierre, Andrew J., Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force (London, 1972)
- Political and Economic Planning, British Trade Unionism (London, 1948)
- Political and Economic Planning, Trade Unions and the Common Market (London, 1962)
- Political and Economic Planning, Trade Unions in a Changing Society (London, 1963)
- Political and Economic Planning, "Inside the Unions", Planning, 249 (1946), 1-16
- Political and Economic Planning, "Output and the Worker", Planning, 233 (1945), 1-16

- Porter, Lyman W., and Karlene H. Roberts, eds., Communication in Organizations (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1977)
- Potter, A. M., Organised Groups in British National Politics (London, 1961)
- Powell, Norman John, Anatomy of Political Opinion (New York, 1951)
- Fribicevic, Branko, The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control, 1910-1922 (Oxford, 1959)
- Price, John, The International Labour Movement (London, 1945)
- Puchala, Donald J., "Patterns in West European Integration", Journal of Common Market Studies, 9 (1971), 117-42
- Reese, Trevor R., Australia, New Zealand and the United States (London, 1969)
- Reynolds, Lloyd G., and Charles G. Killingsworth, Trade Union Publications, Volume I, Description and Bibliography (Baltimore, 1944)
- Richards, Peter G., Parliament and Foreign Affairs (London, 1967)
- Richardson, James L., Germany and the Atlantic Alliance (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966)
- Richter, Irving, Political Purpose in Trade Unions (London, 1973)
- Rideout, R. W., "The Content of Trade Union Disciplinary Rules", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 3 (1965), 153-63
- Rideout, R. W., "Responsible Self-Government in British Trade Unions", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 5 (1967), 74-86
- Roberts, B. C., "Trade Unions and Party Politics", Cambridge Journal, 6(1953), 387-402
- Roberts, B. C., Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain (London, 1956)
- Roberts, George B., "International Needs for Funds and Available Resources", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 319-25
- Roberts, Karlene H., and Charles O'Reilly III, "Measuring Organizational Communication", Journal of Applied Psychology, 59 (1974), 321-26

- Rogers, David L., Gordon L. Bultena and Ken H. Barb, "Voluntary Association Membership and Political Participation: An Exploration of the Mobilization Hypothesis", Sociological Quarterly, 16 (1975), 305-18
- Rogers, Everett M., and Rekha Agarwala-Rogers, Communication in Organizations (New York, 1976)
- Rogers, Everett M., with F. Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations (New York, 1971)
- Rogow, A. A., with Peter Shore, The Labour Government and British Industry, 1945-1951 (Oxford, 1955)
- Ronnenberger, Franz, Wege der Meinungsbildung in der komplexen Gesellschaft (Hannover, 1972)
- Rose, Richard, Politics in England Today, third edition (London, 1976)
- Rose, Richard, ed., Studies in British Politics, third edition (London, 1976)
- Rosen, Sidney, and Abraham Tesser, "On Reluctance to Transmit Undesirable Information: The MUM Effect", Sociometry, 33 (1968), 253-63
- Rosenau, James N., Public Opinion and Foreign Policy (New York, 1961)
- Rosenau, James N., Kenneth W. Thompson and Gavin Boyd, eds., World Politics: An Introduction (New York, 1976)
- Royal Commission on the Press, 1947-1949, Report, Cmd. 7700 (HMSO, 1949)
- Royal Institute of International Affairs, Atlantic Alliance: NATO's Role in the Free World (London, 1952)
- Royal Institute of International Affairs, Defence in the Cold War (London, 1950)
- Royal Institute of International Affairs, United Kingdom Policy: Foreign Strategic and Economic (London, 1950)
- Royal Institute of International Affairs and Council on Foreign Relations, Britain and the United States: Problems in Co-operation (London and New York, 1953)
- Royal Institute of Public Administration, The Government Explains (London, 1965)

- Rubinstein, David, ed., People for People: Radical Ideas and Personalities in British History (London, 1973)
- Rubinstein, David, "Socialism and the Labour Party: The Labour Left and Domestic Policy, 1945-1950", in Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville, ed. by David E. Martin and David Rubinstein (London, 1979), pp. 226-57
- Rush, Michael, Parliament and the Public (London, 1976)
- Russett, Bruce M., Community and Contention: Britain and America in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963)
- Russett, Bruce M., "Elite Perceptions and Theories of World Politics", in New Dimensions of World Politics, ed. by Geoffrey L. Goodwin and Andrew Linklater (London, 1975), pp. 86-108
- Sayers, R. S., A History of Economic Change in England, 1880-1939 (London, 1969)
- Schonfield, Andrew, British Economic Policy since the War (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1958)
- Scott, William A., "Psychological and Social Correlates of International Images", in International Behavior, ed. by Herbert C. Kelman (New York, 1965), pp. 71-103
- Selvin, David, "Communications in Trade Unions: A Study of Union Journals", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 1 (1963), 73-93
- Seton-Watson, Hugh, "Commonwealth, Common Sense, Common Market", in Suicide of a Nation?, ed. by Arthur Koestler (New York, 1964), pp. 131-46
- Seymour-Ure, Colin, The Political Impact of the Mass Media (London, 1974)
- Seymour-Ure, Colin, The Press, Politics and the Public (London, 1968)
- Shanks, Michael, "Politics and the Trade Unionist", Political Quarterly, 30 (1959), 44-63
- Shils, Edward, "Center and Periphery", in Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology (Chicago, 1975), pp. 3-16
- Shils, Edward, "The Concept and Function of Ideology", in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 17 volumes (New York, 1968) VII, 66-76

- Shlaim, Avi, Peter Jones and Keith Sainsbury, British Foreign Secretaries since 1945 (Newton Abbott, 1977)
- Sills, David L., "The Succession of Goals", in A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations, ed. by Amitai Etzioni, second edition (New York, 1969), pp. 175-87
- Silverman, David, The Theory of Organisations: A Sociological Framework (London, 1970)
- Simpson, Bill, Labour: The Unions and the Party (London, 1973)
- Snyder, William P., The Politics of British Defence Policy, 1945-1962 (London, 1964)
- Sprout, Harold, "The Role of the Great States", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 284-91
- Statistical Material Presented During the Washington Negotiations, Cmd. 6707 (HMSO, 1945)
- Steele, Fritz, The Open Organization (Reading, Massachusetts, 1975)
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L., "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production", in Comparative Organizations: The Results of Empirical Research, ed. by Wolf D. Heydebrand (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973), pp. 476-506
- Strang, William, Lord, "The Formation and Control of Foreign Policy", Durham University Journal, 49 (1957), 98-108
- Strang, William, Lord, and others, The Foreign Office (London, 1955)
- Strange, Susan, Sterling and British Policy (London, 1971)
- Tarde, Gabriel, On Communication and Social Influence: Selected Papers, ed. by Terry N. Clark (Chicago, 1969)
- Thompson, James D., and William J. McEwen, "Organizational Goals and Environment", in A Sociological Reader on Complex Organizations, ed. by Amitai Etzioni, second edition (New York, 1969), pp. 187-96
- Thomson, Don, and Rodney Larson, Where Were You, Brother? (London, 1978)

- Tracey, Michael, The Production of Political Television (London, 1977)
- Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings of the Annual Congress, 1921-1951
- Transport and General Workers' Union, Transport and General Workers' Record, 1945-1951
- Tretheway, Richard J., "International Economics and Politics: A Theoretical Framework", in The Interaction of Economics and Foreign Policy, ed. by Robert A. Bauer (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1975), pp. 1-24
- Turner, H. A., Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy (London, 1962)
- Turner, H. A., "The Trend of Strikes: An Inaugural Lecture" (Leeds, 1963)
- Undy, R., "The Electoral Influence of the Opposition Party in the A. U. E. W. Engineering Section, 1960-75", British Journal of Industrial Relations, 17 (1979), 19-33
- United States Senate, A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941-1949 (Washington, D.C., 1950)
- Uri, Pierre, ed., From Commonwealth to Common Market (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968)
- Vital, David, The Making of British Foreign Policy (London, 1968)
- Wallace, William, Foreign Policy and the Political Process (London, 1971)
- Wallace, William, The Foreign Policy Process in Britain (London, 1975)
- Wallace, William, "The Role of Interest Groups", in The Management of Britain's External Relations, ed. by R. Boardman and A. J. R. Groom (London, 1973), pp. 263-87
- Waltz, Kenneth N., Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics (London, 1968)
- Watt, D. C., "Foreign Affairs, the Public Interest and the Right to Know", Political Quarterly, 34 (1963), 121-36
- Webb, Sidney, and Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, revised edition (London, 1920)
- Weick, Karl E., The Social Psychology of Organizing (Reading, Massachusetts, 1969)

- Welles, Sumner, "Shaping the Economic and Political Future", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 241-48
- Westley, Bruce H., and Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., "A Conceptual Model for Communication Research", Journalism Quarterly, 34 (1957), 31-38
- "Who Holds the Sterling Balances?", The Banker, 94 (1950), 93-97
- Wigham, Eric, Trade Unions (London, 1956)
- Williams, Francis, Ernest Bevin, Portrait of a Great Englishman (London, 1952)
- Williams, Francis, ed., A Prime Minister Remembers (London, 1961)
- Williams, John H., "The Bretton Woods Agreements", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 308-18
- Windmuller, John P., "Foreign Affairs and the AFL-CIO", Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 9 (1956), 419-32
- Windmuller, John P., "Labor: A Partner in American Foreign Policy?", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (1963), 104-14
- Wolfe, Thomas W., Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970 (Baltimore, 1970)
- Wolfers, Arnold, "The Role of Small States in the Enforcement of International Peace", Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 21 (1945), 292-99
- Woodhouse, C. M., British Foreign Policy since the Second World War (London, 1961)
- Worswick, G. D. N., and P. H. Ady, eds., The British Economy, 1945-1950 (Oxford, 1952)
- Yergin, Daniel, Shattered Peace: Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (London, 1968)
- Younger, Kenneth, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy", British Journal of Sociology, 6 (1955), 169-75
- Younger, Kenneth, "Public Opinion and British Foreign Policy", International Affairs, 40 (1964), 22-33
- Youngson, A. J., Britain's Economic Growth, 1920-1966 (London, 1967)