

Respectable Militants: The Lancashire
Textile Machinery Makers c.1800-1939

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PART 1

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
List of Tables	iv
Chapter One: <u>Introduction: The Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry in Labour History</u>	
I. The Development of the Textile Machinery Industry in Lancashire	1
II. The Textile Machinery Industry and the Trade Unions	9
III. The Lancashire Textile Machinery Artisans: Respectable Militants?	12
Chapter Two: <u>The Emergence of the Textile Machinery Artisans and their Role in the Labour History of Lancashire before 1850</u>	
I. Introduction	31
II. The Twilight Years of the Lancashire Millwrights	35
III. The Artisan Societies and the Bolton Turn-Out of 1831	42
IV. The Escalation of the Conflict with Capital, 1841-51	50
V. Textile Machinery Artisans and the Wider Labour Movement, 1800-50	62
Chapter Three: <u>The 1852 Lock-Out of Engineers in Lancashire</u>	
I. The Creation of the A.S.E. and the Economic Background to the Conflict in Lancashire	95
II. Hibbert and Platt and the Battle for Control of the Labour Process	103
III. The Conduct of the Lock-Out in Lancashire	113
IV. Aftermath and Conclusions	120
Chapter Four: <u>The Textile Machinery Artisans: A Case Study of the Labour Aristocracy Debate</u>	
I. Introduction	134
II. Work	
A) Artisan and Non-Artisan Incomes	138
B) Unemployment and Welfare Provision	144
C) The Labour Process, Workplace Health and Safety and Paternalism	154

III. Community	Page
D) Residence and Community Relations	165
F) Lifestyle and Conditions of Living	175
F) Prospects of Upward Social Mobility	181
IV. Conclusion	185
Chapter Five: <u>The Era of the New Unionism</u>	
I. Introduction	208
II. The Bolton Engineers' Strike of 1887	214
III. 'New Unions' in the Textile Machinery Industry	224
IV. The Great Strike in the Oldham Iron Trade, 1897	234
V. The 1897-98 Lock-Out and the Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry	245
Chapter Six: <u>The Grass Roots Militancy of 1910-14</u>	
I. Introduction	293
II. The Dobson and Barlow Dispute, 1913-14	301
III. The Burnley and Colne Strikes, 1913-14	304
IV. The Howard and Bullough Strikes, 1913-14	308
V. Conclusion	327
Chapter Seven: <u>Industrial Relations During the Great War</u>	
I. Introduction	338
II. The Machinery Makers and the Problems of Dilution	343
III. The Tweedales and Smalley Dispute and the 'May Strikes' of 1917	357
IV. Conclusion	365
Chapter Eight: <u>Conclusion: The Retreat from Craft Control during the Inter-War Period</u>	
I. Introduction: The Post War Boom	375
II. The National Iron Moulders' Strike, 1919-20	379
III. The End of the Boom and the 1922 Lock-Out	392
IV. The Consequences of Deepening Depression	403

Appendices:	<u>Page</u>
A Resolutions of the Chartist Metal Trades' Delegate Meeting held at the Carpenters' Hall, Manchester, August 11th, 1842.	418
B Family Connections in Artisan Employment at Hibbert and Platt and Robert Hall and Company 1838-71.	420
C Text of the Memorandum Issued to Members of the Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers, by its Executive Committee, 24th January 1852.	425
D The 1898 Terms of Settlement.	429
E The Operation of the 1898 Settlement and Industrial Disputes in the Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry to 1914.	435
F Trade Union Membership in the Lancashire Textile Machinery Making Centres, 1840-1914.	444
G Unemployment in the Accrington and Burnley Branches of the F.S.I.F., 1863-1914.	448
H Wage Rate Movements (Time Rates) in Three Lancashire Textile Machinery Districts, 1834-1914.	451
I Wage Movements in the Blackburn/Accrington Textile Machinery District, 1914-19.	453
J Membership of the Major Textile Machinery Industry Trade Unions 1914-20.	456
Bibliography	457

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
<u>Chapter 1</u>	
1 Principal Mechanical Establishments in Lancashire in 1841.	2
2 The Significance of Textile Machinery Making Employment in East Lancashire Engineering in 1901.	3
3 Major Manufacturers of Spinning and Preparatory Machinery in Lancashire, 1870-1914.	5
4 Major Manufacturers of Weaving Machinery in Lancashire, 1870-1914.	6
<u>Chapter 2</u>	
1 U.K. Exports of Machinery 1841-60.	52
2 Numbers Employed by Hibbert and Platt 1837-51.	53
3 F.S.I.M. Branch Membership in Lancashire 1840-51.	59
<u>Chapter 3</u>	
1 J.S.E.M.M. Branch Returns in the Amalgamation Ballot, 1851.	100
2 A.S.E. and J.S.E.M.M. Membership, February to April 1851.	101
3 Textile Machinery Making Firms in Lancashire Involved in the 1852 Lock-Out.	114
4 A.S.E. Membership in Lancashire Branches Affected by the Lock-Out, 1851-1858.	123
<u>Chapter 4</u>	
1 Wage Rates of Textile Machinery Artisans in Oldham and Bury, 1838-1889.	139
2 Wages Rates of Non-Artisans in Textile Machinery Making in Oldham and Bury, 1838-1889.	140
3 Artisan and Labourer Incomes in Oldham, Bury and Burnley, 1838-1908.	
a) Weekly Earnings of Moulders, Machine Shop Artisans and Labourers at Platts of Oldham, 1839-41.	141
b) Weekly Earnings of Moulders, Machine Shop Artisans and Labourers at Halls of Bury, 1853-72.	142
c) Weekly Earnings of Artisans and Labourers at Butterworth and Dickinson of Burnley, 1904-08.	143

	<u>Page</u>
4 Foundry and Machine Shop Employment Fluctuations at Platts East Works, 1838-41.	145
5 Foundry Employment Fluctuations at Robert Halls of Bury, 1845-67.	146
6 Unemployment in Lancashire A.S.E. Branches, 1861-65.	146
7 F.S.I.F. Unemployment in Lancashire Branches in Depression Years, 1850-70.	147
8 Welfare Benefits of the Major Artisan Societies in the Textile Engineering Industry in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.	150
9 Social Structure of South Stoneyholme (Burnley) in 1881.	173
10 Social Structure of the Trafalgar Street District of Burnley in 1881.	174
11 Occupations of the Sons of Lancashire Engineering Artisans.	183
12 The Sons of Engineering Artisans and their Occupations in Two Burnley Districts in 1881.	184
13 Industrial Disputes at Dobson and Barlow, August 1865 to October 1868.	190

Chapter 5

1 Platts' Home Deliveries of Machinery, March to August, 1897.	242
2 Membership of Oldham and District A.S.E. Branches, February and June, 1897.	243
3 Returns in the Election of the A.S.E. General Secretary, in Lancashire, May 1892.	250
4 East Lancashire Membership of the Foreman's Mutual Benefit Society, 1913.	264
5 Platts and Asa Lees Production of Mules and Ring Frames, 1895-99.	266
6 Lancashire Branch Returns in the Ballot which ended the 1897-98 Dispute.	271

Chapter 6

1 Industrial Disputes in the U.K., 1907-14.	293
2 Feinstein's Index of Retail Prices, 1898-1914.	294
3 Burnley and Colne A.S.E. Branch Membership, 1910-14.	308
4 Employment at Howard and Bullough, 1853-1913.	309

	<u>Page</u>
5 Production of Textile Machinery at Howard and Bullough, April to July 1913.	315
6 Accrington A.S.E. Branch Membership, 1912-14.	318
7 Departmental Membership of the A.S.E. at Howard and Bullough in 1913.	319
8 Howard and Bullough's Delivery of Textile Machinery, May to November, 1914.	325

Chapter 7

1 The Extension of Controls over the Textile Machinery Industry July - November 1915.	340
2 Quarterly Output of Complete Machines from Howard and Bullough, 1914-19.	341
3 Enlistment from F.S.I.F. East Lancashire Branches in 1916 and 1918.	342
4 Exports of Textile Machinery, 1912-19.	360

Chapter 8

1 Production of Completed Machines by Howard and Bullough, September 1919 to February 1920.	387
2 Lancashire F.S.I.F. Branch Returns in the Return to Work Ballot, January 8th, 1919.	389
3 Lancashire F.S.I.F. Branch Returns in the Return to Work Ballot, January 20th, 1919.	390
4 U.P.A. Lancashire Branch Members Receiving Unemployment Benefit 1920-22.	395
5 Persons in Receipt of Poor Law Relief in Lancashire Towns: A Comparison of January 1921 and January 1922.	396
6 Production of Textile Machines at Howard and Bullough, February to June, 1922.	400
7 Branch Membership in Lancashire of the A.E.U., Grinders and Glazers Society and U.P.A., 1920-33.	401
8 Percentages of Adult Male Workers on Payment by Results in E.E.F. Affiliated Firms, 1914-27.	404

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ABSTRACT

Lancashire's textile machinery industry developed with the mechanisation of its cotton industry, and by 1914 was the leading branch of mechanical engineering in Britain. Throughout this industry's history its artisans retained characteristics of respectability and militancy allied with a strong sense of local independence. (Chapter 1)

As the industry expanded in the 1830's and 1840's the artisans fought to retain control over the labour process and maintain economic status in the face of technological change. Meanwhile they maintained a significant and underacknowledged role in the wider labour movement. (Chapter 2)

Artisans of the leading firm of Hibbert and Platt were at the centre of the greatest industrial dispute of the mid nineteenth century, the 1852 engineering lock-out. (Chapter 3) The next forty years are seen as the classic period of the 'labour aristocracy' in Britain; the textile machinery artisans provide an excellent case study of this most controversial concept. (Chapter 4)

The 1890's brought the unionisation of the industry's less skilled workers by localised 'new unions' and general labour unions, notably the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union. Meanwhile, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was defeated by the Engineering Employers' Federation in 1898 which began a centrifugal drift of power from the weakened Executive to the branches. (Chapter 5) The inflationary conditions of 1910-14 brought a wave of strikes as artisan control of the labour process was re-asserted. (Chapter 6)

The Great War created such demands for armaments that most firms became 'controlled' establishments and commercial work gave way to

munitions. The associated problems of dilution led to the serious artisan-inspired strikes of 1917. (Chapter 7)

The industry's inter-war decline reflects the decline of its artisans, who in 1920 and 1922 suffered further defeats by the employers and were subsequently obliged to yield in their century-long struggle to retain control of the labour process. (Chapter 8)

Chapter One

Introduction: The Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry in Labour History

I. The Development of the Textile Machinery Industry in Lancashire

According to the 1907 Census of Production the textile machine making industry was the leading branch of Britain's mechanical engineering sector. The gross output of the industry was valued at £13 million, followed by railway engineering at £12.4 million, steam engine making at £6.9 million, cycles and motor cycles at £5.6 million, motor vehicles at £5.2 million and boilermaking at £4.1 million.¹ At the same time, the industry employed about 40,000 men, mainly in Lancashire; it contributed over 10% by value of British engineering output, and with approximately 45% of its output exported, it provided the largest category of engineering exports.²

The manufacture of machinery for the production of jute and flax was concentrated in Belfast and Dundee, whilst the leading area for wool and worsted machinery making was the West Riding of Yorkshire. However, Lancashire, the leading area in cotton textile machinery was, by far, Britain's premier textile engineering centre in terms of the value of its output, its exports and in the numbers employed. In 1921 Lancashire was, with the adjacent industrial enclaves of north-east Cheshire and north Derbyshire, estimated by G. W. Daniels and J. Jewkes, to possess 66% of Britain's textile machinery making capacity, and to employ almost 50,000 workers.³

In the early Victorian period the significance of textile machinery making within the wider engineering sector, was undoubtedly far greater than it was in 1907 or 1921. The 1841 report of the Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery indicates the overwhelming significance of textile machinery making

in Lancashire. Its statistical returns were based on all types of engineering, but the text of the report indicates that the majority of firms were supplying the Lancashire cotton industry. The only notable exceptions (see Table 1) were perhaps the metropolitan districts of Manchester and Salford/Patricroft where a number of large machine tool and steam engine manufacturing establishments were emerging. Moreover, since a number of the smaller firms did not reply to the questionnaire sent out by the Select Committee, the figures are an underestimate of the size of the industry.

Table 1: Principal Mechanical Establishments in Lancashire in 1841

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number of firms</u>	<u>Number of Hands (Maximum Capacity)</u>	<u>Estimate of Capital (£)</u>
Manchester	26	5430	400,000
Salford/Patricroft	9	2520	240,000
Stockport	8	500	40,000
Ashton-under-Lyne	8	1155	85,000
Oldham	19	2207	200,000
Rochdale	13	720	80,000
Bury/Heywood	7	740	70,000
Bolton	7	2250	220,000
Blackburn	6	720	50,000
Preston	7	930	100,000
Burnley	5	210	30,000

Source: Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery 1841,
Parliamentary Papers Vol. 7, cd. 201, Appendix No. 2, p.230.

Even by the early twentieth century, textile machinery making continued to dominate the engineering industries of most of the larger east Lancashire towns, as Table 2 indicates, and by 1921, the 'textile' sector still accounted for an estimated 36.5% of Lancashire's total engineering employment.⁴

Table 2: The Significance of Textile Machinery Making Employment in East Lancashire Engineering in 1901

<u>Location</u>	<u>A Total Engineering/ Machine Making Employment</u>	<u>B Textile Machinery Employment</u>	<u>B as % of A</u>
Accrington	3,844*	3,393	88.3
Blackburn	3,618	2,200	60.8
Burnley	2,216*	2,000	90.3
Colne	556	400	72.0
Oldham	15,084*	13,000	88.2
Rochdale	4,019	2,700	67.2
Bury	3,316*	1,500	45.2
Bolton	10,276*	4,400	42.8

* Accrington figures include Church U.D.; Burnley includes Padiham U.D.; Oldham includes Royton, Chadderton, Crompton, Failsworth and Middleton U.D.'s; Bury includes Heywood U.D. and Bolton includes Radcliffe, Little Lever and Farnworth U.D's.

Sources: Column A: Census of England and Wales, 1901, County of Lancaster G.3 Vict. C.4, pp.144-181.

Column B: Figures are from R. Kirk op. cit., pp.115 and 121, with adjustments for Accrington based on DDPSL 3/31/2: Howard and Bullough Wages Book and for Burnley and Colne: Burnley Gazette 29.10.1913.

By the time of the Select Committee's Report in 1841, the industry's structure was undergoing fundamental change as the combined textile and textile machinery firms such as Thomas Ashton, 'cotton spinner and loom manufacturer' of Hyde, were giving way to specialist engineering firms such as Jenkinson and Bow of Salford; Parr, Curtis and Madeley of Manchester; Lees and Barnes and Hibbert and Platt of Oldham, and Dobson and Metcalf of Bolton. In the subsequent decade each of these firms expanded to employ at least 500 men, with Dobson and Metcalf employing almost 1,000 and Hibbert and Platt over 1600.⁵ The withdrawal of restrictions on machinery exports in 1843 led to the development of an increasingly

significant export trade, spearheaded by Hibbert and Platt who by the late 1850's were selling about one third of their mules abroad; for the other leading firms, Dobson and Barlow's export of approximately one thirteenth of their mule output was probably more representative.⁶

As the home market continued to expand with stimulus from regular mill building booms in Lancashire, such as 1870-3, 1880-4, 1889-92 and 1904-7, and as the export market flourished (45% of textile machinery output was exported by 1907), thus the spinning machinery section became dominated by a small group of industrial giants. There were seven leading firms: Platt Brothers, Asa Lees, John Hetherington, Brooks and Doxey, Dobson and Barlow, Howard and Bullough, and Tweedales and Smalley. With the exception of Tweedales and Smalley all had been founded before 1860, and with the exception of Howard and Bullough and the lesser firm of Lord Brothers, all the notable producers of spinning machinery were located in Manchester and the cotton spinning area of south-east Lancashire (see Table 3).

The manufacture of weaving machinery was far less concentrated; in 1900 there were eleven such establishments in Burnley and Blackburn alone. Platts continued to produce a significant proportion of the industry's loom output and there was an important loom making enclave in Bury, but these apart, the manufacture of weaving machinery was confined to the weaving district, north of the Rossendale Forest (see Table 4). Most of these firms too originated in the pre-1860 period.

The Lancashire textile machinery industry also included the leading manufacturers of bleaching and other finishing machinery: Mather and Platt and Farmer Norton of Salford, and Bentley and Jackson of Bury. In addition, there were specialist manufacturers

of spindles and flyers such as William Bodden of Oldham and William Ryder of Bolton, and firms practising the repair of machines or the re-conditioning of second hand plant, the most notable being Samuel Dodd of Oldham.

Table 3: Major Manufacturers of Spinning and Preparatory Machinery in Lancashire 1870-1914

<u>Firm</u>	<u>Works</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Date of Origin</u>	<u>Estimated Maximum Number Employed</u>
Platt Bros.	i) Hartford (New)	Oldham	1821	11,112
	ii) East (Old)			
Asa Lees	Soho	Oldham	1790	3,000
Dobson & Barlow	i) Kay Street	Bolton	1790	4,000
	ii) Bradley Fold			
Richard Threlfall	Bridgeman Place	Bolton	1834	252
Brooks & Doxey	i) Union	Manchester		
	ii) Junction		1859	2,600
John Hetherington	Phoenix	Manchester	1830	4,000
Howard & Bullough	Globe	Accrington	1853	4,500
Tweedales & Smalley	Globe	Rochdale (Castleton)	1891	2,500
John Mason	Globe	Rochdale	1820	
Lord Bros	Canal Street	Todmorden	1840	500
Taylor Lang	Castle	Stalybridge	1852	300
Arundel	Sovereign	Stockport	1840	450

Sources: R. Kirk and C. Simmons, 'Engineering and the First World War: A Case Study of the Lancashire Cotton Spinning Machine Industry', World Development Vol.9, No.8, 1981. Except Tweedales and Smalley, Accrington Observer, 6.1.1920, Brooks and Doxey, Manchester Courier, 17.8.1909, Arundel and Co., Textile Recorder, 15.10.1921.

Table 4: Major Manufacturers of Weaving Machinery in Lancashire
1870-1914

<u>Firm</u>	<u>Works</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Date of Origin</u>	<u>Estimated Maximum Number Employed</u>
*William Dickinson	Phoenix	Blackburn	1826	233
*John Dugdale	Soho	Blackburn		
*Willan & Mills	Rosehill	Blackburn		155
Henry Livesey	Greenbank	Blackburn	1864	740
Joseph Harrison		Blackburn	1826	
Yates & Thom	Canal	Blackburn	pre-1850	1000
British Northrop		Blackburn	1902	350
Butterworth & Dickinson Globe		Burnley	1835	650
Cooper Bros.	Bethesda	Burnley	c.1850	300
Harling & Todd	Calder	Burnley	1844	133
George Keighley	Bankhouse	Burnley	1854	350
Pemberton & Son	Waterloo	Burnley	1853	300
John Pilling & Son		Colne	1833	285
W. B. White	Red Scar	Colne	1838	115
Hacking & Co.	California	Bury	1855	500
Robert Hall	Hope	Bury	1837	700
Walker & Hacking	Vulcan	Bury	pre-1835	
William Smith	Sun	Heywood	1824	
Gregson & Mark		Preston		400
Atherton & Co.		Preston	1835	600

*merged in 1897 to form Blackburn Loom and Weaving Company Limited.

Sources: Blackburn: G. C. Miller, Evolution of a Cotton Town, Blackburn 1951, p.343. Wm. Dickinson & Sons, A Record of 100 Years, Blackburn 1926, p.2.
Burnley: J. Allen, George Keighley J.P., Burnley 1905, p.13. Butterworth & Dickinson Ltd., Globe Works Annuals and Private Letter Book 1914-49.
Colne: Burnley Gazette, 29.10.1913.
Bury: Bury Times, 13.11.1912, Textile Manufacturer, Vol.70, 1944.
Preston: R. Kirk, Ph.D. Thesis, p.121.

The Great War marked the turning point of the industry's fortunes, hitting hard at the hitherto booming export trade, and because of the government's desperate need for military and naval hardware, turning the industry's capacity over to the production of munitions. The speculative boom which followed the war led to major changes in the structure of the industry with the take-over and merger of Lord Bros. of Todmorden and Brooks and Doxey, and the take-over and restructuring of Tweedales and Smalley, in 1919-20.

The collapse of the boom was not so immediate in textile machinery making as in other sectors of engineering, but the effects were fundamental and permanent. The loss of foreign markets, due to import substitution and more intense foreign competition, hit the textile machinery industry, directly and indirectly. It was hit directly through its own heavy dependence on the export trade, and indirectly as its domestic market, Lancashire, was dependent upon the export of cotton yarn and piece goods. Indeed, the value of exports fell from £25.113 million in 1921, to £15.734 million in 1923, and only once more (1925) recovered to a level above £12 million in the 1920's; the world slump further reduced exports to £5.180 million in 1933, and they had only recovered to £8.408 million by 1938.⁷ Home markets were equally unrewarding; sales of £8 million in 1924, dwindled to under £5 million per year in the 1930's.⁸ In 1907 textile machinery represented 15% of the output of the mechanical engineering sector; by 1930 this had shrunk to 7%.⁹

The most important consequence of the industry's struggle to keep its markets was the rationalisation of the spinning machinery section with the creation of Textile Machinery Makers Ltd. (T.M.M.) in 1931, which brought together Platts, Asa Lees, Howard and Bullough, Dobson and Barlow, Hetheringtons and Brooks and Doxey. In 1933, Tweedales and Smalley were persuaded to join the amalgamation.

The consequence for labour was a speeding up of the loss of jobs as the main Hetherington and Asa Lees works, and Dobson and Barlow's Kay Street plant were closed, Platt's foundry capacity was drastically reduced, and the major Brooks and Doxey works was reduced to jobbing and repair work.¹⁰

The policy of re-armament, made necessary by the deepening crisis in Europe in the mid-1930's breathed new life into the industry. From 1935, Butterworth and Dickinsons of Burnley were already in negotiation with the Admiralty, and by 1939 armaments formed 20% of that firm's output.¹¹ The return to peace in 1945 brought a further short-lived boom which by 1947 had spent itself. From that point the industry's decline was swift and permanent, as some of the most famous works ceased production: Platts East Works (1952), Asa Lees (1952), Brooks and Doxey (1955), and Tweedales and Smalley (1956).

The thesis will thus provide a longitudinal study of one of the most important branches of engineering during a period of over a hundred years. The detailed examination of one specialist, highly regionalised sector of mechanical engineering facilitates the construction of a comprehensive case study. The rapid growth of the Lancashire cotton industry, the legalisation of machinery exports, the development of new machine tool technology, and impact of the Great War, (amongst other themes), can all be assessed in terms of their effects on both employers and labour. Indeed, the survival of a limited yet valuable stock of records from small firms such as Robert Halls and Butterworth and Dickinson, allows a very useful comparison to be made of the experiences of these firms, and the industry's giants, whose records survive in the Platt-Saco-Lowell archive.

II. The Textile Machinery Industry and the Trade Unions

The place of the textile machinery industry of Lancashire is fundamental in the history of trade unionism. The industry's workers were perhaps the most important of the original factory-based artisan groups of the industrial revolution. In fact, the industry's deep historical roots, and the subsequent piecemeal nature of technological change enabled those artisans to retain much of their control over the labour process until the 1920's.

Again, the use of a longitudinal, regional study of one specialist sector has considerable advantages. On the one hand, the responses of the artisans to technological change and the prospects of de-skilling over a hundred year period can be collated. On the other hand, a comprehensive labour history case study may more effectively be constructed. Perhaps inevitably the attention of historians has been drawn to the 'main stream' history of the engineers of the A.S.E./A.E.U., neglecting to some extent the 'tributary streams' of patternmakers, iron moulders, smiths, grinders etc.¹² Thus the detailed examination of surviving records of the societies representing these artisans provides a useful balance to the usual preponderance of the A.S.E./A.E.U. sources in engineering labour history. However, whilst it should be stated that this work is primarily concerned with the development of the artisanate, a complementary analysis of the role of those even more neglected elements of the engineering industry, the semi-skilled and unskilled grades, will be included where the fragmentary evidence permits.

In the formal history of trade union organisations, the Lancashire machinery makers can claim a primary role. The major foundry union in Britain, the Friendly Society of Iron Moulders was

formed in Bolton in 1809. Its original purpose was the organisation of the skilled foundrymen in the growing number of small firms supplying the textile machinery industry as it converted from essentially wooden to iron-framed products. Integrated firms such as Dobsons subsequently developed their own foundries and within fifteen years the moulders' society had established branches in most Lancashire textile machinery centres.¹³ Two lesser foundry unions, the Amalgamated Society of Plate and Machine Moulders and the Amalgamated Coremakers' Society were both products of the 'new unionism' and both were largely confined to Lancashire's textile machinery foundries. The former was established in 1890 in Oldham by Platts and Asa Lees semi-skilled men who subsequently travelled the county to establish further branches.¹⁴ The latter was created in Bury, in 1901, from a loose federation established in 1889 which embraced several localised societies in the Manchester and south-east Lancashire area.¹⁵

The oldest of the major machine shop unions, the Steam Engine Makers' Society, grew up about 1824 in the Mersey shipyards, but it did not recruit textile machinery artisans until the mid 1880's, by which time it was dwarfed by its rival, the A.S.E. The latter was the product of a series of amalgamations, notably in 1838 and 1851, the most important element in which was the Manchester-based, Friendly Union of Mechanics. This was almost certainly the union which engaged in the textile machinery industry's first major industrial dispute, the 'turn out' of engineers at Dobsons of Bolton in 1831.¹⁶

Two smaller, yet significant machine shop societies which reflected the diffusion of new machine tool technology in the industry, both appeared in 1844 to represent men viewed as insufficiently skilled by the A.S.E.'s immediate predecessor, the

Journeyman Steam Engine, Machine Makers, and Millwrights Society. The small Grinders and Glazers Society was formed in Manchester by the men of the engineering industry's new specialist machine grinding shops who linked up with those of Bolton and Oldham in that year.¹⁷ The United Machine Workers Association was created to represent the superior grades of semi-skilled 'machine men' such as planers, slotters and borers. Both societies remained, like the Coremakers and the Amalgamated Moulders, heavily dependent on Lancashire and its textile machinery industry for their membership.

Many of the Smiths employed in textile machinery making were attracted into the new A.S.E. in 1851, for example those of Blackburn and Preston.¹⁸ However, two separate sectional smiths' societies remained in existence, often hostile to each other and to the Amalgamated Society. The 'Associated Smiths' were largely concentrated in Scotland and the English shipbuilding industry, but the United Kingdom Amalgamated Society of Smiths and Strikers remained closely associated with Lancashire textile machine making, and was essentially the successor of Alexander Hutchinson's union which led the combined Lancashire metal trades into the Chartist "general strike" of 1842.¹⁹

Even after the adoption of iron-framed products, the textile machinery industry still employed a great number of wood working artisans who, with the exception of machine joiners who were an integral part of the A.S.E., maintained their own sectional memberships. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the General Union of Operative Carpenters both represented significant numbers of men, especially in the larger firms. A sectional patternmakers' society, had emerged in the shipyards of the north-east coast in 1872 among men who felt the A.S.E. could not provide for their particular needs. In 1875 the new society began

to establish branches in Lancashire machinery making towns despite strenuous opposition from the A.S.E.²⁰

Textile machine making also produced its own small sectional societies. These were the United Operative Spindle and Flyer Makers Society, the Operative Mule and Ring Spindle Makers Society, the Operative Roller Makers Society and the United Operative Shuttle Makers Society.²¹

Unionisation of the growing number of lower grade semi-skilled men and the relatively small number of unskilled labourers began very slowly in the late 1880's and faced tremendous problems. However, one union, the Gas Workers and General Labourers, represented in Lancashire by J. R. Clynes, eventually made remarkable progress from the mid-1890's. The United Machine Workers had itself developed a certain exclusivity and had confined its recruitment to the better paid 'machine men', particularly in south-east Lancashire where the most highly capitalised firms were largely located. Thus the G. and G.L.U. filled the vacuum, recruiting labourers, lower paid semi-skilled men such as drillers, and even the better paid semi-skilled men in north Lancashire.²² These unions of the unskilled and semi-skilled were, however, dwarfed in importance, if not in membership numbers, in the textile machinery industry by the artisan societies even up to World War Two.

III. The Lancashire Textile Machinery Artisans: Respectable Militants?

The labour history of the textile machinery is very much the history of its skilled workers. Even by 1914, the Engineering Employers' Federation estimated that 60% of the labour force of its federated firms was still classified as skilled.²³ The proportion

of skilled men employed in the smaller and medium sized firms would then have been far greater. As late as 1930, Butterworth and Dickinson, one of the leading loom making firms, employed 230 fully skilled men and 70 bona fide apprentices out of a labour force of about 500.²⁴

Eric Hobsbawm has recently described the history of the artisan as a, "drama in five acts".

"The first sets him in his pre-industrial period, the second deals with his struggles in the early industrial period, the third with his mid-Victorian glories, the fourth with his successful resistance to renewed attack. The last sees his gradual but far from smooth decline and fall since the end of the first post war boom."²⁵

The central purpose of the case study is the attempt to reconcile two characteristics attached to engineering industry artisans at different points in their history which are ostensibly paradoxical. The prevailing image tends to be that of moderation and respectability, based upon a strong sense of sectionalism and privileged economic status within the working class. In contrast, occasional phases of militancy starkly project from this background, notably the Lancashire/London lock-out of 1852, and the period of the Great War, especially from 1915, which is associated with the growth of the shop stewards' movement.

The aloofness of the engineering artisans (and other skilled factory workers) from the labour movements of the 1830's and 40's, notably Chartism, is traditionally accepted with little questioning.²⁶ In the period 1850 to 1880, the engineers are seen as archetypal 'labour aristocrats', whose trade societies were increasingly diverted to 'friendly/welfare' functions at the expense of 'trade' functions.²⁷ In the midst of this mid-century moderation, the lock-out of 1852 appears as a temporary upsurge of militancy associated with the creation of the new A.S.E. which was

flexing its muscles and asserting its bargaining strength.²⁸ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, despite the influence of socialists like Tom Mann, the A.S.E. and other artisan societies are perceived as shifting increasingly into isolation in the labour movement despite the militant eight hour day campaign which led up to the lock-out of 1897-98.²⁹ The re-awakening of militancy after the defeat of 1898, is attributed above all to the dramatic impact of the Great War, and in particular the thrusting of dilution upon skilled men whose workshop controls and economic status were meanwhile being eroded by piece work and inflation respectively.³⁰

The heart of the problem lies in the controversy which surrounds the labour aristocracy debate. In a recent article, Richard Price has criticised the prevailing approach to the concept which focuses upon 'subordination'. This, he argues, tends to

"generate a consensus that the key problematics of working class history, the questions that need explanation are, subordination and reformism. (This) closes off the possibility of a genuinely dialectical dynamic to which the subordinate groups contribute more than just the material for their subjection. But more important ... is the fact that such a tendency can scarcely accommodate the central peculiarity of the British working class to resist and obstruct capitalist domination of the labour process. No other working class has so tenaciously or successfully elevated the phenomenon of workplace resistance to a central feature of its relations with the wider society."³¹

What may be called the 'subordination' approach has tended to affect the engineering artisans more than any other trade, since from the days of Ernest Jones, the Chartist leader, their 'aristocratic' role in the labour movement has not seriously been questioned in the period 1852 to 1915.³² Firstly, their prime role in the 'subordination' of the working class can be questioned and then taking Price's approach, their role in the resistance to capitalist control of the labour process should be credited with equal, if not greater, attention.

The ability to restrict labour supply, to influence the manning of machines, the ability to exert control over the quality and speed of work, the negotiation of piece rates and piece work conditions, and a strong local autonomy in the conduct of industrial relations in general, all characterise the textile machine makers in the 1840's, the 1870's, or indeed at almost any point up to 1922. Significantly, the major defeats experienced by the engineering artisans in 1852 and 1898 failed to break their ability to exert strong controls over the labour process. In both cases, the ability of the central leadership of the A.S.E. to influence industrial relations was seriously, if temporarily, weakened. However, rank and file resistance at branch level, or through alternative unofficial structures, was able to thwart the desire of employers to exploit their victories to the full. Marx, himself acknowledged that,

"the more skilful the workman, the more self-willed and intractable he is apt to become, and of course the less fit a component of a mechanical system in which ... he may do great damage to the whole."³³

The nature of industrial disputes, even excluding those over pay, is remarkably constant from the Bolton 'turn out' of 1831 and the crisis at Hibbert and Platt in 1851, through to the disputes at Butterworth and Dickinsons of Burnley as late as 1933. The key element is the artisans' resistance on the shop floor to the attempts of capital to wrest from them, the ability to exert control over the labour process.

The suitability of the appellation "moderate", implying a willingness to acquiesce in the subordination of labour, must be questioned, therefore. However, it must not be confused with the epithet "respectable" which could be most appropriately applied to the textile machinery artisans. Unfortunately, a confusion of the

two terms has clouded much discussion of the role of engineering artisans in British labour history, not only of the mid-Victorian period, but also of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Respectability in the eyes of the artisan implied an independence of tradition and spirit within the working class culture which was certainly not exclusive of militancy and radicalism.

Another recent contributor to the labour aristocracy debate, Alastair Reid, has thrown some valuable light on this matter in his analysis of the essays of Thomas Wright, the 'Journeyman Engineer'. Reid points out that for Wright the term was,

"an intrinsically working class virtue, adhered to by even the most politically radical ... the demarcation between who was and who was not 'respectable' was not in Wright's account a means of identifying an upper stratum but on the contrary only came into operation at the other end of the working class spectrum among those who were at risk of becoming dependent on economic assistance and consequently becoming politically unreliable."³⁴

Thus if Wright's concept of 'respectability' is added to the artisans' resolution in their defence of workshop controls, the appellations 'respectable' and 'militant' need not be mutually exclusive, but can be seen as complementary.

A possible explanation of some misunderstanding of the role of the engineering industry artisan lies in the attention paid to the role of the leaderships of the major societies and the comparative neglect of local, branch and district level source material. A secondary theme of this work is to demonstrate the very strong sense of independence of the Lancashire textile machinery artisans, whose militancy often contrasted with the cautious, restraining influence of London-based Executives.

The Lancashire moulders strongly resisted the movement of their society's headquarters to London in 1842, as did the engineers in

1851 and in the latter case, a separate Lancashire-based mechanics' society remained in existence for several vital months. In 1867 the A.S.E. leadership tried in vain to restrain the militancy of its Blackburn branch during the crucial investigations of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions. The strength of what became known as 'localism' was at its greatest following the defeat of the A.S.E. in 1898, as the leadership was bound by the restrictions imposed by the terms of settlement of the dispute. This was most prominent in 1913-14 in Lancashire, and surfaced again in the 1917 strikes against dilution which began in Rochdale. Both the major national disputes in the post-war years, the moulders' strike of 1919-20, and the engineering dispute of 1922, exhibited further evidence of pronounced militancy in Lancashire in the vain attempts to sustain the campaigns against the Engineering Employers' Federation.

The second chapter of this study, which approximately covers Hobsbawm's first and second 'acts', focuses on the responses of the textile machinery artisans to the increasingly formal strictures of the factory regime and the first phase of diffusion of new machine tool technology. The desire to limit the working day whilst retaining control over the supply of labour and machine manning, led to what was perhaps the first serious industrial dispute in the history of modern British engineering: the Bolton 'turn out' of 1831. The 1830's and 1840's saw the textile machinery makers developing their trades societies, but also going beyond a mere sectional outlook in order to support the schemes of John Doherty, and belatedly, the principles of co-operative workshops, acknowledging the influence of the ideas of Robert Owen, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Louis Blanc. More significantly, the machinery makers of Manchester and the south Lancashire towns, played a decisive yet very much under-acknowledged role in the revival of

Chartism in 1841 and the "general strike" of 1842. This involvement in the wider working class movement has perhaps been ignored or minimised for so long since it goes against the received views that engineering artisans either remained consistently aloof from such movements, or as 'labour aristocrats', led the class collaboration of the 1840's and 50's.³⁵

The lock-out of engineers in 1852 was the most important industrial dispute of the mid-nineteenth century and it originated at the Oldham firm of Hibbert and Platt, which was by then probably the country's largest engineering firm. The dispute was the result of a fundamental struggle carried on by the firm's artisans to assert control over the labour process in the face of rapid technological change, and a management determined to break, or at least diminish, the growing power of the artisan societies.

The Webbs saw the 1852 lock-out as the culmination of an increasingly aggressive trade policy adopted by the A.S.E.'s main predecessor from 1845.³⁶ Thus it has tended to appear as an isolated short period of militancy between the years of moderation following the foundation of the J.S.E.M.M., and the two decades or so following the lock-out, when the A.S.E. is portrayed as seeking primarily to build up its central administration and welfare benefit system. Keith Burgess has begun to place the 1852 dispute in its proper context, relating it not just to the build-up of artisan society power, but also to the diffusion of new technology which threatened craft controls.³⁷ Developing this approach further, the lock-out can be viewed not as the result of an isolated surge of militancy, but rather as the most serious in a whole series of industrial relations breakdowns over control of the labour process, which began in 1831 in Bolton and recurred in 1834 (Bolton), 1836

(Manchester), 1845 (Bury), and later in Bolton (1866-8) and Blackburn (1867).

The expansion of the textile machinery industry following the 1852 lock-out was characterised by the development of existing technology rather than the diffusion of new. Thus in this period of growth and the opening up of new overseas markets, rising costs could be more easily passed on to the customer, and industrial relations became less starkly confrontational. This does not necessarily vindicate Foster's concept of class collaboration, however, as the artisans availed themselves of every opportunity to fight limited localised campaigns to re-establish craft controls. There is considerable evidence of such campaigns in the Lancashire machinery making industry during the two decades which followed the defeat of 1852.²⁰ In particular, the incidence of piece work was reduced and where it remained, the artisans were able to acquire greater control over its operation and to secure more equitable distribution of bonuses. It is perhaps appropriate to equate industrial relations in the third quarter of the century in Lancashire's machinery making industry, with the diplomatists' concept of detente, with limited localised conflicts, rather than with that of entente, which would wrongly imply class collaboration, and possibly artisan subordination to the principles of political economy.

It would be foolish to ignore the considerable wage differentials between the textile machinery artisanate and the ranks of semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Similarly, the strong family influences which brought successive generations into the industry must be taken into account. Yet it is easy to exaggerate the 'labour aristocratic' elitism of such workers. As Hobsbawm has recently pointed out,

"the artisan stratum, consisted, like the rest, of manual wage earners possessing the common stigmata of proletarian existence: insecurity, uncertainty, and the risk of poverty."³⁹

Similarly the artisans could never isolate themselves from the ranks of the semi-skilled through institutional means. As Hobsbawm continues,

"It is inconceivable that the skilled part of the male workforce in the manufacture of metals, machines, implements and vehicles etc., which doubled between 1851 and 1891, could have been recruited exclusively by formal apprenticeship."⁴⁰

Hobsbawm's emphasis on the primacy of the economic criteria in the labour aristocracy debate, has been recently balanced by more extensive research on the social issues.⁴¹ The evidence relating to social relationships, residence, and general lifestyle of the Lancashire textile machinery artisans indicates that whilst the question of 'respectability' remained paramount, this was not a trait peculiar only to the artisans, but was characteristic of other proletarians too. A careful examination of the available evidence shows that the division between the engineering artisans and the lower middle class was a far more formidable barrier than that between these artisans and the rest of the proletariat.

From the 1880's to the outbreak of war in 1914, there was a period of "successful resistance to renewed attack", especially in the period following the defeat of the A.S.E. by the Engineering Employers' Federation in the set-piece battle of 1897-98. This was also the period of the 'New Unionism' and the growing influence of socialism upon the artisan societies. The bitter and extremely violent strike of engineers at Dobson and Barlow's Kay Street works, in 1887, marks the impact of stark class conflict on the textile machinery industry. A simple claim for a wages advance in a period of improving trade, brought a strike, the importation of blacklegs, and subsequently, large scale rioting and military occupation of

Bolton. The conduct of the strike clearly shows the integration of the skilled engineering workers in the wider working class community, and that this was not mere sectional action.⁴² The strikers were supported by a campaign of boycott by the working class community, of small businessmen who traded with the employers. The strike also enabled the Marxist Social Democratic Federation to claim a strong foothold in the town, and enabled candidates sponsored by the local Trades Council to break the traditional Liberal and Conservative hold on local politics.

A decade later, the combined strength of the artisan societies in Oldham was sufficient to defeat Asa Lees and Platts, and secured union recognition at the latter firm for the first time since 1852. What is perhaps more important is that the strike awakened the textile machinery employers to the growth of trade union power and thereby assisted the establishment of the Engineering Employers' Federation in Lancashire.⁴³

Significantly, the settlement of the Oldham strike served as a rough blueprint for the ideas enshrined in the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes' which accompanied the settlement of the national engineering lock-out of 1898. Through these 'Provisions' the Federation sought to exercise greater control over industrial relations by conducting negotiations in a more formalised, regulated manner with trade union officialdom, thereby hoping to diminish the influence of the shop floor militants.

Economic conditions following the Federation's victory in 1898, the peculiar circumstances of the textile machinery industry, and the Federation's domination over a weak A.S.E. leadership, all combined to undermine this victory through a resurgence of rank and file power. Cronin observed that,

"the prosperous conditions ... increased the demand for Labour and often negated the effects upon workers of the introduction

of machinery. This contradictory conjuncture thus strengthened the hands of the workers, made skilled hands scarce and so made the victories achieved by employers ... difficult to enforce. The classic case is engineering, where events seemed to conspire to recreate workshop power for the men and thus necessitate the 1922 replay of the 1897-98 strike."⁴⁴

Zeitlin notes the peculiar situation of textile machinery making which still faced little foreign competition yet possessed long established sites with plant built up piecemeal during the century. Together, these factors made employers reluctant to bring about wholesale transformation of production, and their alternative strategies which only contemplated gradual, small scale assaults on craft controls, played into the hands of rank and file resistance. Moreover, this very resistance was obliged to develop in view of the Federation's policy of keeping the A.S.E. leadership in a state of weakness.⁴⁵

This weakness was not overcome by the A.S.E.'s attempts to develop the power of its permanent central bureaucracy. Van Gore observed that,

"Constitutional changes had only a limited impact upon a powerful tradition of local autonomy based on the job control exercised by fitters and turners at the point of production. Further reinforcement came from the enormous diversity and complexity of local conditions and payments methods in engineering. This ensured the continuing importance of branch and workplace bargaining, even in the aftermath of the 1897 lock-out and the 1898 national agreement through which the executive sought to increase its authority."⁴⁶

Despite attempts to drive a wedge between the industry's foremen and the artisan societies through the Foremen's Benefit Society, and a policy of blacklisting union militants, the Federation and its leading members in the textile machinery industry, were unable to consolidate the victory of 1898, just as a previous generation had been unable to break artisan workshop controls after the lock-out of 1852. The key to this successful artisan resistance lay in the autonomous strength and organisation of unofficial structures based

on the foundry and workshop floor and usually supported by local officials, often in the face of executive disapproval or opposition. In places like Lancashire the employers failed to exploit their great victory since they were, in Phelps Brown's words, "combating a whole culture, a heritage of attitudes".⁴⁷

The conversion of textile machinery firms to suppliers of munitions with the attendant irritants to smooth relations between employers and artisans, led in the spring of 1917, to the Lancashire machinery makers regaining the centre of the national industrial relations stage. The impact of dilution, the erosion of wage differentials, the use of 'leaving certificates' and growing threats of artisan conscription eventually boiled over in the strike of Tweedales and Smalley's workers which in turn escalated into a strike involving 60,000 in Lancashire and 250,000 nationally. The repercussions of the strike actually went right to the heart of Lloyd George's coalition government and led to the replacement of the Minister of Munitions, Christopher Addison, by Winston Churchill; and a shelving of plans to extend dilution to commercial work.

The cessation of hostilities brought general working class expectations of a fairer society. Parallel to this was the specific artisan desire of a restoration of eroded real wages, and the insistence on the redemption of wartime promises to reverse dilution. The militancy which had been demonstrated in 1912-14 and 1917, re-appeared with the post-war boom of 1919-20, though it was somewhat overshadowed by the industrial relations crises of the coal mining and railway sectors. However, the failure of the powerful iron moulders' union, the F.S.I.F. and its allies, to break Federation resistance in a strike over a 15 shilling pay claim, was an ill-omen for artisan aspirations in general. The collapse of the

brief post-war boom thus ushered in the final act of Hobsbawm's artisan drama: "the far from smooth decline".

Following their defeat of the moulders, the Federation employers went onto defeat the strongest of the small specialist textile machinery societies, the Spindle and Flyer Makers, and then completed the destruction of artisan opposition by crushing the A.E.U. and its allies in 1922. The deepening depression in the industry had undermined effective resistance to the Federation in the 1922 dispute and allowed the latter to re-establish its 'right to manage', which rank and file artisan militancy had steadily undermined after the 1898 settlement.

The deepening of the depression in the early 1930's brought severe artisan unemployment and employers were able to confront resistance in the last bastions of artisan control of the labour process: the workshops of the small family-run firms. Most of these were loom manufacturers in north-east Lancashire. In Burnley, for example, systems of payment by results were resisted by artisans right up to the defeat of the A.E.U. in 1922, and in most of the town's engineering works, were still virtually unknown a decade later.

In a series of cases which went through the Federation's disputes procedure in 1933, the leading Burnley firm, Butterworth and Dickinson, was finally able to achieve a strategic breakthrough in wresting control of the labour process from the artisans, and in beginning a slow but systematic process of de-skilling. In the conduct of these cases the firm's directors were forcefully assisted by the Federation's Secretary, Sir Allan Smith. In dismissing A.E.U. objections to the introduction of semi-skilled men to work hitherto the preserve of artisans, Smith presented a speech which was indicative of the nature of industrial relations in the harsh

conditions of the slump. (The work at issue was the boring of loom 'pedestals' and the turning of 'pike ends' on loom take up rollers.) He argued that,

"A lot of things were done by skilled men which could perfectly well be done and are now being done ... by semi-skilled men, not only in the loom trade, but in other trades where the requirements are of a much closer degree; but you have enjoyed, if I may put it in that way, a long run of restrictions of these machines in the loom trade to skilled men and you now feel a little annoyed ... that at long last the loom trade is going to be dealt with in the same way as the general engineering practice has necessitated in the case of general engineering production; ... You have been in an insulated and isolated position in Burnley and enjoyed yourselves for so long that you do not like to face progress when it comes ... the increased output is not sufficient, and the capital expenditure on the introduction of these machine tools has got to be met, and it must be met by cheapening production."⁴⁸

At the time of the presentation of the case the firm was operating with little over half its normal workforce of 500 men, with most of these working only a four day week.⁴⁹ In such conditions was the artisan resistance finally broken down.

Edmund and Ruth Frow's recent work, 'Engineering Struggles', points out that in the years after World War Two, the militancy of the textile machinery workers reasserted itself in a series of strikes against proposed large scale redundancy at T.M.M. Perhaps the most significant of these strikes came at the end of 1952, when the dwindling market for textile machinery had led the firm to propose a scheme of drastic rationalisation of capacity. Most notable in the plan was the proposed closure of the Platts East Works after 122 years of machinery production.⁵⁰ The resistance, co-ordinated by the T.M.M. Central Shop Stewards' Committee, could not prevent closure of the works but did succeed in persuading management to find alternative jobs for all but 20 or 30 of the 250 men threatened with unemployment.

It is noteworthy that after 120 years of militancy, from the Dobson and Barlow strike of 1831, it was textile machinery makers

who initiated this action, which the Shop Stewards' Committee
Chairman, Robert Williams claimed as, "the first fight for the right
to work of substance in Britain".⁵¹

FOOTNOTES

- 1 First Census of Production 1907, Final Report, Parliamentary Papers, 1912-13, Vol. 109, cd.6320
- 2 S.B. Saul, 'The Market and the Development of the Mechanical Engineering Industries in Britain 1860-1914', Economic History Review, Vol. 20, 1967, p.112 and R. M. Kirk, 'The Economic Development of the British Textile Machinery Industry c.1850-1913', Salford University, Ph.D., Thesis, 1983, p.13.
- 3 Board of Trade, Industrial Survey of the Lancashire Area (Excluding Merseyside), Compiled by G. W. Daniels and J. Jewkes, H.M.S.O. 1932, p.151.
- 4 ibid.
- 5 J. Ward, Workmen and Wages at Home and Abroad, London 1868, p.88.
- 6 R. Kirk, op. cit., p.421.
- 7 ibid. p.654.
- 8 T. R. Gourvish, 'Mechanical Engineering', in M. K. Buxton and D. H. Aldcroft (eds.), British Industry Between the Wars, London, 1979, p.134.
- 9 ibid.
- 10 T.M.M. Directors' Meetings Minutes, 1.10.1931, 16.11.1932 and 11.4.1938.
- 11 W. D. Butterworth, Industrial Relations in a Small Engineering Firm, Typescript n.d., p.2/1.
- 12 The exceptions are the works of trade union officials such as William Mosses', History of the United Patternmakers' Society, and those commissioned by unions, such as H. J. Fyrth and H. Collins, The Foundry Workers, Manchester 1959. Angela Tuckett has filled one notable lacuna with her recent, The Blacksmiths' Story, London 1974, though this work tends to concentrate upon the 'Associated Blacksmiths' at the expense of the rival Lancashire-based U.K. Society of Smiths and Strikers.
- 13 There followed branches in Manchester (1809), Burnley (1811), Preston (1813), Stockport (1816), Stalybridge (1822), Ashton (1822), Bury (1824). See also Chapter Two, Table 3. The union eventually became the A.U.E.W. Foundry Section in 1971.
- 14 MSS 41/APM/2/1, Oldham Branch Cash Book, and the oral evidence of Mr. Joe Banks, the union's last General Secretary.
- 15 MSS 4/ASCM/4/1, Quarterly Report, December 1918.
- 16 See Part III of Chapter Two.
- 17 Amalgamated Machine, Engine and Iron Grinders and Glazers Society, Annual Report, 1915-16.

- 18 A.S.E., Monthly Reports, August and December 1851.
- 19 The history of the Smiths' societies is extremely complicated, largely because of the frequent changes of nomenclature. The U.K. Smiths and Strikers Society which eventually became part of the A.E.U. in 1920, was previously known as the Sons of Vulcan United Society of Smiths and Strikers, until 1886; prior to that it had been the United Order of Smiths.
- 20 W. Mosses, History of the United Patternmakers Society 1872-1922, London 1922, p.36. Significantly the patternmakers rejected amalgamation within the A.E.U. in 1920, and eventually became part of A.U.E.W. - T.A.S.S. (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section) rather than the A.U.E.W. 'Engineering' Section. The earliest Lancashire branches were: Manchester and Bolton (1875), Blackburn and Preston (1876) and Bury 1879).
- 21 These societies were all absorbed by the A.S.E. or A.E.U. with the exception of the last mentioned.
- 22 G. and G.L.U., Quarterly Reports and Balance Sheets, *passim*. A separate Machine and General Workers Union tended to dominate recruitment in the Bolton area until its amalgamation with the G. and G.L.U. in 1915. The Workers' Union made limited progress in the Manchester area in this industry.
- 23 M. L. Yates, Wages and Labour Conditions in British Engineering, London 1937, p.31.
- 24 W. D. Butterworth, *op. cit.*, pp.1/4-1/5.1
- 25 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Artisan or Labour Aristocrat', in Worlds of Labour, London 1984, p.254.
- 26 R. G. Kirby and A. E. Musson, The Voice of the People: John Doherty 1798-1858, Manchester 1975, p.263, take this view of the early 1830's. Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, London 1963, p.34 and Donald Read, 'Chartism in Manchester' in Asa Briggs (ed.), Chartist Studies, London 1959, p.46, for a similar view of the 1840's.
- 27 C. G. Hanson, 'Craft Unions, Welfare Benefits and the Case for Trade Union Law Reform, 1867-75', Economic History Review, Vol. 28, 1975, argues that the unions' image presented to the Royal Commission of 1867-69 was one of, "sober insurance societies". John Foster, Class Struggle in the Industrial Revolution, London 1974, Chapter 7, sees the textile machinery makers in Oldham as prime examples of class collaboration during the mid-nineteenth century.
- 28 H. Pelling, *op. cit.*, pp.49-51.
- 29 H. A. Clegg, A. Fox and A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Oxford 1964, p.165 and J. B. Jefferys, The Story of the Engineers, London 1945, p.169. The latter account notes the A.S.E.'s self-criticism in this matter, in 1910.
- 30 J. Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, London 1973, *passim*, and A. Warwick, The Deluge, Oxford 1965, p.218 ff.

- 31 R. Price, 'The Labour Process and Labour History', Social History, Vol. 8, 1983, pp.57-58.
- 32 J. Saville (ed.), Ernest Jones: Chartist, London, 1952, p.47. In his introduction to Jones' writings, Saville comments on the dogmatism which Jones and later Hyndman passed on to the labour movement of the twentieth century, on questions such as this.
- 33 K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, Moscow 1954 edition, p.368.
- 34 A. Reid, 'Intelligent Artisans and Aristocrats of Labour: The Essays of Thomas Wright', in J. Winter (ed.), The Working Class in Modern British History, Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling, Cambridge 1983, p.180.
- 35 Some recent writers have acknowledged this role, however, for example Dorothy Thompson, Mick Jenkins and R. Sykes, see Chapter Two, n.4.
- 36 S. and B. Webb, History of Trade Unionism, London 1907 edition, p.191 ff.
- 37 K. Burgess, 'Technological Change and the 1852 Lock-Out in the British Engineering Industry', International Review of Social History, 14, 1969.
- 38 See Chapter Four, Conclusion.
- 39 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered' in, Worlds of Labour, p.233.
- 40 ibid.
- 41 For example the work of Gray, Crossick and Breuilly. See Chapter Four, Introduction.
- 42 The A.S.E., Monthly Report, November 1887, reflected that, "the public of Bolton and the press took up the cause of the workpeople in such a manner that has never been known in the history of strikes or trades unions. Money flowed in from all parts of the U.K. and larger donations were made to the non-society men than in any previous dispute."
- 43 The Federation first recruited the Manchester firms, Brooks and Doxey and Hetheringtons in April 1897, while the Oldham strike was in progress. Platts, Asa Lees and Dobson and Barlow joined only when the national lock-out commenced.
- 44 J. E. Cronin, 'Strikes 1870-1914' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), A History of British Industrial Relations, 1875-1914, Brighton 1982, p.80.
- 45 J. Zeitlin, 'The Labour Strategies of British Engineering Employers', in H. E. Gospel and C. R. Littler (eds.), Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations, London 1983, pp.36-41.
- 46 V. Gore, 'Rank and File Discontent', in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), op. cit., p.53.

- 47 H. Phelps Brown, The Origins of Trade Union Power, Oxford 1983, p.114.
- 48 MSS 237, Engineering Employers' Federation Archive, Collective Bargaining Minute Books, (Proceedings of Central and Special Conferences) Vol. XXXIV, 13.1.1933.
- 49 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.1/8.
- 50 E. and R. Frow, Engineering Struggles, Manchester 1982, p.212.
In addition to the proposed closure of Platt's East Works, the last remnant of Asa Lees was also to close, whilst there were to be job losses at Platt's Hartford Works and at Howard and Bullough.
- 51 ibid. p.214.

Chapter Two

The Emergence of the Textile Machinery Artisans and their Role in the Labour History of Lancashire Before 1850

I. Introduction

The creation of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1851 and the lock-out which followed in 1852, mark one of the most important stages in the development of industrial relations in Britain. The consolidation of the union, and the subsequent dispute in London and Lancashire demonstrated that industrial relations were evolving into a nearly national framework, with increasingly centralised bargaining between capital and organised labour.

By the mid-nineteenth century, after sixty years of erratic growth, Lancashire had displaced London as the nation's leading engineering centre, and within Lancashire, the textile machinery industry was the leading engineering sector, a position it retained until the Great War. The labour force of this industry could be said to have emerged as a distinct and predominantly highly skilled, factory-based entity by the 1820's. The textile engineering workers were thus in the vanguard of the organised working class in England by 1850; their role in the process leading to the 1851 amalgamation and the lock-out of 1852 demonstrates their key position.

Several works have traced the development of the engineering industry as a whole up to 1850, and indeed, the growth of its leading union. Musson and Robinson, in outlining the role of science and technology in the early stages of the industrial revolution, have noted the development of specialist machine-making firms in Lancashire, especially in Manchester and Salford.' Keith Burgess, developing the earlier work of MacLaine and Jefferys, has analysed the development of the A.S.E. and its predecessors, and the

response of these early engineering unions to the challenge of technological revolution.² The Lancashire textile machinery artisans provided a cornerstone of John Foster's controversial explanation of the 'liberalization' of labour in the mid-nineteenth century³, and recent work on the Chartist movement in the north has begun to re-assess the role of skilled factory workers such as the engineers.⁴

This chapter seeks to trace the emergence of a specialist textile machinery industry in Lancashire, to discuss the development of all sections of its labour force, not merely the fitters and turners who were the basis of the A.S.E., and to explain the significant contribution of the textile machine makers to the wider labour movements of the period.

In labour histories dealing with the engineering industry, attention has understandably been focused on the A.S.E. and its predecessors. This is partly a reflection of the availability of evidence, but also of the eventually overwhelming predominance in the industry of that union and its successors, the A.E.U. and A.U.E.W. Through an analysis of the experiences of the complete range of trades within the 'textile' section of the engineering industry in Lancashire, a more balanced labour history should emerge. Indeed, in the crucial events between 1840 and 1845, the role of the smiths and the moulders was far more influential than that of the fitters and turners, who were to form the core of the new A.S.E. in 1851.

In this formative stage of the engineering industry, the gradual shift from hand tools to hand controlled power tools involved a decrease in physical effort but an overall increase in the mental effort, education and dexterity, required of the artisan. Braverman quotes Bright's work on the 'mechanization profile' to illustrate

this point. "Using hand tools, such as a file he (the metal worker) requires considerable dexterity," Bright argues,

"As power is added but the tool guidance is left in the operator's hands, he needs new levels of dexterity and decision-making to control the machine action, and these grow in importance. A high degree of attention is required. Knowledge requirement, hence training and/or experience requirement, grows with the introduction of the power tool."⁵

Thus in this period prior to the lock-out of 1852, the textile machinery artisans were able to exert a high level of control over the labour process and through their societies were able to restrict labour supply sufficiently to maintain that control to a very great extent in the face of employers' attempts to break it down.

As the demand for textile machinery multiplied in the period from the 1780's to the mid-1820's, a distinct body of machine making and iron founding firms emerged.⁶ The magnitude of the demand by the 1820's placed skilled labour, capable of executing a wide variety of tasks, from the arduous moulding of heavy castings to the precision turning of rollers, at a premium. The transition from basically wooden machinery to iron had taken place during the later stages of the French Wars. Prior to the change, demand for wooden machinery placed great scarcity value on the labour of the millwrights, whose skills could have been acquired in the construction and setting-up of cornmilling or fulling machinery. Thus in the early stages of the textile machinery industry's development, these workers were able to exploit this favourable market position and maintain effective trade societies in the face of the anti-union legislation then in operation.

The forces of demand boosted by the booms of 1824-5 and the early 1830's, encouraged the growth of larger, specialist machinery making firms, and the desire of these firms to increase efficiency and reduce labour costs by investment in new machine tools. The

impact of these changes undermined the privileged status of the millwright as new men, notably from metal-working backgrounds, entered the industry. Thus developed the so-called 'engineers' economy' and more specialised skills such as moulding, turning and fitting emerged with it.⁷ However, the reminiscences of a tramping mechanic working at Hibbert and Platts' works in Oldham in 1845 show clearly that the older artisans, at least, were men of all-round skill and ability. "When a youth," the mechanic recalled, "my education had been well attended to. I can draw a plan, make a pattern, mould a casting, use a turning tool, handle a chisel and hammer, file at vice, fit up on the floor."⁸

The introduction of new machine tools was pioneered by firms such as Hibbert and Platt (later Platt Bros.) and Samuel Lees (later Asa Lees) of Oldham, and Isaac and Benjamin Dobson (later Dobson and Barlow) of Bolton, and it was at the latter firm that there took place the first major confrontation between capital and the new mechanics' societies in the 'turn-out' of 1831. This turn-out, a battle against long hours and the increase in the ratio of apprentices to journeymen, marks the start of a century of struggle by textile machinery artisans to defend their controls over the labour process in the face of successive waves of technological change.

The Bolton turn-out, which provides a good illustration of regional-level mutual assistance among the mechanics' societies, was contemporaneous with the involvement of the Lancashire moulders and machine makers in John Doherty's National Association for the Protection of Labour. This was in fact, merely one of a series of involvements of the machinery making artisans in the wider labour movement, which began with the anti-combination law agitation and was sustained until the early 1850's. The operation of the United

Trades Association during the Chartist agitation of 1841-2 is perhaps the key example of the class solidarity shown by the textile machinery artisans during a period when the weight of historical judgement labels them as elitist and sectionalist.*

The creation of such organisations as the United Trades Association in 1840, the Operative Mechanics Protective Society in 1844, and the establishment of the journal, 'Trades Advocate and the Herald of Progress' in 1850 all illustrate the vital role of Lancashire textile machine makers in laying the foundations of the engineers' amalgamation in 1851. During the same period, deteriorating industrial relations brought about partly by rapid technological changes at firms such as Hibbert and Platt, Metcalf and Dobson, and Walkers of Bury, indicate why Lancashire's textile engineering industry was the storm centre of the lock-out of 1852.

II. The Twilight Years of the Lancashire Millwrights

The capacity of the Lancashire textile industry underwent revolutionary expansion during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its spindle capacity grew from an estimated 1.7 million in the early 1780's to between 4 and 5 million by 1812, 10 million by 1829-31, and 21 million by 1850; power loom stock increased from around 2,400 in 1812, to 14,000 by 1819-21, 55,000 by 1829-31 and 250,000 by 1850.¹⁰ The industry's fixed capital value has been estimated at half a million pounds in 1787, two million pounds in 1795, five million in 1812 and almost fifteen million in 1834.¹¹

The consequent demand surge for construction and installation of cotton mill machinery was met by many textile firms producing their own carding machines, jennies, mules and power looms, a practice

which remained common until the 1820's. This is confirmed by the evidence of Messrs. Ashton and Bremner, both listed as cotton spinners and power loom manufacturers of Hyde, presented to the 1824 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery.¹²

Musson and Robinson have pointed out that the last quarter of the eighteenth century brought the establishment of an increasing number of specialist iron foundries, machine makers and roller or shuttle makers, though early trade directory nomenclature was inconsistent.¹³ Significantly, three of the future giants in the manufacture of spinning machinery were founded before 1825: Asa Lees (1790), Dobson and Barlow (1790) and Platt's (1821).

In the late eighteenth century it was common for the cotton manufacturers to employ a number of highly skilled men to construct and erect machinery in a new mill. A Bolton artisan, John Hammond, writing in the 1830's, recollected that the work, "was all done in places where it had to remain," and that the artisans employed to make the machines came from a variety of trades,

"amongst them, the millwright claimed the pre-eminence; the rest were composed of carpenters, joiners, smiths, clockmakers, who left their original trades for better wages; moulders and turners were then little known."¹⁴

Only a minority of this labour force was retained once installation was completed; these men were responsible for maintenance and perhaps minor design improvements.¹⁵

The lucrative nature of the millwrights' work in the early Lancashire textile machinery industry, attracted skilled men and their families from all over Britain, notably from Birmingham and Scotland. Many of them were able at this early stage, before capital requirements became too great, to go on to become successful

entrepreneurs themselves in textile machinery making, general engineering or cotton spinning.

John Hammond observed that,

"after the mills had been a few years established, some thrifty part of the men who had been employed in them began to study their own interest. They found the business lucrative and resolved to have a share in it."¹⁶

Scotsmen such as James McConnel and John Kennedy, later successful cotton spinners, served apprenticeships of seven years at the firm of Cannan and Smith of Chowbent (a district between Bolton and Wigan) where they remained until 1791, when they established a textile machinery firm just off Manchester's Oldham Street.

According to Kennedy,

"Chowbent was therefore, a kind of information centre, employment exchange and staging post for Scots on the way to work and sometimes fortune in England."¹⁷

Other successful examples were: John Galloway, Adam and George Murray; whilst Richard Roberts was a later and more famous arrival in the Manchester machine making trade.¹⁸

For those millwrights and journeymen machine makers without serious entrepreneurial ambition, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were none the less something of a 'golden age'. John Galloway noted the millwright's all-round skill and versatility in work in which he, "had to understand pretty nearly the whole process from taking the particulars and making the patterns to fixing the machinery in the mill."¹⁹ An increase in such a skilled labour force could not be brought about sufficiently quickly to meet the growing demand for machinery. One Manchester employer, Peter Ewart, consequently complained of the near-impossibility of obtaining, "good millwrights, filers and turners," in the 1790's.²⁰ In spite of a steady expansion of the numbers of the more specialized filers and turners, the upward spiral of textile

machinery demands kept pressure on the employers and maintained, temporarily, the millwrights' advantageous market position. In Bolton, the firm of Dobson and Rothwell (later Dobson and Barlow), was informing potential customers in December 1812 that orders for mules, drawing frames and other machines placed at that time could not be met before April 1814, such was the backlog of demand on their order book.²¹

Evidence presented to the Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery in 1824 confirms this situation. Thomas Ashton of Hyde complained of the difficulties in obtaining skilled labour for machinery making and even machinery repair work; that having to make do with less able men necessitated using higher grade cotton to produce the same quality of yarn as he had formerly done.²² Ashton explained that the pressure of demand had forced up millwrights' daily wages in Hyde from four shillings and sixpence in 1822 to five shillings in 1824.²³ Even in the difficult depression years of 1818-1819, the local millwrights were, "very fully employed", he pointed out, "for the power looms were being introduced and that kept them in full employment during that time."²⁴ Ashton's testimony shows there was also concern among the employers at the growing practice of foreign manufacturers, notably French, of sending agents to the Manchester area to offer substantial financial inducements to tempt some of the most talented journeymen to the continent.²⁵ This would have also added to the bargaining strength of the skilled journeymen.

While the ratio of labour to capital remained high and tools remained unsophisticated, the millwrights could maintain not only a strong bargaining position but also a virtually unchallenged control of the labour process, until the first impact of new machine tools in the early 1830's.²⁶ The Lancashire millwrights lacked the

traditional elitism of their London counterparts yet were in a sufficiently strong position to lead resistance to the Combination Laws, though this perhaps did bring about the temporary demise of one of their societies.²⁷

Thomas Ashton commented on the ability of the millwright societies to keep other trades out of machine making in his evidence to the Select Committee of 1824. Other employers confirmed the rather contemptuous attitude held by the millwrights towards the more specialised engineers.²⁸ From the scanty available Lancashire evidence, it would appear that whilst employers made serious efforts to take on the artisan societies, the millwrights' position remained unassailable.

In Bolton, Isaac and Benjamin Dobson formed the 'Black Horse Club' and the 'Bolton Prosecution Club'. This was initially founded to co-ordinate the defence of capital against the Luddites but was also used to fight combinations of artisans.²⁹ John Hammond's account of the 1831 'turn out' provides the most telling evidence of the millwrights' strength and organisation. He lamented that the new "mechanical trades" in textile machinery manufacture, were by comparison with the millwrights, naive in their early bargaining with powerful employers like Dobson. The mechanics' wages of 18 shillings to a guinea per week were superior to those of workers in other shops yet they were obliged to work a 13 hour day (6 a.m. to 7 p.m.). The millwrights were experienced and powerful enough to remain aloof from such a disadvantageous compromise, for as Hammond noted,

"none of the mechanical trades, except the wary millwright, had any idea of stipulating time and wages altogether; they had, before this time, organised a union, and were very watchful over their rights; had the other mechanical trades followed their examples the struggles they have left to their successors would have been obviated."³⁰

T. C. Hewes, textile machine maker of Manchester, who employed, "about 100 on machinery", in 1824, was able to force piece work upon many of his firm's artisans, but only upon those, "below the millwrights", whose, "closed society" was able to maintain uniform day wages.³¹

The above evidence not only demonstrates the power of the millwrights but also supports Hobsbawm's thesis that the emerging engineering artisan societies had not yet fully learned, "the rules of the game" of collective bargaining. He argues that they allowed the employers to get, "their skilled labour ... at lower than market cost", since the artisans were willing to retain, "independence of supervision, dignified treatment and mobility", as a partial substitute for their maximum wage potential.³² The evidence demonstrates that the converse was also true, that they would accept long hours and even piece work in certain circumstances, for comparatively high wages, at least in these early years of the textile machinery industry's development.

Holbrook-Jones argues that it was,

"the growth of the cotton industry that really created the conditions for the emergence of the 'engineer' as a metal-working wage labourer."³³

Burgess sees the textile industry boom of 1824-5 as the decisive point in the move towards the substitution of more specialised men for the multi-skilled millwrights; labour then constituted 3/5 to 7/10 of the total cost of machine making, he claims.³⁴ The greater availability of supplies of cast and wrought iron was beginning to enforce change on the millwrights; Dobson and Rothwell, for example had already completed the transition to iron framed machines by 1817.³⁵

The development of new specialist artisan societies clearly marks the progress of this change. Most important initially was the

Friendly Society of Iron Moulders, which was formed in Bolton in 1809 and soon established a strong network of branches throughout Lancashire's textile district: Manchester (1809), Burnley (1811), Preston (1813), Stockport (1816), Ashton (1822), and Bury (1826).³⁶ Mechanics' societies with a purely 'friendly benefit' function had existed in Lancashire since the late 1770's according to Maclaine.³⁷ More significant was the creation of the Friendly Institution of Mechanics which formulated its first rules in a Leeds meeting in 1824; at least 16 Lancashire branches were involved in the new organisation. Membership was open to filers (fitters), model makers (patternmakers), wood and iron turners, smiths and joiners who were engaged in the manufacture of steam engines and machinery for the, "preparation and spinning of flax, tow, hemp, cotton, wool, worsted, or silk."³⁸ The Friendly Union of Mechanics emerged in Manchester in 1826, organised by John White.³⁹ Manchester was also the place of origin of the United Journeymen Fitters and Turners, Brass Founders 'and Finishers' and Coppersmiths' Society in 1825 and the United Order of Smiths in 1822.⁴⁰

Jefferys observed that during the second quarter of the nineteenth century,

"the practice of the machine maker carrying his tools, sometimes including a lathe, drill, and grindstone, from mill to mill, gave place to textile machine making factories in and around the textile areas."⁴¹

Heavy investment in new capital equipment and larger scale workshops and foundries by the entrepreneurs, began to drastically increase the fixed capital/labour cost ratio and consequently quickly undermined the millwrights' position and even began to threaten that of the new specialist engineering artisans.

By the 1840's the millwrights were, at least in the larger machinery making concerns in Lancashire, being subsumed into what

was coming to be known as 'the engineers' economy'. Many were accommodated in the new mechanics' societies to more effectively defend their economic position.⁴² Yet the transition was far from smooth, as the incompleteness of the technological revolution in machine making allowed many millwrights to fall back upon new or long established exclusive societies, which survived in Lancashire until 1867.⁴³

III. The Artisan Societies and the Bolton Turn-Out of 1831

The 1820's proved a period of transition, with the emergence of a growing number of specialist iron founding and machine making firms amid a sea of small scale concerns of master millwrights and jobbing engineers. By 1825, Manchester and Oldham had between them 63 firms engaged in machine, roller or spindle manufacture.⁴⁴ As early as 1822 the diarist Edwin Butterworth could describe Samuel Lees' Soho works in Oldham, as being, "so large that the works and adjacent buildings appeared like a small village; the number of workmen then employed by Mr. Lees was 130",⁴⁵ he added.

The next 15 years saw the establishment of some of the industry's most influential firms. John Hetherington and Company of Ancoats, Manchester, makers of spinning and preparatory machinery, was founded in 1830; as was the leading manufacturer of bleaching and finishing machinery, Mather and Platt at the Salford Iron Works.⁴⁶ In the same year, Hibbert and Platt completed their new works at Greenacres Moor, Oldham for, "the construction of almost every description of machine used in cotton manufacture".⁴⁷ Several important manufacturers of looms appeared with the rapid growth in

demand for power looms: William Dickinson's and Joseph Harrison's works in Blackburn, both commenced operation in 1826, whilst Burnley's leading engineering firm, Butterworth and Dickinson, started loom manufacture in 1835 as John Wilkinson and Company, and two years later Robert Halls of Bury was established.⁴⁸

The developments of 1830-37 were associated with the improvement of trade during these years which culminated in the boom period of 1834-36. The millwrights and the newer artisan societies alike, found themselves under ever increasing pressure as investment in labour saving machine tools went rapidly ahead. Employers introduced higher apprentice/journeymen ratios, piece work and systematic overtime, and so challenged the artisans' very control of the labour process.⁴⁹ Such challenges were most pronounced in Oldham, Manchester/Salford and Bolton and it was in Bolton where the first major clash between capital and labour in the machinery making industry took place. This was to demonstrate the strength and determination of both sides and the advance of engineering trade unionism from a local to a regional basis.

By 1831 the firm of Isaac and Benjamin Dobson was perhaps the largest textile machine making concern in the country, and as a pioneer of the use of new machine tools was responsible for leading the early initiatives against traditional craft controls and independence.⁵⁰ The installation of costly machine tools impelled the firm to extend working hours, so as to maximise production and bring the greatest return on the investment. In addition, the introduction of self-acting tools encouraged the increase of the apprentice/journeymen ratio, since boys with only limited skill and experience could operate the machines for certain tasks once they had been 'set up' by skilled men.

John Hammond's account quite clearly demonstrates the rather naive and belated realisation by the artisans that their craft controls over the labour process were being quickly eroded, and that in the longer term their economic position due to market scarcity was under threat. In the 1820's he recalled,

"the daytime was permanently established from six to seven, all hands attending at the same time, and as the mechanics' wages were higher than what their fellow workmen received in other shops, the odd hour was considered to be remunerated by the extra wages they drew ... there was the hired man, the piece man, and the day man, all of whom worked long time, or the extra hour at least, not yet perceiving how much the encroachment was advancing."⁵¹

Indeed by 1831 the sop of the wage differential had gone as labour supply had expanded and this, at last, galvanised the artisan resistance.

The resistance initially took the form of a petition, signed by 135 men, which requested a shorter working day and limitation of apprentices; to avoid victimisation of leaders, the petition took the circular 'round robin' form. It read,

Gentlemen, we your workmen wish to inform you that we require a reduction of our time of work for the future as follows, viz. from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock at night allowing half an hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner, half an hour for tea and to leave work on Saturdays at four o'clock. Respecting the lads that they be reduced in proportion to the men allowing one lad to four men and the lads to serve five years before twenty one years of age and that by legal indenture."⁵²

Although it is not mentioned on the petition or in Hammond's account, it is likely that Dobsons sought to attack the artisans' position more directly by introducing unapprenticed men to machine work as well as increasing the proportion of apprentices. A letter written by 'A Mechanic' of Manchester to John Doherty's journal, Voice of the People, claimed that,

"the mechanics of Bolton, ... for some length of time beheld with painful feelings, the encroachments daily making on their trade, by the admission of improper persons, the great number of apprentices allowed to be taken, and the difference in the hours

of labour between themselves and the mechanics of other towns."⁵³

The expiration of the two weeks notice provided brought about the start of the turn-out on June 4th. It is likely that the organisation of the turn-out was undertaken by the Manchester-based Friendly Union of Mechanics and indicates the emergence of the fledgling society as a powerful force in industrial relations. The society initially maintained at least 120 men and 80 until December 1831; with contributions reaching over £1,800, these men were able to receive a basic weekly sum of approximately nine shillings and sixpence.⁵⁴ The geographical extent of support shows the F.U.M. was already developing into a regional organisation, with contributions coming in from 28 towns in northern England, the most important of which were: Manchester, Bury, Preston, Leeds and Bradford.

In Bradford, strong support was organised by John Murgatroyd and the Machine and Steam Engine Makers' Friendly Society and a circular issued by this union shows that the Bolton turn-out had acted as a kind of catalyst to promote ideas of amalgamation among engineers which eventually bore fruit twenty years later. The circular was addressed to, "all mechanics engaged in making steam engines and machines for the preparing and spinning of worsted, woollen, cotton, flax, tow and silk," and proposed a meeting, "to form a union of all mechanics," for the support and defence of the trade.⁵⁵

On the other hand, a letter preserved by Dobsons shows that the employers too sought support from outside the area to conduct the fight. Thomas Maltby, a Sheffield knife grinder, wrote to Dobsons apologising for not taking up the offer of strike-breaking employment. "When I came to Bolton," he claimed, "it was my full intencion to come to work, but they got mee down to the Crown and they persuaded mee to come back."⁵⁶ The letter indicates also the

effectiveness of the mechanics' picketing and that a considerable sum of money was probably spent sending away potential 'knobsticks'.

As the strike continued, perhaps due to the importation of men like Maltby, the amicable nature of the dispute in its early stages, gave way to more violent rhetoric and physical clashes near the Black Horse Street works. The petition drawn up prior to the strike in May had been couched in most polite terms, concluding, "we remain respectfully, your servants."⁵⁷ By September 1831, the mechanic's letter to The Voice of the People asked whether the natural pride of an Englishman would, "let him submit to be wronged, to be trampled upon, to be oppressed and tyrannized over by a domineering employer." The belief in skilled labour as the basis of wealth creation is clearly stated in the letter as the mechanic asks, "Then shall the honest artisan submit to such degradation, he who has raised the country he lives in to its present fame for trade and manufactures."⁵⁸

The Bolton Chronicle, a journal highly critical of Dobsons, and Voice of the People recorded violent clashes in June and July between supporters of the 'turn outs', including many women, and soldiers escorting 'knobsticks' to the works.⁵⁹ The violence culminated, in September, in a full-scale attack upon a public house where several of the latter had assembled to drink to a man's 'footing'.⁶⁰

Following Dobsons' compromise offer of a half hour reduction in the working day on October 8th, there was a drift back to work, and the strike committee was obliged to intensify its activities, authorising the expenditure of thirty shillings weekly on 'picquets' and £1. 2s. 9d. on the functioning of the committee itself.⁶¹ The eighty or so remaining turn-outs continued the struggle until December, but their fate after that point is unrecorded. Although

the available evidence is very scanty, it would seem that this was not an isolated struggle, for also in December 1831, there are reports of clashes between mechanics and soldiers with drawn bayonets in the Gannow district of Burnley.⁶²

If the remaining strikers did go down to defeat, their strong union organisation was able to counter-attack successfully with the improvement in trade in 1834. The society was able to re-assert craft controls in their struggle with Dobsons as a surviving fragment of evidence demonstrates. "The shop (Messrs. Dobsons)", it records, "made legal at a meeting in Bolton, meetings having been held in other towns a short time previous for the same purpose by the Journeymen Mechanics."⁶³ (The term 'made legal' was used by artisan societies during the early and mid nineteenth century to denote places of employment where only journeymen did 'skilled' work and the appropriate journeyman/apprentice ratio was adhered to.)⁶⁴

The ability of the textile machinery industry's artisans to resist attempts to encroach upon craft controls was further demonstrated in 1836 by the men of the Manchester firm of Sharp Roberts. This firm, the combination of the wealth of John Sharp and the technical innovatory skills of Richard Roberts, had opened the Globe works on Faulkner Street in 1828 to manufacture power looms, self-acting mules and a variety of other machines.⁶⁵ It was very much in the forefront of technological change and by 1842 was described by the Manchester Guardian as, "the largest machinists in that town and consequently in the world."⁶⁶ Again the issue of a longer working day to maximise production from new capital equipment was the central problem. The employers had instituted a sixty hour week which the mechanics sought to reduce to fifty seven and a half. The artisans turned out and the firm replied by calling on other Manchester employers to operate a blacklist against them, "by

refusal to employ any turn-out workmen, the names of which will be communicated to you."⁶⁷ However, the artisans' market position and the effectiveness of their society's conduct of the turn-out, undermined this initiative and within two weeks Sharp Roberts, "deemed it advisable to announce that for the future, we shall pay a week's wages for fifty seven and a half working hours."⁶⁸

In the same year as the events at Sharp Roberts, two developments at the machine tool making firm of James Nasmyth at Patricroft, near Salford, further threatened the mechanics' ability to maintain craft controls. Nasmyth brought in unapprenticed 'illegal' men at lower wages to take over machines hitherto the preserve of skilled mechanics. The resulting strike was broken by the importing of blacklegs from Scotland.⁶⁹

Even more ominous was the patenting of Nasmyth's small shaping and planing machine which, at prices ranging from £75 to £270 each, was soon being purchased in quantity by firms such as Dobsons.⁷⁰ Such tools threatened the very basis of the mechanics' craft status by so reducing the skill content of many of the machine shop tasks, that the apprenticeship system, the means of restricting labour supply, would be rendered virtually obsolete. In addition the employer's need to maximise use of costly capital equipment would challenge the mechanics' traditional freedom and control over the labour process by the consequent ushering in of new piece work and piece master systems and new grades of supervisory workers. Similarly, the new tools made the introduction of overtime, not just to execute urgent orders or to enact repairs, but on a systematic basis, virtually de rigeur. In times of depression, some artisans could be faced with systematic overtime whilst their former colleagues were obliged to endure prolonged bouts of unemployment,

another blatant threat to the economic position of the skilled men as a whole.

The threats posed by the diffusion of new machine tool technology were met by the emerging craft societies developing their organisational structures and extending the scope of their operations to a regional basis. The two major mechanics' societies, for example, merged in 1838 to form the Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers Friendly Society (J.S.E.M.M.), the new society having an estimated 3,000 members and branches in all the major textile machinery making towns in Lancashire, North Cheshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.⁷¹ Manchester became the new society's 'acting' (executive) branch, although as MacLaine notes, it was viewed as, "an authority to be consulted", rather than, "a centre to be obeyed."⁷² This entrenched independence of branches and reluctance to place too much power in the hands of a central executive, was to prove a strong centrifugal force throughout the history of the J.S.E.M.M.'s successors, especially when the seat of the executive was moved to London. Historians have tended to overemphasise the ostensibly strong centralising rulebooks of the J.S.E.M.M. and A.S.E. and play down the rich vein of 'localism' which runs through the society's history.

The J.S.E.M.M. charged an entry fee of 10 shillings and contributions were sixpence per week initially; in addition to a range of friendly benefits, provisions were made for levies for the assistance of men involved in disputes. The growth of the society was such that in 1841 it was proposed,

"that the General Secretary of the Acting Branch devote the whole of his time to the duties of his office, and the Delegate Meeting from time to time affix his salary for the same."⁷³

In the following year, the scope of the society was extended to include millwrights.

The major foundry union, the Friendly Society of Iron Moulders, had more than doubled its membership from 1832 to 1840, when it claimed 3,498 members, a high proportion of whom were located in the Lancashire textile machinery making towns.⁷⁴ The moulders were still immune from the threat of technological change, and were consequently able to enjoy the fruits of the engineering industry's insatiable demand for more and more iron castings. Indeed the society's 1837 delegate meeting in Manchester could declare that, "eight hours is sufficient for a regular day's work."⁷⁵

The smiths too were developing their regional organisation in Lancashire with the lead taken by Alexander Hutchinson's Associated Smiths' society which like the F.S.I.M. had its greatest strength in Bolton and Manchester. Until the mid 1840's the smiths failed to develop a centralised administrative machinery comparable to that of the F.S.I.M. or the J.S.E.M.M., and it is perhaps not a totally unrelated development that because of the limited progress down that road, the smiths were able to lead all the other skilled metal trades into Chartism in 1841-42.⁷⁶

IV. The Escalation of the Conflict with Capital 1841-51

William Jenkinson, of the large Salford machine making firm of Jenkinson and Bow, was an important witness called before the Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery in 1841.⁷⁷ His evidence clearly demonstrates the speed of technological change at that time and the growing scale of conflict with the artisan societies who were determined to preserve the economic position and craft controls still held by their members.

"The tools have wrought a great revolution in machine making", Jenkinson proclaimed, "to name one particular is by the production of tools, machinery is made by almost labourers, and made better where it required without those tools first rate workmen."⁷⁸ Jenkinson outlined the detailed consequences of these changes at his works, which then produced carding, scutching, and all types of spinning machinery, including flyers and rollers. One drastic change was the replacement of skilled men, who at Jenkinson's tended to earn 26 to 30 shillings a week, by semi-skilled 'machine-men' operating the new planing machines for 12 to 14 shillings a week.⁷⁹ In addition, the firm had made great progress in re-organisation of workshop tasks in order to use piece work, so much so that Jenkinson confessed that he was not sure whether his firm employed more hands on piece or time rates.⁸⁰ Thirdly, the firm had overcome artisan opposition to the limitation of apprentices in most departments of the works. "They are not limited in our establishment", he remarked, "except in two branches; they limit them in the foundry amongst the moulders, and also in the spindle making establishments."⁸¹

Jenkinson, did however, acknowledge the strength and organisation possessed by the artisans. "They have combinations among themselves, and they are very tenacious of their rights," he pointed out.⁸² It is noteworthy that it was the moulders, with their strong union tradition and freedom from de-skilling due to new technology in the 1840's, who were best able to resist the firm's attempts to break artisan control of the introduction of apprentices.⁸³

In the short term the sheer scale of the expansion of demand for skilled engineering and foundry workers enabled them to preserve their economic position. The impact of railway building, Jenkinson noted, had, "taken off a great surplusage of our hands and thereby kept up the rate of wages."⁸⁴ Even more important was the abolition of the remaining restrictions on machinery exports in 1843 which permitted textile

machinery makers to open up almost limitless foreign markets.⁸⁵ The growth of total machinery exports was dominated by sales of textile machines, thus Table 1 provides a good indication of the expansion of the latter's markets abroad.

Table 1: U.K. Exports of Machinery 1841 - 60

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Value</u>
1841	£551,361
1844	£773,187
1848	£817,656
1850	£1,043,764
1852	£1,251,360
1860	£3,837,821

Sources: Parliamentary Papers (Accounts)

1845 XLVI (22) p.477 for 1841 and 1844

1849 L (445) p.625 for 1848

1863 LXVI (3211) p.42 for 1850, 1852 and 1860

John Foster estimated that the industry's leading firms such as Hibbert and Platt of Oldham, were exporting up to half of their machinery output by the 1840's.⁸⁶ This is, however, criticised as an exaggeration by Kirk, who points out that Foster's calculations are based on the limited and unrepresentative export of throstle frames, and that Hibbert and Platt, were in any case geared up to the export market much earlier than the other leading firms.⁸⁷ None the less Foster's basic point remains germane; the rapid expansion of overseas markets provided the stimulus for the wholesale adaption of new machine tools and the consequent pressure on the artisans from piece work, systematic overtime, unlimited apprentices and the introduction of semi-skilled machine-minders. The demand for artisans was such that many were inevitably

recruited by employers, and eventually accepted by the societies without having completed the formal apprenticeship. In 1845, the J.S.E.M.M. delegate meeting in Manchester, even considered a proposal which was supported by Oldham and Bury branches to allow in 'men of ability' without an apprenticeship, subject to a three month probationary period. To allow such men into the society on an informal basis after a suitable period of time might be acceptable, but a formal rule change to that effect was overwhelmingly rejected.⁹⁸

The rapid expansion of the domestic (Lancashire) market of course continued; the country's cotton industry spindle capacity rose from an estimated 19.5 million to 21 million between 1844/6 to 1850 and the number of power looms from 225,000 to 250,000.⁹⁹ The final drive towards the factorisation of the weaving sector led to the development of several firms specialising in power loom manufacture. Three important Burnley firms appeared during this period. Harling and Todd (1844), Whittaker and Sagar, later Pembertons, (1848) and Cooper Brothers (c.1850).

It was, however, the generally larger firms manufacturing spinning and preparatory machinery which pioneered the new self-acting tools and led to challenges to the artisans' position. The growth of Hibbert and Platt was the most spectacular; the firm's new Werneth Works was opened in 1845, and the expansion of the labour force is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Hibbert and Platt Employment 1837-51

1837 - 400

1843 - 500

1846 - 837 (over half in the Hartford New Works at Werneth)

1851 - 1636

Sources: 1837 and 1846: W. Marcroft, op cit. p.82

1843: DDP SL 15/1/2 W. W. Kempe, Typescript draft of Platts' History

1851: Northern Star 17.1.1852

The other major Oldham firm Lees and Barnes (later Asa Lees) employed 400 by 1846;⁹⁰ the Manchester firm of Parr, Curtis and Madeley expanded its labour force from 225 in 1841 to 508 a decade later.⁹¹ Dobsons of Bolton were obliged to open a new works on Kay Street in 1846 since the Black Horse Street site could not be developed to meet the growing demand; by 1851 the firm employed 980 men.⁹²

The introduction of new technology brought new grades of workers to the machine shops, who were not deemed sufficiently skilled to merit inclusion in the J.S.E.M.M. It was significantly in south Lancashire, where the above mentioned firms were located, that new unions were evolving to represent these new grades. The United Machine Workers Association was formed in January 1844 to organise planers, borers, slotters and drillers and maintained a fairly localised existence in the spinning machinery centres until its amalgamation with the A.S.E. in 1920.⁹³

In April 1844, also in Manchester, the Amalgamated Machine, Engine and Iron Grinders and Glazers Society was created and within two years had over 200 members, almost all of whom worked in East Lancashire.⁹⁴ Machine grinders were also a grade of workers who were the product of new technology, but the work itself was highly skilled. Whereas a planer or slotter might earn only half the wages of a turner or fitter, the grinder would usually earn wages of a very similar level. However, when grinders at Hibbert and Platt approached the J.S.E.M.M. for membership, they were rebuffed; machine grinding, they were told, was still seen as a trade, "at which club men do not work."⁹⁵

A major reason for the exclusion of the grinders was likely to have been the association of the trade, like the machine men, with piece work. However, the J.S.E.M.M. was faced with the proliferation of piece work throughout the Lancashire machine making establishments as trade expanded and new technology was introduced. William Marcroft observed,

in the 1840's, "the work extended so fast that Messrs. Hibbert and Platt found it necessary to re-organise their works so as to increase production, and several departments were put on the piece work system."⁹⁶ Not only the industry's largest firms, but lesser ones such as John Masons of Rochdale, were by the mid-1840's contemplating a large scale transformation of production to a piece work basis.⁹⁷

Piece work was seen not only as a means of maximising production but as a means of undermining artisan controls and workshop freedoms. At Hibbert and Platt for example, the extension of piece work in the mid-1840's, brought the elimination of the custom of closing the machine shops at around 10.30 a.m. to allow the artisans, "to have a forenoon's baggain", i.e. a short break to visit the nearby Hartford Inn or Morning Star for a glass of ale. Similarly, tolerance of occasional lateness in starting in the morning or afternoon was ended, a timekeeper appointed, and fines imposed for offenders.⁹⁸

An extension of the basic piece work system which was used by several textile machinery making firms, was the piece master system. A senior artisan would be selected to operate as a kind of sub-contractor in charge of a work group of artisans, apprentices and labourers. He would be responsible for overseeing the completion of a particular job or order and would divide up the work between members of the group. He would be responsible for day to day discipline, for the timing of particular tasks, and would usually be directly paid for the whole job by the employer. He might then take most or all of the profit on that job for himself, in addition to his own wages, and pay the rest of the group a wage according to skill and age, with perhaps some share of the profit or "overplus". Indeed, some piece masters were able to earn up to £10 per week at Hibbert and Platt's in the mid-1840's.⁹⁹

In 1845, the Delegate Meeting of the J.S.E.M.M. took action to try and contain both systems, by imposing fines on members participating and

rendering them liable to disqualification from benefit for repeated infringements.¹⁰⁰ However, in many localities a blind eye had to be turned to ordinary piece work since it was so entrenched.¹⁰¹ A declaration of the meeting clearly shows the qualified toleration of piece work and the bitter opposition to the piecemaster system.

"It is a well known fact that there are as good, well-disposed members who work by the piece, as any to be found in the Society; and that such men despise the means that others (ie the piecemasters) take to enrich themselves at the expense of the trade."¹⁰²

Enrichment often meant not only creaming off the entire profit on the job but perhaps bringing in unapprenticed, lower paid men instead of artisans, or the practice of abuses such as "nibbling" or "chasing".¹⁰³

The piecemaster system was first successfully attacked and reformed, not by the J.S.E.M.M. but by the new Grinders and Glazers Society at Hibbert and Platt and then at Asa Lees, following its 1844 Delegate Meeting in Bolton.¹⁰⁴ The Grinders successfully demonstrated the viability of an alternative scheme which shared the profit among the members of the work group and permitted the retention of the artisan's freedom and control of the labour process. However, in the years 1844 and 1845 the attempts to limit the extension of piece work became secondary in many Lancashire machinery making centres to the artisans' battle against the 'quittance paper' system.

The use of the quittance paper or character note was a reaction by several employers to the rapid advancement of the influence of the trade societies on the foundry or machine shop floor. The system was probably first used by an association of Lancashire firms in October 1844, in order to,

"resist insubordination and improper demands made upon masters by their workmen, and by so doing ... will in many instances, rescue right-minded workmen from the appalling tyranny of the combination clubs."¹⁰⁵

It was designed to deter or single out militants and society organisers, for as William Glasebrook, the F.S.I.M. Secretary noted in a circular to branches, if a man,

"had taken an active part in a dispute with any of the Masters he would be a 'Marked Man', so that he would not be allowed to work for any master who was a member of the Association, however good his character may have previously been considered."¹⁰⁶

The effect of the employers' action was to revive the co-operation of the metal trades which had lapsed with the failure of the Chartist venture in 1842. Many Lancashire F.S.I.M. branches joined this 'Mechanics Protective Society of Great Britain and Ireland'. Glasebrook added that,

"in most of the branches the Iron Moulders had joined the Engineers, Machinists, Millwrights, and Smiths, and were forming a Protective Association of the five trades. But whether they had joined the other trades, or resolved to stand alone, there appeared to be but one sentiment throughout, namely determination to annihilate the system of quittance papers."¹⁰⁷

The Protective Society was soon involved in disputes in Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool, but faced its major test in Bury in January 1845.

The focus of the struggle was the foundry of the loom making firm of Walkers, as the moulders imposed a ban on overtime in protest, at use of the quittance paper. The firm countered by extending the working day with no increase in pay; this brought the other trades behind the moulders in strike action which soon involved over 350 men.¹⁰⁸

Walkers brought in 'knobsticks' to keep up production in March 1845 as they wished to take early advantage of the spring thaw in the Baltic Sea to build up their exports to Russia and Sweden. (This was again to be a vital factor in Platts' conflict with the A.S.E. prior to the 1852 lock-out.) The introduction of the knobsticks led to violence, and the unions brought in W. P. Roberts, 'The Trades Advocate', to defend those charged with assault and intimidation. At least three strikers were gaoled, with hard labour, for two months in New Bailey Prison, Salford, whilst at the culmination of the violence in May, a young moulder, John

Sugden, was stabbed to death, and two other men wounded by a 'knobstick'.¹⁰⁹

Despite great privation which drove many strikers and their families from the area to seek work, the strike ended after eight months with complete success. The artisans on strike were successful for a number of reasons. Walkers had difficulty in obtaining sufficient skilled labour to replace the strikers, despite sending out agents to recruit throughout the north.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, local support for the strike was well organised through the Protective Society and on a regional basis by the artisans' unions, most notably the F.S.I.M.¹¹¹

The moulders' eventual victory revived support for some form of permanent mutual support organisation to link the metal trades, and vindicated the original plans of Alexander Hutchinson in the United Trades Association of 1840-42.¹¹² The Webbs, with eyes to the events of 1851 and the creation of the A.S.E., noted that joint committees of moulders, engineers, millwrights and smiths were firmly established in the principal machine making towns of Lancashire following the Bury dispute.¹¹³

In conclusion, it can be noted that despite the massive increase in demand for the machinery they produced, the diffusion of the new technology had brought the beginning of a deterioration in the market position of the 'machine artisans' from the mid-1840's. This was observed by David Chadwick, writing of Manchester in 1859, who noted that to offset this decline, the artisans had turned to the trade societies for self-defence, notably by stepping up efforts to restrict labour supply.¹¹⁴

Detailed statistical evidence of union membership during the 1840's is lacking, but that which is available does tend to confirm Chadwick's assertion. Membership of the J.S.E.M.M. Manchester No. 1 branch rose from 351 in 1843 to at least 389 in 1851, and that of Manchester No. 3 branch

from 335 in the summer of 1842 to at least 600 in 1851.¹¹⁵ More comprehensive evidence is supplied by the records of the F.S.I.M. Lancashire branches as shown in Table 3 which gives a good indication of the trends of union membership of the textile machinery industry's skilled foundry workers.

Table 3: F.S.I.M. Branch Membership in Lancashire 1840-51

	<u>1840</u>	<u>1841</u>	<u>1845</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>1851</u>
Bolton	106	118	193	193	187
Bury	70	70	120	98	102
Oldham	70	74	240	154	292
Burnley	22	24	44	44	30
Blackburn	41	31	60	61	124
Preston	49	57	70	72	94
Rochdale	44	36	95	44	88
*Manchester	325	283	460	451	554

*Manchester figures are distorted by the growth of steam engine, machine tool and locomotive building; the other branches provide a more accurate indication of the trends of textile machinery artisan membership of the society.

Source: F.S.I.M. Half Yearly Reports MSS 41/F.S.I.F/4/

The growth of society membership between 1841 and 1845 was remarkable, especially in the case of Oldham. The sharp set-back of 1848 in most branches reflects the impact of the severe depression which threw many moulders and engineers into prolonged unemployment or short time working.¹¹⁶ However, on the vital question as to whether between 1841 and 1851 union membership in engineering kept pace with the overall growth of the labour force, Burgess concludes tentatively that this was not the case, thus tilting the delicate balance of industrial relations in favour of capital.¹¹⁷

There is no doubt that following the involvement in Chartism in 1841-42, there was a desire among the artisan societies to turn away

from such political movements and to concentrate on the building up of membership, not least through the development of better friendly welfare benefits; the J.S.E.M.M. 1843 Rule Book shows an attempt to recognise changing conditions by limited extension of the membership criteria. The society now recognised formally that only a five and not a seven year apprenticeship was necessary, and allowed machine joiners to join provided they had, "worked seven years at the machine making business."¹¹⁸ More important was the Society's provision of a system of unemployment benefit of ten shillings a week for ten weeks and five shillings for a further ten, which would operate alongside the tramping system.¹¹⁹

The new benefit was a recognition of the plight of members during the 1842 depression, but the J.S.E.M.M. Executive reacted against the events of that year by censuring its General Secretary, Robert Robinson of Manchester No. 1 branch, for, "his impropriety of conduct during the late excitement." Further, the new out of work benefit was to be denied to any man leaving employment due to, "political or popular movement."¹²⁰

The Friendly United Smiths (previously the National Associated Smiths), the union which had taken the lead in involving the Lancashire metal trades in Chartism, went to far greater extremes than the J.S.E.M.M. in its reaction to the militancy of 1841-42. In 1845, it became in its own words, "the original anti-strike society".¹²¹ It provided members with a range of welfare benefits and forbade on penalty of a ten shilling fine any man's, "undermining of another in his shop".¹²² However, it imposed fines for members discussing politics during lodge hours and declared its opposition to strikes on the grounds that, "they are a serious evil to all concerned, and to the public in general."¹²³

In an attempt to further its national organisation, the F.S.I.M. had transferred its seat of government from Manchester to London in 1842, but just as the A.S.E. leadership found a decade later, it proved

impossible for an Executive based in the metropolis to assert full control over its strongest and potentially most militant branches in Lancashire. The F.S.I.M. Executive sought exclusive power over the calling of strike action; William Glasebrook wrote to branches noting that, "it has long been our conviction that disputes have been much too frequent, too rashly entered into, and have been attended with evil consequences to ourselves."¹²⁴ The response of branches, especially those in Lancashire, was to resist this centralisation of power extremely forcefully.¹²⁵ In 1848, the F.S.I.M. followed the J.S.E.M.M. down the road of extending welfare benefits, in adopting a system of unemployment assistance..¹²⁶

The period 1842 to 1850 thus saw a drawing back of the artisan societies from involvement in Chartism, and a determined attempt to build up more effective organisation and membership in order to resist the ever growing threat from new technology and unscrupulous employers. The societies had become more cautious, with greater emphasis on unemployment benefits being forced upon them through the experiences of the 1842 and 1848 depressions. The quittance paper issue, however, had demonstrated their potential militancy and their potential strength in combined action. The F.S.I.M. in 1845-46 and the J.S.E.M.M. in 1851 aspired to national organisation, but the strength of the Lancashire machine making branches in each was such as to drag London-based executives along in their wake. This was perhaps inevitable in view of the ever growing predominance of Lancashire in the engineering industry as a whole and its role as the vanguard of technological revolution. The events leading up to the creation of the A.S.E. in 1851 and the lock-out of 1852 clearly demonstrate the focal position of the Lancashire textile machinery artisanate.

V. The Textile Machinery Artisans and the Wider Labour Movement
1800-50

J. B. Jefferys, the historian of the country's major engineering union, argued that its members, and other engineering industry artisans had, "on the whole stood aloof from the general agitation for repeal of the (Combination) Acts," and that they, "played a negligible part", in the General Unionism of the 1829-34 period and then in Chartism.¹²⁷ Historians ideologically distanced from Jefferys such as A. E. Musson have adopted a very similar line.¹²⁸ Indeed, evidence is extremely thin, especially before 1840, but there is sufficient material, when pieced together, to throw considerable doubt upon the traditional image of the engineering artisans' role in the wider labour movement. Instead of being considered an aloof sectional, labour aristocratic group of factory workers, the textile machinery industry's foundrymen, smiths and engineers should perhaps be given acknowledgement for their long-term class consciousness, and at times, even class leadership.

Although in the period before 1830, the machinery makers were able to command a privileged economic status because of the scarcity of that labour, they did not remain entirely aloof from wider political and economic struggles. In 1799 following the passing of the Combination Acts, government agents, as E. P. Thompson has shown, were concerned at the association of Jacobins and the illegal unions. One such agent, Barlow, noted a Republican society originating in Sheffield, where there was general spirit of disaffection, "among every class of artisan and mechanics", which had, "communicated to this town (Manchester), Stockport and particularly Bury."¹²⁹ "In Lancashire", Thompson notes, "the resistance to the Combination Acts was organised by a committee of

skilled unionists, comprising the fustian cutters, cotton spinners, shoemakers, machine makers, and calico printers."¹³⁰

A period of severe government repression met the discontent following the French Wars and the reform meeting at St. Peter's Field, Manchester which was so tragically broken up on August 16th 1819, was supported by the trades of Bolton who sent, "a strong delegation of workers; including engineers."¹³¹ A dozen years later, an address given by the committee organising the turn-out of Dobson's Machine makers, gives a clear indication that the horizons of the men involved went far beyond mere trade objectives of a sectional nature. The committee exhorted, "fellow workmen", of Bolton,

"to animate ourselves by the reflection that the cause we are advocating will be beneficial both to ourselves and the body of Mechanics generally, it is a cause in which Honesty, Truth and Justice are contending with that Iron-Hearted Monster, Tyranny, supported by Despotism, Cruelty and Oppression, and which the former must ultimately conquer; it is a just cause, and one too in which we will stand firm, and rally round the Standard of Freedom and Justice, until by our perseverance and consistency to one another, we shall strike terror into the hearts of those inhuman and despicable beings, whose only wish is to grind down the privileges of their operatives, until they are ten times more debased than the shackled slaves of Africa

With these considerations, and under these reflections, we are determined (with your assistance) to march on to victory, or perish in the conflict, and we are satisfied that our cause is just, and that the subtle, iron hearted, and cruel oppressors must give way, and like the rotten system of borough-mongers sneak away from the sight of man, and die if they cannot Reform."¹³²

Daniels concludes, "that the writings of William Cobbett were not unknown in Bolton requires no further evidence."¹³³

In August 1818, at the height of a turn-out of Manchester spinners, a meeting of a dozen trades, including machine makers, from Lancashire,

"convened to take into consideration the distressed state and privations to which the working class of society are reduced by their avaricious employers reducing wages to less than sufficient to support nature or purchase the bare necessities for our existence with great economy and hard labour; therefore

to render redress in such cases of distress to any body or party reduced as aforesaid."¹³⁴

The result of the meeting was a projected union of the trades entitled, "The Philanthropic Society", the aim of which was mutual assistance in the conduct of industrial disputes, relief of distress and the meeting of legal costs.¹³⁵

Within five years, another conflict between spinners and masters, on this occasion in Bolton, provides further evidence of the involvement of textile machinery artisans in the wider labour movement. The authorities seized papers belonging to the organisers of the turn-out and listed as providers of financial assistance were: reed makers, mechanics, foundrymen and millwrights.¹³⁶ The potential penalties involved for such assistance, not merely under the Combination Acts, but under the Conspiracy Laws, further diminish the traditional image of the engineers, moulders and the other artisans in the machinery making trades as aloof or merely sectional in motivation.

The history of the National Association for the Protection of Labour is further illustrative of the active involvement of the Lancashire machine makers and moulders in the wider labour movement. The United Trades Co-operative Journal recorded that trade branch recruits to the N.A.P.L. between March and October 1830, included: Bolton engineers, Manchester moulders, mechanics, and spindle makers, Ashton mechanics, and Bury moulders.¹³⁷ In the Journal's first edition, trade society branches were requested to present copies of their rules at the headquarters of Manchester's United Trades Committee, the Moulders Arms in Chorlton Street.¹³⁸ This was the clubhouse of the Manchester moulders who played a key role in the N.A.P.L. just as they (and their clubhouse) were to do again during the Chartist "general strike" in Manchester in 1842.

The biographers of John Doherty, the primary driving force behind the N.A.P.L., tend to play down the role of the machinery makers in the General Unionism of the 1829-34 period. "It is also clear," they argue,

"that the most highly skilled and paid workers, like the letter press printers and engineers, held almost entirely aloof from the general union movement, preferring to rely on the strength of their sectional organisations."¹³⁹

Whilst this fits neatly into A. E. Musson's view of a consistently aloof and sectional engineering artisanate before and after 1850, the evidence he and Kirby provide doesn't entirely square with this viewpoint. In particular, the analysis provided of financial contributions to the N.A.P.L. makes it impossible to gloss over the role of the engineers or moulders as one of aloofness.

From July 31st, 1830 to September 10th, 1831, contributions to the N.A.P.L. which could be attributed to specified trades, totalled £1,677-3s.-9½d., over 2/3 of which probably came from Lancashire. As would be expected, the cotton textile trades by virtue of their numerical predominance, contributed the greatest part, over £1,000. They were followed, in overall contributions by the Midland framework knitters, but third in significance came the textile machinery making trades with contributions of over £67. Further, Kirby and Musson list separately under 'miscellaneous trades' the iron moulders and smiths, a substantial proportion of whom would have been employed in the foundries and forges of the expanding Lancashire machine making works. (Total 'miscellaneous trade' contributions were over £14.) Individual trade branches or groups which figure prominently in the Voice of the People's contributions columns during 1831 were: Manchester moulders, Manchester smiths, Ashton mechanics, Sharp and Roberts mechanics, and Preston moulders, mechanics and spindle and flyer makers.¹⁴⁰

Thus if the limited employment capacity in 1830-1 of the newly emerging machinery making industry is taken into account, the commitment of its artisans to Doherty's dream of a national general union was certainly not inconsequential.

In looking for explanations of the moulders' and machine makers' commitment to the N.A.P.L. a number of factors can be taken into account. Firstly, there is the question of economic depression, and secondly that of close family connections between the Lancashire machine makers and the textile workers.¹⁴¹ Severe depression and attacks on living standards in the textile industry would coincide with the same situation in machinery making, especially prior to the lifting of export restrictions in 1843, and with the close family connections between the two industries, the fight of one would be seen as a worthy cause of support for the other. The improvement in economic conditions in 1833 probably brought a return to a more sectional outlook, which persisted until Chartism gathered momentum in Lancashire in 1838.¹⁴²

In March 1838, a Bury Trades delegate meeting declared for universal suffrage and advocated a run on the banks to achieve this end; speakers at the meeting included a delegate of the millwrights (Burgoyne) and the smiths (Thomas Stoker).¹⁴³ This ties in with a point made by Sykes that the year 1838 saw greatly increased "politicisation" of the skilled metal trades. He cites the membership of the Associated Smiths and the Iron Moulders of the Manchester Combination Committee, and the boycott by the smiths and millwrights of the coronation procession.¹⁴⁴ Of much greater significance was the attendance of several engineering trades at the huge Chartist meeting on Kersal Moor in September 1838; these certainly included the Associated Smiths and the J.S.E.M.M. who listened to speeches from J. Rayner Stephens and John Fielden. The

J.S.E.M.M. banner displayed at the meeting was unequivocally political in its message which proclaimed, "Every man has a right to one vote in his choice of representative; it belongs to him in his right of existence, and his person is his title deed."¹⁴⁵ The prominence of trades such as 'engineer', 'mechanic', 'smith', 'moulder' and 'iron turner' in lists of Chartists arrested for riot and sedition in 1839 is further testimony of the involvement of the engineering artisans in the movement at this time.¹⁴⁶

In the following year it was the Friendly United Smiths of Bolton, led by Alexander Hutchinson who led the other skilled metal trades into joint action and towards a more fundamental involvement in Chartism. The first developments were noted by the Webbs as a Bolton-based, "committee of the engineering trades" which was soon to advocate, "one concentrated union", in order to overcome the weaknesses in continued sectionalism.¹⁴⁷ Hutchinson and the committee went on in April 1840 to found The Trades Journal which first appeared in the July, was to run to twelve issues and survive until September 1841. The paper adopted the Smiths' motto "Numbers without union are powerless, and union without knowledge is useless". Its basic aim was declared to be to, "advocate the principles and rights of Trades Societies generally, and to diffuse useful and practical knowledge". From this quite moderate and essentially labourist stance, the Lancashire metal trades were to move swiftly to embrace the Chartist programme within two years; the rapid descent into economic depression was the key.

The Trades Journal was an important element in the trades' move towards Chartism. As well as its primary aim of fostering inter-union co-operation, it sought to promote working class education. Its editorial committee produced a series of articles of a scientific nature on topics such as public health, magnetism and

colour, and extracts from the writings of Swift, Godwin, Locke, Burke and Coleridge. The tenth issue even proposed the establishment of a "Mechanics Mutual Improvement Society" in order to promote, "the education of members and apprentices", and the building of a hall, for educational classes, a workers' reference library and an information exchange to deal with conditions of labour and wages.¹⁴⁸

This element of the journal anticipates the similar educational content of the later engineering workers' journals, 'The Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress (1850) and William Newton's The Operative (1851-52). The consistent aim of these journals was the education of the working class from within its own ranks, towards self-awareness and improvement. Before and after the mid-century, the Lancashire machine makers and moulders did not, as a key element in the working class, seek improvement through the bourgeois system of adult education, as 'class collaborators', as Foster charges, but where possible, through independent working class means, to enhance their respectability.¹⁴⁹

Hutchinson's main achievement, expedited by the Trades Journal, was to co-ordinate the trade activities of the various skilled elements in the engineering industries in Lancashire. The class consciousness in his argument is self-evident. "It is hoped," he wrote,

"that the time has at length arrived when working men, who are desirous of uniting for the protection of their labour, will no longer be led astray by the fancied notion that their own individual trade can secure them from oppressive encroachments of the capitalists and others, who from their very circumstances, are ever on the watch for opportunities of reducing the value of their labour, not caring for the happiness of those whose ingenuity and industry have contributed to their ease, and enabled them to accumulate princely fortunes."¹⁵⁰

However, Hutchinson and the Bolton committee were careful not to go too far too quickly, lest potential allies be frightened by the

prospect of lost independence within a larger organisation. A purely defensive organisation was therefore proposed in which the trade societies would retain autonomy. "It is not contended," he argued,

"that the trades should be brought into one general union, so as to deprive them of the power of regulating the affairs of their respective societies ... On the contrary, we want a union of the various trades for the purpose of acting on the defensive, so that when any of them should be thrown out of employment, in consequence of resisting oppression, there might be a more permanent provision prepared for their support."¹⁵¹

The result was the creation of the United Trades Association, which comprised the so-called, "five trades of mechanism" in Lancashire: the smiths, iron moulders, millwrights, engineers and mechanics.¹⁵² The Association first met in February 1841, following preliminary meetings of deputies of each of the five societies in October 1840. The initial reactions to the venture were favourable and some suggested more fundamental change; one respondent noted that the five trades' interests were,

"inseparably identified and yet by a strange fatuity, they have divided themselves into five distinct societies ... Trade Societies, therefore, to be effective must be built upon another foundation, they must have a wider basis, and command a more comprehensive view."¹⁵³

Had Hutchinson's scheme proved more than just temporarily successful it would have been a far more comprehensive body than the A.S.E. which emerged some ten years later from renewed amalgamation talks, since the latter failed to bring in the iron moulders, and significant elements of the smiths, millwrights and mechanics.

The attitude of the Trades Journal and the U.T.A. towards less skilled workers was, however, somewhat ambiguous. The smiths' strikers' wages of approximately 2s. 6d. per day, were barely half the level of those of the members of the five trades, and thus the strikers were not invited to join the U.T.A. None the less, the Trades Journal gave every encouragement to the formation of the

Manchester Society of Hammermen in July 1840, acknowledging that this occupation was, "amongst the most laborious, and yet one of the least remunerated."¹⁵⁴

Mick Jenkins, in his analysis of the Chartist "General Strike of 1842", correctly asserts that, "February 1841 was a stage on the road to August 1842".¹⁵⁵ Yet this road was by no means as direct and clear cut as he implies; the more rapid progress to the strike of 1842 and the leading role in it of the five trades, was brought about by the extremity of the economic depression from the winter of 1841-2, which brought the skilled Lancashire machinery makers down to levels of unemployment and poverty they had never previously experienced.

The vital meeting of February 17th, 1841 was related in great detail by the Trades Journal, and the wording of the major resolution and the delegates' speeches, particularly that of Hutchinson in support of the resolution, clearly show that he and the skilled trades, although rapidly overcoming sectionalism and developing a wider class consciousness, were still far from contemplating a revolutionary general strike which Jenkins perceives.

The main resolution was,

"that it is the opinion of this meeting that a union of purpose, of interest, and of friendship, be formed by the five following trades, viz. millwrights, engineers, iron moulders, smiths and mechanics. And that as all the above trades have societies to which some of these have subscribed for a number of years, it does not appear desirable to this meeting that these societies should be broken up, or that the personal control over their own affairs should cease."

However, it is in the concluding section of Hutchinson's speech supporting the resolution, that the position of the U.T.A. at its inception can be best understood. "It is said that union is strength", he pronounced,

"and if one single society can do good, surely five can effect much more. Under our present constitution, when a reduction takes place in any particular branch, each stands calmly by in imagined security, and watches the defeat of the other. It soon, however, becomes its fate to suffer in like manner. This ought not to be; let the burden be equally borne by all, for all are equally interested in the event of such struggles. You are all engaged upon the same work - often in the very same workshops; your interests are inseparably the same. Yet when an oppression comes, your employers do not reduce you all at one time; it better serves their end to do so gradually, and when one or two branches have been conquered, the rest become an easy prey. I do not seek to incite you against your masters; they are men like ourselves, and only look to their own interest. The union I have proposed is for the purpose of avoiding such a state of things. If ever a reduction of wages shall be proposed, let us carefully consider whether there be any real necessity for it, and then say that we will either have a general reduction or none at all. If the reduction be just let us submit to it; but if not let all resist it. By union we shall be in a position to do this. Instead of one shop or place having little disturbances, let it be general, and by such a practice we shall avoid that ill-feeling and contention I have before mentioned."¹⁵⁶

The extract clearly shows an association planned in order to act defensively but none the less to employ co-ordinated industrial action. It was certainly not yet contemplating revolutionary class struggle which Jenkins' selective use of the speech implies.¹⁵⁷

Indeed, the same edition of the Trades Journal which contained Hutchinson's speech, contrasted the U.T.A. with the Owenite Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. Then, it argued,

"men consulted only their feelings and passions, which were generally excited by their leaders; now reason and justice hold sway ... Employers were denounced as tyrants and oppressors; now they are looked upon as men whose interests are inseparably connected with our own."

This appears to be more the language of political economy than embryonic socialism or syndicalism, but this could have been dictated by fears aroused by the close attention of the authorities, notably Colonel Thomas Wemyss, Assistant Adjutant General of Manchester who carefully monitored the meetings of the trades.

Wemyss was not, at this stage, alarmed that the Chartist orator James Leach had addressed the trades' previous mass meeting,

considering it a, "humbug to extract money".¹⁵⁸ He was however, concerned that the meeting had attracted 12,000 to 13,000 people and that the trades might join to take united industrial action. "I have been told", he wrote to Samuel March Phillips, Under Secretary at the Home Office,

"that the Machine Makers, Blacksmiths, Iron Founders, Millwrights and Iron Turners, propose founding a General Union, embracing 20 miles round Manchester, so that if the Masters attempt any reduction of wages they may one and all resist it."¹⁵⁹

It was the deepening and catastrophic economic depression which gathered strength in 1841, which with the increasing effectiveness of the Chartist propaganda, turned the textile machinery artisans towards co-ordinated industrial and political action. The general economic position in the Lancashire towns became grave, as depression in the textile industry devastated the machinery making industry which depended on it. The F.S.I.M. which had a high proportion of its membership in Lancashire machinery makers' foundries, saw that membership fall from 3498 in 1840 to 2407 in 1843 whilst the J.S.E.M.M. Manchester No. 3 branch which had 554 members in June 1840, had only 346 remaining by December 1842.¹⁶⁰

The overall position in many Lancashire towns was so serious that the machinery makers, textile workers and other proletarians were driven together in desperate protest. The close family connections between textile and machinery workers in Lancashire certainly attenuated elitist sectionalism among the latter, since the wives and grown-up daughters of machine workers usually worked in the cotton mills. In Bolton, Engels estimated that 20% of the population were dependent on the Poor Law Guardians.¹⁶¹ Stockport and Colne had only about half their workforces in employment. In Oldham, of all those "fit to work" (some 19,500) only 9,500 were fully employed and 5,000 were working half time.¹⁶²

The position of the various machinery making trades was, if anything worse than that of the working class as a whole.

Henry Ashworth, writing of the Bolton machinery making artisans, noted that in 1836 2110 had been employed; by 1842 this had slumped to 1325. "The distress among the mechanics is greater than among any other class," he observed,

"and upon these it presses the more severely, as their earnings in times of ordinary trade are probably above the average of the other classes ... the effect of a stagnation of trade is first and most severely felt by the mechanic and the artisan."¹⁶³

A contributor to the Bolton Free Press made similar observations.

"The mechanics", he explained, "who were looked upon as something more than common working men, were now in great distress and paupers of the parish."¹⁶⁴ This severity of general depression and the descent of the machinery makers from the pinnacle of the working class to the edge of the abyss of the Poor Law, certainly explains their transcendence of limited trade union consciousness in 1842.

In both Oldham and Bolton there is evidence of large scale emigration of mechanics to the U.S.A.¹⁶⁵ However, for those who remained in Lancashire and remained in employment there was a struggle to maintain decent wage rates. It appears that at this time employers were able to seize the initiative and drive down wages by linking them less with established trade custom and more with economic fluctuations, aided by the existence of a large reserve army of artisan unemployed. The Bowley-Wood index of engineers' wages, though criticised as seriously underestimating the effects of economic fluctuations, shows that with 1860 as 100, the 1840 money wage was 95, and that of 1842, 92.¹⁶⁶ The labourist battle against wage reductions was, in south Lancashire in 1842, increasingly intertwined with the machinery makers' involvement in the wider Chartist movement. In this connection, two developments,

in January and July 1842 involving Messrs. Sharp Roberts' works in Manchester, probably marked the turning points.

By January 1842, Alexander Hutchinson was working for Sharp Roberts and was sent as delegate of the firm's artisans to speak at a meeting of Manchester free traders. The resolution he brought from the machine makers clearly shows that sectional, society horizons had been left behind. On the question of the franchise the resolution noted that the machinery makers were pledged,

"to take every justifiable means by our individual and united exertions for bringing to an end these unjust, cruel and monstrous restrictions and in obtaining for every honest working man a voice in the making of those laws by which he is to be governed."

Hutchinson went on to blame the previous limited involvement of skilled men in political campaigns on the suspicion and ill-feeling shown to them by Chartists, a point borne out at least by the attitude of Ernest Jones in the later stages of the movement. To Hutchinson, however, the skilled metal workers were perhaps an elite, but one which would lead the working class, not collaborate with its enemies. He saw men like the machine makers as, "the most educated and intellectual portion of the trades who were the natural leaders of the working class." He added that the skilled trades had the advantage, in their trade societies, of excellent organisation, and, "if they could graft the agitation upon that organisation, the most happy results might be expected to follow." In order to overcome the Chartists' ill-feeling towards the skilled trades and the resultant lack of co-operation, he proposed a trades conference to take up the initiative.¹⁶⁷

In June 1842, the Manchester J.S.E.M.M. branches resolved,

"that we the mechanics of Manchester do forthwith join the National Charter Association, and campaign for the political emancipation of the industrious classes of this country."¹⁶⁸

By the end of the month the mechanics, smiths and other trades were addressed by the Chartist orator, James Leach, who drove home the artisans' plight of having been, "driven to the degrading alternative, either starve, go out to beg or go to the bastille."

The cause was plain, he argued, class legislation.

"From this impure fountain has sprung the upas tree of corruption, which has spread its withering, blighting branches through the institutions of the country ... the system itself contains that which would prove its own destruction even if we did not interfere; but whilst the system is going to ruin, the consequences are that the people are the sufferers."¹⁶⁹

In what amounted to an anticipation of Marx's analysis of capitalism, Leach saw the skilled machinery makers and iron moulders as the key agents in its destruction. "The enemies to your interests", he argued, "dread you, the trades most. When the trades of Great Britain unitedly declare for the Charter in a voice not to be misunderstood, it will be gained."¹⁷⁰

By mid-July, the smiths' strikers (hammermen) had followed the skilled metal trades into Chartism in a joint meeting at the Olympic Tavern in Manchester's Stevenson Square with the J.S.E.M.M. The latter's acquisition of class consciousness was doubtless a vital factor in swaying their semi-skilled colleagues. A J.S.E.M.M. delegate declared that the mechanics,

"had found that the trades unions had not accomplished that for which they had been formed, namely the protection of the labour of the working man; and therefore, they had come to the conclusion that nothing short of a participation in the making of the Laws by which they were governed would effectually protect their labour. Having come to that conclusion, they had joined the National Charter Association."¹⁷¹

The second turning point was brought about by John Sharp, partner in the Manchester firm of Sharp Roberts. Sharp, along with Richard Cobden addressed a meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League in Manchester on July 21st, on the subject of the restrictions on machinery exports. Sharp, to the audience's approval, blamed the

severe depression on the restrictions on trade, and to further approval, pointed out that he had given his artisans notice of a 35% to 40% reduction of wages, on top of a 20% reduction which had already been applied. He also added that in the longer term the wages of English artisans would be bound to fall to continental levels, particularly because of the, "excellence of machinery and tools, there was now less pure skill required."¹⁷² Cobden, perhaps more alert to the local consequences of such statements, protested his strong opposition to the reduction of English artisan wages to continental levels, but the damage was almost certainly already done. Only three days later, July 24th, a delegate meeting of the skilled metal trades of south Lancashire followed, and on August 11th the artisans demonstrated their readiness to support the strike which had begun two days earlier at Ashton-under-Lyne.¹⁷³

"Much of the success of the strike", Jenkin argues, "was due to the support of the skilled workers and above all the engineers, a fact which has often been misrepresented by later writers."¹⁷⁴ Two delegate meetings of the "Five Trades of Mechanism" on August 11th and 12th and a general trades meeting on August 15th and 16th clearly illustrate the commitment of the artisan machine makers to the Chartist cause and their leading role in the "general strike" in Lancashire.

The delegate meeting of mechanics, millwrights, smiths, iron moulders and engineers, which was held at Manchester's Carpenters' Hall opened at 6 a.m. on August 11th and was chaired by John Middleton. The resolutions in full are contained in Appendix A but certain points merit particular attention. The second resolution unequivocally condemned violence proclaiming that the delegates could not sanction, "the conduct of those individuals who have been going about destroying property and offering violence to the

people". The third re-affirmed the delegates' intention to destroy, "class legislation" whilst the fourth promised to continue the struggle until, "the People's Charter ... becomes a legislative enactment." The fifth resolution best illustrates the leading role in the wider movement which the five trades were assuming; it established a committee which was to win over other trades to Chartism, "to endeavour, if possible, to secure a more general union, before entering into any practical measures for redressing any grievances."¹⁷⁵

At the following day's meeting the basis of support for the Charter among the textile machinery industry's workers was extended, as the semi-skilled Metal Planers offered support, followed by the Smiths' Strikers and the Spindle Makers.¹⁷⁶

The general delegate meeting of August 15th and 16th brought together 141 delegates from 59 trades; at least 24 of these came from the skilled metal trades and many of these came from the large textile machinery making firms of Manchester and south-east Lancashire.¹⁷⁷ The Bolton Free Press significantly commented that,

"some of the trades which they represented treated the present agitation as purely a movement for an advance of wages but the great majority of them considered it altogether as a Chartist movement and stated they would not agitate for anything less than the Charter."¹⁷⁸

The final resolution as amended by the delegates of the Smiths (William Robinson) and J.S.E.M.M. (Joseph Melrose) was,

"that the delegates here assembled recommend their respective constituencies to adopt all legal means to carry into effect the People's Charter, and that they send delegates to every part of the United Kingdom, to endeavour to get the co-operation of the middle and labouring classes to carry out the same, and that they stop work until it becomes the law of the land."¹⁷⁹

The strike could not be sustained; the arrest of Leach and then Hutchinson proved serious blows to its continuity. The rather dubious legal grounds for the latter's arrest in fact related to his

involvement in the general trades meeting of August 16th. He was charged that,

"at the borough of Manchester with divers other persons, he did unlawfully and wickedly conspire and combine to prevent her majesty's subjects from following their lawful occupations and to compel them to depart therefrom by force and violence, threats and intimidation; and that he did, in pursuance of such conspiracy seditiously urge and excite others of her majesty's subjects to join in the illegal acts and practices aforesaid in disturbance of the peace of our lady The Queen and to the terror of the people".¹⁸⁰

Significantly, Hutchinson was released in early September when the excitement had subsided.

A number of aspects of the strike itself merit particular consideration. The traditional concept of an industrial working class divided into economically distressed pro-charter groups such as the hand loom weavers and largely aloof groups of skilled factory workers such as engineers, must be seriously questioned. Dorothy Thompson's work on the early Chartist movement began to develop this line of attack and it has since been further explored by Jenkin and Sykes.¹⁸¹

Historians following the traditional line of argument have placed considerable stress upon the resistance of the men of Hibbert and Platt's machine making works to the Chartist turn-outs, who, upon their arrival in Oldham from Ashton-under-Lyne, had demanded the closure of the establishment.¹⁸² Elijah Hibbert, who as a town magistrate, was regularly in touch with Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, certainly boasted of this success when the Chartist challenge subsided.¹⁸³ However, the circumstances surrounding these events should be carefully examined in order to assess the exact nature of the role of the machinery makers in Oldham at this time.

The turn-outs arrived from Ashton on August 8th, 1842. The magistrates wrote to Graham that several thousand operatives visited the town, their march headed by a, "black flag topped with a red cap

of liberty". However, it is quite possible that the desire to resist the turn-outs was affected by the arrival of Colonel Wemyss accompanied by a troop of horse soldiers, who had been brought out from Manchester by Elijah Hibbert himself.¹⁸⁴ Following this initial set-back, the Chartists certainly built up a position of strength in Oldham after the withdrawal of troops, and though the exact situation at Hibbert and Platt's works remains unclear, the turn-outs appear to have met with success at the town's other machine making establishments, such as Lees and Barnes (later Asa Lees) and Saville and Wolstenholme. On August 10th, magistrates noted that, "almost every operation in manufacturing is suspended; the hat manufactories, machine shops and other workshops have been visited and the hands turned out," and on August 13th, a petition signed by Hibbert, Saville, Samuel and Job Lees and over 80 other notables, recorded the renewed activities of armed Chartists, and lamented, "all the mills and other manufactories are now all at a stand."¹⁸⁵

It is also clear that engineering workers, including employees of Hibbert and Platt took a leading role in organising the turn-out in Oldham. Two engineers, Isaac Hoyle and Richard Dunkerley took the turn-out campaign to the suburb of Royton on August 13th, to demand not just restoration of wage cuts but implementation of the Charter.¹⁸⁶ In addition, Samuel Baron, an employee of Hibbert and Platt was elected as delegate of the Oldham Hammermen (Smiths' Strikers) to attend the trades meeting in Manchester of August 15th and 16th.¹⁸⁷

Evidence regarding the ability of the Chartists to bring out the workers of other machine making firms is limited, but suggests success in Bolton, and in Manchester and Salford, where, in addition

to the Sharp Roberts works, those of Parr, Curtis and Madeley, and Wren and Bennett, were brought to a standstill.¹⁸⁸

In conclusion, the balance of evidence indicates that, at least as far as 1841-42 is concerned, Musson's claim that the engineers and iron founders did not give, "widespread or sustained" support for Chartism, seriously understates the role of these artisans in Lancashire.¹⁸⁹ Similarly his view that the actions of 1842 were, "fundamentally industrial trade union actions against wage reductions", ignores the more important role of the U.T.A. in the Manchester meetings which sought to develop and sustain the Chartist turn-out. As early as June 1842, the Northern Star gratefully acknowledged the contribution of the machinery makers, stating that, "this once aristocratical trade has come out boldly for the principles of democracy."¹⁹⁰

The years following the failure of the strike should also be examined, especially in view of the writings of historians as diverse as Foster and Donald Read, who emphasise the virtual volte-face of the Lancashire working class aspirations towards reformism and acceptance of the status quo.¹⁹¹ Certainly the trades societies did react against the political ventures of 1842, notably the J.S.E.M.M.¹⁹² However, the Bury strike of 1845 showed that co-operation between the trades was not dead, and in 1847-48 there is evidence of some continued interest in Chartism. For example, the J.S.E.M.M. Manchester No. 4 and No. 5 branches deposited funds in O'Connor's Land Bank. They disobeyed their Executive Council's instruction to remove the funds initially and only after a ballot had been held to facilitate the branches' suspension did they give way.¹⁹³

Hutchinson had commented in 1842 on the animosity shown by certain Chartists towards the skilled trades which had inhibited the

latter's involvement in the movement. Belchem in fact, notes the attempts of George Julian Harney to develop a "third force" which would have united middle class radicals, co-operators and the skilled trades with the mass of the industrial workers on a programme which toned down the Chartist plans. He was, however, defeated by Ernest Jones, who Belchem argues, believed, "there could be no compromise over the Chartist programme and no concession to the susceptibilities of the new breed of skilled workers in the craft unions."¹⁹⁴ Jones argued that the iron trades' artisans should reject their combinations and industrial action against employers. "This doctrine of expedience is especially active in reference to the co-operative and trade movements," he complained, "and most particularly as regards the Amalgamated Iron Trades."¹⁹⁵ The trade societies should, he claimed, use their funds instead through the Charter movement to, "change the whole system ... by changing the system makers."¹⁹⁶ Such a dismissal of the very *raison d'être* of the societies doubtless did much to seal the alienation of the latter from Chartism and drive them back upon their more limited labourist goals.

Thus, as textile engineering rapidly expanded, following the opening up of the new export markets from 1843, technological changes faced the artisans with a challenge which could only be met by consolidation of defences through the trade societies, which with the exception of the depression of 1848, expanded accordingly. Ironically, as the artisans' means of defence, the trade societies, were rapidly expanding, Chartism fell into a spiral of decline. The machinery makers' political and class consciousness did not, however, disappear after 1842, despite their alienation from the Chartists' emerging leadership. Indeed, on the eve of the lock-out

of 1852 which began in Oldham, the Northern Star printed a comment from an artisan machine maker, who argued that,

"we must have political power - the right to assist in legislating the means of our defence - the power of saying to what extent, and for how long, a commercial system will be tolerated that centralises the wealth of the country in the hands of a few persons, enabling ten soulless men to threaten as many thousands with starvation." 197

By that time, it could be claimed by Burgess with great justification, that far from indulging in class collaboration, the Lancashire machinery makers were an increasingly isolated militant minority in a quiescent working class. 198

FOOTNOTES

- 1 A. E. Musson and E. Robinson, Science and Technology in the Industrial Revolution, Manchester 1969, notably pp. 430 to 456.
- 2 K. R. Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations, London 1975, Chapter 1 and The Influence of Technological Change on Social Attitudes and Trade Union Policies in the British Engineering Industry 1780-1860, Leeds University, Ph.D. Thesis, 1970.
- 3 J. Foster, op. cit., Chapter 7.
- 4 R. Sykes, 'Early Chartism and Trade Unionism in South East Lancashire', in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), The Chartist Experience, London 1982, and M. Jenkins, The General Strike of 1842, London 1980.
- 5 J. R. Bright, Automation and Management, Boston 1958, p.210 ff. quoted by Braverman op. cit., p.217.
- 6 See Tables 3 and 4 in Chapter One.
- 7 Charles More, Skill and the English Working Class, London 1980, pp. 195-6 argues that the origins of the engineering artisan lie more properly with the smiths and the early metal working trades rather than the millwrights. The early history of the textile machinery industry would however, justify the traditional viewpoint, see Part II.
- 8 W. Marcroft, Ups and Downs, Life in a Machine Making Works, Oldham 1889, p.11.
- 9 This has been the prevailing opinion of historians as diverse as Musson and Jefferys.
- 10 P. Deane and W. A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959, Cambridge 1969, p.191.
- 11 S. D. Chapman, The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution, London 1972, pp. 30-31.
- 12 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, Fourth Report, Parliamentary Papers, 1824, vol. 5, 51, pp. 300-307.
- 13 Musson and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 431-33. The Manchester and Salford directories list 'loom makers' and 'shuttle makers' in 1772/3; from 1781 there appears 'cotton engine maker' and the 1788-1800 directories include 'joiner and loom maker', 'millwright, machine maker and turner in wood and metal' and 'water spindle maker and turner'.
- 14 John Hammond, 'Address to Friends and Fellow Workmen', quoted in G. W. Daniels, 'A Turn-out of Bolton Machine Makers in 1831', Economic Journal, 1929, p.593. The Hammond document is noted by Daniels and later by Musson and Robinson as being in possession of Manchester University's Economics Department, but can no longer be traced there, nor in the main University library.

- 15 Following the changes in technology which broke down the millwrights' skills, the term 'millwright' was commonly retained by many textile machinery firms to describe the small group of specialist workers responsible for the installation of new machines in textile mills and their maintenance.
- 16 Quoted by Daniels, op. cit., p.594.
- 17 John Kennedy, 'A Brief Notice of My Early Recollections', in Miscellaneous Papers, Manchester 1849, p.15. Significantly 'Chowbent' remained the name of an A.S.E. branch into the twentieth century, though the placename had largely fallen into disuse.
- 18 W. H. Chaloner, 'John Galloway : Engineer of Manchester and his Reminiscences', Transactions of Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, LXIV, 1954, pp. 93-95 discusses Galloway's early career in Chowbent and Manchester. Musson and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 440-41 discuss the importance of the firm of Cannan and Smith.
- 19 Chaloner, op. cit., p.95.
- 20 Musson and Robinson, op. cit., p.437
- 21 Dobson and Barlow Ltd., Samuel Crompton. A Brief Survey of his Life and Work. Incorporating a History of Dobson and Barlow, Bolton 1927, p.59.
- 22 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, Fourth Report, p.300. The major problem was roller turning.
23. ibid. p.305.
- 24 ibid. p.306.
- 25 ibid.
- 26 When cast, and later wrought iron, replaced wood in elements of machine construction, some of these were machined, though much work consisted of hand finishing of castings. The early lathes were small, treadle-operated devices. John Wilkinson had introduced boring by cannon lathe in the development of the Boulton-Watt steam engine in 1775. The first planing machines, however, didn't appear until 1817, the first slotting machines by about 1825, and the first drilling machines from 1837.
- 27 The forerunner of the Philanthropic Society of Millwrights of Great Britain, which was based in Bolton and Manchester, was in existence prior to 1809, then was suspended until 1820; the revived society started with funds of £200, according to James Anderson of the Manchester branch, Philanthropic Society of Millwrights of Great Britain, Letter Book Relating to Amalgamation with the A.S.E., 1867, p.8.
- 28 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, Fourth Report, p.307. In the First Report p.39, another (non-Lancashire) employer, testified that the millwrights "would not work with an engineer; they thought it rather a disgrace, and they did strike in some manufactures".

- 29 The Black Horse Club was named after the location of the Dobson textile machinery works. Significantly the headquarters of the Philanthropic Society of Millwrights was located on the same street. Dobsons employed watchmen equipped with fire arms which were discharged nightly to warn off marauders, Dobson and Barlow Ltd., 134 Years of Progress 1790-1924, Bolton 1924, p.93. This is perhaps an explanation of MacLaine's uncertainty as to the purchase of pistols by the Bolton branch of the Friendly Union of Mechanics. V. MacLaine, The Engineers' Union Book 1 - The Millwrights and Old Mechanics, London University Ph.D. Thesis, 1939, p.137.
- 30 Quoted by Daniels, op. cit., p.594.
- 31 Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, Fourth Report, pp. 340 and 363.
- 32 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work Load in Nineteenth Century Industry', in Labouring Men, London 1964, p.348.
- 33 M. Holbrook-Jones, Supremacy and Subordination of Labour, London 1982, p.42.
- 34 Burgess, Ph.D. Thesis, p.45.
- 35 Dobson and Barlow Ltd. op. cit., p.61. Deane and Cole op. cit., p.225 estimated British annual output of pig iron had increased from 250,000 tons c.1805 to 428,000, 1820-4 and 658,000, 1825-9.
- 36 H. J. Fyrth and H. Collins, The Foundry Workers, Manchester 1959, p.21
- 37 MacLaine, op. cit., p.103.
- 38 Mechanics Friendly Institution, Resolutions of Meeting of Deputies, Leeds 1824, Rule I. Under Rule XI subscriptions to provide for all benefits were set at 4¹/₂d. per week. Entry fees were 7/6 (Rule II). The meeting was chaired by Anthony MacGregor of Blackburn initially and then J. Mellor of Burnley. Delegates also attended from Preston, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, Todmorden, Ashton, Stockport, Stalybridge and Oldham, whilst correspondence was received from branches in Manchester and Heywood.
- 39 The Friendly Union of Mechanics and the Mechanics Friendly Institution joined in 1838 to form the basis of the future A.S.E.
- 40 MacLaine, op. cit., p.350.
- 41 J. B. Jefferys, The Story of the Engineers, London 1945, p.17.
- 42 The Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers' Friendly Society which had emerged in the amalgamation of 1838, added 'millwrights' to its already lengthy title in 1842 to encourage this recruitment.
- 43 Evidence is confusing, but points to the existence of two separate Lancashire Millwright societies until 1867: the Philanthropic Society of Journeymen Millwrights and the Amicable

and Brotherly Society of Journeymen Millwrights. The former had branches in Manchester, Bolton, Bury, Ashton, Oldham and Preston.

- 44 G. H. Tupling, 'The Early Metal Trades and the Beginnings of Engineering in Lancashire'. Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society LXI 1949 p.26.
- 45 E. Butterworth, Historical Sketches of Oldham, Oldham 1856, p.184.
- 46 DDPSL 15/1/3 History of Hetheringtons of Manchester, Typescript n.d., p.4. and Mather and Platt Ltd, Salient Dates in Mather and Platt History, Typescript n.d.
- 47 Butterworth, op. cit., p.185.
- 48 W. Dickinson and Sons, A Record of 100 Years, Blackburn 1926, p.2. G. C. Miller, Blackburn, Evolution of a Cotton Town, Blackburn 1951, p.343. Butterworth and Dickinson Ltd., Globe Works Annual, 1908, and DDHL 38/9/1 Robert Hall and Company, First Vages Book.
- 49 Foster, op. cit., p.225 sees the early and mid 1830's as the key period in the employers' introduction of new capital intensive processes in Oldham.
- 50 Dobsons, along with Hibbert and Platt of Oldham, and Mather and Platt of Salford was an important customer for Nasmyth machine tools from 1836, and was a strong supporter of Hibbert and Platt during the 1852 lock out.
- 51 Quoted by Daniels, op. cit., p.594.
- 52 ZDB 2/31, Dobson and Barlow Archive, Bolton Public Library. One of the signatories of the petition, almost certainly Richard Threlfall, went on to found his own textile machinery making firm. Dobson and Barlow, op. cit., p.73.
- 53 Voice of the People, 3.9.1831.
- 54 Daniels, op. cit., p.600-601. Married men were allowed an extra two shillings and those with children, one shilling per child under ten years.
- 55 ibid. p.597
- 56 Dobson and Barlow, op. cit., p.73.
- 57 ZDB 2/31.
- 58 Voice of the People, 3.9.1831.
- 59 Bolton Chronicle, 25.6.1831 and 30.7.1831. Voice of the People 6.8.1831
- 60 Manchester Guardian, 17.9.1831. 'Footing' was the ceremony which denoted a young man's entry into the trade as a journeyman.

- 61 Daniels, op. cit., p.601.
- 62 Bolton Chronicle, 17.12.1831.
- 63 Cited by G. W. Daniels, 'The Organisation of a Turn Out of Bolton Machine Makers in 1831,' Economic Journal, January 1930, p.115.
- 64 One of the crucial grievances at Hibbert and Platt, which led to the 1852 lock-out, was the employment of 'illegal' men i.e. unapprenticed men put on work which the A.S.E. viewed as skilled.
- 65 W. H. Dickinson, 'Richard Roberts, His Life and Inventions', Transactions of the Newcomen Society XXV 1945-7, p.128.
- 66 Manchester Guardian, 23.7.1842. By this date the firm had opened the new 'Atlas' works and was manufacturing locomotives as well.
- 67 Daniels, 'The Organisation of a Turn Out of Bolton Machine Makers', p.115.
- 68 ibid.
- 69 James Nasmyth, An Autobiography, edited by Samuel Smiles, London 1883, p.222.
- 70 Nasmyth Collection, Order Book 1836-49 p.2, Nasmyth Collection, (SN 27) Catalogues and Publicity Material, show the smallest machines were able to plane metal up to 3' 6" x 1' 6" x 1' 0", the largest 20' 0" x 4' 0" x 4' 0". In addition new drilling machines were priced at between £80 and £180 and self-acting slide lathes from £80.
- 71 Jefferys, op. cit., pp.19-22.
- 72 MacLaine, op. cit. p.156.
- 73 ibid. p.170
- 74 MSS 41/FSIF/4, F.S.I.M. Half Yearly Reports, 1840.
- 75 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit. p.31. The development of plate moulding which threatened the skilled moulder in the manner self-acting drilling and planing machines threatened the mechanic, was not introduced in Lancashire before 1851.
- 76 See Part V of this chapter.
- 77 R. Kirk, op. cit. p.40 n. argues that Jenkinson and Bow was then the largest textile machinery making firm in the U.K.
- 78 Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery, 1841, First Report, Parliamentary Papers 1841, VII, cd. 201 p.102.
- 79 ibid. p.111 for the incomes of the 'machine-men' and p.104 for those of the firm's skilled men.

- 80 *ibid.* p.104. Jenkinson noted that his piece hands were, "first class men and some of them will earn as much as £3 and £4 a week." At such rates of pay the piece work system was not unpopular in many Lancashire districts and the A.S.E. was to find it difficult on many occasions in the nineteenth century to galvanise opposition to it.
- 81 *ibid.* p.105.
- 82 *ibid.* He noted artisan societies' ability to keep up wages and their greater immunity from the consequences of the ebbs and flows of the market.
- 83 Kirk, *op. cit.*, p.183 notes that spindle manufacture, often carried on by specialist firms, remained a highly skilled and complex operation.
- 84 Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery, p.104.
- 85 The major markets in the 1840's were European : Russia, Spain, Italy, the Hanseatic Towns and Turkey, but countries such as Brazil and Mexico were already contributing a significant share of the overall demand. Parliamentary Papers (Accounts), 1849, L, cd. 445, p.623.
- 86 Foster, *op. cit.*, p.229.
- 87 Kirk, *op. cit.*, p.421. He notes that Hibbert and Platt produced over 15 times more mule spindles than throstle spindles and didn't export half of their production until the 1860's. He also points out that Dobson and Barlow, perhaps a more typical leading firm, only exported less than a tenth of their output in the 1850's.
- 88 J.S.E.M.M., Delegate Meeting Minutes, Manchester 1845, p.33.
- 89 Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p.191.
- 90 Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p.184.
- 91 Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery, p.110, evidence of Matthew Curtis for 1841; *Northern Star*, 17.1.52. for 1851.
- 92 Dobson and Barlow, *op. cit.*, p.97 and *Northern Star*, 17.1.1852.
- 93 Jefferys, *op. cit.*, p.19.
- 94 Grinders and Glazers Society, *Annual Report*, 1893-4. The society had branches in Manchester, Oldham, Bolton, Rochdale, Blackburn, Preston, Bury, Ashton and Leeds.
- 95 Marcroft, *op. cit.*, p.6. See Table 1 in Chapter IV for the wage rates of grinders, machine men, fitters, turners, etc., at Hibbert and Platt 1838-41 and Robert Halls 1855-8.
- 96 *ibid.* p.75.
- 97 John Mason and Company, Correspondence, L.29 Box 1, Letters to James Davenport, 11.7.1846 and 17.7.1846.

- 98 Marcroft, *op. cit.*, p.19; see also Chapter Four parts III and V for further details of this issue at Hibbert and Platt in the 1840's and early 1850's.
- 99 Marcroft, *op. cit.*, p.12.
- 100 Minutes of the 1845 Delegate Meeting, p.32.
- 101 In this connection the action taken against pieceworkers was left to the individual branches which were to, "use every reasonable means" to do away with piece work. *ibid.*
- 102 *ibid.* p.31
- 103 'Nibbling' was the setting of an agreed rate at the commencement of the job for each man and subsequently, on a pretext, reducing the rate to maximise the piece master's own profit. 'Chasing' was the employment by the piece master of a compliant artisan when starting the job, who would then work extremely quickly to set a high standard for the rest of the men to match, again allowing more profit to come to the piece master at the expense of the ordinary artisan.
- 104 See Chapter Four, Part III for a fuller discussion of this campaign. The A.S.E. adopted a similar policy in 1862.
- 105 Fyrth and Collins, *op. cit.*, p.35.
- 106 MSS 41/FSIF/4/15/3, Circular to F.S.I.M. Branches, 9.1.1845.
- 107 *ibid.*
- 108 Northern Star, 3.5.1845. The firm was later known as Walker and Hacking. Richard Walker was Bury's M.P. from 1832 to 1852.
- 109 *ibid.* 15.3.1845. The assaillant, Frederick Smith, was eventually sentenced to hard labour for 20 years.
- 110 *ibid.* 26.4.1845.
- 111 *ibid.* 10.5.1845 notes support from Salford, Oldham, Bolton, Stockport, Rochdale and Heywood. Fyrth and Collins, *op. cit.*, p.36 note that the dispute cost the F.S.I.M. £9,000, of which £1,000 was contributed by the Scottish Moulders' Society.
- 112 See Part V of this Chapter.
- 113 S. and B. Webb, *op. cit.*, p.190.
- 114 D. Chadwick, 'Wages in Manchester and Salford in 1839 and 1859', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 1859, XXIII, pp. 412-415.
- 115 J.S.E.M.M. Manchester No. 1 and No. 3 Branch, Contribution Books, give the 1842 and 1843 membership figures. The 1851 figures are derived from the A.S.E. Jubilee Souvenir, (1901) p.125, and are almost certainly gross underestimates since they are the branch ballot returns on the 1851 amalgamation question and thus do not include non-voters.

- 116 K. Burgess, Ph.D. Thesis, p.239, notes the J.S.E.M.M. spent £40,000 on relieving unemployed members during the year.
- 117 *ibid.* pp. 216-219. Burgess compares J.S.E.M.M. branch membership and the number of engineering workers recorded in the 1841 and 1851 census returns. This comparison is, however, fraught with severe problems as he acknowledges. The basic difficulty is the lack of symmetry of census divisions and union branch territory. This is compounded by the fact that recruitment to branches could be based on either residence or place of employment. In addition Burgess bases his study only on the J.S.E.M.M. which by 1847 had 7,000 members, yet does not include the F.S.I.M. with 4,512 members (1847), the S.E.M. with 2,068 (1850), nor the newly emerging U.M.W.A. and the Grinders and Glazers Society.
- 118 J.S.E.M.M. 1843 Rule Book, Preamble I, and Rule XXX.
- 119 *ibid.* Rule XVI. See also Chapter Four for a discussion of artisan social security.
- 120 Jefferys, *op. cit.*, p.22. See Part V for Robinson's involvement in Chartism.
- 121 United Order of Smiths, 1853 Rules, Preamble referring to Rule 42 of the 1845 Rule Book.
- 122 *ibid.* Rule 59. See Table 8 in Chapter Four for a full list of its welfare benefits.
- 123 *ibid.* Rules 49 and 42 and Preamble XV. Presumably the new rules were adopted after the quittance paper dispute in which the moulders were supported by the smiths, Northern Star, 3.5.1845.
- 124 MSS 41/PSIF/4/15/3.
- 125 *ibid.* The following year, 1846, saw the transfer of this power to the Executive but only by the wish of a London-based delegate meeting.
- 126 R. A. Leeson, Travelling Brothers, London 1979, p.178-9.
- 127 Jefferys, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.
- 128 A. E. Musson and R. G. Kirby, The Voice of the People : John Doherty 1798-1858, Manchester 1975, p.256 and A. E. Musson, 'Class Struggle and the Labour Aristocracy', Social History, 1976, p.342. Notable among others taking a similar stance are Henry Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism, London 1963, p.34, and Donald Read, 'Chartism in Manchester', in Asa Briggs (ed.) Chartist Studies, London 1959, p.46.
- 129 E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London 1963, p.546.
- 130 *ibid.* p.547, quoting the evidence of T. Bayley to the Home Office, 6.11.1799.
- 131 A.U.E.W. Journal, May 1977, vol. 44 No. 5. p.15.

- 132 Weekly Report of the Dobsons' Turn Out Committee. Quoted by Daniels, op. cit., pp.599-600
- 133 Daniels, op. cit., p.600.
- 134 J. L. and B. Hammond, The Town Labourer, London 1949 edition, vol. II p.128.
- 135 The then Home Secretary, Sidmouth, planned to prosecute the Philanthropic Society which the Manchester Borough Reeve had believed to have been organised by "revolutionists". He was dissuaded by the Solicitor General who thought this plan counter-productive and was proved right when the Society failed within a month.
- 136 Kirby and Musson, op. cit., p.29. Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.21 note the role of the moulders in this turn out.
- 137 United Trades Co-operative Journal, 1.5.1830, 5.6.1830, 19.6.1830, 18.9.1830 and 2.10.1830.
- 138 ibid. 6.3.1830.
- 139 Kirby and Musson, op. cit., p.259.
- 140 Voice of the People, 1.1.1831 to 3.9.1831.
- 141 The later 'quittance paper' dispute at Walkers in Bury was carried on in conjunction with a strike of power loom weavers, working for the same employers, Northern Star, 26.4.1845.
- 142 There seems to have been little interest in the upsurge of General Unionism in 1833-4, perhaps because initially the Owenite ideals of small workshop co-operatives and rural colonies had little appeal to men whose skills were, more than any others, identified with the further development of highly capitalised factory-based industry. From the mid-1840's, however, there was a belated interest taken by several groups of engineering workers in the application of co-operative ideas to machine making in large scale establishments. See Chapter Three, Conclusion.
- 143 Northern Star, 24.3.1838.
- 144 R. Sykes, op. cit., p.160.
- 145 Manchester Guardian 26.9.1838, Manchester and Salford Standard 26.9.1838 and Northern Star 29.9.1838 and 13.10.1838, all contain accounts of the meeting. An indication of the diffusion of the Chartist programme is given in Thomas Wood's autobiography in John Burnett (ed.), Useful Toil, London 1974, pp.309-10. As a sixteen year old apprentice in 1838, he, like many of his generation, read the Northern Star second hand at work. "I began to join in some fashion at a newspaper", he recalled. He went on, having finished his apprenticeship, to work at Hibbert and Platt of Oldham.
- 146 S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.189.

- 147 The Trades Journal, 4.7.1840
- 148 ibid. 1.5.1841.
- 149 See Chapter Four for a more detailed discussion of artisan respectability in the third quarter of the century, especially Part IV and the Conclusion..
- 150 The Trades Journal, 1.8.1840.
- 151 ibid.
- 152 The terms 'engineer' and 'mechanic' tended to be used interchangeably at this time, but in this particular instance, 'engineers' referred to members of the J.S.E.M.M. and 'mechanics' to members of the more exclusive S.E.M. (Steam Engine Makers Society) which was Liverpool-based, and did not recruit in the textile machinery making industry in depth, until the 1880's.
- 153 The Trades Journal, 1.9.1840.
- 154 ibid. 4.7.1840.
- 155 Jenkins, op. cit., p.132.
- 156 The Trades Journal, 1.3.1841.
- 157 Jenkins, op. cit., p.132 provides a very misleading interpretation of the founding of the U.T.A. by quoting only the first, fifth, sixth and twelfth sentences of Hutchinson's speech.
- 158 Home Office Papers, P.R.O., HO 45/43. Wemyss to Phillips, 31.1.1841.
- 159 ibid. 2.2.1841.
- 160 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.32.
J.S.E.M.M., Manchester No. 3 Branch, Contribution Book.
- 161 F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, Moscow 1962 edition, p.122.
- 162 E. J. Hobsbawm 'The British Standard of Living 1790-1850', in Labouring Men, p.75.
- 163 H. Ashworth, 'Statistics of the Present Depression in Bolton', Journal of the Statistical Society V, 1842, p.79.
- 164 Bolton Free Press, 20.8.1842.
- 165 DDPSL 15/1/1, W. V. Kempe, Typescript History of Platts, p.18, and H. Ashworth, op. cit., p.75.
- 166 Quoted by Burgess, Ph.D. Thesis, p.158.
- 167 Manchester Guardian, 5.1.1842.

- 168 Northern Star 4.6.1842. The J.S.E.M.M. meeting did, however, reject a motion for complete suffrage. A possible explanation of this lies in the skilled man's suspicion of political power in the hands of the unskilled and 'lumpen proletarian' elements whom they saw as lacking education and independence and thus being very susceptible to corruption at the hands of the propertied classes.
- 169 ibid. 9.7.1842. Leach was south Lancashire delegate to the National Convention and its vice-chairman. D. Read, op. cit., p.52.
- 170 ibid.
- 171 ibid. 23.7.1842.
- 172 Manchester Guardian, 23.7.1842.
- 173 Northern Star, 30.7.1842.
- 174 A. Jenkin, 'Chartism and the Trade Unions', in L. M. Munby (ed.), The Luddites and Other Essays, London 1971, p.81.
- 175 Northern Star, 20.8.1842.
- 176 ibid. The Metal Planers Society was founded in 1836 in response to the first phase of application of self-acting machine tools in Lancashire machinery making, and was eventually absorbed by the A.S.E. in 1895. The Spindle Makers retained an independent, strictly sectional policy until amalgamation with the A.E.U. in 1962.
- 177 Manchester Guardian, 17.8.1842.
- 178 Bolton Free Press, 29.8.1842.
- 179 Manchester Guardian, 17.8.1842. The rather controversial amendment submitted by Melrose and Robinson was to include the middle class in the final resolution so as to encourage the eventual participation of the latter in Chartism.
- 180 ibid. 24.8.1842.
- 181 D. Thompson (ed.), The Early Chartists, London 1971, p.12. A. Jenkin, op. cit., pp.81-82 and R. Sykes, op. cit., pp. 152 ff.
- 182 For example, A. E. Musson, 'Class Struggle and the Labour Aristocracy', p.341.
- 183 H.O. 45/249, Letter of Elijah Hibbert to Sir James Graham, 24.8.1842.
- 184 ibid. T. Mills/E. Hibbert/A. Clegg/J. Mellor to Graham 8.8.1842. Also Bolton Free Press, 13.8.1842 for Hibbert's role in the affair.
- 185 H.O. 45/249, letters of Mills and Mellor to Graham 10.8.1842 and petition to Graham 12.8.1842.

- 186 *ibid.* Report of Hibbert and Mellor to Sergeant Robinson of Royton Police, 13.8.1842.
- 187 Manchester Guardian 17.8.1842 records Baron as the delegate of the Hammermen who attended the trades' conference. DDPSL 1/110/1 Hibbert and Platt East Works Wage Book, lists Samuel Baron as one of the firm's smiths' strikers.
- 188 H.O. 45/249, Robert Thompson and Howell Croft to Graham, 15.8.1842, for Bolton. Manchester Guardian, 20.8.1842 for the closure of the Manchester and Salford works.
- 189 Musson, *op. cit.*, p.342.
- 190 Northern Star, 4.6.1842. The machine makers' involvement in the movement was contrasted with the inaction of "true aristocratic" trades such as the coachmakers and bookbinders.
- 191 Foster, *op. cit.*, p.203 ff., Read, *op. cit.*, p.56.
- 192 See Part IV.
- 193 MacLaine, *op. cit.*, pp. 304 and 314.
- 194 J. Belchem, 'Chartism and the Trades'. English Historical Review XCVIII, 1983, p.587.
- 195 Ernest Jones, Notes to the People Vol. 2 (February 1852) pp. 860-2, quoted by J. Saville (ed.), Ernest Jones: Chartist, London 1952, p.190.
- 196 *ibid.* p.192.
- 197 Northern Star, 30.12.1851.
- 198 Burgess, Ph.D. Thesis, p.292.

Chapter Three

The 1852 Lock Out of Engineers in Lancashire

I. The Creation of the A.S.E. and the Economic Background to the Conflict in Lancashire

The 1852 lock-out of engineering workers marks the greatest impact of developments in the textile machinery industry on industrial relations in general. Thomas Hughes saw the conflict as,

"the first of a new class of strikes or lock-outs. It was carried on and fought out with the greatest vehemence and stubbornness and excited the deepest interest throughout the whole country."¹

The Times went as far as to proclaim that the dispute,

"must cause the ruin of one party if not both, and it may destroy the iron trade of these islands forever."²

There were, in Lancashire and London, 3,500 members of the newly formed A.S.E. locked out, 1,500 other artisans and about 10,000 labourers and "machine men". At the height of the dispute there were in excess of 10,000 men locked out in Lancashire; well over half of these men had been employed in textile machinery manufacture.³

The years following the economic crisis of 1842 had seen the rapid growth of textile machinery manufacture, especially in Lancashire, with the opening up of export markets from 1843 and the systematic application of the power loom in the home market. The rapid growth of the market had encouraged many firms to invest in new, costly machine tools which brought skilled labour substitution as hitherto complex tasks were broken down into several specialist, repetitive processes utilising semi-skilled machine men, the tools having been set up by a small number of skilled workers. The new technology also brought in its wake the extension of piece work, and systematic overtime as employers sought to maximise returns on their

costly capital investments. Thus, as outlined in Chapter Two, part four, the growth of the textile machinery industry after 1842 was accompanied by a notable escalation in the conflict of capital and organised labour, as the artisans' economic position and control over the labour process came under sustained threat.

Between 1846 and 1850 the fixed capital of Hibbert and Platt of Oldham, the firm at the centre of the 1852 conflict, increased from £38,055 to £104,778.⁴ Whitworths, the suppliers of most of Hibbert and Platt's machine tools, almost quadrupled their labour force in the decade from 1844, whilst orders of new machine tools from Nasmyth's Patricroft Works reached a spectacular peak between 1845 and 1847.⁵

Technological change thus threatened the artisans in boom years with introduction of machine men and a higher proportion of apprentices, but in the periods of depression, they faced the biting impact of large scale unemployment when those of their colleagues, fortunate enough to retain jobs, could well be obliged to accept systematic overtime, which at most firms merited only payment at the standard time rate.

In fact the issues of unemployment and systematic overtime had, in fact, made a major impact on artisan societies' policy following the experience of the 1842 crisis. In 1843 the J.S.E.M.M. delegate meeting made a formal appeal to members to resist systematic overtime⁶ and in 1845 the society commissioned a prize essay competition on the subject; the winning submission, by Haslingden surgeon, Dr. J. Binns, was published in the following year.⁷ In 1847 the financial crisis ushered in another severe depression. By 1850 the J.S.E.M.M. had spent £40,000 on the relief of unemployed members, with 1,000 out of 7,000 out of work in 1849.⁸ The F.S.I.M. paid out almost £50,000 between 1848 and 1851, with £18,000 being

paid in 1849 when over 1,000 of its 3939 members were unemployed and over 300 were on short-time.⁹

The 'Quittance Paper' dispute of 1845 had demonstrated the strength of concerted artisan industrial action and the ability of militant Lancashire branches of the F.S.I.M. and J.S.E.M.M. to take autonomous action, if necessary against the wishes of a moderate executive. The evils of the piecemaster system and attacks on traditional work place freedoms and privileges increasingly combined at firms like Hibbert and Platt, with the threats from systematic overtime, high apprentice/journeymen ratios and "illegal men", to consolidate resistance, the success of which was increasingly seen to depend upon the artisan societies.¹⁰

An extract from the preface to the rules of the newly formed Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1851 clearly indicates the growing determination to resist the array of threats to the artisan's status. It was admitted that,

"whilst in constant employment our members may be able to obtain all the necessaries and perhaps some of the luxuries of life", but added that,

"notwithstanding all this, there is a fear always prominent in the mind of him who thinks of the future, that it may not continue, that tomorrow may see him out of employment, his nicely arranged domestic comfort overthrown, and his hopes of being able in a few years by constant attention and frugality, to occupy a more permanent position, proved only to be a dream. How much is contained in that word continuance, and how necessary to make it a leading principle in our association!"

The basic right to resist encroachments was justified in that they engendered,

"such awful consequences to a trade, that if they were persevered in unchecked they would result in reducing its condition to that of the ill-paid labourer without conferring a corresponding advantage on those who were admitted. It is our duty then to exercise the same control over that in which we have a vested interest as the physician who holds his diploma or the author who is protected by his copyright."¹¹

This defence of personal investment in skill acquisition was to prove the most controversial element in the conflict leading to the 1852 lock-out and has remained a point of debate among historians to the present day.¹² What is important in the period leading up to the lock-out was the underlying determination of the artisan societies, "to destroy the redundancy that existed in the Labour Market", as William Newton of the A.S.E. had proclaimed in March 1851.¹³

Legal and economic factors had kept the J.S.E.M.M. on the defensive following the Quittance Paper dispute. A strike of mechanics at the Newton-le-Willows locomotive manufacturers, Jones and Potts, had brought the arrest of 27 men, including J.S.E.M.M. Secretary, Henry Selsby, for, "unlawfully conspiring, confederating and agreeing to oppress."¹⁴ Eight, including Selsby, were found guilty and although the verdicts were quashed on appeal, the case cost the J.S.E.M.M. £1,800 and led to a resolution from its next delegate meeting, instructing its leading officials to distance themselves from such events. This was followed by a strike at the Rochdale textile machinery firm of John Mason which took place during the deteriorating economic circumstances of the spring of 1847, following long-running disputes over unapprenticed labour, piece work and artisan workshop freedoms.¹⁵

With improvement in trade in 1851, against the background of amalgamation, the artisan societies sought to take a more determined line of resistance against the encroachments on their trades and to recoup the reductions in wage rates which had been forced upon them since 1847. (The Trades Advocate noted that by October 1850 the average skilled man's wage in engineering in Oldham had fallen by two shillings and eightpence per week.)¹⁶

The origins of the 1852 lock-out lie in the revival of artisan militancy associated with the improving trade, and also in the particular circumstances of the Lancashire branches of the J.S.E.M.M./A.S.E., which were able to exert a major degree of autonomy in the face of a potentially more passive and compromising executive. The Bury moulders had demonstrated their autonomy of a London-based executive in 1845 and the Selsby affair had indirectly enhanced branch autonomy in the J.S.E.M.M. by keeping the society's leaders out of the day-to-day conduct of trade disputes. The actual process of the amalgamation negotiations and the attendant difficulties with many of the Lancashire branches must be seen as a contributory factor in the origins of the lock-out.

William Newton, speaking of the benefits of amalgamation, declared that he had,

"been on many occasions anxious to see removed some of those evils which had for a long time affected them injuriously, such as overtime and piece work,"

but he,

"had found on all occasions of their consideration that there was not the slightest hope for the adoption of any remedial measures until the trade was more perfectly united."¹⁷

However, the boilermakers and the moulders both rejected amalgamation, and the new A.S.E. attracted under half of the smiths and steam engine makers. The Lancashire smiths in particular clung to their own society, then called the United Order of Smiths, Turners, Fitters and Millwrights, which as the name implied, supported the society's claim to being, "the original amalgamated iron trades society".¹⁸ More significantly perhaps, the J.S.E.M.M. itself, which had proposed amalgamation, was seriously split on the question, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: J.S.E.M.M. Branch Returns in the Amalgamation Ballot 1851

(Lancashire and North Cheshire)

	<u>FOR</u> <u>AGAINST</u>			<u>FOR</u> <u>AGAINST</u>	
Manchester No. 1	65	324	Oldham No. 1	1600	0
Manchester No. 2	0	583	Oldham No. 2	Unanimously for	
Manchester No. 3	432	168	Rochdale	117	52
Manchester No. 4	25	184	Bury	57	293
Manchester East	50	156	Heywood	360	0
Hulme	97	241	Bolton	1440	0
Gorton	174	29	Chowbent	34	102
Stockport	0	216	Todmorden	96	32
Hyde	424	0	Burnley	248	0
Stalybridge	Not known		Blackburn	560	0
Salford	Not known		Accrington	96	0
			Preston	560	0

Source: A.S.E. Jubilee Souvenir (1901) p.125

The Manchester branches which tended to form the nucleus of the J.S.E.M.M. Executive Council, were overwhelmingly against amalgamation, and obtained strong support in some nearby towns such as Bury and Stockport.¹⁹ Indeed a separate J.S.E.M.M., based in Manchester, remained in existence, issuing its own monthly reports until June 1851, by which time, significantly, the crisis at Hibbert and Platt, was already advanced. The membership of the A.S.E. and J.S.E.M.M. from February to April 1851, shown in Table 2 indicates that the size and scope of the J.S.E.M.M. rump was sufficient to continue to influence A.S.E. decision making.

Table 2: A.S.E./J.S.E.M.M. Membership February - April 1851

	<u>February</u>		<u>March</u>		<u>April</u>	
	<u>Members</u>	<u>Branches</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Branches</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Branches</u>
JSEMM	2003	33	1637	27	1434	22
ASE	7417		7783	84	8485	92

Source: A.S.E. Jubilee Souvenir pp.31-32

In 1842, there had been great resentment in the F.S.I.M. at the movement of the seat of the Moulders' executive to London and in 1850, the Trades Advocate noted that a resolution at an aggregate iron trades meeting in Manchester, to remove the executive of any new amalgamated society to London, "was not well received."²⁰ Brentano noted, in his early study of the A.S.E., that similar resentment existed in Lancashire at the establishment of the new society's headquarters in London.²¹ There is clear evidence that the J.S.E.M.M. rump executive continued to influence negotiations with major engineering employers in the spring and early summer of 1851. Perhaps more important, the new A.S.E. Executive in London cannot but have given a great deal of autonomy to its Lancashire branches in order to win over J.S.E.M.M. members and to prevent defections back to the parent organisation.²²

Evidence which is regrettably less substantial than that relating to Hibbert and Platt, indicates that the J.S.E.M.M. led by Manchester branch officials William Hemm and Thomas Norbury successfully negotiated settlements with leading Manchester firms, notably the large textile machinery making establishment of Parr, Curtis and Madeley. On June 26th, 1851, that firm agreed to discontinue the employment of 'illegal men' on a range of boring, slotting, planing and shaping machines and to end piece work and systematic overtime.²³ Further, the militant autonomy demonstrated

by the Oldham A.S.E. in dealings with John Platt was quite remarkable in the face of an essentially authoritarian and moderate executive led by William Allan. In the events of 1851 the executive tended to follow the lead of its Oldham branch, rather than the other way round, or tried in vain to restrain its initiatives.²⁴

By early 1851, unemployment in the new A.S.E. was only 3% of membership and in Lancashire steps were soon taken to resist employers' attempts to undermine or dilute artisan controls of the labour process. The protracted negotiations with Hibbert and Platt began in April 1851, but other firms were dealt with far more swiftly. In June, the large Bolton firm then known as Dobson and Metcalf, which had been the first major battleground in the textile machinery industry twenty years before, introduced plans to extend piece work.²⁵ This was opposed by the A.S.E. and following meetings with the society's representatives the plan was withdrawn. This victory was followed by further success at the Manchester firm of textile machinery and machine tool manufacturers, Elce and Cottam, though this had required a month's strike action. After negotiations, the firm agreed to restore the traditional 4 : 1 ratio of journeymen to apprentices, and to end abuses of the piecemaster system.²⁶ During the summer of 1851 further successes were achieved by the A.S.E. in the West Riding of Yorkshire and in Lincoln.²⁷

In September 1851 the campaign was again stepped up in Lancashire, at the loom making firm of Joseph Harrison. According to The Operative the basic issue was a dispute over the artisans' claim for a wages advance; which on rejection had led to a walk-out with the firm putting apprentices in to do the men's work. It noted that,

"When the general rules of the trade were infringed by men being discharged for asking for more wages, and boys were placed to supercede them in employment, the workmen considered

that it was time to take means to prevent the recurrence of such aggressions."²⁸

However, the evidence of William Allan before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, indicates that the dispute was also about the firm's desire to extend piece work.²⁹ The A.S.E. took wider strike action in support of its members, and there followed a month's deadlock despite attempts made by a union delegation led by Bury officials to negotiate with Joseph Harrison. However, in mid-October the firm gave way, re-instated the men dismissed, and conceded their demands.³⁰

Thus in spite of dogged resistance from the Leeds locomotive manufacturing firm, Kitsons, which had locked out 150 artisans from August 23rd, the A.S.E. in the north of England could look back upon four months of success in industrial relations, just at the time when events in Oldham were reaching a vital turning point. The victories in Bolton, Manchester, Yorkshire, Lincoln and Blackburn, and the militancy of the rank and file artisans must have convinced the A.S.E. officials in Oldham and London that complete victory over the formidable opponent John Platt was desirable and possible.

II. Hibbert and Platt and the Battle for Control of the Labour Process

Hibbert and Platt had expanded their labour force from about 500 in 1843 to 873 in 1846 and to over 1600 by 1851.³¹ The autobiographical accounts provided by Thomas Wood and William Marcroft testify to the firm's heavy investment in new machine tools in the mid-1840's, and the accompanying erosion of traditional artisan freedoms and craft controls.³² Marcroft's account, however, clearly demonstrates the ebb and flow of the artisans' battle with

the employers as economic conditions fluctuated. Soon after the creation of the Grinders and Glazers Society in 1844, Hibbert and Platt and Asa Lees had been obliged to modify the unpopular piecemaster system to allow profits to be shared among all members of a work group and not simply be pocketed by the piecemaster.³³ In the depressed years of 1847-49 the employers had counter-attacked to reverse this gain and had extended piece-master operations in other departments; further they had introduced more apprentices and semi-skilled labour. Marcroft notes that due to the depression,

"the funds of the men's trades union being exhausted, the masters ventured to make many changes in the machines that greatly increased our work."³⁴

However, as trade recovered, the grinders were again able to reform the piecemaster system, and the artisans in general were becoming keen to take on Hibbert and Platt over the question of the number of apprentices, the excessive overtime and most significantly the employment of men who were not considered skilled. "As to the assistant labourers called unskilled men," the societies demanded,

"there were only to be so many employed as were needed to carry articles from one place to another, and on no account whatever must an unskilled labourer, except for a striker for a smith, be a permanent assistant to one man. No hammer or chisel or other tool was to be handled by an unskilled man, neither could any such person be employed on any machine whatsoever at drilling, turning, sliding, slotting or planing."³⁵

The artisans' demands were presented on April 10th, 1851 and if they were not met, strike action was threatened from April 21st. John Platt, however, agreed to negotiate and the threatened strike was called off. He eventually agreed to three of the A.S.E. demands i.e. restoration of the traditional proportion of apprentices, ending of systematic overtime, and ending of piece work; but refused to dismiss the semi-skilled 'illegal men' operating the new machine tools. In this, Platt was perhaps given confidence through the

intervention of William Newton of the A.S.E. Executive on May 7th, who had made it clear that the latter would not support the Oldham branch in strike action against the employment of these labourers.

Thus a wide gulf was apparent between the London-based A.S.E. executive and the Oldham leaders. The latter were determined to turn back the tide of de-skilling by uncompromising action while the economic circumstances were favourable. One of them, John Simpson, declared that,

"we have everything to gain by this agitation; we have lost so much that we have nothing further to lose; and now that a greater union exists amongst us, now that we can speak as the voice of one man, let us say that we will be free. Look at our late struggles, they have been nothing but petty grievances; but these grievances which at first were nothing but a smouldering heap, had arisen to a gigantic flame, and unless it was speedily extinguished, the prediction would be fulfilled, that mechanics, like labourers, would be compelled to work for 15s. per week."³⁶

The men backed Simpson and by 450 votes to 120 rejected Platt's offer calling for, "nothing but the full demands". The executive was extremely alarmed at this and was itself adamant that,

"the offers of Mr. John Platt ought to be accepted and the Oldham men will not be justified in refusing them; and that Mr. Newton of London and Messrs. Norbury and Hemm of Manchester be deputed to the workmen of Messrs. Hibbert and Platt to prevail on them not to leave their situations, but to accept the proposals of Mr. Platt."³⁷

On the very same day that the A.S.E. leadership met in London, May 13th, Platt was taking his first steps towards a powerful counter-stroke. He attempted to secure the support of 20 Manchester and south Lancashire employers to combat, "interference in the management of their business," through an association.³⁸ Three days later Platt cleverly appeared to concede defeat, and concluded an agreement with the Oldham leaders, the main points of which were as follows:³⁹

1. That in future all planing, shaping and boring machines, at the workshop of the undersigned, be worked either by mechanics or apprentices, to be taken up by them as they become vacant.

2. That the labourers at present employed on those machines be not unduly interfered with until Christmas 1851, when the machines shall fall entirely into the hands of the mechanics; but if any of the labourers are discharged, or the machines otherwise become vacant, the vacancies shall be filled up by the mechanics as they occur.

3. That Michael Bernard have taken from him all authority over the workmen in our employ, and that illegal hands be discharged. We further say that we disapprove of the practices alleged against Bernard and pledge ourselves that they shall not again be repeated.

4. That systematic overtime be abolished, and any claims for exception decided by the district committee.

5. That if the majority of legal shops in the same line of business refuse to concede the above requests at the end of three years from the date of these resolutions the question be again open for discussion.

The agreement appears to be a humiliating defeat for Platt, involving the dismissal of unapprenticed machine men and even granting the local A.S.E. district committee the right to determine what should constitute systematic overtime. It would appear the Oldham A.S.E. had re-asserted and extended artisan control over the labour process. However, three points should be taken into account. Firstly, Platt was desperate to avoid a strike which had been called for May 17th since the firm's two works had vast Russian orders partially completed, and these had to be transported during the Baltic's ice-free shipping season which had just begun, and would end on October 10th. Secondly, a subsequent letter to The Times

revealed that Platt had avoided new and very lucrative contracts and sought to make haste to complete existing commitments in order to,

"prepare ourselves for what we were convinced must ultimately become inevitable, viz: a united resistance by the employers."⁴⁰

Thirdly, even if Platt's plan for a coalition of employers to break the unions failed, the fifth clause of the agreement reserved his right to escape from its strictures should the other employers break ranks to pursue their own selfish interests.

There followed a somewhat uneasy truce which lasted only until mid-July when over 1600 men went on strike claiming that the firm had, "not complied with the foregoing arrangement".⁴¹ The works were both closed and after three days Platt was again forced to give way to the men's demand that Bernard and other piecemasters be dismissed. Again it was significant that the Oldham branch and the A.S.E. Executive Council were strongly at odds over this industrial action; the latter in fact repudiated the Oldham action, censured the local officials and denied benefit to those men who had gone out on strike.⁴²

The renewed outburst of militancy in Oldham was, however, certainly not isolated. At the same time pressure throughout Lancashire was such that the A.S.E. Executive Council was obliged to send out a circular to branches in order to sound out opinion on overtime and piece work; this was followed by branch meetings to discuss the issues. At Heywood, near Oldham, for example, where much of the membership was employed at William Smith's Sun Iron Works, manufacturing textile machines, the branch minute book records that the officials, "summoned a meeting on the 12th of August on the systematic overtime and piece work."⁴³ In Manchester, however, where the rift between the J.S.E.M.M. rump and the A.S.E. had finally healed, the local militancy far outpaced the Executive-

led procedure. The agreement given in John Platt's ostensible capitulation was matched on July 26th at Parr, Curtis and Madeley, the city's largest textile machinery works. Two other major manufacturers of textile machinery: John Hetherington and Company and Crighton and Sons were also involved in these agreements which were to come into operation from November 1st.⁴⁴ The response to the circular was a vote of 5297 to 18 for the abolition of systematic overtime and 5709 to 16 for the abolition of piece work. Meanwhile, as Brentano noted,

"repeated demands now poured in from the branches to the Executive Council to carry out the resolution of the assembly of delegates at Birmingham."⁴⁵

The response to the circular and the repeated successes in Lancashire in 1851 persuaded the A.S.E. Executive to take the vital decision to extend the campaign; indeed as Brentano's comments imply, the pressure was perhaps becoming irresistible. The result was the passing of a resolution on November 20th, 1851 which proclaimed that,

"all engineers, machinists, millwrights, smiths and pattern makers cease to work systematic overtime and piece work after 31st December, 1851."⁴⁶

A circular was then issued to employers which concluded,

"the Executive Council have decided to advise the trade generally to discontinue the practices of systematic overtime and piece work after the 31st of December, 1851, and in those cases where overtime is really necessary, in the cases of breakdowns or other accidents, all time so worked over to be charged and paid for at the rate of double time."⁴⁷

The circular perhaps did more to unite the employers than John Platt's efforts in May. The result was a general meeting of Lancashire employers at Manchester's Clarence Hotel on December 9th. Thirty-four employers agreed upon four resolutions, yet the first of these appears to show that the ostensible reason for their united

response was the need to support Hibbert and Platt over the question of the employment of "illegal men". "This meeting," it declared,

"having heard the statement of Messrs. Hibbert, Platt and Sons, that their workpeople intend to turn out on the 31st of December, unless all the men now working at planing machines, or tools of a similar character, are discharged, and their places supplied by mechanics belonging to a Trades Union, the undersigned have taken this statement into consideration, and pledge themselves should such turn out take place on this plea, either at the works of Messrs. Hibbert, Platt and Sons or at those of any of the undersigned, to close their establishments, and not to re-open them until agreed upon by the vote of a general meeting and then only with workpeople who have no connexion with such Trades Union."⁴⁸

The resolution shows that whilst the employers acknowledged the severity of the threat from the proposed co-ordinated A.S.E. initiative on systematic overtime and piece work, they believed that the "illegal men" issue at Hibbert and Platt was the one most guaranteed to produce strong and united resistance from the widest possible range of employers; additionally it would bring far greater public sympathy for their cause. Thus, it was the local dispute in Oldham (and Manchester) which contributed the fundamental issue of the subsequent wider struggle, and not the actions of the A.S.E. leadership. It was also significant that John Platt and his allies were careful to equate artisan desires to resist de-skilling with the particular designs of the trade unions, and hinted at the influence within the latter of subversive elements.⁴⁹ In fact Platt and other hard-liners among the employers, such as James Nasmyth were quite determined to fight on the 'illegal men' issue to gain sufficient support to enable them to emasculate or destroy the potentially dangerous new A.S.E., which threatened to use its power to consolidate artisan control of the labour process.⁵⁰

The basis of the employers' propaganda counter-offensive was completed by two further steps. First, on December 17th, a letter to The Times newspaper from 'Amicus' was published, which stated

that the replacement of the labourers by union artisans was one of the official policies of the A.S.E.⁵¹ Second, a week later, a communique from John Platt and the Lancashire employers was sent to the London employers which blatantly added,

"the unconditional discharge of all labourers, or such class of persons at present engaged in working planing machines or tools of a similar character, and the employment in their stead of mechanics, members of the union",

to the points of the A.S.E. circular of November, and described the whole document as the demand of, "a body of persons styling themselves the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Millwrights, Mechanics etc."⁵² Attempts by the A.S.E. Executive went in vain to point out in the press that,

"the council of the Amalgamated Society had nothing whatever to do with that dispute (i.e. that at Hibbert and Platt); it did not originate with them. It never received their sanction."⁵³

On December 30th, the alliance of Lancashire and London employers was cemented in the 'Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers'.

Hughes noted the surprise of the A.S.E. at the, "unanimity and vigour", of the employers' response to the proposed industrial action.⁵⁴ This perhaps explains the Executive's eleventh hour attempts to restrain the Oldham men, who were instructed on December 28th, "not to leave their situations if Messrs. Hibbert and Platt refuse to carry out the agreement"; this was followed on December 30th by an offer from the Executive to go to arbitration.⁵⁵

In the period leading up to the lock-out, the role of the A.S.E. Executive has prompted a great deal of subsequent discussion. P. J. Murphy, for example, has argued that both Jefferys, and more recently Burgess, have, not least for ideological reasons, misrepresented this role, notably on the 'illegal men' issue.⁵⁶ Both, he claims, accepted at face value the Executive's disclaimer

that it did not support the Oldham militants on this matter. This, he continues, would emphasise the deception carried out by John Platt and his allies which won over the wavering employers and the bulk of public opinion. Murphy argues that reluctance of the Executive to support Oldham was not a question of principle but, "the argument is one of tactical expedience", and that the employers' fears had a, "substantive foundation".⁵⁷

Murphy quotes a statement from Newton in The Operative on May 17th, 1851, to support his case. Newton argued that,

"when they had settled the question as far as Mr. Platt was concerned, they might extend their influence, under this example, to other manufacturers until the machines become generally in the hands of skilled workmen."⁵⁸

However, as he does acknowledge, Newton had through the columns of The Times, pointed out that in the settlement with Platt, he acted in a private capacity only and had consistently urged the Oldham men to accept Platt's offered compromise to avoid confrontation.⁵⁹

Despite this, Murphy finds Newton's account, "unconvincing," claiming that his divergence from the Oldham men was, "one of timing rather than principle," and that his statement of the 17th of May indicated, "a long term intention to generalise this condition". (i.e. the replacement of the 'illegal men' at Platts).⁶⁰

Yet, if the dimension of the nature of the relationship between the A.S.E. Executive, including Newton, and the union's Lancashire branches is fully explored, especially in terms of the ongoing amalgamation process, the apparently confused picture can be clarified, and the views of Burgess and Murphy reconciled to some degree. The latter is, to an extent correct in seeing expediency in the reluctance of Newton and the A.S.E. leaders to commit themselves to Oldham's "illegal men" fight; the former is correct to see the issue as, "rather an embarrassment," to them.⁶¹

The textile machinery firms of Lancashire such as Hibbert and Platt, Dobson and Metcalf, and Parr, Curtis and Madeley, were far in the vanguard of technological change. Thus it was their artisans and the local officials in Oldham, Bolton and Manchester, who were facing the consequent life and death struggle to preserve artisan control of the labour process and to resist de-skilling. Such pressures were not yet felt in other parts of the north, still less in the more traditional workshops of London where the A.S.E. Executive was then located and from where its members were largely elected. Thus the 'illegal men' issue was to the Oldham men the key issue in their fight with Platt, but to the London-based Executive it was an issue which gave a strong propaganda weapon to the employers and had only limited appeal to their own membership outside the technologically advanced machinery making plants of south Lancashire.

The resentment in areas of south Lancashire at the transfer of power in the new A.S.E. to London, and the continued existence of the J.S.E.M.M. until June, placed the Executive in a precarious position vis-a-vis the powerful Lancashire branches. Its hold in Lancashire was as yet too weak to prevent autonomous action by the artisans of Hibbert and Platt and the other troubled firms, especially in view of commitments given to deal with the 'illegal men' problem at the pre-amalgamation conferences in Warrington and Birmingham, which had tied Lancashire to London. Thus the role of William Newton was so vital. He was seen by the leadership as the best man to try to head off the Oldham militants onto the more limited campaign of overtime and piece work. This he failed to do, so strong was local feeling. Having witnessed the apparent local success over so powerful an opponent as John Platt however, Newton could feel sufficiently confident to endorse, in his personal

capacity, an extension of the fight to adjoining areas such as Manchester, without this becoming part of any official national policy of the A.S.E. as a whole. Thus, when the true extent of the support for Platt was becoming apparent and the primary area of dispute was de facto the 'illegal men' question, the A.S.E. Executive was being perfectly consistent with its decision of May 13th in trying to curb the Oldham men's militancy. Just as in the less significant circumstances of 1867 in Blackburn, 1887 in Bolton, Blackburn again in 1911, and Accrington in 1914, the grass roots activists in textile machine making were able to force the pace of industrial relations, with the A.S.E.'s leadership left vainly striving for moderation in their wake.

III. The Conduct of the Lock-out in Lancashire

Burgess' analysis of firms involved in the lock-out in Lancashire indicates that they were, on the whole, the larger establishments which were pioneering the new capital-intensive systems of production and which, consequently, stood to gain most by ousting the A.S.E. and wresting control of the labour process from the artisans.⁶² He notes that the 1851 census shows 187 employers of machine and steam engine makers in Lancashire; and that of the 240 who replied to a circular requesting a statement of numbers employed, only 55 replied that they employed over 20.⁶³ Yet, of the 36 Lancashire firms listed by the Northern Star as participating in the lock-out, none employed under 50, and the average number of employees per firm was about 290.⁶⁴ If the firms specifically engaged in textile machinery making are selected, the average number of employees is 518 (see Table 3).

Table 3: Textile Machinery Making Firms in Lancashire Involved in the 1852 Lock-Out

<u>Firm</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>
Parr, Curtis & Madeley	Manchester	580
J. Hetherington	Manchester	180
W. & C. Mather	Salford	125
William Higgins	Salford	652
Dobson and Barlow	Bolton	986
Richard Threlfall	Bolton	260
Hibbert and Platt	Oldham	1,636
Lees and Barnes	Oldham	400
John Mason	Rochdale	272
Lord Bros.	Todmorden	90

Source: Northern Star, 17.1.1852

Whilst all the leading textile machinery makers in Manchester, Salford, Bolton and Oldham took part in the lock-out, it should be noted that the newer, smaller and technologically less advanced firms concentrating on loom manufacture (which were largely located in Bury and the towns north of the Rossendale Forest) all remained unaffected. In Blackburn, where there had been industrial strife in the autumn of 1851 at Harrisons, the editor of The Standard could confidently proclaim that, "in our town the hands at the different foundries are fully employed, with no probability of any misunderstanding." He also noted the absence of industrial troubles in Bury and Preston.⁶⁵

In Manchester itself, where the authorities were anxious lest there be an escalation of trouble as there had been a decade earlier, the superintendents of police in four districts reported developments in the lock-out to Captain Willis who represented the

Home Office. Their reports on the firms affected provide additional evidence that it was the predominantly larger establishments which were engaged in the struggle with the A.S.E. They noted 33 'shops' open with 1991 men working, an average of just over 60 employees in each, and 13 closed with 3113 employees locked out, an average of over 239 employees in each.⁶⁶

The lock-out commenced on January 10th, 1852 when Hibbert and Platt's men refused to do overtime. Eventually over 10,000 were involved in Lancashire, over half of whom worked in textile machinery manufacture. Two features of the subsequent four month struggle merit particular attention: the two sides' propaganda campaigns and the attitude of the textile machinery artisans to the dispute.

The Employers' Association had established a fighting fund of ten shillings per employee per member firm; and subsequently engaged the services of Sidney Smith as secretary to co-ordinate their propaganda campaign. In the early stages of the lock-out at least, Smith and the employers won the battle for public opinion with the plea, "May I not do what I will with my own?" which of course centred on the right to place unapprenticed, non-union labour on the new self-acting machine tools.⁶⁷

The employers' organisation also successfully branded the A.S.E. officials, or at least the more militant unionists, as dangerous revolutionaries and identified them with the policies of the French socialist, Louis Blanc. Lord Shaftesbury, for example, praised the employers', "bold and righteous course of resistance to the Louis Blanc conspiracy of the mechanics and engineers."⁶⁸ The communique of December 24th which was probably drafted by John Platt, and which did much to draw in the London employers claimed that the planned lock-out was devised as,

"a purely defensive step against the interference and dictation of a small but mischievous class of agitators, who are endeavouring to force all well-disposed workpeople into open opposition with their employers and advising steps which can only end in misery and ruin to the really honest and industrious artisan."⁶⁹

Further, the original letter of 'Amicus' to The Times which spread confusion as to the professed aims of the A.S.E., asserted with greater irresponsibility that the union aimed eventually at, "the equalisation of wages," and, "a trial of the ingenious doctrines of M. Louis Blanc."⁷⁰

The other notable line of propaganda used by the employers was that the A.S.E. was standing out against progress and the inflexible laws of political economy. The Times was keen to throw its weight behind the employers' side on the matter of the "illegal men". It noted that,

"at the very last meeting of these engineers we find it actually alleged as an injury and grievance, that Messrs. Hibbert and Platt were endeavouring to teach 'labourers' to do machinists' work by a new machine. Why if they and all employers in this and every other trade did not do so, neither our commerce nor our prosperity would be where they are. It is the proper object of every producer to lessen the cost of production and his success becomes the benefit of consumers at large. Every master machinist or millwright has a most undoubted right to both substitute cheap labour for dear or to supersede both by machinery as far as he can. The cry of these intelligent engineers is merely the cry of the handloom weavers - a cry against inevitable and irresistible laws. They cannot possibly gain their ends, because no master by so conducting trade could find the wherewithal to pay them ... If engineering labour is beaten down in the market by the increase in hands, engineers must share the lot of their fellow men."⁷¹

In contrast, the A.S.E. found itself very much on the defensive following John Platt's successful creation of the Employers' Association and its striking of the first blow by locking out employees following the crisis at Hibbert and Platt. Perhaps because of his previous contempt for the artisan societies, the A.S.E. rejected the support of Ernest Jones. Perhaps also, because the Society leaders were striving to display a moderate image, they

were concerned lest, "enemies of the Society might make a handle out of his (i.e. Jones') presence".⁷² In similar vein, the leadership spent the first weeks of the lock-out attempting to dissociate the Society from the Oldham struggle against the employment of 'illegal men'. "Whatever a particular shop or factory chose to do in Oldham, the entire society is not to be compromised by," it was adamantly proclaimed.⁷³

Beyond these essentially negative reactions, little was done beyond attempting to obtain maximum support from organised labour. The Northern Star had pointed out that the A.S.E. had, "about 12,000 members of the best organised, and most intelligent working men of this country in its ranks",⁷⁴ and the Lancashire A.S.E. leaders took up this point in a dire warning to the other trades of what would be their fate should the engineers be vanquished. "If they are not watchful now", the working men of England were warned,

"they will see the customs and privileges connected with their various trades leaving them, and themselves powerless to resist the attack. The success of the Master Engineers will be the signal for a wholesale slaughter on the rights of labour and the pernicious doctrines put forth by those alluded to, will teach them to be passive spectators of the carnage."

The warning concluded that the doctrines of political economy, in particular the free traders' cheap food policy, would herald a systematic assault on wages.⁷⁵

As the dispute ground on, however, the aggression and vigour of the employers' campaign began to cost them sympathy and enabled the A.S.E. to add to the basis of its own moral and practical support. From February 1st, the use of the 'document' was revived, not only against the A.S.E. men but against other trade unionists whose societies had not originally been party to the dispute.⁷⁶ This had been decided upon at a joint meeting of the Lancashire and London employers on January 24th which had produced an eight point secret

memorandum headed, "In Strict Confidence - For Members Only".

However, a copy was obtained by the A.S.E., and its publication proved a notable propaganda coup for the union.⁷⁷

The first article of the memorandum clearly stated the intention of the employers to break union ability to control the labour process; the second and fourth appeared to aim at the complete destruction of trade unionism itself in engineering industrial relations (the fourth article detailed the use of the 'document'). These measures tended to alienate much of the previously sympathetic element. The Blackburn Standard for example, saw the revival of the 'character note' or 'document' as, "an injudicious and moreover an inconsistent step on the part of the Executive Committee of the Association of Employers."⁷⁸ Thomas Hughes noted also that even the men losing heart by the continuation of privations resulting from the lock-out, were provoked into, "a dogged resolution to stand out till the last."⁷⁹ William Marcroft recalled that his Grinders and Glazers Society would have accepted a compromise by giving way to overtime, piece work and would even concede the employer's right to select men for machines. However,

"to sign the declaration document insulted them as free men, which left no alternative but to resist it ... the grinders as a body felt that they were unjustly treated, and to be compelled to sign a document like the declaration was an act of tyranny, which was to be resisted to the uttermost of their power."⁸⁰

The employers' attempt to steamroller resistance brought not just the small Grinders and Glazers Society behind the A.S.E., but the skilled moulders of the F.S.I.M. who, with a national organisation and no threat from new technology to their skills, were able to provide very stiff resistance. The F.S.I.M. itself responded in uncompromising fashion, resolving to expel any member who signed the employers' declaration, and by the end of the dispute only 59 out of 4456 had done so. The cost was the dismissal of 747

F.S.I.M. men by 46 firms, most in Lancashire, but several firms preferred not to press the issue against the moulders.⁸¹

Many labourers and semi-skilled men, as well as non-society artisans also provided strong resistance in Lancashire, but the need of the A.S.E. to sustain them proved a major drain on its finances. At a meeting of the Bolton non-unionist artisans, for example, it was resolved that these men were,

"determined not to resume work on any conditions less than those required by the Amalgamated Society, providing anything like a subsistence can be received from the Fund subscribed for our support."⁸²

By March 1852, the resistance of the unions and the others locked out, was starting to crumble. On March 3rd, A.S.E. lock-out pay had to be cut from 15 to 10 shillings per week and three weeks later the Manchester branches were desperately trying to keep the men solid in the face of employers' claims that the men in London were streaming back to work on their terms.⁸³ Thus on March 30th, the Lancashire branches sought a compromise whereby overtime would be worked, "when necessary", and piece work, "on the mutual principle". This amounted to a retraction of the December 24th circular if the employers would cease to enforce the 'document'.⁸⁴ The latter, however, sensing victory was theirs for the taking, replied that, "the committee cannot enter into any compromise whatsoever. They are strongly opposed to all combinations, whether of masters or workmen," and were resolved to continue the fight until, "the unquestionable right of every employer to make what arrangements and engage what men he pleases, is fully recognised."⁸⁵

Three weeks later over 400 men in Manchester had returned to work, and in Bolton it was observed that not merely non-unionists but men at the very heart of the struggle were giving up, "many of them amalgamators, including a local paymaster and secretary." The

Bolton branch was even obliged to send a deputation to London to request the Executive to seek terms for a return to work.⁶⁶ Defeat was formally acknowledged by the latter on April 29th.

IV. Aftermath and Conclusions

Details of the aftermath of the lock-out should be considered, not least since they throw more light upon the conduct of industrial relations and the apparent lack of class consciousness of the skilled engineering workers in the third quarter of the century. The artisan societies suffered loss of members due to the rigours of the lock-out and the imposition of the 'document', and were financially drained. For the remainder of the decade and beyond, the societies were psychologically incapable of little more than rebuilding their shattered position in the generally favourable economic conditions of that period.

The systematic assault on craft controls at the work place and on the influence there of the unions, was the most immediate consequence of the employers' victory. The severity of the assault, however, varied from firm to firm. James Nasmyth was typical of the uncompromising element on the winning side. In his testimony before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions in 1867, he boasted that following the lock-out he had, "poured a quantity of lads into my place and I soon weeded out the men I did not want and took in able men of all kinds."⁶⁷

Hibbert and Platt took a similar line and ruthlessly used the 'document' to drive out trade unionists and thus facilitate the firm's efforts to break craft controls on the labour process. William Marcroft, for example, refused to sign and was obliged

therefore, to quit his job as a grinder at which he had earned 45 to 50 shillings per week with overtime and piece work bonuses. He was forced to take up work with a small firm of jobbing engineers which provided wages of only 28 shillings a week.⁸⁸

For those men who swallowed their pride and quit their societies to retain their jobs there was also the prospect of severe reductions in wages. The Grinders' Society saw its former members in Manchester suffer reductions from 30 to 32 shillings to between 22 and 26 shillings per week.⁸⁹ The F.S.I.M. which had expelled all signatories of employers' documents, claimed that Hibbert and Platt were taking moulders back only if wage reductions of between three and twelve shillings per week were accepted.⁹⁰

In contrast, however, some firms were simply glad to be able to have checked the growing influence of the artisan societies and so did not enforce the 'document'. A number, such as Elce and Cottam of Manchester were expelled from the Employers' Association for failing to apply the letter of the January Memorandum.⁹¹ Others, including the leading firm of Dobson and Barlow in Bolton, having re-asserted their authority, were persuaded to abandon use of the 'document' over the following months and years.⁹²

In the short term, union membership and finance received a very severe setback. At least one small society, the Rochdale and Oldham based Amalgamated Society of Operative Machinists, was only able to survive by local voluntary donations and the credit of sympathetic shopkeepers.⁹³ Similarly, the Grinders and Glazers Society which had joined the dispute in support of the A.S.E. was abandoned financially by the larger society and was left, in April 1852, with just over £136 to maintain 200 members. Thus, "the Society became completely paralysed and was compelled to lay dormant, being a society only by name."⁹⁴ By 1854, it could muster only 88 members

in five branches and it was not until 1860 that the pre-lock-out membership was restored.⁹⁵

The larger and more formidable F.S.I.M. which had led the opposition to the 'quittance paper' in 1845, was also badly hit because of its uncompromising resistance in 1852. It pledged support to each man who was discharged for refusal to sign the 'document' and consequently paid out £10,000 to this end.⁹⁶ The greatest proportion of this money went in support of the men of its Oldham, Bolton and Manchester branches where the struggle had been hardest.⁹⁷ The skilled moulders were, however, not yet seriously threatened by new technology and through the society's ability to restrict entry to the trade through limitation of apprentices, it was able to stand firm against the 'document'. Such was the scarcity of skilled moulders that most Lancashire employers were obliged to concede defeat. The society's historians note that some firms had given way within a couple of months, fifteen by July 1852 and, "within a year the struggle was all but won."⁹⁸ The significant exception in this successful counter-attack was Oldham where the resolution of Hibbert and Platt's anti-union policy decimated F.S.I.M. membership, which even by 1858 had not recovered to the pre-lock-out strength.⁹⁹

The magnitude of the A.S.E.'s defeat was such that it was obliged to allow its members to sign the 'document' whilst retaining secret membership of the society. J. Swift, an A.S.E. official writing in the 1890's, recalled that he had,

"spoken to men who went through that fight, and who eventually had to sink their independence and sign agreements which they never intended to keep, forced to act a lie through starvation."¹⁰⁰

None the less the A.S.E. had 2,000 members dependent upon its trade protection benefit in May 1852, 820 in June and 511 in July, because

of the refusals to sign the 'document'.¹⁰¹ Its funds had dwindled from £21,705 to £7,103 between December 1851 and December 1852, its membership as a whole from 11,829 to 9,737.¹⁰² The impact of the lock-out and the document on the membership levels of particular branches in Lancashire can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: A.S.E. Membership in Lancashire Branches Affected by the Lock-Out 1851-58

	<u>May</u> <u>1851</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1851</u>	<u>June</u> <u>1852</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1852</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1855</u>	<u>December</u> <u>1858</u>
Bolton*	417	458	443	275	296	380
Oldham*	670	826	775	547	491	633
Rochdale	132	164	141	125	130	184
Salford		178	182	149	190	208
Todmorden		43	40	39	29	37

(* indicates a town with 2 branches)

Source; Derived from A.S.E. Annual Reports

One interesting, if short-lived, result of the A.S.E. defeat was a consolidation of interest in co-operative machinery making workshops. There had been little interest among engineers in Robert Owen's co-operative ventures in the early 1830's, but the ideas had gained ground by the mid-1840's, aided by the impact of economic depression. In 1845 the A.S.E. delegate meeting in Manchester debated a resolution which proposed that the Society's money invested in, "a mechanical establishment, to be erected by the society, so that our unemployed members may have situations provided for them."¹⁰³ Despite support from the Bolton, Preston and Burnley delegates the motion was decisively rejected.

In the following year, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's socialist-mutualist ideas were published in the, Systeme des Contradictions Economiques ou Philosophie de la Misere. On translation, this was

published in sections by the Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress during the autumn and winter of 1850.¹⁰⁴ Previously, the same journal, which was Manchester-based and was closely linked with the J.S.E.M.M. Executive, had published Proudhon's plans for a People's Bank which he had vainly tried to establish after the revolution in France in 1848.¹⁰⁵ Jefferys notes that these ideas got strong support in Bury where an iron trades committee established the Bury Labour Redemption Society in 1850, which took subscriptions of a penny per week per member with a long-term aim of buying, "all the property in the kingdom", which was to be re-organised on a co-operative basis. Subsequently, the Bury engineers and moulders vigorously supported plans for a co-operative foundry and iron works.¹⁰⁶

Following the amalgamation of 1851, the idea of co-operative workshops was given further support, notably by William Newton, either at mass meetings or through the columns of The Operative. The lock-out stimulated more serious consideration of these ideas. In January 1852, Newton toured the Lancashire engineering towns advocating co-operative production of textile machinery. He envisaged a network of co-operatives; each workshop and foundry was to employ about 1500 men; 500 working in each of three eight hour shifts to produce machinery, "of a similar nature to that done by Messrs. Hibbert and Platt."¹⁰⁷ Many of the Lancashire engineers saw the co-operatives not merely as isolated islands in a sea of capitalism but as a basis of an egalitarian society. At a mass meeting of 1700 Bolton men in February 1852, a speaker supporting Newton argued for the establishment of a system of co-operative manufacture which would, "do away with the medium of the employers."¹⁰⁸

The Bolton speaker's solution to the problem of defeating the lock-out was the creation of a, "combination of all the trades". This is but one of several indications that the conduct of the lock-out was not merely the sectional defence of labour aristocratic status but contained the seeds of a much wider class consciousness; just as had been amply demonstrated in the summer of 1842. The engineers were strongly supported, not just by the allied trades: the grinders and iron moulders, but by the fine spinners, the carpenters and joiners, wire drawers and other trades.¹⁰⁹ The engineers in 1852, as in 1842, should be seen not as aloof aristocrats of labour, but by virtue of their relatively strong economic position, literacy and education and the strength of their union, as leaders of the struggle with capital. This is clearly demonstrated by The Operative which was a semi-official A.S.E. journal. It proclaimed that,

"Labour ... is the creative parent of all property, of all riches and grandeur of the earth. The rights of labour have an origin prior to any other consideration; it has an incontestible, sacred and paramount claim, which supersedes every other demand."¹¹⁰

Another edition's editorial unequivocally proclaimed the class nature of the deepening struggle with the engineering employers.

"Capital, in a proper state of society, would be the handmaid of labour, its representative, and servant - whilst now, capital is labour's master, its tyrant, its oppressor - of that which is produced, it absorbs the greatest share and leaves labour unprotected and degraded. It is against such a system that the operatives of this nation are struggling and to perpetuate such a system the manufacturing classes are labouring."¹¹¹

The A.S.E. flirtation with co-operative workshops was all but over by 1854, but there remained one very notable exception. In April 1852, faced with the success of the lock-out and Hibbert and Platt's rigorous application of the 'document', 23 of that firm's skilled men founded a co-operative textile machinery making works in Stalybridge. The town's historian notes that the works,

significantly known locally as, 'the Amalgamated Shop', was the, "spontaneous outcome of the community of interests and determined self-reliance."¹² It operated upon co-operative principles until at least 1859, producing carding machinery and scutchers, when upon re-organisation its capital was assessed at £30,000. Having started with only £600, the Stalybridge artisans had certainly demonstrated the viability of co-operative ideas, which in terms of a highly capitalised industry such as machine manufacture, had been viewed by most critics as wholly naive and utopian."¹³

In terms of the A.S.E. as a whole, the period following the lock-out was one of industrial peace; the rebuilding of finances and membership and the attempted centralisation of power upon the Executive Council. Certainly the defeat of 1852 deterred further confrontation with the employers until the mid-1860's, yet the overall passivity of the union's central organisation has too readily been accepted as sufficient justification for branding the engineering artisans as a whole, as elitist and class collaborationist 'aristocrats of labour'. William Allan's conciliatory tones in his testimony before the Royal Commission have contributed to this acceptance, though Clements has criticised any superficial equation of such moderation with the union leaders' acceptance of the principles of bourgeois Political Economy."¹⁴

The A.S.E. leadership did make sustained attempts to limit local autonomy. In the immediate aftermath of defeat, a delegate conference established district committees to co-ordinate branch activities in areas such as Lancashire where a number of branches existed in close proximity. These were to be, "subject to the approval of the Executive Council", and the latter vetoed their rights to make policy, "where the rules are silent."¹⁵ In 1855, the Executive created a 'contingency fund' to support members who

lost jobs because of industrial action.''¹⁶ This would be assistance in addition to the 'out of work allowance' payable from the branch, and could be disbursed at the Executive's discretion in specified disputes arising from wage reductions, piece work, introduction of unapprenticed labour, etc. It was a bold attempt to wrest control over local industrial relations from the branches, but evidence suggests that at least by the time of Allan's testimony before the Royal Commission in 1867, branch autonomy in the conduct of trade policy was only minimally reduced.''¹⁷

In the period 1852-1880 the pace of technological change in textile machinery making was generally matched by an expansion in the demand for skilled labour which created an equilibrium which was conducive to a degree of harmony in industrial relations. However, the flare-up of 1865-67 in Bolton and Blackburn indicates that the artisans were prepared to react strongly, without the approval of the executives of their societies, if necessary, in order to confront further challenges to their control of the labour process. Evidence from the period 1852-65 is extremely thin but extracts from the minutes of the small Heywood branch, from 1859, show that for all the formal moderation of the A.S.E. leadership and their attempts to restrict branch autonomy, the localised defence of craft controls proceeded very much as before 1852.

In June 1859 it was noted that,

"with respect to the introduction of labourers on boring lathes, as being a preparatory step to the introduction of them into the trade, we being of the opinion that it is highly necessary steps should be taken to prevent such an infringement on the interest of our trade."

Should an employer reject the artisan's appeals, "we recommend the branch to give him such support as his case demands," and, "we recommend our members to shun these individuals and discountenance all jesting and familiarity with them."'¹⁸

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Thomas Hughes, 'Account of the Lock-Out of Engineers 1851-52', in Trades Societies and Strikes, Report of the Committee on Trades Societies of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, London 1860, p.170.
- 2 The Times, 12.1.1852.
- 3 Northern Star, 17.1.52.
- 4 R. Kirk, op. cit., pp.154-5 argues that this remarkable growth rate could be exaggerated with the 1846 figure a serious underestimate.
- 5 K. Burgess, 'Technological Change and the 1852 Lock-Out in the British Engineering Industry', International Review of Social History, XIV, 1969, pp.228-29. See also Masmyth Collection, Order Books 1836-59.
- 6 Jefferys, op. cit., p.23.
- 7 J. Binns, Systematic Overtime Working and its Consequences, Moral, Physical, Mental and Social, Manchester 1846.
- 8 Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress, 20.7.1850 and 27.7.1850.
- 9 MSS 41/FSIF/4/55 Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Practicability of the Members of the Iron Moulders Society Becoming Members of the Amalgamated Society, Manchester Branch, 19.11.1851.
- 10 See Part IV for the problems of piecemasters and attacks on artisan traditions at Hibbert and Platt.
- 11 A.S.E., 1851 Rulebook Preface, quoted by Jefferys, Labour's Formative Years, London 1948, pp.29-30.
- 12 See P. J. Murphy, 'The Origins of the 1852 Lock-Out in the British Engineering Industry Reconsidered', International Review of Social History, XXIII 1978 *passim*.
- 13 The Operative, 8.3.1851.
- 14 S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.195. Selsby had succeeded Robinson in late 1845 as J.S.E.M.M. Secretary. The dispute was a major cause of the bankruptcy of Jones and Potts which occurred soon after its settlement.
- 15 John Mason and Company Archive, L29 Box 1. The correspondence of John Mason and his cousin James Davenport is extremely difficult to decipher, but letters from June and July indicate serious labour problems at the firm's Globe Works. Letters dated July 11th and 17th 1846, indicate that Mason was keen to take on the union leaders, particularly on the question of piece work, and saw the worsening economic conditions as the means to bring this about in favourable circumstances.
- 16 Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress, 19.10.1850.

- 17 *ibid.* 12.10.1850.
- 18 United Order of Smiths, 1853 Rulebook, Preamble.
- 19 In 1845, for example the J.S.E.M.M. Executive comprised 11 Manchester members and 11 from surrounding south-east Lancashire towns. In 1848 its 22 men E.C. included 8 Manchester men and a further one from Salford.
- 20 Trades Advocate, 2.11.1850.
- 21 L. Brentano, 'The Growth of a Trades Union', North British Review LIII, 1870 p.88
- 22 A.S.E., Monthly Report, February 1851, records the J.S.E.M.M. complaints of A.S.E. attempts to poach members.
- 23 A.S.E., Jubilee Souvenir, p.38.
- 24 Burgess and Jefferys both maintain that the Oldham stance against Platt's employment of 'illegal men' was repudiated by the A.S.E. leadership. Murphy, however, argues that the role of the leadership was one of acquiescence in following Oldham, and that the former was afraid of taking a public stance on the issue. See Murphy, *op. cit.*, especially pp.243-244 and 260-262 for a summary of the interpretations of the events in Oldham which led up to the lock-out. It is significant that in the case of the Manchester agreements negotiated by Hemm and Norbury, the A.S.E. Executive used the technicality of the officials being members of the J.S.E.M.M. until June 28th (i.e. 2 days after the agreement) to distance itself from the uncompromising Lancashire opposition to 'illegal men'.
- 25 The Operative, 7.6.1851.
- 26 *ibid.* 28.6.1851.
- 27 K. Burgess, 'Trade Union Policy and the 1852 Lock-Out in the British Engineering Industry', International Review of Social History XVII, 1972, pp.647-8.
- 28 The Operative, 20.9.1851.
- 29 Royal Commission on Trade Unions, First Report, Parliamentary Papers, 1867, vol. XXXII cd. 3873, p.33. By 1867 there was still no piece work in Blackburn textile machinery making.
- 30 The Operative, 18.10.1851. Significantly, however, the firm of Harrisons, like other north Lancashire loom manufacturers, was technologically conservative, and in the paternalistic tradition of such smaller firms, the conflict was soon forgotten, and in January 1852, when the lock-out was affecting south Lancashire, Harrison's 200 workers were provided with a "substantial dinner" and entertained by the works brass band, to mark the entry of Joseph Harrison's second son into the firm. Blackburn Standard, 14.1.1852.
- 31 E. Butterworth, *op. cit.*, p.185-6 and Northern Star, 17.1.1852.

- 32 See Part III of Chapter Four.
- 33 See Part III of Chapter Four for further details of this issue.
- 34 Marcroft, op. cit., p.33.
- 35 ibid. p.38.
- 36 The Operative, 17.5.1851.
- 37 Hughes, op. cit., p.176.
- 38 The Operative, 24.5.1851. Jefferys, op. cit., p.36 argues that competitive rivalry prevented the completion of anything more than a verbal agreement.
- 39 A.S.E., Jubilee Souvenir, p.35. Michael Bernard noted in clause 3 was an unpopular piecemaster. There was an additional clause 6 which allowed for apprenticed joiners to serve in the machine shop as "veneers".
- 40 The Times, 1.1.1852. Platts Order Book, DDPSL 1/2/25, confirms that the firm did cut its commitments to a minimum before and during the lock-out period.
- 41 ibid.
- 42 Brentano, op. cit., p.91.
- 43 Heywood A.S.E., Branch Minute Book No. 1, 26.7.1851.
- 44 Northern Star, 20.12.1851 and A.S.E., Jubilee Souvenir, p.36.
- 45 Brentano, op. cit., p.92. The Birmingham delegate meeting was held in July 1850 to continue discussions begun in Varrington to lay the foundations of the proposed new amalgamated society. The Birmingham delegates had pledged the new society to end piece work and systematic overtime.
- 46 Jefferys, op. cit., p.36.
- 47 Hughes, op. cit., p.177.
- 48 ibid. The other resolutions established a fighting fund of 10 shillings per firm's employee, accepted the appointment of a secretary to receive reports from employers, "aggrieved by any encroachments of his workpeople", and bound the firms to notify the secretary of their workforce size and thus the scale of their contribution to the fund.
- 49 See Part III of this Chapter.
- 50 Masmyth's Autobiography pp.310-11 records the 'illegal men' issue as the sole cause of the dispute. During the lock-out Masmyth's Bridgewater Works became a wholly non-union shop.
- 51 Hughes, op. cit., p.177.
- 52 ibid. p.178.

- 53 The Times, 29.12.1851.
- 54 Hughes, op. cit., p.181.
- 55 Jefferys, op. cit., p.38.
- 56 Murphy, op. cit., pp.243-245 and 258 ff.
- 57 ibid. pp.262 and 257.
- 58 Murphy, op. cit., p.261.
- 59 The Times, 30.12.1851.
- 60 Murphy, op. cit., p.261. He does, however, somewhat misleadingly relate the Newton statement in the Operative of May 17th, directly to the official A.S.E. stance following the Executive meeting of May 13th and the agreement with Platt on the 16th. It does, however, more properly relate to Newton's still unofficial involvement of May 7th. Copy deadlines prevented coverage of the events of May 13th to 16th until the Operative's subsequent issue: May 24th. The statement of the 17th could be Newton's personal acknowledgement of the possible local extension of the then successful campaign in Oldham for control of the labour process, rather than any statement of A.S.E. intentions in general.
- 61 Burgess, 'Trade Union Policy and the 1852 Lock-Out', p.655.
- 62 Burgess, 'Technological Change and the 1852 Lock-Out', p.231 ff.
- 63 ibid. pp.234-5.
- 64 ibid. p.234.
- 65 Blackburn Standard, 21.1.1852.
- 66 Bolton Chronicle, 24.1.1852.
- 67 The employers' case was in fact publicised in a pamphlet written by E. Vansittart Neale entitled, 'May I not do what I will with my own?'
- 68 Jefferys, op. cit., p.38
- 69 Northern Star, 27.12.1851.
- 70 The Times, 17.12.1851. This ludicrous claim was probably a misunderstanding of the A.S.E.'s policy of advancing the wages of the lower-paid Lancashire districts up to the higher levels of Manchester. Louis Blanc was a French socialist who as a member of the republican government following the downfall of Louis Philippe in 1848, had vainly tried to establish Ateliers (National Workshops) to provide work for the Paris unemployed. His original schemes were watered down to the provision of minor public works and a dole.
- 71 ibid. 12.1.1852.
- 72 Jefferys, op. cit., p.38.

- 73 Northern Star, 10.1.1852.
- 74 ibid.
- 75 ibid.
- 76 Hughes, op. cit., p.185.
- 77 The complete text of the memorandum is located in Appendix C
- 78 Blackburn Standard, 4.2.1852.
- 79 Hughes, op. cit., p.185.
- 80 Marcroft, op. cit., pp.40-42 and 48.
- 81 MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/7, Circular of F.S.I.M. Executive to Branches 14.5.1852. The Society claimed that firms in Bolton, Manchester and Stockport had, when faced with the moulders' opposition, "laid aside the Document".
- 82 Bolton Chronicle, 24.1.1852. Hughes, op. cit., p.182, notes that in London there were 1,000 non-union artisans and 10,000 other men locked out who were aided by donations amounting to £8,000, some from the A.S.E. but most from private subscription.
- 83 ibid. 27.3.1852.
- 84 ibid. 3.4.1852
- 85 ibid.
- 86 ibid. 24.4.1852.
- 87 Royal Commission on the Trade Unions 1867-9, Fifth Report, Parliamentary Papers 1867, XXXIX, cd.3980 p.71.
- 88 Marcroft, op. cit., p.48
- 89 Amalgamated Machine, Engine and Iron Grinders and Glazers Society, Annual Report, 1893-4.
- 90 MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/7.
- 91 A.S.E., Jubilee Souvenir, p.41.
- 92 It had, at least fallen into disuse by 1866, ZDB 2/14 and 2/22.
- 93 Bolton Chronicle, 24.1.1852. Ironically the members of this society, semi-skilled machine men, had most to gain from the employers' success in breaking artisan controls.
- 94 Grinders and Glazers Society, Annual Report, 1893-94.
- 95 ibid.
- 96 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.47.
- 97 MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/7.

- 98 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.47
- 99 MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, F.S.I.M. Half Yearly and Monthly Reports, Membership fell from 292 in 1851 to 83 in 1854 and by 1858 was 272. In contrast, Bolton membership was 187 in 1851, 198 in 1854 and 308 in 1858.
- 100 J. Swift, 'Engineering', in F. W. Galton (ed.), Workers on their Industries, London 1896, p.109.
- 101 A.S.E., Jubilee Souvenir, p.41.
- 102 Jefferys, op. cit., p.291.
- 103 Minutes of 1845 A.S.E. Delegate Meeting, p.11.
- 104 Edition No. 15, 5.10.1850 contains the first section of Proudhon's 'Philosophy of Poverty'.
- 105 Trades Advocate and Herald of Progress, 20.7.1850.
- 106 Jefferys, op. cit., p.33.
- 107 Bolton Chronicle, 24.1.1852.
- 108 ibid. 14.2.1852.
- 109 Jefferys, op. cit., p.39 and Bolton Chronicle, 24.1.1852.
- 110 The Operative, 28.2.1852.
- 111 ibid. 26.4.1852.
- 112 S. Hill, Bygone Stalybridge, Stalybridge 1907, pp.296-297.
- 113 In 1859 seven of the co-operators withdrew and eventually the firm took the name of two of the original partners, Taylor Lang, after its original book keeper/patternmaker, James Taylor and one of its fitters, John Lang.
- 114 R. V. Clements, 'British Trade Unions and Popular Political Economy' Economic History Review, Vol.XXIII, 1961, *passim*.
- 115 Minutes of A.S.E. First Delegate Meeting, May-June 1852 pp.38-39.
- 116 K. Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations, p.37.
- 117 See Chapter Four, Conclusion.
- 118 Heywood A.S.E., Branch Committee Minutes, 10.6.1859.

Chapter Four

The Textile Machinery Artisans: A Case Study of the Labour

Aristocracy Debate

I. Introduction

The relative passivity of the English working class in the third quarter of the nineteenth century has frequently been contrasted both with the turbulence of the previous thirty-five years, associated with Peterloo, General Unionism and Chartism, and the consolidation of independent labour politics and socialist-inspired trade unionism in the century's last quarter. The Webbs observed a 'turning point' in the trade union movement around the mid-century, 'associated with the emergence of the A.S.E., the first and strongest of what they termed the "new model" unions. They contrasted the, "generous but impracticable universalism of the Owenite and Chartist organisations", with the A.S.E.'s, "principle of the protection of the vested interests of the craftsman in his occupation," and its emphasis on the consolidation of its, "admirably thought-out financial and administrative system."² From a somewhat different standpoint, Engels lamented the apparent embourgeoisement of the better-off elements of the working class; the defection of these 'labour-aristocrats' being a primary explanation of the growing docility of the working class as a whole following the demise of Chartism.³

In recent years the concept of the labour aristocracy, and the rather wider subject of the subordination of the working class within the capitalist mechanism, has attracted a great deal of attention from historians. Indeed a debate has developed over the last thirty years or so which has proved more intense than just about any other in the field of labour and social history, with the

possible exception of that regarding working class living standards in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Henry Pelling, for example, has claimed that the concept of the labour aristocracy has contributed, "more harm than good to historical truth", though interestingly for this study, he adds that, "militancy was much more likely to be found among the better off than among the poorer workers."⁴ A. E. Musson, in a very detailed critique, has claimed that,

"there was not a sustained, united, class conscious mass movement in the 1830's and 40's, and a new labour aristocracy was not suddenly created at mid century."

He goes on to argue that,

"wherever one looks, in fact, one finds strands of continuity, in complicated and often conflicting tendencies: sectionalism and trades combination, class consciousness and class collaboration, industrial policies and politics."⁵

Among a host of other critics, perhaps one of the most convincing has been Patrick Joyce who, whilst rejecting a 'labour aristocracy' based explanation of working class quiescence in the twenty or thirty years after 1850, poses an alternative answer in the, "culture of subordination", brought about in Lancashire through the massive effects of the factory regime on the workforce and the resultant growth of deference to a strong employer paternalism.⁶ More recently still Neville Kirk, like Joyce has accepted a certain discontinuity at the mid-century but has claimed,

"the growth of reformism in the cotton districts was not to be attributed to the emergence of a labour aristocracy."

Kirk's explanation of the reformism lies in a complex formula centred on,

"the emergence of a restabilised and dynamic capitalism - which greatly enhanced the scope for class manoeuvre, for concessions, and initiatives towards labour 'from above', and the advancement of sections of the working class within the system."⁷

Eric Hobsbawm has remained a most steadfast supporter of the aristocracy of labour concept, which he has based primarily on economic criteria.⁹ This approach is to some extent balanced and complemented by the localised studies of Robert Gray and Geoffrey Crossick who maintain that the existence of a kind of labour aristocratic separatism in the working class, was closely related not merely to work, but to cultural and institutional factors.⁹ The least compromising defence of the concept has been provided by John Foster whose Marxist-Leninist analysis has provoked a flood of critical responses. Foster's work is particularly significant for this study since his central argument hinges to a great extent on the supposed turn to class collaboration of the Oldham textile machinery making artisans.¹⁰

A possible weakness in both the Gray and Crossick studies is that they are both confined to the capital cities of Scotland and England respectively, where pre-industrial crafts remained more entrenched, and industry itself was quite heavily geared to the luxury needs of the wealthy consumer. The Lancashire textile machinery making artisans were at the very heart of the industrial revolution and the subsequent Victorian boom. As a factory-based artisanate, this group was literally the labour force of the 'workshop of the world', and its experience of the third quarter of the nineteenth century provides an ideal case study with which to consider the labour aristocracy concept, and also Patrick Joyce's counter-theory of accommodation through the influence of factory culture and paternalism.

Hobsbawm's pioneering 1954 article, which really began the recent debate, is perhaps the most appropriate starting point for this case study. He selected the 1840's to the 1890's as the, "classical period of the nineteenth century labour aristocracy", and

his six criteria for inclusion in a notional labour aristocracy were:

1. The level and regularity of a worker's earnings.
2. His prospects of social security.
3. His conditions of work, including the way he was treated by foremen and masters.
4. His relations with social strata above and below him.
5. His general condition of living.
6. His prospects of future advancement and those of his children.¹¹

More recently, Breuilly has argued that there are three emphases in the use of the labour aristocracy concept: work, community, and organisations, though after due consideration, he dismisses the third as appearing to possess little value.¹² Taking these means of assessment into account, along with the contributions made by Crossick, Gray, Joyce, Foster and others to the debate, the case study of the textile machinery making artisans can be best approached using just two broad themes: work and community, which none the less overlap at several points, notably on the issues of deference and the prospects of social mobility. In his recent work on the labour market in the period 1870-1914, Gregory Anderson uses broadly similar means. "In any assessment of the skilled worker, two lines of inquiry have to be distinguished, one which examines relative movements in measurable criteria such as earnings and a second which is concerned with changes in status and class position."¹³

The two broad themes may be subdivided into more specific criteria in order to facilitate closer examination of the subject. Thus, the theme of 'work' may be divided into the sub-themes of:

A) Artisan and Non-Artisan incomes; B) Unemployment and Welfare Provision; C) The Labour Process, Workplace Health and Safety and Paternalism. That of 'community' may be divided into the sub-themes

of: D) Residence and Community Relations; E) Lifestyle and Conditions of Living; F) Prospects of Upward Social Mobility.

II. Work

A. Artisan and Non-Artisan Incomes

Hobsbawm has maintained that the labour aristocracy formed between ten and fifteen per cent of the working class, using Dudley Baxter's 1867 estimate of 11% earning 28 shillings per week or more, or 15% if the agricultural labourers and female domestic servants were excluded. He also points to the existence of a 'super aristocracy', who according to Leone Levi's survey of 1865, earned 40 shillings or more.¹⁴

Basic wage rates are patently unreliable as an accurate guide to actual pay; on the one hand they ignore the gains in periods of boom from overtime working, and they fail to take account of the wage enhancement of piece work bonuses.¹⁵ On the other hand, they fail to acknowledge losses due to short-time working or periodic unemployment, or losses due to factors peculiar to particular trades.¹⁶ However, wage rates do provide a fairly useful picture of differentials within a firm, an industry or a district, and it should be remembered that wage rates were regarded as vitally important by the workmen themselves, as status factors, and as criteria for determining eligibility for membership of the branches of some craft societies.¹⁷

If the 28 shilling rate is taken as the standard of labour aristocratic status, then the textile machinery making artisans were, at best, marginal candidates for inclusion as Table 1 indicates. There were virtually no candidates for the 'super

aristocracy' category before 1910 in the industry as Appendix H indicates; the exceptions being largely moulders and patternmakers in the leading Manchester and south-east Lancashire firms. The few who commanded such rates before 1880 were the partners, in the small firms doing jobbing or loom making work, who retained their foundry or machine shop trades, or the senior foremen of the large, technologically advanced firms.¹⁸

Table 1: Wage Rates of Textile Machinery Artisans, in Oldham and Bury, 1838-1889

Trade	<u>1838/41</u> <u>Platts</u> <u>(Oldham)</u>	<u>1855/8</u> <u>Halls</u> <u>(Bury)</u>	<u>1872/5</u> <u>Halls</u> <u>(Bury)</u>	<u>1889</u> <u>Halls</u> <u>(Bury)</u>
Moulder	28/- to 32/-	32/- to 34/-	34/-	34/-
Patternmaker	N/A	N/A	30/-	32/-
Smith	26/- to 30/-	24/- to 28/-	26/- to 29/-	30/-
Fitter	27/- to 30/-	23/- to 26/-	28/- to 30/-	25/- to 30/-
Turner	26/- to 30/-	23/- to 26/-	26/- to 28/-	26/- to 30/-
Joiner	28/- to 30/-	26/- to 28/-	27/- to 29/-	25/- to 30/-
Grinder	26/-	24/-	30/- to 32/-	32/-

Sources: DDPSL 1/110/1 Platts East Works Wages Book and DDHL 37/11/10, DDHL 37/5/3, DDHL 3742 Halls Wages Books and Staff Analysis Book.

If wage rates alone are thus considered, only the skilled moulders appear anything more than marginal candidates for inclusion as labour aristocrats before 1889, on the basis of Dudley Baxter's criterion of 28 shillings.¹⁹ Analysis of earnings is required to throw more light on the economic position of these artisans. However, the differentials between these men and their less skilled colleagues can be usefully demonstrated by a brief outline of the latter's basic rates of pay, listed in Table 2.

The wage rates demonstrate, at least superficially, the existence of a sufficiently great differential to lend support to Hobsbawm's basic argument; indeed Table 2 shows that many of the industry's less skilled workers were firmly placed in Dudley Baxter's lowest wage category, i.e. under 20 shillings per week, which he estimated embraced 40% of the working class.²⁰ The nature of the relationship between these economically contrasting groups in terms of work and social behaviour will be an additional indicator of the potential existence of a labour aristocracy in the textile machinery industry.

Table 2: Wage Rates of Non-Artisans in Textile Machinery Making in Oldham and Bury, 1838-1889

<u>Trade</u>	<u>1838/41</u> <u>(Platts)</u>	<u>1855/8</u> <u>(Halls)</u>	<u>1872/5</u> <u>(Halls)</u>	<u>1889</u> <u>(Halls)</u>
Coremaker	15/-	N/A	N/A	17/- to 20/-
Smith's Striker	15/- to 17/-	N/A	16/- to 17/-	18/-
Metal Dresser	15/- to 19/-	14/- to 19/-	20/- to 22/-	20/- to 22/-
Labourer	15/- to 19/-	14/- to 17/-	16/- to 18/-	16/- to 18/-
Driller	N/A	N/A	17/- to 19/-	18/- to 19/-

Sources: As Table 1

Due to the survival of detailed wage data from three Lancashire firms Platts, Halls and Butterworth and Dickinsons which cover the periods 1838-41, 1851-1914, and 1904-8 respectively, a good estimate of artisan and non-artisan earnings can be made. This will provide a more satisfactory standard of judgement of the economic basis of the labour aristocracy concept, which as Hobsbawm originally pointed out, rested primarily on the strength of the first of his six criteria.²¹ However, even a detailed study of earnings has its limitations, as a standard of assessment of economic well-being. The situation in Lancashire was complicated by the fact that large numbers of wives and daughters of engineering workers, were employed

in spinning and weaving. On the purely economic side of the balance, this would boost the position of the engineering artisan, yet socially a working wife could be a negative factor in a community's assessment of status and respectability. Further, as Roberts has argued, in many Lancashire towns the existence of so many working females was used as a powerful argument by employers to keep adult male wages down.²²

The earnings data was selected by taking a sample of moulders, machinshop artisans and labourers at Platts for each of the years 1839, 1840 and 1841. Similar samples were taken from Halls' wages books for the years 1853, 1855/6, 1863 and 1872 and a further sample was taken from Butterworth and Dickinson's wages book for the years 1904/5 and 1907/8.²³

Table 3a: Weekly Earnings of Moulders, Machine Shop Artisans and Labourers at Platts of Oldham, 1839-41²⁴

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Basic Wage Rate</u>	<u>Range of Average Earnings</u>		
		<u>Sample's Highest Earner</u>	<u>Sample's Lowest Earner</u>	<u>Sample Mean</u>
<u>1839</u>				
Moulder	32/-	28/5½	27/8	28/2
Machine Shop Artisan	28/- to 30/-	28/11	26/6	27/8
Labourer	15/- to 19/-	17/9	12/6	15/5
<u>1840</u>				
Moulder	32/-	32/7	29/9	31/-
Machine Shop Artisan	28/- to 30/-	31/8	24/10	27/4
Labourer	15/- to 19/-	18/-	13/6	15/10
<u>1841</u>				
Moulder	32/-	33/9	28/1	31/-
Machine Shop Artisan	28/- to 30/-	32/4	25/8	29/6
Labourer	15/- to 19/-	18/11	12/-	16/-

Source: DDPSL 1/110/1, Platts East Works Wages Book

Table 3b: Weekly Earnings of Moulders, Machine Shop Artisans and Labourers at Halls of Bury, 1853-72²⁵

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Basic Wage Rate</u>	<u>Range of Average Earnings</u>		
		<u>Sample's Highest Earner</u>	<u>Sample's Lowest Earner</u>	<u>Sample Mean</u>
<u>1853</u>				
Moulder	32/-	32/10	30/3	31/9
Fitter/Turner	24/- to 26/-	28/3	23/10	26/3
<u>1855/6</u>				
Moulder	34/-	32/4	27/-	31/-
Machine Shop Artisan	24/- to 28/-	25/10	22/8	23/10
Labourer	14/-	15/8	14/2	15/2
<u>1863</u>				
Moulder	34/-	30/5	27/3	28/6
Machine Shop Artisan	16/- to 28/-	26/9	22/2	25/-
Labourer	15/- to 17/-	17/7	14/10	15/10
<u>1872</u>				
Moulder	34/-	32/10	28/6	31/6
Machine Shop Artisan	26/- to 28/-	30/5	21/6	25/3
Labourer	15/- to 17/-	17/1	15/3	16/6

Source: Halls Wages Books, DDHL 37/11/3, 37/11/10, 37/12/4 and 37/5/3

Table 3c: Weekly Earnings of Artisans and Labourers at Butterworth and Dickinson of Burnley 1904-1908 (54 hour week)²⁶

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Basic Wage Rate</u>	<u>Range of Average Earnings</u>		
		<u>Sample's Highest Earner</u>	<u>Sample's Lowest Earner</u>	<u>Sample Mean</u>
<u>1904/5</u>				
Moulder	35/-	40/4	37/8	38/9
Machine shop Artisan	33/-	38/1	32/-	36/4
Labourer	17/- to 19/-	21/9	19/2	20/4
<u>1907/8</u>				
Machine Shop Artisan	35/-	39/2	34/6	36/6
Labourers	18/6	20/9	18/2	20/-

Source: Butterworth and Dickinson Wages Book, 1904-8

The earnings samples covering the period 1839 to 1872 thus tend to confirm the status of textile machinery making artisans as little more than marginal labour aristocrats. Throughout the period, average weekly earnings tended to fall below the basic weekly wage rate, because of short-time working, short-term unemployment, sickness or other enforced absence from work. The shortfall is most noticeable in lean years such as 1839, 1855/6 and 1863 and is not compensated for in the better years such as 1840, 1841, 1853 and 1872. Only in the Lancashire mill-building and export boom period of the Edwardian era, did full employment and overtime earnings enable the industry's skilled workers to maximise their weekly earnings to exceed the basic weekly wage rate.²⁷

The samples do, however, demonstrate the massive economic divide between the artisan and the labourer or semi-skilled worker. The economic basis for a labour aristocracy is, in comparative terms within the textile machinery industry, quite clearly demonstrated,

and is almost as clear cut as the economic divide in the cotton industry between the 'aristocratic' spinners and the piecers.²⁶ In the wider context, the textile machinery artisans were marginal aristocrats, and this marginality was underlined by the constant threat of technological change undermining their skills, and by the threats of unemployment in the periodic economic depressions.

B. Unemployment and Welfare Provision

Hobsbawm's first criterion stresses the regularity as well as the level of earnings and whilst the samples in Table 3 provide for short-term unemployment, they cannot embrace those men forced to move to other firms or towns to find work. Most secondary works referring to textile engineering in Lancashire, tend to give misleading impressions of almost continuous rapid expansion of firms like Platts, Dobson and Barlow, Howard and Bullough, etc., but the wage books indicate that in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, like the second, the lives of skilled and unskilled alike were blighted by the unemployment resulting from the firms' erratic patterns of growth. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the employment of foundry workers, as Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 indicate.

Table 4 shows the impact of the depression of 1839 which cut foundry jobs almost by half as the lack of new machinery orders first dried up the need for new castings; subsequently (and less drastically), the lack of work hit the machine shop trades: smiths, turners, grinders, joiners and fitters etc. Table 5 shows the employment fluctuations in the foundry of Robert Halls. The impact of the depression of 1847-48 which ushered in the last 'peak' of Chartism is clearly demonstrated, but the impacts of subsequent depressions: 1855, 1858 and 1863 are almost equally marked, and

Table 4: Foundry and Machine Shop Employment Fluctuations at Platts East Works 1838-41

<u>Date</u>	<u>Foundry</u> (all grades)	<u>Machine Shops</u> (all grades)	<u>Total</u> <u>Employed</u>
November 1838	25	130	155
February 1839	39	126	165
May 1839	40	128	168
August 1839	29	147	176
November 1839	27	114	141
February 1840	22	116	138
May 1840	24	112	136
August 1840	25	115	140
November 1840	27	132	159
February 1841	39	173	212
May 1841	44	186	230
August 1841	34	178	212
December 1841	38	197	235

Source: DDPSL 1/110/1, Platts East Works Wages Book.

demonstrate support for Church's criticism of the concept of a unified 'Great Victorian Boom' in the third quarter of the century,²⁹ which has rather too conveniently appeared to lend support to the labour aristocracy concept.

The records of the donation benefit paid out by the A.S.E. and F.S.I.F. confirm the trends in Table 5. Table 6 indicates the impact of the cotton famine on the A.S.E. membership in Lancashire branches, where the great majority were employed in textile machinery making. Table 7 shows the extent of unemployment among skilled moulders during the depressions of the third quarter of the century in Lancashire.

Table 5: Foundry Employment Fluctuations at Robert Halls, 1845-67

Oct 1845	15	Jan 1851	24	Jan 1857	45	Feb 1863	28
Jan 1846	13	Aug 1851	23	Aug 1857	40	Aug 1863	40
Aug 1846	13	Jan 1852	28	Jan 1858	21	Feb 1864	40
Jan 1847	15	Aug 1852	29	Sep 1858	42	Aug 1864	46
Aug 1847	7	Jan 1853	35	Jan 1859	38	Feb 1865	52
Jan 1848	7	Aug 1853	43	Aug 1859	61	Nov 1865	81
Aug 1848	12	Jan 1854	26	Feb 1860	80	Feb 1866	84
Jan 1849	19	Aug 1854	38	Aug 1860	76	Aug 1866	82
Aug 1849	23	Jan 1855	27	Feb 1861	52	Feb 1867	74
Jan 1850	23	Aug 1855	22	Aug 1861	40	Aug 1867	76
Aug 1850	19	Jan 1856	33	Feb 1862	33		
		Aug 1856	51	Aug 1862	33		

Source: DDHL 37/11/11, 37/11/8, 37/11/10, 37/12/4,

Table 6: Unemployment in Lancashire A.S.E. Branches, 1861-65

Date	Accrington		Burnley		Bolton		Oldham		Blackburn	
	M/s	No.	M/s	No.	M/s	No.	M/s	No.	M/s	No.
		U/e		U/e		U/e		U/e		U/e
Oct 1861	61	8	107	10	463	19	914	41	308	39
Mar 1862	68	6	112	22	530	43	908	103	311	89
Oct 1862	74	8	106	37	576	56	888	129	295	89
Mar 1863	72	5	101	26	587	67	837	119	302	49
Oct 1863	72	1	93	7	587	42	809	46	334	24
Mar 1864	68	1	98	4	568	27	822	64	323	33
Oct 1864	70	1	107	16	572	17	919	28	346	26

M/s = Members U/e = Unemployed

Source: A.S.E., Monthly Reports

Table 7: F.S.I.F. Unemployment in Lancashire Branches in Depression
Years 1850-70

<u>Date</u>	<u>Branch</u>	<u>Branch Membership</u>	<u>Members on Donation Benefit</u>	<u>% of National Membership Unemployed (Average for Year)</u>
March	Oldham	149	37	
1855	Blackburn	141	46	13%
	Bury	109	22	
	Bolton	230	43	
June	Blackburn	198	70	20%
1858	Bolton	308	76	
Sept.	Blackburn	253	56	
1862	Bolton	387	83	17%
	Bury	220	27	
	Burnley	84	11	
Feb.	Blackburn	194	80	
1868	Bolton	242	72 (+10)*	
	Burnley	103	21	23%
	Oldham	458	73 (+7)*	
	Accrington	106	13	

* Figures in brackets indicate members unemployed who had exhausted donation benefit.

Source: F.S.I.F. Monthly and Annual Reports, MSS 41/FSIF/4.

The chronic insecurity of employment for the majority of textile engineering artisans, re-inforced their cultural separation from the lower middle class, as it brought a high degree of dependence on the trade union or friendly society. Some large firms did keep on aged employees for as long as practicable on light or less demanding work and then provided them with assistance on leaving. Platts for example, made ex gratia payments to long-serving and loyal foremen or craftsmen, though these were extremely selective and subject to the approval of a full board meeting.³⁰

Joyce claims, in support of the concept of employer paternalism in Lancashire, a possible, "long and continuous", association of engineering artisans with firms like Dobson and Barlow and Platts.³¹ The paucity of evidence makes this a difficult point to prove or disprove. However, the available evidence from the much smaller firm of Robert Halls of Bury, casts substantial doubt on Joyce's speculation. The firm's wages books indicate very little long-term artisan employment security.³² It should also be noted, that for the average Lancashire engineering artisan, the prospect of living sufficiently long to have to provide for old age and infirmity was quite remote, especially in the more hazardous trades such as moulding and grinding.³³

The need to provide for the effects of unemployment, sickness, disablement or the payment for a funeral, re-inforced artisan dependence on the trade union and friendly society. Indeed, as Hobsbawm has recently pointed out, many Victorian observers virtually equated the labour aristocracy with that section of the working class which was unionised, for this reason of potential provision of social security.³⁴ The relative significance of the welfare benefit schemes provided by the artisan societies vis a vis

their trade function was the subject of a flurry of debate in the mid 1970's.³⁵ Although there is disagreement as to how far the union leaders were seeking to impress the Royal Commission of 1867-69 as to their moderation and the significance of their welfare benefit schemes, it is accepted that the latter were on balance, secondary to the trade function. However, the welfare benefit schemes had vital trade implications. Wavering members would be reluctant to throw away accumulated superannuation or other benefit rights by strike breaking or working below standard union rates, set by a particular branch. Similarly out of work 'donation' benefit or tramping allowances would help maintain branch membership during periods of economic depression.

The role of the artisan's trade union welfare benefit schemes was, according to Thomas Wright, the 'Journeyman Engineer', to, "secure the working man the glorious privilege of being independent."³⁶ He pointed out that they combined the functions of,

"trade registry, trade insurance, and general insurance societies. By means of a network of lodges, and an organised system of reports from lodge secretaries, they are enabled to give members who are out of employment reliable information as to where they are or are not likely to obtain work. While members are out of employment, or incapacitated by sickness from following it, they afford them an income which, though small, is certain and sufficient to obviate any appeal to charity. They make superannuation allowances, and make provision for members, who through accident or disease, may be permanently disabled from following their trade. And finally, by means of an adequate funeral benefit, they give their members the assurance, so dear to the heart of working men, that whatever ups and downs they may have in life, they shall when the end has come, at least be laid decently to mother earth, no pauper grave or pauper coffin enclosing them."³⁷

The friendly society function of the A.S.E. and the other craft unions was as Tholfsen points out, "not a reflection of middle class individualism but a response to practical necessity." It was also,

"in the spirit of working class subculture ... a conscious effort to sustain the self-respect of working men who had to contend with the demeaning apparatus of poor relief."³⁸

Table 8: Welfare Benefits of the Major Artisan Societies in the Textile Engineering Industry in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Society	Date	Weekly Subscription	Funeral Benefit	Tramping Allowance	Donation Benefit	Accident Benefit	Sickness Benefit	Super-Annuation	Other Allowances	Dispute Benefit
JSEMM	1843	8d.	£8		10/- for 10 weeks 5/- for 10 weeks	Up to £80		5/- per week if over 58		
ASE	1851	1/-	£10		10/- for 14 weeks 7/- for 12 weeks	Up to £100	10/- for 26 weeks 5/- for 26 weeks 3/6 thereafter	5/- if over 50 with 18 years membership		15/- a week
FSIF	1851	1/-	£10 plus £5 for wife's funeral	As donations benefit plus cost of a bed	8/- for 26 weeks 4/- for 26 weeks (2 Year Members) 6/- for 26 weeks 3/- for 26 weeks (1 Year Members)	Up to £150	10/- for 26 weeks 5/- for 26 weeks 3/6 thereafter (if a 12 month member)	3/6 per week if over 60 and 30 years membership	£6 emigration assistance	10/- a week for 6 weeks and then donation benefit 2/- per week for wife and 1/- each child for 18 weeks

Table 8 (continued)

Society	Date	Weekly Subscription	Funeral Benefit	Tramping Allowance	Donation Benefit	Accident Benefit	Sickness Benefit	Super-Annuation	Other Allowance	Dispute Benefit
United Order of Smiths	1853	3d. (sickness) 5½d. (trade)	£8 with additional £1 p.a. to wife for 10 years	1d. per mile plus bed and beer allowance 1/6 Sundays	10/- for 2 weeks 8/- for 2 weeks		10/- for 12 weeks 6/- for 12 weeks 4/- for 28 weeks	2/- to 3/- if over 65 according to length of membership		
United Pattern makers' Society	1876	9d.	£13 of which £5 payable on death of wife		10/- for 12 weeks 7/- for 12 weeks 5/- for 12 weeks		10/- for 26 weeks 6/- for 26 weeks	9/- a week for 25 Year Members 7/- for 20 Year Members	Compulsory annual levy of 6d. for tool insurance. Maximum benefit £10	

Sources: Rulebooks of J.S.E.M.M., 1843; A.S.E., 1851 and United Order of Smiths, 1853; MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/5, and Mosses, op. cit., p.41.

William Owen Davis, a millwright working at Hetheringtons in Manchester, emphatically pointed out that even in the very worst periods of unemployment, the ultimate badge of shame was the act of submitting to the Poor Law and its degrading means test. To submit to it, he argued, was, "unthinkable to respectable skilled engineers."³⁹ It is important to note that 'respectability' to men like Davis, was not an element of moderation and conformity with middle class values, but was the essence of freedom and radicalism.⁴⁰

The vital role of the trade society in reinforcing social security of the textile machinery artisans through welfare benefit schemes can be appreciated from the summary provided in Table 8.⁴¹

In addition to the welfare function of the artisan unions, the friendly societies' role was vitally important in providing social security for the non-society artisans and many of the industry's less skilled workers, as well as additional safeguards for the unionised artisans. Gosden points out that recruitment by societies such as the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows was, prior to 1850, strongest among the better paid, yet there was significant membership among, "town labourers". By 1870 it is possible that the proportion had increased from an 1848 figure of 6.8%.⁴²

Until the 1840's, however, the social security of the engineering and foundry artisans depended heavily upon the tramping networks established by their unions. The severe depressions which centred on 1842 and 1848 appear to have brought to a head growing resentment at the system's rigours and sheer inefficiency. The discontent appears to have been strongest in the Lancashire branches of the J.S.E.M.M. and the F.S.I.F. At the 1848 delegate meeting of the F.S.I.F., the representative of the Oldham branches claimed that,

"a man on tramp receives 22 shillings from the funds, a great deal of which is spent on beer, beds and riding from place to place."

He went on to argue that this sum could keep two or even three men if paid at home, where money would also be of much greater help to the moulder's wife and children.⁴³ The Stockport delegate criticised the insalubrious nature of typical tramping accommodation and the wasteful sick fund expenditure on, "bad feet, swelled legs and surfeits of colds", whilst the Bury delegate demanded the abolition of the entire tramping system within the Moulders' Society.⁴⁴

Thus tramping ceased to be the lynchpin of the artisans' social security system and quickly became relegated to a system of relief for the adventurous, footloose young artisan and for the less able men who moved from town to town to catch peaks in demand on a semi-casual basis. By 1848, only 224 F.S.I.F. moulders chose to tramp whilst 785 opted for home donation benefit. By the 1860's, the proportion of unemployed A.S.E. members on tramp had fallen to 35%; by the 1890's it was only 10%, and by the 1900's it was only 4%.⁴⁵

The image of the tramping artisan in the eyes of the propertied classes, was as the Webbs observed, an extremely sinister one.

"The unionist workman, tramping with his card in search of employment, was regarded by the constable and the magistrate as something between a criminal vagrant and a revolutionist."⁴⁶

Tramping was the preserve, to a considerable extent, of the adventurous artisan, whose life centred on the comradeship of the road, the clubhouse and the workplace. The rapid displacement of this system by home and family based donation benefit was a profound change at the mid century which is a minor, yet curiously neglected element in the wider parameters of the labour aristocracy debate.

In conclusion it should be noted that the continued grave insecurity of employment for most artisans in textile machinery

making, after 1850, encouraged dependence on working class institutions such as the co-operative society, friendly society and most importantly, the trade union. Such dependence clearly marked off the artisan from his middle class contemporaries, strongly re-inforcing class identity. If the insecurity of employment is added to the extreme marginality of the 'aristocratic' status of the textile machinery artisans, and is viewed against a background of ever-present threats from 'illegal men' and new technology, the continuity of militancy through the mid-century into the 1860's and 70's can be explained. In addition, Foster's collaborationist aristocrat concept must be rejected and the concept of factory culture inspired deference thrown open to question.⁴⁷

However, the continuity of militancy into the 1860's and 70's need not involve the complete rejection of the basic concept of artisan elitism. The very insecurity which threatened the artisan tended to re-inforce his determination to preserve his exclusivity against the perceived threat from the less fortunate mass below him in the industry's hierarchy.⁴⁸

C. The Labour Process, Workplace Health and Safety and Paternalism

Thomas Wright explained to his readers that there was far more to workshop life than the mere completion of orders for the employer. His account of, "the inner life of the workshop",⁴⁹ does much to explain Hobsbawm's point that in the mid nineteenth century the artisans in engineering and iron founding,

"demanded some of the extra price of their market scarcity in terms of non-economic satisfactions, such as independence of supervision, dignified treatment, and mobility."⁵⁰

Freedom from close supervision was in most shops an essential element of the artisan tradition. Wright notes that a major function of apprentices was, "keeping nix", i.e. keeping look-out

for foreman or manager whilst the men rested, read, smoked or pursued clandestine, "corporation work" (i.e. private work).⁵¹ William Marcroft's account of life in the grinding shop at Platts in the 1840's shows that the artisans took for granted a certain flexibility in starting times, and the right to go out for a glass of ale at the local pubs during the morning.⁵²

The maintenance of artisan independence and the ability to control the labour process rested on the continuation of close solidarity. Beyond the workshop or foundry the pub/clubhouse played a vital role in this group identity. In the workshop, customs such as the payment of 'footings' by new workers or boys just out of apprenticeship was an essential element too, until the mid-century, when several societies took action to proscribe it.⁵³ At Platts, the end of an apprenticeship was toasted at the workplace with hot brandy punch and a solemn speech from the workshop's senior artisan which re-inforced the craft pride and solidarity felt by the young man. It was to be hoped that he would prove,

"a skilled and industrious workman, a credit to the trade and a profit to the master who employed him,"

and that,

"he ever would hold out a helping hand to a brother workman in distress; and should misfortune ever overtake him may he never be in need of a friend."⁵⁴

Thomas Wright noted that the paternal responsibilities felt by 'old hands' for the new entrants to the trade continued, as advice would be given on matters such as additional payments for out work, "hot", or "dirty" work, when a labourer's assistance should be requested, and when it should be refused. Such advice went along with stories from the union men of the heroic struggles of the shop in strikes or lock-outs. In particular, the newly fledged artisan would,

"hear of with commendable trade horror of the existence of a proscribed and hated race of beings called knobsticks or black sheep, and he will be taught, in effect that whenever he meets one of these obnoxious creatures, wretches in human form ... it will be his duty to 'strike the caitiff down'. In some districts he will hear of instances gleefully recounted, in which knobsticks have been literally struck down; for personal ill-usage was at one time invariably resorted to in dealing with these offensive characters, and is occasionally still practised towards them, when the means usually adopted by the more civilised workmen of the present day of threatening to strike, has failed in getting them removed."⁵⁵

The artisan solidarity in many workshops and foundries was prominent in both good times and bad. The marriage of a young journeyman would, on his return to work, be celebrated with an, "ovation" and a "ringing in", the banging of hammers on boilers, iron plates, etc. A slump in trade would bring the organisation of collections for unemployed colleagues, single men taking voluntary idleness to keep married men with families in work, or the collective organisation of short-time to avoid dismissals.⁵⁶ In Burnley, in the slump of the early 1930's a variant on this latter practice was still prominent. Mr. W. D. Butterworth, director of Butterworth and Dickinsons, recorded with some admiration the work of one of his staunchest opponents, a communist shop steward in the A.E.U. who negotiated an agreement for rotational 'playing off', to keep unemployed men in benefit and thus avert the stigma of the Public Assistance means test for as long as possible.⁵⁷

In the 1840's, as Platts responded to the stimulus of vast foreign markets for their machinery and introduced new machine tools, the workshop freedoms and traditions came under attack. Thomas Wood recalled that Platts used the very latest Whitworth tools; the very best used by his previous, small employer, he noted, "Platts would have thrown away as utterly useless."⁵⁸ He and William Marcroft both comment on the high wages paid by Platts, but

Wood regretted that the work had less variety and although a large quantity of accurate work could be done, it was done

"without a little of the thought required of those who work in small shops where fresh work continually turns up."⁵⁹

Wood recorded that Platts was a, "place where no favour was shown"; if a man were not worth the standard rate he had to go.

"I saw many start that were paid off the first day, some at even a shorter trial," he noted.⁶⁰

The tolerance of artisan independence and control of the labour process was being replaced by a less compromising management stance at Platts in the mid 1840's. William Marcroft noted that the manager began a systematic attack on the abuse of such freedom, equating it with Chartist tendencies. "This charter system must be checked," he had demanded, "the time lost in drinking and going to races cannot be allowed any longer." The time allowed for visits to the pub for ale was disallowed and a time-keeper appointed to deal with those artisans persistently late.⁶¹

The desire to maximise productivity and break down artisan controls led a number of firms to introduce systems of piece work in the 1845-52 period; A.S.E. resistance was to contribute to the major lock-out of 1852.⁶² In one of the Lancashire firms which was to support Platts in the lock-out, the employer, John Mason of Rochdale, was seeking to extend piece work to this end in 1846. Writing from a convalescent hotel near Ilkley, he lamented to his cousin James Davenport who was managing the works in his absence, of continuing labour troubles in spite of slackness in trade.

"My own opinion, is that there can never be any good done ... with them, without its (the department concerned) being put upon a system of piece work. We should get better men, keep them longer and ought to have the work done for less money and finally in a better manner. Look at Higgins (a larger Salford textile engineering firm) or any of the places where they have it done by the piece and they seem to get on in a more straight forward businesslike and certain way."⁶³

It was Platts of Oldham which spearheaded the introduction of piece work and this firm's adoption of the piece master system lies at the heart of Foster's development of the labour aristocracy concept. He claims that the old style craft elite was, through the piece master system, giving way to a collaborationist labour aristocracy, as, "the self-imposed work routine of the craft worker (which) served to insulate him from employer control," was replaced by the new systems which, "equally firmly identified the skilled worker with management."⁶⁴ Foster claims that the piece master system at Platts was universal and detached about one third of the artisans who, "acted as pacemakers and taskmasters over the rest."⁶⁵ He singles out William Marcroft for particular condemnation for further refining the piece master system by extending the bonus system from individual piece masters to the whole team of skilled men working in a particular group.⁶⁶

Foster claims that the A.S.E.'s defeat in 1852 led to the final collapse of artisan independence and the firm establishment of a collaborationist textile machinery artisanate through the piece master system. This argument cannot be supported, for not only did the A.S.E. and its predecessor, the J.S.E.M.M. steadfastly oppose the piece master system up to the 1852 lock-out, but the opposition was maintained into the 1860's, by which time it was in fairly rapid decline.⁶⁷

Jefferys has shown that by 1861 only 25% of A.S.E. members on average were engaged in any kind of piece work in the Manchester, Oldham, Bolton and Rochdale districts, in which were located the most technologically advanced textile machinery making firms.⁶⁸ The piece master system was largely confined to Lancashire, but its nature varied from town to town. In isolated instances, Foster's

point is supported. For example, in Blackburn, instances were reported to the A.S.E. of piece masters having powers of hiring and firing; in Bolton piece masters took the whole of the bonus, whilst in Rochdale they had, "discretionary power", in the division of the surplus.⁶⁹

In 1862, the A.S.E. renewed its attacks on the system; its General Council drew up a system of fines, with provision for expulsion for any member, "taking work by the piece and not sharing equally any surplus made."⁷⁰ In effect, the A.S.E. had adopted the system which the Grinders' Society had obliged Platts and Asa Lees to accept in the mid-1840's. Foster has strongly attacked the role of William Marcroft in this transformation of the piece master system to one of profit-sharing among the artisans, as a supporting element in the creation of a labour aristocracy in Oldham. However, Marcroft's account of the introduction of the system hardly suggests a spirit of collaboration with the Oldham employers. In 1844 the Grinders' Society's Delegate Meeting in Bolton determined to attack the abuses of the piece master system, and Marcroft, as the Oldham delegate, was responsible for trying to implement the Society's alternative policy. He notes that the meeting,

"determined that in all future time, wherever piece work was adopted, all the clubmen should share of the profit made beyond the weekly wages earned. The Oldham machinery making works were to be the first to be attacked."⁷¹

The Grinders succeeded first at Platts and then at Asa Lees. However, following an industrial dispute (perhaps in 1847 or 1848), the management of Platts re-introduced the old system, although with the revival of trade, the Grinders were soon able to muster sufficient power to restore the collective distribution of the bonus money. This was clearly not the spirit of docile class

collaboration with which Foster identified Marcroft and his colleagues.

In 1863, sixteen months after the A.S.E.'s initiative against the piece master system, its General Council reported that it was, "highly gratified at the success which had attended the efforts of the former meeting."⁷² William Allan's testimony before the Royal Commission on trade unions, in 1867, shows the success of his society's efforts. Speaking of Blackburn, where the A.S.E. was fighting a major industrial battle, he pointed out that,

"they formerly had piece work there, but from the representations made to the employers, that was abandoned and has not been resorted to for some years."⁷³

In 1876, a further A.S.E. survey of its branches revealed no piece work at all in Accrington or Stockport, and that it was minimal in Todmorden, Bury and Blackburn; in the latter town, despite a costly defeat on the issue in 1867, only 4 artisans were engaged in piece work by 1876.⁷⁴ As for the piece master system, it had never existed in Accrington or Stockport, and had disappeared from Blackburn, Bury, and most significantly, Oldham and Bolton. The Bolton branch secretary replied that the, "mechanics take work from the masters as there are no piece masters."⁷⁵ Only in Manchester and Rochdale did this system remain in operation; in the former place it embraced 138 artisans (120 A.S.E.) and in the latter 51 (20 A.S.E.).⁷⁶ Thus it appears quite clear that whatever the impact of the piece master system in Oldham in the early 1850's, the system was never widespread and its influence was very short-lived in Lancashire as a whole. Foster is quite correct to see the piece masters as labour aristocrats in collaboration with capital, but wrong to identify their interests with the artisanate as a whole.

Conditions of health and safety at work tended to further emphasise the vast gulf between even the best paid artisans and the

lower middle class. The skilled loose moulders were the best paid of the textile machinery industry's artisans in the nineteenth century; their wage differential was partly a reflection of the high level of skill required in the work, but was also a reflection of its extremely arduous and unhealthy nature. The simplest measure of this are the F.S.I.M. superannuation statistics. In 1855, the union had only 59 superannuated members, when membership was 5,685. By 1865, there were only 115, and by 1875 only 177. Average age of death of F.S.I.F. moulders was under 52 years, even in 1885.⁷⁷ Dust and smoke arising in particular from the drying of the resin and sand moulds, brought a variety of lung ailments, which were compounded by the extremes of temperature in winter.

A letter written to the Bolton Chronicle in 1920 by a striking moulder explained that his work was,

"highly skilled ... and no doubt very interesting when one 'knows how'. But it obviously calls for more exertion and tax on physical output than some of us care to think about. Not only that it is extremely dirty. Dust, sand and what one would take to be the refuse of a scrapheap interfere with what fresh air intends itself to be. I have been in moulding shops that were little more than brickheaps, with spaces meant for windows, and roofs that were unfinished. Rain has plenty of scope for entrance through spaces all over the said roofs. The fiercest and mildest winds blow through spaces that would be windows as we know them, if there were glass panes there. Under such conditions the men in these shops get all the draughts which are not conducive to good health and bright spirits in periods of extreme heat and cold, aggravated by outbursts of sulphur and smoke clouds enough to upset any Christmas."⁷⁸

The splashes of molten iron were an additional hazard, causing some horrifying accidents and persistently causing the loss of eyes.⁷⁹

Similar problems also dogged the rather less well paid grinders. William Marcroft recorded that between the opening of Platts' Hartford works in 1845, and 1889, seven foremen of the grinding shop died with an average age at death of only 40. By 1885, all his contemporaries from the early period in Platts' grinding shop had died.⁸⁰ The grinders' work was deemed so unhealthy that they were

subject to discrimination by some friendly societies. The Order of Rechabites, for example, on medical advice, allowed certain branches to exclude 'dry' grinders; in Lancashire they were allowed, "to pay according to risk", in a separate branch, but none had been formed by 1872.⁸¹

The working conditions of some elements of the A.S.E.'s membership were considerably better, but life expectancy of fitters and turners was little superior to that of moulders or grinders. Jefferys notes that in the 1860's, the average age of death of members of the A.S.E. was only 37½, and by the late 1880's was only 48;⁸² a survey by the local sanitary inspectorate in Burnley carried out in 1892 indicated that the average age of death of skilled engineering workers was 53.⁸³

An analysis of the treatment of the artisan by foremen and employers provides an opportunity to test Joyce's conclusions on the impact of paternalism. It should be pointed out that on Joyce's canvas of working class deference, encouraged by employer paternalism, the image of the journeyman engineer is not so boldly presented.

"Though within the pale of the factory influence, the engineering and iron workers' combination of economic and cultural organisation offered considerable resources with which to offset that influence. When the politics of the labour interest are considered, it is apparent that it was from the craft trades in particular, where a social world was most fully developed and where cultural worlds overlapped least, that the primary impulse towards independence came."⁸⁴

However, Joyce does cite the leading textile engineering employers, John Platt and Benjamin Alfred Dobson as prime examples of paternalism in Lancashire; he also claims that by the later nineteenth century, the Lancashire textile districts represented a lingering conservative/deferential element in an increasingly radical A.S.E.⁸⁵ There are certainly several good illustrations of

textile machinery making employers practising a highly developed paternalistic policy towards their workers. Examples of an equally developed reciprocal form of deference are far more difficult to find.

In the period before 1890, Platts of Oldham and the Salford finishing machinery firm of Mather and Platt were clearly the industry's leading practitioners of paternalism, which tended to take the form of welfare provision for the workforce or attempts to encourage self-improvement by a generous assistance to local education provision.⁸⁶ By the turn of the century there is ample evidence of such methods being applied by the smaller firms too.⁸⁷

Joyce also gives us the example of Benjamin Alfred Dobson's funeral where 30,000 were estimated to follow the cortege in 1898.⁸⁸ It should, however, be treated with caution as an example of employee deference. Only just over a decade earlier, Dobson had been the object of working class vilification as he brought in 'knobsticks' in an attempt to break the Bolton engineers' strike of 1887. Large crowds had alternated boos for Dobson with cheers for another employer who had fought the strike 'cleanly'.⁸⁹ More telling evidence, perhaps, comes from a period of troubled industrial relations in September 1867. A joint committee representing moulders and engineers criticised Dobson and Barlow (and other Bolton employers), for their failure to mix with their workmen and their being unapproachable except in a very formal manner via foremen. They were also criticised for their failure to raise their workmen,

"intellectually and morally by the building of institutions, the getting up of lectures, concerts, the opening of reading rooms, and other means which must make the servant feel that both his and his master's interests are one."⁹⁰

Although evidence is very limited for the third quarter of the century, there are sufficient grounds for crediting Dobson and Barlow with the worst record of industrial relations in the entire Lancashire textile machinery making industry between 1850 and 1914.⁹¹

Evidence from other Lancashire towns tends to cast further doubt on the image of artisan deference. Joyce himself accepts that Burnley was a notable exception in the county, developing from, "the centre of a lively popular radicalism", in the third quarter of the century straight into, "a widespread acceptance of socialism in the 1880's and 90's."⁹² Neville Kirk however, has recently suggested industrial relations were far less harmonious and the working class far less dependent in other Lancashire towns, during the third quarter of the century, than Joyce has maintained.⁹³

In the textile machinery industry this was possibly the case even for Blackburn, the central example selected by Joyce in north-east Lancashire to support his thesis. In 1852, the Blackburn Standard could claim that at the height of the bitter lock-out affecting Bolton, Oldham and Manchester, there was, "no probability of any misunderstanding", between the local employers and engineering artisans.⁹⁴ Indeed in January 1852, 200 men were treated to a "substantial" dinner by Joseph Harrison in celebration of his son's joining the firm. The appearance of the artisans, according to the Standard, "was highly creditable, evidently indicating habits of prudence and self-respect."⁹⁵ However, the deteriorating economic conditions of 1866-67 revealed a very different picture of employer-artisan relations in the town's engineering industry. The moulders had foregone a wage advance claim in 1866, but were confronted with the employers' demand for a cut as trade declined in 1867. They consequently denounced the

masters involved, who included Harrisons, and proceeded to attack their blatant materialism and selfishness, proclaiming that they, "did not know of any other town where such princely fortunes have been raised in so short a space of time."⁹⁶

Patrick Joyce assembles a great deal of Lancashire evidence in support of his concept of deference.⁹⁷ However, whilst there may have been a tendency to support an employer's stance in terms of electoral voting behaviour, in terms of industrial relations, especially regarding issues which were perceived by the artisans as threatening their control of the labour process, the machinery makers' class collaboration remained minimal, as this chapter's conclusion seeks to demonstrate.

III. Community

D. Residence and Community Relations

Much of the recent research into the labour aristocracy has focused to a great extent on the social relationships and cultural activities of the artisan.⁹⁸ The general theme of this work has been to demonstrate a degree of social overlap and integration between artisans and the lower middle class, whilst underlining the relative insularity of the former from the unskilled labourers. In his original article Hobsbawm had suggested, although not confining himself to social matters, that,

"if the boundaries of the labour aristocracy were fluid on one side of its territory, they were precise on another."⁹⁹

He goes on to quote a passage from Thomas Wright, the "Journeyman Engineer" in support of the second element in his statement.

"Between the artisan and the unskilled labourer, a gulf is fixed ... The artisan creed with regard to labourers is that the latter are an inferior class and that they should be made to know and be kept in their place,"

Wright explained to his readers.¹⁰⁰ He actually went on to underline further the great social barrier between the two groups.

Artisans' wives, he pointed out,

"hold the wives of labourers to be of a lower social grade, and very often will not 'neighbour' with them at all, or else only in a patronising way."¹⁰¹

In a recent article, Alastair Reid has criticised the superficial equation of Wright's descriptions of artisan values with the labour aristocracy model. He explains that Wright's artisan/labourer division was but one of six fundamental pairs of opposites which he saw as constituting the working class, the others being: sober/drunken, unionist/non-unionist, educated/uneducated, non-political/political, regularly employed/irregularly employed.¹⁰² Each of the polarisations had its own dynamics whereby the unionists would view the non-union men as selfish and potentially threatening, whilst the latter would see the former as dictatorial; the sober might view "the lushingtons" as wastrels, and in turn be seen as unsociable by the latter, and so on. Thus for Wright's artisan to be a labour aristocrat, we should have to construct a Weberian ideal type: sober, unionist, educated, regularly employed, and non-political, and this image, as Reid points out, Wright did not seek to convey.

In another recent work, Alan Fox has also pointed out that class consciousness was also impeded by the fact that not merely the artisan class but the rest of the working class was,

"riddled with fine status distinctions ... engineering labourers, for example, regarded themselves as superior to bricklayers' labourers who, in turn, looked down on general labourers."¹⁰³

Reid's interpretation of Thomas Wright, and Fox's additional point indicate that artisan elitism was but one of a series of fissures in the working class, and that the evidence for or against the textile machinery artisan as a labour aristocrat must be very carefully and comprehensively handled when the non-quantifiable social issues are assembled.

The evidence does appear to be fundamentally conflicting in this area. Robert Roberts' memories of Edwardian Salford, would appear to lend support to the labour aristocrat concept. Even in the public house, he pointed out,

"workers other than craftsmen would be frozen or flatly ordered out of the rooms in which journeymen foregathered."¹⁰⁴

The recollections of Frank Benson, whose father was a skilled moulder at Dobson and Barlow of Bolton, indicate a certain amount of geographical segregation of artisans from the less well off, but any sense of artisan elitism appears to have been either directly related to work or directed against those whose conduct took them beyond the pale of the 'respectable' working class, in which both he and Thomas Wright included unskilled workers.¹⁰⁵

"We thought ourselves as respectable working class; we were a little bit above the labouring class who lived in the poorer districts of the town."

The artisans, such as fitters, moulders and patternmakers,

"would consider themselves somewhat distinct from the labouring classes, the people who used to do the fetching and carrying and the assistants."

Yet, he added,

"they would all mix socially. There were respectable labourers who would mix in various church activities, who took part in the religious life of the church. You would mix with them. You wouldn't look down on them in any shape or form. The only people you'd look down on was the people who used to drink and neglect their family life."¹⁰⁶

Tom Stephenson, also discussing the Edwardian era, in the district of Whalley near Blackburn, provides further evidence of a lack of any fundamental social divide between artisan and labourer.

"The bulk of the people, the labourers, were getting only about 18s a week, but although the labourer did regard the craftsman as a little above him, I don't think there was any hostility. They worked together; they lived together; they drank together in the pubs; and their children married each other."¹⁰⁷

Much of the elitism of the artisan, when directed at the labourer, stemmed from workshop or foundry relationships, and was more the product of insecurity than arrogance.¹⁰⁸ The textile machinery artisan had from the 1840's, faced the prospect of technological change dragging him down as employers were able to break down craft controls over the labour process. The driving force behind Lancashire artisan militancy in the 1852 conflict had been the fear of 'illegal men', and the destruction of the craftsman's independence and status. Craft pride and respectability sometimes exacted a high price. In periods of high unemployment in Lancashire there was an unwritten law that the artisan would never accept the work of an unskilled man within the engineering industry.

Thomas Wright had observed that an engineering artisan would never do the work of a labourer,¹⁰⁹ a tradition which was still remarkably strong in Burnley in the slump of the early 1930's. W. D. Butterworth, director of the loom making firm of Butterworth and Dickinson, observed that in 1934 the setting on of a single man brought about an unofficial strike of skilled men which brought the works to a virtual standstill for two weeks. It transpired that the artisans would not work with a 'skilled' man who had accepted unskilled work with the firm. Butterworth was surprised at the resulting, "blaze of indignation", and consequently discovered that,

"in our area there was a clear understanding that if a skilled man, desperate through lack of money, were to work as a labourer on the roads or take up an entirely different occupation at a lower rate of pay, his comrades would understand, but under no

circumstances must he do this for an engineering employer. This would make him akin to a 'blackleg' or 'scab' and this perhaps explains his notoriety."¹¹⁰

In the Burnley of the early 1880's there was a substantial degree of residential integration of textile machinery artisans and the less well paid proletarians, although there were complex differentials between districts, and between individual streets within particular districts as Tables 9 and 10 show, (see pages 173-174).

A number of recent pieces of research have demonstrated a degree of overlap, in terms of geographical integration and social and cultural admixture, of artisans and the lower middle class in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Crossick, for example, has argued the return of the artisan labour aristocracy to working class self-identity, in the later nineteenth century, was partly a reaction to the emergence of a more self-conscious lower middle class which increasingly adopted an 'anti-manual' stance and sought more residential exclusivity."¹¹¹

The case for artisan/lower middle class integration and artisan/labourer segregation rests heavily on two strands of evidence: the artisan involvement in mechanics' institutions and other organisations which instilled middle class values, and the residential integration of artisans and the lower middle class.

Hobsbawm points out, however, that,

"though hunger for 'respectability' united the upper working class strata with the remainder of the lower middle class ... it did not imply (though it did not exclude) a simple ideological embourgeoisement."¹¹²

Tholfsen, who emphasises the continued vitality of artisan radicalism and independence of working class subculture after 1850, does accept that once the artisans' ideal of independence was separated from the context of early Victorian radicalism, it was, "vulnerable to middle class social and cultural pressures."¹¹³

The limited evidence available from the textile machinery making centres is conflicting, and indicates that Tholfsen and Hobsbawm (in his later work) are right to venture only tentative conclusions on this theme. Oldham has been the centre of perhaps the greatest concentration of inquiry. Foster has argued that the role of adult education, temperance movement and co-operative society, in conjunction with new authority systems at work, like the piece master organisation, were breaking down working class cultural independence, by associating its artisan 'leaders' with middle class aspirations.¹¹⁴

Hobsbawm notes the significance of artisan membership of building societies in Oldham, as recorded by the Royal Commission on Friendly Societies 1871-74, and the fact that evidence presented to the Commission bracketed together artisans, managers and small shopkeepers.¹¹⁵ William Ashcroft's evidence to the Commission does indeed stress the involvement of artisans, in particular the men of Platts machinery making works, who had purchased shares with a view to owning their own houses. However, in addition, Ashcroft clearly states that membership did not confine itself to the artisan element of the working class. In addition to managers earning up to £2 10s. per week and artisans earning 30s. per week, there were members who, "do not even earn more than £1 per week."¹¹⁶ Thus, it appears there was no clear out dividing line between Oldham's artisans and labourers, at least in terms of building society membership, and property owning aspirations.

The evidence relating to membership of mechanics institutions in Lancashire textile engineering towns follows no uniform trend and could, depending on the town selected, be used to support or oppose the concept of artisan social integration with the lower middle class. Foster points out that, in Oldham, adult education served

the purpose of leading artisans into collaboration with the employers.

"At one and the same time, it enabled this new generation of engineers to carry out technically phrased instructions from above and supported their rejection of surviving craft practices and discipline."

He goes on to stress that,

"most of the thousand or so young workers involved in adult education in the 1850's seem to have come from engineering and Platts certainly gave large support to both the independent mechanics institutes and the School of Science and Art."¹¹⁷

Foster's line is supported by Tylecote who notes that the Lyceum School of Science and Art,

"attracted persons of all occupations from manufacturers, professional men and tradesmen to clerks, fitters and cotton operatives."¹¹⁸

Trodd, similarly, argues that the Burnley institute performed a similar class integrationist role and became a pillar of an emerging labour aristocracy, which as in Oldham was strongly connected with the local temperance and co-operative movements.¹¹⁹

In contrast, the skilled working class appears to have rejected involvement in what was becoming an increasingly middle class institution in most of the other leading textile machinery towns.

In Bolton, the Institute's secretary remarked upon its,

"failure to attract the artisan and the difficulty of grafting formal educational studies upon these institutions which have become primarily social institutions and were not normally attended by the persons whom it was intended to recruit for technical training."

He also lamented, "the apathy with which the working classes as a body regard our institution."¹²⁰ In 1859, the students at

Accrington's Institute were, "mainly factory operatives", but by 1872, a letter to the local newspaper observed that,

"if clogs and fustian jackets do not abound in the newsroom to the extent that could be wished it is owing to the false pride which renders the wearer uncomfortable alongside shoes and broadcloth, and not to say invidious class distinction on the part of the directors."¹²¹

By 1889, the Annual Report stated that,

"for many years it has been noticed with great regret that mechanics and working men, generally speaking, have not to any great extent supported the Institution which has gradually and perforce developed into a community composed largely of employers of labour, tradesmen and those engaged in the various professions."¹²²

Hemming notes that in both Blackburn and Heywood, the absence of the working classes was the most recurring theme of debate and was blamed for their relatively early demise.¹²³

The evidence relating to geographical integration or segregation of artisans in relation to either the lower middle class or less skilled manual workers is similarly conflicting. Crossick cites evidence presented to the Board of Trade Inquiry into the cost of living in 1908, to show residential integration of artisan and lower middle class elements in both Bolton and Preston. This integration, the inquiry specifically ascribed to the high level of adult female employment which raised artisan family income, and narrowed differentials between them and the lower middle class.¹²⁴ Trodd's research on two contrasting districts of Blackburn, revealed that in 1871 there was a high level of integration across the social spectrum from labourers to the lower middle class. Proximity to the workplace was still the key determinant of residence, whilst differentiation within the community was primarily based on a family's 'respectability', which was only marginally determined by occupation.¹²⁵

A study of the 1881 census returns for two clearly demarcated industrial districts of Burnley also reveals a picture of artisan integration with the middle class on the one hand, and lower paid, less skilled proletarians on the other. In the new south Stoneyholme area,¹²⁶ two predominantly middle class streets indicate a strong engineering artisan presence (Rectory Road,

Table 9: Social Structure of South Stoneyholme (Burnley) in 1881

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Stanhope Street</u>	<u>Warwick Street</u>	<u>Regent Street</u>	<u>Rochester Street</u>	<u>Blenheim Street</u>
Engineering Artisan	2	5	6	3	2
Other Artisan	1	2	0	0	2
Textile "Aristocrat"	1	4	3	2	1
Employer	0	0	1	0	0
Other Non-Manual	0	4	1	0	0
Small Shopkeeper/Trade	3	3	1	2	2
Weaver/Lower Paid Textile	3	7	7	10	2
Other Manual Workers	2	3	6	6	2
Widows etc.	1	2	1	4	2
TOTAL	13	30	26	27	13
	<u>*Canning Street</u>	<u>Berkeley Street</u>	<u>Belgrave Street</u>	<u>*Rectory Road</u>	
Engineering Artisan	2	9	4	3	
Other Artisan	4	7	2	5	
Textile "Aristocrat"	0	4	2	1	
Employer	1	2	0	2	
Other Non-Manual	3	1	8	16	
Small Shopkeeper/Trade	1	5	2	6	
Weaver/Lower Paid Textile	3	4	5	3	
Other Manual Workers	1	1	2	0	
Widows etc.	0	3	2	1	
TOTAL	15	36	27	37	

* only the appropriate sections of these two main thoroughfares which bisected the area are included.

Source: 1881 Census, Burnley Enumeration District 14.

Belgrave Street, and to a lesser extent, Berkeley Street and Canning Street). Yet the other streets in the vicinity show integration of engineering artisans in an almost exclusively proletarian environment, (see Table 9). The older and less fashionable Trafalgar Street area indicates a more complete integration in an essentially proletarian district,¹²⁷ (see Table 10).

Table 10: Social Structure of the Trafalgar Street District of Burnley in 1881

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Whitaker Street</u>	<u>Rowley Street</u>	<u>*Albion Street</u>	<u>Patten Street</u>	<u>Gresham Place</u>
Engineering Artisan	4	5	3	8	11
Other Artisan	0	6	1	6	7
Textile "Aristocrat"	4	7	3	5	0
Employer	0	2	3	0	0
Other Non-Manual	0	3	0	0	3
Small Shopkeeper/Trade	1	0	4	0	1
Weaver/Low Paid Textile	11	14	12	10	7
Other Manual	4	3	10	8	3
Widows etc.	1	0	1	0	4
TOTAL	24	40	37	37	36

	<u>Sackville Street</u>	<u>Escar Street</u>	<u>*Trafalgar Street</u>	<u>Halstead Street</u>	<u>Dent Row</u>
Engineering Artisan	3	2	3	1	1
Other Artisan	2	0	1	2	1
Textile "Aristocrat"	2	4	0	0	0
Employer	1	1	0	0	0
Other Non-Manual	1	0	0	1	2
Small Shopkeeper/Trade	0	0	5	2	1
Weaver/Low Paid Textile	2	0	0	3	2
Other Manual	0	1	0	5	1
Widows etc.	0	2	0	2	0
TOTAL	11	10	9	16	8

	<u>Birtwell Street</u>	<u>Thorneybank Street</u>	<u>Thorney Court</u>	<u>Hartley Court</u>
Engineering Artisan	1	5	1	0
Other Artisan	3	2	0	0
Textile "Aristocrat"	2	1	1	0
Employer	0	0	0	0
Other Non-Manual	0	0	0	0
Small Shopkeeper/Trade	1	0	0	0
Weaver/Low Paid Textile	8	3	1	1
Other Manual	9	2	2	1
Widows etc.	2	1	0	1
TOTAL	26	14	5	3

* only the appropriate sections of these major thoroughfares are included.

Source: 1881 Census, Habergham Eaves Enumeration District 30.

Thus the Burnley evidence would seem to indicate, along with that of Oldham and Blackburn, that engineering artisans were, in terms of residence at least, no more integrated with the lower middle class than with the mass of the less well-paid manual workers. Their economic insecurity, the nature of their work, and their trade unions would place them with the proletariat, a fact increasingly confirmed by their growing residential segregation from the lower middle class, as the latter migrated to their own exclusive suburbs, as transport developments permitted.¹²⁸

In a recent work, Gray has acknowledged that,

"there is also evidence of a clear separation (of artisans) from the lower middle class groups. The social experience of industrial labour and the collective form of organisations and activity characteristic of skilled workers distinguished them from clerks and small shopkeepers ... Despite their apparent social proximity to the lower middle class and their separation from other workers, the upper strata of the working class had a clear sense of class identity."¹²⁹

Indeed, the artisans' lifestyle and their extremely limited chances of escape from the proletarian environment, further distanced the textile machinery makers from the social and cultural world of the lower middle class.

E. Lifestyle and Conditions of Living

In years not blighted by unemployment or family misfortune, the textile machinery artisan enjoyed a reasonable standard of living, at least by comparison with the majority of the working class in Lancashire. Several contemporary observations testify to the machinery makers of the mid-nineteenth century, not as abstemious, religious individuals who sought to provide for future security, but in many instances almost the opposite.

A German traveller, Friedrich Von Raumer visited the Sharp Roberts works in Manchester in 1835 and 1841. He noted that at 30

shillings a week, the English artisan was better paid than his German counterpart, sufficient to provide even breakfasts of,

"the finest wheat bread, cheese of the best quality, and a considerable portion of ale or porter."

He also observed that whilst some saved part of their wages, most spent all they got, and in this he saw potential danger in England in a period where trade should fall away.¹³⁰

Thomas Wood and William Marcroft, who both experienced the inner life of Platt's machine shops in the 1840's underlined Von Raumer's impressions of the machinery making artisans as a rather wayward, hedonistic and generally irreligious class of workers. Wood, who like William Marcroft was keenly religious and teetotal, observed that Platts' artisans were,

"wicked and reckless. Most of them gambled freely on horse or dog races ... There were very few who took care of their money, fewer still who went to a place of worship, or regarded the Sabbath in any other light than as a holiday. Their mode of life was different to the homely manner I had been accustomed to. Flesh meat, as they called it, must be on the table twice or thrice a day. A rough and rude plenty alone satisfied them. The least pinching, such as I had seen scores of times without a murmur, and they were loud in their complainings about clamming."¹³¹

William Marcroft was similarly disapproving. "The machine grinders in general," he observed, "were great flesh eaters and drank more beer and spirituous liquors."¹³² The grinders' relatively high piece work earnings were generally quickly spent by the "drinking and gaming men," who were in the majority. "To save money was deemed stingy and shabby ... the men who did not fall in with the habits of the rest had to endure much annoyance."¹³³

Thomas Wright's observation of the basic artisan desire of retaining the, "glorious privilege of being independent", could manifest itself in self-improvement, and long term security from the threat of pauperism. Yet, equally, as the observations of Von Raumer, Wood and Marcroft clearly show, this artisan independence

could also manifest itself in the observation of 'Saint Monday', a heavy indulgence in food, drink and gambling, and a love of the comradeship provided in the public house.

These were the very characteristics which Foster saw as, "the essence of the non-aristocrats' culture", a rejection of work discipline, subservience and abstinence.¹³⁴ It could be argued that from 1850 a drastic change in the life style of the machinery making artisan was brought about as the temperance movement and other 'self-help' institutions gathered momentum. Indeed, Marcroft's account shows that Platts of Oldham began to impose tighter controls on the movement and freedom of their artisans during the 1840's. However, what Foster termed, "the most characteristic expression",¹³⁵ of non-aristocratic culture, the public house, remained a bastion of artisan and trade union life in the textile machinery districts until the end of the century.

In 1887, for example, the Rope and Anchor, in Bolton was the strike headquarters and organising centre for the A.S.E. and its allies in the protracted and bitter campaign against Dobson and Barlow and the firm's imported 'army of knobsticks'.¹³⁶ In Blackburn, all the artisan societies in the 'Iron Trades Section' of the Trades and Labour Council, i.e. A.S.E., F.S.I.F., Grinders, Smiths and Strikers and Steam Engine Makers, continued to meet in pubs until the end of the century.¹³⁷ The Annual Reports of the A.S.E. and F.S.I.F. indicate that the Lancashire textile machinery branches continued en bloc so to meet.

For those artisans with a wife and young children to support, life could prove a constant struggle against indebtedness. C. S. Davies noted that her father-in-law, a millwright at Hetheringtons, was able only to rent a small 'two up and two down' in the Manchester district of Ancoats.¹³⁸ The 1897/8 lock-out saddled the

family with such debts with the local tradesmen, "as took years to repay", and obliged them to sell virtually all the household furniture except table and beds.¹³⁹

Frank Benson noted that the wage of his father, a moulder, who was strongly religious and teetotal, "wasn't an adequate one for three or four children".¹⁴⁰ Thus, as Rowntree observed even the relatively well paid manual workers were trapped in what he termed "the cycle of poverty". Until the older children commenced work, Benson recalled, family life was far from comfortable. The Benson family did have a better than average 'two up and two down' terraced house in Bolton; it even had a small front garden; a symbol of superior working class status in south-east Lancashire. The children were adequately clothed in contrast with those Benson labelled, "the ragamuffin types", whose parents simply didn't care or couldn't afford decent clothes. Yet, new garments were bought only once a year, every May for the Sunday School Walks, and footwear consisted of only a pair of clogs for weekdays and shoes for Sunday wear.¹⁴¹

Benson's account gives an excellent guide to the diet in artisan households. The father's breakfast, taken at work, consisted of sandwiches; each child had porridge, bread and half an egg. The main meal, midday dinner, would perhaps be: cold meat (Monday), stew (Tuesday), Lancashire potato pie (Wednesday), chops (Thursday). Each meal would be followed by a 'sweet' such as rice pudding, or banana chopped up in milk. The evening meal (tea), would simply comprise bread, butter and jam, except on Sunday when the week's treat would bring boiled ham salad, with a very occasional luxury tin of salmon followed by tinned fruit. However, in the frequent difficult times, family dinner would become a monotony of stews

based on bones, herbs and vegetables, whilst tea would be reduced to bread and margarine.¹⁴²

Material conditions could be to some extent ameliorated if the artisan's wife were in full-time employment, as Elizabeth Roberts observed in studies of Blackburn and Preston.¹⁴³ However, this would bring greater dependence on convenience foods such as fish and chips, tripe, and pies, and might bring a lowering of the family in terms of neighbourhood status. In Burnley, the contrast between the paucity of artisan working wives in the 'respectable' South Stoneyholme area, and the more 'proletarian' Trafalgar Street area is perhaps a good indicator of such social forces.¹⁴⁴

In conclusion, it can be seen that in terms of residence, there was artisan integration with both lower middle and less skilled manual workers, and for those families whose father avoided the 'non-respectable' pitfalls of excessive drinking or gambling, there was the prospect of decent footwear, clothing, housing and wholesome food. However, such benefits of what could be termed 'labour aristocratic' status would, as the accounts of Davies and Benson indicate, be blighted for lengthy periods by unemployment, short-time working, or the effects of industrial action.

However, the considerable gap between the accounts of textile machinery artisans' lifestyles in the second quarter of the century from Von Raumer, Wood, and Marcroft and those of Davies and Benson have to be reconciled. Firstly, the obvious contrast between the pious, rather puritanical nature of Wood and Marcroft and the majority of their contemporaries at Hibbert and Platts must explain some of the colour of the descriptions of the latter's apparently very wayward and self-indulgent existence. The Edwardian Benson household would approximate more to that of Wood and Marcroft, rather than to the somewhat irreligious lifestyle the latter saw as

typical of their contemporaries. Another point to consider is the cumulative effect of the shift in the 1840's and 1850's from the tramping system which militated so clearly against stable artisan family life, to the home-based artisan society welfare benefits typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as described in Section 2 of this chapter.

The work of Alastair Reid on the essays of Thomas Wright helps explain any remaining contrasts. He notes Wright's observation that the working class in 1870 had three generations, each with rather different outlooks and lifestyles. The men born before 1820 had experienced harsh economic conditions and combined a strong class hatred with a "rough and tough" lifestyle which reinforced a contempt of, "mere book learning".¹⁴⁵ If this outlook is added to the itinerant, footloose life encouraged by the tramping system, with the comradeship of the inn/clubhouse, the wayward hedonism described by Wood and Marcroft is set more in focus. The men born in the 1820's and 1830's, according to Wright were more cautious in their use of industrial action, were aware of foreign competition, yet still saw the working class as sole producers of wealth, who were still treated as outcasts by society.¹⁴⁶ Although little better educated than the previous generation, these men regretted this loss and struggled to give their children the opportunities they had missed. The young generation, according to Wright,

"believes that education, abundant and easily accessible literature and the resources of modern science have already placed means within the reach of the working classes which ... would diffuse a far higher and more general happiness among them than is to be found at present. Believes that a time may - probably will - come, when self-organised, self-supporting 'Working Men's Clubs' will supersede the public house, intelligent intercourse the 'boozing' and horse-play of the tap room; a time when a choicely-filled little bookcase will be an ordinary article of furniture in working class homes."¹⁴⁷

The third of Wright's generations was that of Frank Benson's father and William Owen Davies. Artisan independence was the common trait of this generation just as it was of Wood and Marcroft's workmates; but by the later nineteenth century a 'respectability' based upon freedom from the stigma of the Poor Law, aspirations to decent housing, and the provision of opportunities through education for their children, was the keynote of that independence. The importance of the public house had diminished somewhat as a focus of everyday life, but it remained the basis of the grass roots functioning of the foundation of artisan independence and solidarity, the trade union.

F. Prospects of Upward Social Mobility

Robert Roberts, writing of Salford at the turn of the century, maintained that the real social divide in his "village" was between those who dirtied their hands and face in earning their daily bread, and those who did not. He also pointed out that the skilled workers' ambitions, if any, were generally confined to,

"saving enough to buy the ingoing of a beer house, open a corner shop or get a boarding house at the seaside."¹⁴⁸

Men like Thomas Wood (later a School Attendance Officer) and William Marcroft (later a dentist and leading figure in the Co-operative Wholesale Society) who observed the textile engineering artisans first hand, were notable exceptions to the rule.

The purchase of a corner shop's lease or the tenancy of a public house was a more normal route off the shop floor for men who had saved sufficient capital or were likely to be locally blacklisted for union activities. Marcroft noted that two of Platts leading piecemasters in the 1840's, Daniel Newton and John Hindley, left to

take up the tenancies of the Hartford Inn and the Morning Star, pubs adjacent to the works, which served as union clubhouses. The chairman of the Bolton joint trades' strike committee in the bitter 1887 dispute, formerly an employee of Dobson and Barlow, became licensee of the nearby Falcon Inn on Kay Street.¹⁴⁹

A very small number of industry's artisans made the successful transition into entrepreneurship around or after 1850; even fewer enjoyed sufficient longevity to reap the economic and social benefit of their ventures. Such men included Robert Hall, originally a fitter at Walker and Hackings, James Taylor and John Lang, originally patternmaker and fitter respectively, at Platts, and perhaps most significantly, Edmund Tweedale, originally a fitter and later manager at Howard Bullough's Globe Works.¹⁵⁰

Several Mechanics Institutes and other centres of Adult Education appear to have provided little opportunity for the artisan to improve himself. The evidence indicates that in Bolton, Blackburn and Accrington at least, these institutions were largely limited to those above the artisan class who had sufficient time and money for the courses.¹⁵¹ This state of affairs was apparently not universal. In Burnley at least, the Institution could boast that it was, "famed throughout the country as a training ground for men of high talent, the hope and inspiration of many a working lad."¹⁵²

Towards the end of the nineteenth century as technical education was extended, with growing municipal involvement, new generations of artisans' sons were enabled to achieve a certain degree of upward social mobility; yet for most, entry into the father's trade was their limitation as well as their privilege. It is possible, as Roberts argues, that daughters of ambitious parents had a superior chance of upward mobility through "successful" marriages into the

middle class, especially if prompted into appropriate religious or social circles.¹⁵³

A survey conducted by Chapman and Abbott in 1912 recorded the propensity of Lancashire boys to follow their fathers' trades. Table 11 illustrates the significance of this trend in Lancashire towns, where textile machinery making was a leading employer of labour.

Table 11: Occupations of Sons of Lancashire Engineering Artisans

<u>Town</u>	<u>Percentage of sons entering father's trade (engineering)</u>	<u>Engineering jobs as a percentage of total employment (males)</u>
Oldham	46	24
Rochdale	31	15
Blackburn	27	9
Bolton	22	17
Burnley	20	6

Source: S. J. Chapman and W. Abbott, 'The Tendency of Children to Follow their Fathers' Trades'

Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, 76, 1912/13

The records of Platts and Robert Halls show the great significance of family links in the recruitment of new entrants into skilled work. Moulders' sons did not merely follow their fathers into the firm, but usually entered foundry work too. At Platts, between 1838 and 41, skilled foundry work was virtually the preserve of ten families who appear to have had virtually no members in other departments of the firm. Similarly, Hall's foundry was dominated by the Blomeley, Bird, Clegg, Jackson and Standring families from 1845 to the early 1870's; its grinding shop was even more the preserve of the Norcliffe, Nuttall and Whatmough families over this period.¹⁵⁴

The survey of the South Stoneyholme and Trafalgar Street areas of Burnley in 1881 indicates that a very high proportion of the sons of engineering artisans were still following their fathers into similar skilled work, or were taking up other types of skilled work, or jobs in the textile industry which commanded equal or superior wages. As Table 12 shows, very few were breaking out of the strictures of class into non-manual work.

Table 12: Sons of Engineering Artisans and their Occupations in Two Burnley Districts in 1881¹⁵⁵

Total Number of Working Sons Residing with Parents	37	
Total Entering Engineering Industry or doing Related Work, as Artisans/Apprentices	15	Source: 1881 Census
Total in Other Skilled or Highly Paid Manual Work	10	
Total in Non-Manual Work	3	
Total in Shop Work	3	
Total in Lower Paid Manual Work	6	

It perhaps took the cumulative effect of the improved provision of state education and the "great release" of the world wars to break the pattern. W. D. Butterworth, commenting on the immediate post-second world war years, noted that,

"a common topic for conversation among employers after the war was the absence of bright young men in their factories and the decline in the quality of post-war workers compared with those of pre-war days."

He noted visits to the firm by former apprentices, now teachers or salesmen, and concluded that the answer to the question as to where the most intelligent young workers had gone was,

"Upwards, with monthly salaries instead of hourly wages and suits, collars and ties instead of overalls."¹⁵⁶

IV Conclusion

When the essentially economic criteria are taken together, then a considerable gulf between textile machinery artisan and labourer is demonstrable, at least until the onset of the first world war when traditional wage differentials and craft controls were rapidly eroded. When the level of wages, prospects of social security and, to a lesser extent, all the other factors, are taken into account, there are clearly some grounds for accepting the existence of an artisan elite or aristocracy, albeit an elite which, as Hobsbawm accepts, could not exclude entrants from below in periods of rapid expansion in trade, nor maintain the status of marginal members during depressions. The importance of family connections, and the high proportion of sons following fathers into the skilled foundry and machine shop occupations, underlines the existence of such an elite.

When the level and regularity of earnings are considered objectively, the textile machinery artisan's position is only marginally 'aristocratic'; this is perhaps a reflection of the artisan's undervaluation of his market situation, and the continued desire to 'trade off' economic advance in favour of the maintenance of craft controls and freedoms at the workplace.

The essential element in the understanding of the somewhat paradoxical role of the engineering artisan in the 1850 to 1875 period is the basic desire to maintain the freedom and respectability which came from control of the labour process, craft pride and fellowship, and security from the threat of the poor law. The struggle to maintain this position does lend some credence to the labour aristocracy concept. However, when the conduct of industrial relations is considered, along with the artisan's conditions of work, his conditions of living and his very limited

prospects of advancement, it would seem more reasonable to reverse Hobsbawm's assertion that the artisans' 'border' was precise on its lower side and fluid where it adjoined the lower middle class. Dependence on trade unions, acrimonious industrial relations, dangerous and unhealthy work conditions, threats of unemployment, a maintained connection with the public house, and the minimal chances of significant upward mobility, even for their sons, would seem to be sufficient to identify the textile machinery makers more with their proletarian neighbours than with the lower middle class.

The problem of the labour aristocracy debate until very recently has been that the concept's supporters have sought and found evidence of moderation and class collaboration after 1850, whilst its opponents have looked for similar characteristics in the pre-1850 period in order to disprove the Marxist case for discontinuity at the mid-century. This over-attention to the elitism and sectionalism of the artisans itself began at the mid-century, and henceforth has tended to obscure the continuing trends of militancy and radicalism which were the products of the characteristics of proletarian respectability, outlined in Parts II and III.

Ernest Jones, the leader of the Chartist movement during its last phase, was an implacable opponent of the artisan trade unions and their policies. "There is aristocratic privilege of the vilest die among the high paid trades," he caustically remarked in 'Notes to the People'.¹⁵⁷ These societies, he argued,

"estranged the feelings of the many, who were unable or not permitted to enter their privileged aristocratic circle; they have been the fruitful seminary of that worst of all aristocracies, the aristocracy of labour."¹⁵⁸

The artisan societies' lack of enthusiasm for political reform infuriated Jones and, as John Saville argues, resulted in a major weakness in his political thinking. The suspicion of the unions was

maintained, he argues, by H. M. Hyndman, and such sectarianism, he continues, "has left its mark on the labour movement of the twentieth century."¹⁵⁹

Several Marxist historians have perhaps too willingly followed Jones and Hyndman in their acceptance of an artisanate which was almost exclusively class collaborationist and moderate after 1850 until the 1880's. Hobsbawm, has however, acknowledged that in this respect, "Marxists must practise some self-criticism." He notes that, although more riotous, the less skilled of the working class during the nineteenth century were less politically conscious and much less organisable than the skilled elements.¹⁶⁰

In recent work several labour historians have made important contributions to the re-assessment of the artisan and the artisan unions in the period after 1850. Joyce has stressed the greater immunity of the Lancashire engineering artisans to subordination due to factory culture; Price has stressed the importance of the continuation of the engineers' struggle for control over the labour process, and Tholfsen has stressed the consistency of the engineers' cultural independence of the middle class.¹⁶¹ If Joyce's point is accepted that the engineers' struggle was,

"for control over the labour process rather than for ownership of the means of production",

it was also the case, as Tholfsen argues, that the A.S.E.

"did not passively submit to middle class ideology or embrace the cult of respectability. Faithful to the values of the working class subculture, it existed in a state of tension with a social and ideological system dominated by the middle class."¹⁶²

An analysis of the industrial relations of the textile machinery making industry in Lancashire from the end of the 1852 lock-out to the mid-1870's clearly gives support to the line taken by Tholfsen and Price and belies Foster's assertion that after 1852,

"independent craft autonomy in the engineering industry more or less came to an end."¹⁶³

After the bitter defeat of 1852 in Manchester, Salford, Oldham and Bolton, the *major textile machinery making* centres, there was a brief but not insignificant flirtation with co-operative workshops. Meanwhile, the increasingly favourable economic conditions enabled the A.S.E. and the other artisan societies to rebuild membership and finances and re-establish local initiatives over craft controls.

In the early 1860's, the textile *machinery* industry experienced severe recession, due in large measure to the American Civil War and the resultant cotton famine in Lancashire. By 1866, however, trade was booming as expectations of higher finished cotton goods prices led, as Church notes, to increased investment in fixed capital and an increase in the industry's capacity.¹⁶⁴ The capital investment boom and the subsequent slump, clearly illustrate both artisan determination to defend craft autonomy, and the independence of these workers from the notions of middle class political economy. The contrasting examples of the large technologically advanced firm of spinning *machinery makers*, Dobson and Barlow, and the smaller, technologically conservative weaving *machinery makers* of Blackburn, both serve to underline this continued artisan radicalism.

At Dobson and Barlow, in March 1866, a campaign was begun to secure a system of weekly instead of fortnightly pay. It began with a petition of at least 550 names, the language of which was the epitome of moderation. The 'long-pay' system it was claimed, encouraged, "intemperate habits", and put workmen, "at the mercy of every extortionate and truculent credit giver", whilst weekly pay would bring, "increased attention of your workmen to their several duties, and the diminution of time lost."¹⁶⁵ A lack of response from the employers brought industrial action from the firm's

moulders and dressers; this obliged the firm to concede weekly pay, which began on May 5th. 1866

This was followed by what can only be described as a guerilla war of attrition conducted mainly by the artisans over pay and questions relating to craft control of the labour process. The surviving evidence is incomplete but is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate in Table 13 the, "state of tension", referred to by Tholfsen. The survival of this detailed fragment of evidence indicates that throughout the rest of this period there was little peace and harmony in industrial relations as far as this firm was concerned.

Table 13: Industrial Disputes at Dobson and Barlow, August 1865 to October 1868

<u>Date</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
12.8.1865	Fitters/Turners (carding engine dept.)	Opposition to an excessive share of surplus earnings going to piecemasters.	
16.4.1866	Loaders	Wages Advance	No advance given
7.5.1866	Loaders and Saw Mill Labourers	Wages Advance	Several men dismissed
7.5.1866	Fitters working on carriage frames	Two Shilling Advance	Advance granted to most
8.5.1866	Joiners	Two Shilling Advance	
12.5.1866	Painters	Two Shilling Advance	
12.5.1866	Fitters and Joiners on Carding Machinery	Bonus payments stopped	Strike took place
29.5.1866	Moulders, Grinders, Engineers		150 men on strike
5.6.1866	Grinders	Refusal to work overtime	
12.6.1866	Turners (Mule Dept)	Piece work payments	

<u>Date</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
2.7.1866	Moulders, Engineers		200 on strike
Exact date not known	Smiths, Toolmakers, Planers, Fitters, Turners, Joiners	Objection to System of piece work payment	Dobson accepts suggested alternative
11.7.1866	Grinders, Smiths, Coremakers		58 on strike
13.8.1866	Grinders, Moulders	Rates of payment	87 on strike
14.8.1866	Grinders	Rates of payment	55 on strike
20.8.1866	Grinders, Moulders and Others	Rates of payment	127 now on strike
22.8.1866	Moulders	Objection to employ- ment of more boys	
3.9.1866	Blast Tenters	One Shilling Advance	Award granted
17. 9.1866	Millwrights	Inferior outwork rates	Men accept new rates
24.10.1866	Fitters, Turners	Piece work rates of pay	
7.10.1867	Planers	Two Shilling Advance	Claim rejected
16.10.1868	Fitters, Turners	Wages Reduction	Joint A.S.E. / S.E.M. campaign begun.
16.10.1868	Metal Planers	Restoration of higher wages	

Source: ZDB 2/1 - 2/26

In Blackburn, during the boom of 1866, the unions had refrained from campaigning for wage advances. The onset of depression in 1867 led the leading textile engineering employers, W. Dickinson and Sons, and Harrisons, to proclaim a two shilling wages reduction, the introduction of piece work and unlimited numbers of apprentices.¹⁶⁷ The result was strike action led by the A.S.E. and F.S.I.F. which was countered by the employers' introduction of 'knobsticks'. A

number of strikers were arrested for 'obstruction' or 'loitering' under the 1825 legislation and were subsequently defended in court by Ernest Jones. On March 21st, the day of the trial, crowds estimated at 500 to 600 gathered to cheer Jones and the defendants who each escaped with fines of only five shillings.¹⁶⁸

However, during the next month violence began to escalate as strike breakers and imported 'knobsticks' were attacked, one being injured when knifed in a public house by a striking engineer. A group of engineers, including a foreman were arrested and charged with assault for hurling 'knobsticks' into the Leeds-Liverpool canal.¹⁶⁹ These events caused the A.S.E. leadership growing embarrassment since William Allan was at that time trying to convince the Royal Commission on Trade Unions of the moderation and restraint of his members. The gulf between local and national leadership, clearly visible during the 1852 lock-out, and in the period following the 1898 defeat, is also amply demonstrated by the events in Blackburn. These were highlighted by the prosecution in the trial of the men involved in the canal incident, who claimed that merely fining any men found guilty would be useless since the fines of other convicted men had been systematically paid by local A.S.E. officials from their funds.

Perhaps in view of the above events, the A.S.E. leaders in London refused to organise a national levy to support the Blackburn men.¹⁷⁰ By September 1867, with the strike still dragging on, and 184 men on benefit, the Executive came under strong attack from Blackburn, and Lancashire in general, for its ineffectual conduct of the dispute. All it would do, however, despite its strong commitment to fight piece work and increases in the apprentice:journeyman ratio, was,

"to pledge ourselves to use every exertion in our power in our different branches and districts to secure voluntary

subscriptions to aid our Blackburn members in carrying the struggle to successful termination."¹⁷¹

Eventually, in the spring of 1868, over a year after the strike had commenced, William Allan, and Robert Austin of the Manchester district of the A.S.E. were obliged to attend a meeting in Blackburn of representatives from most of the textile machinery districts. The meeting accepted the need to end the dispute, and at least temporarily to accept the employers' terms, but a resolution from the Bolton delegate was approved, expressing regret at the fact that,

"little or no subscriptions have been received from the London district in aid of the workmen engaged in the dispute at Blackburn."¹⁷²

It was a thinly veiled criticism of the Executive itself and was the precursor of many similar criticisms in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The conduct and outlook of the local leaders and grass roots membership in Bolton and Blackburn stands in contrast to the actual or feigned moderation of the national leaders and makes an interesting parallel with similar contrasts in the 1840's and in the early twentieth century. Certainly the convenient image of the engineering artisans' moderation and class collaboration must be questioned.¹⁷³ Further strikes, in 1873 at Hetheringtons in Manchester, and Dobson and Barlows in 1875, add further doubt to the long established picture of amicable trade negotiations. In the former, the local Employers' Association retaliated against an A.S.E. led strike with a lock-out but was forced to concede a two shilling advance after a two month struggle.¹⁷⁴ In the latter, the Bolton A.S.E officials, seeking a widesweeping advance, were obliged to compromise, as the same Employer Association applied a rigorous blacklist. The former acknowledged that,

"since the strike commenced, the whole of the shops of Lancashire have virtually been closed against the men who came out."¹⁷⁵

The strikes of 1865-67, 1873 and 1875, indicate that, after recovery from the massive defeat of 1852, the artisan unions in the textile machinery industry were still agents of class struggle rather than class collaboration. The rapid expansion of home and foreign markets, the continued absence of serious foreign competition, and the slowing down of the diffusion of new technology, all contributed to a kind of armed truce which was acceptable as long as control of the labour process was not seriously challenged. Clements noted that during the 1860's and 70's working class radicalism was, "practically moribund", and "allies were few", for the artisan societies, yet despite the great pressures on them to accept the basic tenets of political economy, they did not adopt any principles, "which ran counter to the needs of effective trade unionism."¹⁷⁶

The contemporary observations of two employers confirm the position of the artisan societies as the cornerstones of resistance within a generally subdued working class. A Manchester foundry owner, responding to the Royal Commission of 1867-69, observed that,

"they are very nice people if they have their own way, but if they have not they will fight, and they can fight anything and anybody, they are so strong."¹⁷⁷

John Platt, the leading textile machinery employer in Britain, in a speech to the House of Commons in 1866, saw an extension of political rights to the working class as means of defeating trade union power.

"There was one thing that frightened many employers and manufacturers, namely the trades unions."

If the franchise were extended, he believed that this would,

"place more responsibility on the workmen by giving them votes and teaching them political economy in a practical sense, and by

that means they would reduce the numbers who joined trades unions."¹⁷⁸

The textile machinery artisan, whilst thus obliged to accept the political and economic status quo, would exhibit great defensive class solidarity. Thomas Wright, in discussing the Paris Commune of 1871, pointed out that whilst the English workman was, "not so political as the Continental, and especially French workmen are," their class loyalties were entrenched. The typical English engineer, Wright believed, in discussions, "round workshop breakfast stoves or in workshop dining or reading rooms," showed a great deal of sympathy for the communards, if not a full understanding or sympathy with communism itself.¹⁷⁹

Alan Fox has recently stressed the continuity of artisan values in England from the seventeenth century to the twentieth.

"The artisan of a recognised craft, had always been a member, however humble, of an estate of the realm and as such had participated in the tradition of the 'freeborn Englishman' with his liberties and rights, and of course was supported in this by the native strand of individualism."¹⁸⁰

The Lancashire engineer or moulder of the mid-nineteenth century is very much a key element in this tradition. The lack of radical technological change, and generally favourable economic circumstances meant that the artisan's independence and respectability was rarely challenged. The defensive labourist stance of the artisan in this period had been wrongly used, along with the desire for 'respectability' to create an exaggerated concept of 'aristocratic' class collaboration.

Fox's general point was never better illustrated than by Thomas Wright in his attempts to explain the artisan's 'raison d'etre' to the British middle class. Wright distinguished between the 'respectable' artisan who wore his Sunday-best clothes with pride and those with 'genteel' aspirations within the working class, who

in dressing up wore gloves to cover the shameful marks of manual labour.'¹⁰¹ Wright observed that,

"the mechanic is, as a rule, somewhat of a clever fellow, and he knows that by his daily labour he contributes to the national wealth and well-being, and has a more or less full belief in the doctrine so often preached to him that the working class are practically the sole creators of all national wealth. With this knowledge and belief in mind he sees others whom he holds to be his inferiors in intelligence, usefulness, and everything else save some accident of birth or fortune, obtaining a far larger share of the substantial advantages of labour-created wealth than falls to his share. This state of things he holds to be wrong in the abstract and an injustice to him individually; a perversion of what ought to be. As a result he comes to entertain - either consciously or unconsciously - levelling doctrines, but like most other levellers he would only level down."¹⁰²

Significantly, like the seventeenth century Levellers, Wright saw from the artisan's point of view, that it was in the lower strata of the working class, among those at risk of becoming dependent on economic assistance, that there was docility or worse, political unreliability and potential collaboration with the propertied class. Indeed, the anonymous author writing in 1879 observed of the unskilled man, "the force of circumstances ... certainly tends to keep him quiescent;" his mental energies largely being devoted to, "making ends meet."¹⁰³

The history of the textile machinery artisans throughout the following periods of the 'new unionism', the Great War and the inter-war years, confirms the observations of Wright. Their militancy, bred of the traditions of independence and respectability remained, and in fact tended to increase when this cherished inheritance was threatened by technological change and aggressive management. As the less skilled operatives acquired greater 'respectability' through unionisation, the gulf between them and the artisans tended to diminish.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.198.
- 2 ibid. pp.199-200.
- 3 F. Engels, Preface to, The Condition of the Working Class in England, 1892, Moscow 1962.
- 4 H. Pelling, 'The Concept of the Labour Aristocracy', in his Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain, London 1968, p.61.
- 5 A. E. Musson, 'Class Struggle and the Labour Aristocracy', Social History, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1976, pp.355-356.
- 6 P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, Brighton 1980, *passim*.
- 7 W. Kirk, The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England, Beckenham 1985, pp.350-351.
- 8 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy', in Labouring Men, London 1964. 'Debating the Labour Aristocracy', 'The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered', and 'Artisans or Labour Aristocrats?' in Worlds of Labour, London 1984.
- 9 R. Q. Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh, Oxford 1976, and G. Crossick, An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society: Kentish London, London 1978.
- 10 J. Foster, op. cit., Chapter 7.
- 11 Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy', p.273.
- 12 J. Breuilly, 'The Labour Aristocracy in Britain and Germany: A Comparison'. Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, No. 48, 1984. Breuilly's work recognises Beier's development of the three concepts of 'Leistungselite' (labour aristocracy at work) 'Vertelite' (labour aristocracy in the community) and 'funktionselite' (labour aristocracy in organisations).
- 13 G. Anderson, 'Some Aspects of the Labour Market in Britain c.1870-1914' in C. J. Wrigley (ed.), A History of British Industrial Relations, Brighton 1982, p.1.
- 14 Hobsbawm, op. cit., p.280. In the textile machinery industry this would be particularly vital since in many districts, notably Oldham, Bolton and Manchester, piece work was firmly entrenched by the 1850's as far as most of the skilled trades were concerned; patternmaking and loose moulding were the most significant exceptions.
- 15 Moulding is a good example. Employers often tried to enforce wage deductions if moulders turned out sub-standard castings. F.S.I.F., Annual Report, 1883, MSS 41/FSIF/4/18, contains a discussion of the issue which was then provoking considerable industrial unrest in the Burnley textile machinery firms.

- 16 MSS 41/FSIF/1/21/2, Burnley Branch Bye Laws, 1888, clearly stated that only jobbing moulders rated at 34 shillings per week or more and framing moulders rated at 32 shillings were eligible for membership.
- 17 See Appendix H for a detailed survey of pre-world war one wage rates.
- 18 DDPSL 1/110/1, Platts East Works Wages Book, shows only, senior foreman James Palmer, rated above 34 shillings weekly in the 1838-1841 period. His basic wage of 51 shillings was twice that of many of the firm's filers (fitters) and turners.
DDHL 3/11/8, The Robert Hall (Bury) Wages Books, show only the firm's three partners: Robert Hall (fitter/turner), William Tuer (moulder) and William Hodgson (moulder) on a weekly wage rate of 40 shillings or more in the pre-1890 period.
- 19 The extremely unhealthy and strenuous work of the moulders really makes them a special case; the differential they merited was in part a recognition of their hazardous work as well as the high degree of skill involved in it. See Part II, Section C.
- 20 Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy', p.287.
- 21 *ibid.* p.273.
- 22 R. Roberts, 'Working Class Living Standards in three Lancashire Towns, 1890-1914'. International Review of Social History, Vol. XXVI, 1981/2, p.46 ff.
- 23 Each sample was studied for a twelve month period. Since only workers who were employed at the commencement and conclusion of the years chosen were included, there is clearly some bias created since these men enjoyed above average job security.
- 24 The 3 years covered by the wages book were each mixed in terms of the level of trade. 1839 was initially good but trade declined quickly towards the winter. 1840 thus began very badly but recovered. 1841 began very well but the prosperity was evaporating as the economic collapse of 1842 loomed. See Table 4 for employment fluctuations at Platts throughout the period. The sample comprised 3 moulders, 6 machine shop artisans (3 turners, 1 fitter, 1 joiner, 1 smith) and 5 labourers (2 foundry fettlers, 1 smith's striker and 2 machine shop labourers). Total employment in these sections (November 1840) was 14 moulders, 70 machine shop artisans and 25 labourers.
- 25 The samples of Halls Wages books were selected to provide a cross-section of periods of good and poor trade. 1853 was a year of boom and expansion; 1855/6 one of depression; 1863 was a year of deep depression followed by a fairly good recovery and 1872 was a year of fairly good trade throughout. The sample comprised 4 moulders, 6 machine shop artisans and 4 labourers for each one year period. The machine shop artisan sample comprised turners and fitters throughout, except for 1855/6 when one smith and one grinder were included; the earnings of these two men were the lowest in the group (both averaged only 22/8 per week for the year), largely because of their limited opportunities for overtime. In 1853 and 1855/6 total employment of moulders varied from 43 in the summer of 1853 to only 22 in

- August 1855, but had recovered to 51 by the August of 1856. In 1863 numbers employed fluctuated from 28 to 40.
- 26 The Butterworth and Dickinson sample comprised 4 moulders selected from 8 rated at 35/- in 1904/5, 10 machine shop artisans selected from 55 rated at 33/- and 8 labourers selected from 30. In the 1907/8 sample, 10 artisans were chosen from 68 rated at 35/- and 5 labourers from 28 rated at 18/6.
 - 27 The Butterworth and Dickinson wages book shows that a working week of between 63 and 66 hours was virtually the norm in 1905, 1906 and 1907.
 - 28 According to G. H. Wood, the wages of even 'self-acting' spinners rose from 21/9 in 1850 to 33/- in 1874; those of 'big piecers' rose from 8/9 to 14/- in the same period.
 - 29 R. Church, The Great Victorian Boom, London 1975, p.76.
 - 30 DDPSL 1/90/1, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, passim.
 - 31 Joyce, op. cit., p.120.
 - 32 Robert Hall's Vages Books 1855-71, indicate that of the 150 employees of November 1855, just under half remained only 3 years later, whilst by February 1864 under 30 remained and by 1871 under 10.
 - 33 See Part II, Section C for further discussion of this point.
 - 34 Hobsbawm, 'The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered', p.239.
 - 35 C. G. Hanson, 'Craft Unions, Welfare Benefits and the Case for Trade Union Reform', Economic History Review, Vol. 28, 1975. Also 'Comment' on Hanson's article from Pat Thane and A. E. Musson, Economic History Review, Vol. 29, 1976, and Hanson's 'Reply'.
 - 36 Thomas Wright, Our New Masters, London 1873, p.282.
 - 37 ibid.
 - 38 T. R. Tholfsen, Working Class Radicalism in Mid Victorian England, London 1976, p.283.
 - 39 C. S. Davis, North Country Bred, London 1963, p.101.
 - 40 See the Conclusion for further discussion of this point. Davis himself was a strong supporter of Radical atheist M.P. Charles Bradlaugh.
 - 41 The question of welfare benefits was a notable cause of the failure of the engineering and foundry unions to extend the amalgamation of 1851. The F.S.I.M. Executive welcomed a, "concentrated union for the object of mutually assisting each other in cases of oppression," yet advised members to reject amalgamation partly because it feared A.S.E. contributions were insufficient to cover the new society's proposed benefits. MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/5, Report of the Committee Appointed to Enquire into the Practicability of the Members of the Iron Moulders' Society

Becoming Members of the Amalgamated Society (Manchester 19.11.1851). Also, in 1871, the Patternmakers' Society emerged, partly as a splinter from the A.S.E., encouraged by the prospect of attracting more members by offering equivalent or superior benefits from lower subscriptions. This was possible because of the superior job security and healthier work environment of this group of workers. Mosses, op. cit., pp.10 and 30. By the time of introduction of its amended scale of benefits (see Table 8) it was firmly established in Lancashire's textile machinery industry.

- 42 P. H. J. H. Gosden, The Friendly Societies in England, Manchester 1961, pp.74 and 230. The membership analysis for 1866-70, he points out, is not reliable. It was, however, the only comprehensive analysis supplied to the Royal Commission of 1871-74.
- 43 R. A. Leeson, Travelling Brothers, London 1979, pp.178-179.
- 44 ibid. pp.175 and 178.
- 45 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'The Tramping Artisan', in Labouring Men, p.45. One of the very last recorded A.S.E. tramps was a Lancashire man, J. Smith, recorded in 1915 returning home to Bolton from Schenectady, U.S.A., Leeson, op. cit., p.188.
- 46 S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.311.
- 47 Joyce, op. cit., p.xvi, is careful to note that, work, "was the source of defensive forms of class solidarity and of a culture of subordination," and also stresses the "tension" between the world of the factory and working class institutions such as the union and co-operative.
- 48 This point is noted by Breuilly, op. cit., p.60.
- 49 Thomas Wright, Some Habits and Customs of the Working Class, London 1867, p.85 ff.
- 50 Hobsbawm, 'Customs, Wages and Work Load', in Labouring Men, p.348.
- 51 Wright, op. cit., p.85.
- 52 Marcroft, op. cit., p.19.
- 53 For example, the J.S.E.M.M., 1843 Rule Book, (Rule XXVII) exempted members from such payments, "except in places where it is found impracticable." Members asking for footings or participating in the associated rites were liable to fines of two shillings and sixpence. The practice was also repudiated in the United Order of Smiths 1853 Rule Book, (Rule 40).
- 54 Marcroft, op. cit., p.10.
- 55 Wright, op. cit., pp.102-103.
- 56 ibid. p.104.
- 57 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.1/25.

- 58 Thomas Wood, 'Autobiography', in J. Burnett (ed.), Useful Toil, Harmondsworth, 1977, p.310.
- 59 ibid.
- 60 ibid.
- 61 Marcroft, op. cit., pp.14 and 19.
- 62 See Part II of Chapter 3.
- 63 John Mason and Company, L29, Correspondence Box 1, Letter to James Davenport 11.7.1846.
- 64 Foster, op. cit., p.229.
- 65 ibid. p.227.
- 66 ibid.
- 67 The piecemaster system and those artisans who participated in it were repeatedly condemned by local and national officials of the J.S.E.M.M. In the year 1845, for example, they were condemned as men, "not satisfied with reasonable profits, they engaged labourers to assist them at a low price, without even considering that the evil will recoil upon themselves.", Minutes of 1845 Delegate Meeting, (Manchester), p.31. The Operative, 3.5.1851. attacked those who, "resort to these unseemly and unmanly means of sapping the foundation of their own trade to feed their own aggrandizement." It should also be noted that the removal of piecemasters was an important element in the local A.S.E. campaign which led up to the 1852 lock-out at Hibbert and Platt.
- 68 M. and J. B. Jefferys, 'The Wages, Hours and Trade Customs of the Skilled Engineer in 1861', Economic History Review, Vol. 17, 1947, p.39. The proportion in Lancashire as a whole was only 16%.
- 69 ibid. pp.41-42. In Manchester and Bury, the piecemaster was paid a fixed percentage of the bonus. The Bolton system came under strong attack in August 1865 at Dobson and Barlow from the firm's fitters and turners, who criticised the system which allowed, "a few to pocket the surplus earnings of our united labour while they as individuals do no more work." ZDB 2/5.
- 70 Jefferys, op. cit., p.42.
- 71 Marcroft, op. cit., p.33. The Grinders' Society scheme placed the bonus money in the care of democratically elected shop committees who paid out some of the "overplus" each week-end whilst keeping the rest for special pay outs to the men at Easter, Whitsuntide, Vakes Week and Christmas.
- 72 Jefferys, op. cit., p.42.
- 73 Royal Commission on Trade Unions, First Report, Parliamentary Papers 1867, Vol. XIII, cd. 3873 p.33.

- 74 A.S.E., Volume of General Information Schedules 1876. There was no return from Burnley but in view of later evidence it is unlikely that piece work of any kind was practised in the district. For example, evidence presented by the A.S.E. to the Royal Commission on Labour, Parliamentary Papers 1893, XXXII; Appendix XLVI p.467, indicates that no piece work was operated in either Blackburn or Burnley at that time.
- 75 A.S.E., Volume of General Information Schedules, 1876.
- 76 ibid.
- 77 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.42.
- 78 Bolton Chronicle, 16.1.1920.
- 79 The F.S.I.F. was by the late nineteenth century devoting a growing proportion of its energies to campaigns for the improvement of health and safety legislation and that providing for workmen's compensation.
- 80 Marcroft, op. cit., p.71. It is not surprising that both moulders and grinders were noted for their heavy drinking. Marcroft was the only teetotal grinder at Platts in a department of 70 men.
- 81 Royal Commission on Friendly Societies, Parliamentary Papers 1872, XXII, Q.17,357-17,361, Evidence of Sharples and Green.
- 82 Jefferys, The Story of the Engineers, p.66.
- 83 Burnley and District Sanitary Officer's Report, 1892, quoted by G. Trodd, 'Political Change and the Working Class in Blackburn and Burnley 1880-1914', Reading University Ph.D. Thesis, p.233.
- 84 Joyce, op. cit., p.292.
- 85 ibid. pp.169 and 184 for John Platt and Benjamin Alfred Dobson respectively.
- 86 John Platt and his son Samuel Radcliffe Platt provided major financial assistance to Oldham's Lyceum School of Science and Art, and the Verneth Mechanics Institution (Verneth was the district of Oldham in which Platts Old Works was located). They also financed a company orchestra in 1864, and in 1894 the latter provided a works dining hall for almost 1000 men, which had special provision for feeding single men and apprentices. DDP SL 1/15/1, J. J. Kempe, Platts of Oldham, typescript 1971, pp.37-42. William Mather established the Salford Iron Works Evening Science School in 1873 and in 1878 a works dining room.
- 87 For example, firms such as Butterworth and Dickinson followed similar lines after 1900; by 1910 the firm had established a library, supported football, cricket, cycling, rifle, rambling and savings clubs and provided lunchtime "improvement" lectures with visiting speakers. Butterworth and Dickinson, Globe Works Annals, 1908-10.
- 88 Bolton Journal, 4.3.1898, cited by Joyce, op. cit., p.184

- 89 See Part II of Chapter 5.
- 90 ZDB 2/22.
- 91 See Conclusion for a discussion of the problems of the 1860's and Chapters 5 and 6 for an account of the firm's poor industrial relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 92 Joyce, op. cit., pp.61 and 68, relates the atypical development of Burnley's working class to the relatively late development of trade unionism, notably in the weaving community, and to the existence of an employer class which was less well established than in other Lancashire towns, and consequently took a non-paternalistic and anti-union stance in the mid and late nineteenth century.
- 93 M. Kirk, op. cit., pp.22-23.
- 94 Blackburn Standard, 7.1.1852.
- 95 ibid. 14.1.1852.
- 96 Blackburn Times, 2.3.1867. Joyce's analysis of Blackburn and Burnley is at considerable variance with that of Geoffrey Trodd, who contrasted the development of working class political attitudes in the two towns in the period 1880-1914. Trodd stresses the homogeneity of the Blackburn working class which produced, "an economist class consciousness that took form in labourism." Burnley, on the other hand, he claims experienced the growth of a distinct artisan-based labour aristocracy with strong links to the temperance, co-operative and adult education institutions of the town. G. Trodd, op. cit., pp.261-269.
- 97 Joyce, op. cit., Chapter 6, provides evidence from Blackburn, Bury and Oldham in particular to indicate the party-political influence of employers in these localities.
- 98 For example, the work of Gray and Crossick and the recent contribution of Breuilly.
- 99 Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Aristocracy', p.275.
- 100 Thomas Wright, Our New Masters, London 1873, pp.5-6.
- 101 ibid. p.6.
- 102 A. Reid, 'Intelligent Artisans and Aristocrats of Labour: the Essays of Thomas Wright', in J. Winter (ed.), The Working Class in Modern British History, Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling, Cambridge 1983, p.177.
- 103 A. Fox, History and Heritage - The Social Origins of the British Industrial Relations System, London 1985, p.119.
- 104 R. Roberts, The Classic Slum, Manchester 1971, p.119.
- 105 Reid, op. cit., p.180 for Wright's concept of 'respectability'.
- 106 P. Thompson (ed.), The Edwardians, London 1975, p.132.

- 107 Interview with Tom Stephenson in Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, Vol. 21, 1971, p.8.
- 108 This point is also made by G. Stedman Jones, 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution', New Left Review, Vol. 90, 1975, p.65 and by Reid, op. cit., p.177.
- 109 Thomas Wright, Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes, p.258.
- 110 W. D. Butterworth, Industrial Relations in a Small Engineering Firm, Typescript n.d., p.1/32.
- 111 G. Crossick (ed.), The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914, London 1977, p.48 ff.
- 112 Hobsbawm, 'The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered', in Worlds of Labour, p.242.
- 113 T. R. Tholfsen, op. cit., p.283.
- 114 Foster, op. cit., p.211 ff.
- 115 Hobsbawm, op. cit., p.230.
- 116 Royal Commission on Friendly Societies, Parliamentary Papers 1871, XXV, Q.6236, Q.6237 and Q.6238.
- 117 Foster, op. cit., p.228.
- 118 M. Tylecote, The Mechanics Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire, Manchester 1957, p.80.
- 119 Trodd, op. cit., p.271.
- 120 Tylecote, op. cit., p.288.
- 121 J. A. Hemming, 'The Mechanics Institute Movement in the Textile Districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', Leeds University Ph.D. Thesis, 1974, p.105.
- 122 E. Stones, The Development of Education in Accrington 1790-1903, Accrington 1957, p.301. The failure of the Institute to provide good technical education for the artisans of the town, was a major factor in the establishment by John Bullough of the Howard and Bullough Works School in 1881.
- 123 Hemming, op. cit., p.105. He also notes that in the one Lancashire Institute where comprehensive pupil records have survived, in Stockport, between 1851 and 1871, 21% were working class as opposed to 15% professional men, 9% clerks and book-keepers, 7% shopkeepers and 40% tradesmen.
- 124 Crossick, op. cit., pp.50-51. The comments of Frank Benson on the Bolton artisans lends support to this local segregation from the lower paid manual workers.
- 125 Trodd, op. cit., p.262. He contrasted the old 'slum' area of Moor Street, near the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and the new

Cambridge Street in the suburb of Audley, yet found a high level of inter-marriage of engineering artisan families and those of weavers and others lower in the social scale, in both areas.

- 126 The South Stoneyholme area was built in the 1870's, and its lack of public houses added to its 'respectable' image. It was adjacent to Keighley's Bankhouse textile machinery works, and was almost totally isolated from other residential areas by it, the Albert and Stoneyholme weaving sheds, Stoneyholme gas works and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's goods yard. With the nearby Burnley Paper Works, these establishments accounted for almost all the district's employment. The engineering employment category includes textile mill engine workers, and maintenance workers and others as well as textile machinery workers. The 'other artisan' category includes masons, printers, carpenters and joiners, and shoemakers. The textile 'aristocrat' category includes tacklers, overlookers, mulespinners and sizers. The employer category includes men employing 100 or more (one in Rectory Road, one in Berkeley Street) and men employing as few as seven men. The 'non-manual' category includes a high proportion of mill managers on Rectory Road, plus teachers, clerks, salesmen, and even a missionary. It would appear from the returns that in this 'respectable' area very few engineering artisan wives went out to work (only 3 out of 31) yet most wives of weavers and non-artisan manual workers did so, to enable the family to afford to live in the area.
- 127 The Trafalgar Street area was adjacent to Butterworth and Dickinson's original 'Globe' works. Its housing, however, varied from a densely packed western section centred on Thorneybank Street, to a more 'respectable' eastern section centred on Albion Street (in which two major cotton employers resided). The former shows integration of engineering artisans and the less skilled less well paid e.g. labourers, miners and street sweepers as well as weavers; the latter shows their integration with some substantial employers, though the professional/managerial/clerical element is largely absent. Significantly, a far greater proportion of engineering artisan wives went out to work in this generally more proletarian area (15 out of 39).
- 128 South Stoneyholme, for example, rapidly became a proletarian area after World War One.
- 129 R. Q. Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth Century Britain, London 1981, pp.41-42.
- 130 F. Von Raumer, England in 1835, p.221, and England in 1841, p.301, quoted by W. H. Chaloner, 'New Light on Richard Roberts, Textile Engineer 1789-1864', Transactions of the Newcomen Society, Vol. XLI, 1968-69, p.42.
- 131 Thomas Wood, 'Autobiography', in Useful Toil, pp.310-311.
- 132 Marcroft, op. cit., p.72.
- 133 ibid. p.15.
- 134 Foster, op. cit., p.238.

- 135 *ibid.*
- 136 An article in Commonweal, 2.10.1887 (then edited by William Morris and Joseph Lane) stresses the key role of the pubs as centres of organising activity in the strike and that this was the real cause of their closure by magistrates, not their alleged contribution to mob drunkenness.
- 137 Blackburn Trades Council, Annual Reports, 1892-1911. By 1905, the A.S.E. was meeting in its own 'Institute'. Prior to 1900, the only unions meeting away from licensed premises were the various textile societies.
- 138 C. S. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.101. By the early 1890's rent accounted for between four and five shillings of most Lancashire engineering artisans' weekly wages of about 35 shillings. It ranged from four shillings on average in Burnley, Heywood and Todmorden to five shillings in Oldham and Blackburn and five shillings and sixpence in Manchester. Sanitary conditions were described by the A.S.E. as "good" in Accrington, Burnley, Colne, Heywood and Todmorden, yet as, "bad and in need of inspection", in Blackburn, Oldham, Bury, Bolton, Darwen and Manchester. Royal Commission on Labour, 1893, Parliamentary Papers, 1893, XXXII Appendix XLVI, p.469 ff.
- 139 C. S. Davies, *op. cit.*, p.103.
- 140 P. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p.133.
- 141 *ibid.*
- 142 *ibid.* p.134.
- 143 E. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.54.
- 144 See notes 130 and 131.
- 145 Reid, *op. cit.*, p.182.
- 146 *ibid.*
- 147 Wright, Our New Masters, p.23 quoted by Reid, *op. cit.*, p.182.
- 148 R. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p.6. The author's own father had worked as an engineering artisan prior to becoming a small shopkeeper.
- 149 Marcroft, *op. cit.*, p.75 and Bolton Evening News, 3.11.1887.
- 150 Textile Manufacturer, Vol. 70, 1944, p.168 for Robert Hall. S. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp.296-297 for Taylor and Lang. E. G. Smalley, 'History of Textile Machinery Making in Rochdale', in Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society, Transactions, XXIV, 1960, for Tweedale.
- 151 See also Part III, Section D of this Chapter.
- 152 Burnley Mechanics Institute, Annual Report, 1912, quoted by Trodd, *op. cit.*, p.271. Charles More, *op. cit.*, p.216, in criticising the naivety of uncritical attacks on English technical education, quotes Shadwell who argued that technical

schools were, "universally regarded by trade unionists and intelligent workmen as stepping stones out of the mill." Yet, More acknowledges the high drop out rate of evening class students who were working a 54 hour week. He also makes the interesting points that many firms were reluctant to allow apprentices to attend classes lest they 'leak' secrets or take their skills elsewhere after completing apprenticeships, and that at union branch level there was suspicion that technical education might erode artisan control over skilled work.

153 R. Roberts, op. cit., p.2.

154 See Appendix B.

155 The three engaged in non-manual work were two sons of a roller-maker listed as "book-keeper" and "office boy", and the son of a mechanic listed as "solicitor's clerk". The brother of the latter was perhaps also a candidate for inclusion as "printer's apprentice". The three engaged in shop work included, "butcher", "grocer's assistant", and "shop boy".

156 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.3/10.

157 Ernest Jones, Notes to the People, p.862, quoted by J. Saville (ed.), Ernest Jones: Chartist, London 1952, p.194.

158 ibid. p.194.

159 ibid. p.47.

160 Hobsbawm, 'Debating the Labour Aristocracy', in Worlds of Labour, p.222.

161 Joyce, op. cit., p.xv and p.58. Price op. cit., *passim*. Tholfsen, op. cit., p.283.

162 Tholfsen, op. cit., p.283, Joyce, op. cit., p.62.

163 Foster, op. cit., p.227.

164 Church, op. cit., pp.44-45. At Robert Halls, for example, foundry employment, having sunk to 28 in February 1863 rose to 84 three years later, see Table 5.

165 ZDB 2/6, 2/7, 2/8. It is not possible to provide the exact number of signatories since the manuscript is severely damaged in places.

166 ZDB 2/7.

167 Blackburn Times, 2.2.1867 and A.S.E., Monthly Report, September 1867.

168 Blackburn Times, 18.4.1867.

169 ibid. 25.5.1867.

170 A.S.E., Monthly Report, April 1867.

171 A.S.E., Monthly Report, September 1867.

- 172 A.S.E., Monthly Report, April 1868
- 173 Evidence presented to the Royal Commission in connection with the Manchester Outrages involving brickmakers, points out that there was considerable violence involved in the moulders' strike in Bolton in August 1866, although the employees of Dobson and Barlow are not directly mentioned. Royal Commission on Trade Unions, Report on the Manchester Outrages I, Parliamentary Papers 1868, Vol. XXXII, cd. 3873, p.xxiv.
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- 183 A. Working Man, Working Men and Women, London, 1879, pp.106-7.

**Respectable Militants: The Lancashire
Textile Machinery Makers c.1800-1939**

**A Thesis submitted to the
University of Salford for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

PART 2

by

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Chapter FiveThe Era of the New UnionismI. Introduction

If the period 1852-1886 in the industrial relations of Lancashire's machinery making industry was something akin to detente, the following dozen years brought intense and fairly continuous conflict, culminating in the lock-out of 1897-98. Between 1852 and the mid-1880's the employers had not followed up their victory in Lancashire in 1852; the lack of any serious challenge to the artisans' control over the labour process had led to a period of relative peace in industrial relations. The smaller firms' ability to press ahead with technological change was severely restricted by shortage of capital. The major firms, which were not so handicapped, were largely content, after 1852, to establish the principle of their right to manage, without seeking to drive home the principle in detailed assaults on traditional shop floor craft practices.

On the one hand this reluctance to press home the attack on artisan controls can be explained by the extremely buoyant market conditions which, with the notable exception of the impact of the 'cotton famine', tended to prevail. Expanding home and foreign markets, without serious foreign competition outside the U.S.A. market, reduced the employers' incentives to sustain the challenge. The rapid regeneration of membership in the A.S.E. in the 1850's and the unchallenged strength of the F.S.I.F. also acted as a deterrent. The strength of localised resistance in Bolton and Blackburn between 1865 and 1867, and the Lancashire repercussions of the nine hours struggle, which began on the north-east coast, were indications of the nature of difficulties to be encountered.

From the mid-1880's employers began to perceive the challenge of what was to be labelled 'new unionism'. This took the form of the development of trade unions to represent the interests of the hitherto largely unorganised less skilled workers, and the growing influence of socialism among these men, and a growing proportion of younger artisans. The development of new machine shop and foundry technology' had re-created the spectre of de-skilling and thus forged a powerful, if somewhat unholy alliance, in unions like the F.S.I.F. and the A.S.E., of advanced socialists and traditionalists attempting to retain craft elitism. Indeed, in describing the A.S.E. in 1897, Clegg, Fox and Thompson, note,

"socialists intent on pursuing the class war to end all privilege allied ... with members anxious to preserve their ancient privileges against the inroads of machines, piece work and unskilled workers."²

The two wings of the artisan trade unionism did, however, have a great deal in common in subsequent years, following their defeat in 1898, as the employers used their strength to mount attacks on artisan control of the work process and to try to curtail the development of effective shop floor unionism. The basis of the enhanced power of the employers was the national Federation of local Engineering Employers' Associations, created during the 1897-98 lock-out after existing regional and local organisations had proved ineffective in containing the challenge of 'new unionism'.

The Bolton strike of 1887, which centred on Dobson and Barlow's Kay Street Works, is illustrative of what Duffy observed as the, "abnormal organising activity", in the quinquennial period 1885-1890,³ and really heralded the arrival of 'new unionism' in the Lancashire machinery making industry. It is an outstanding example of the deeply ingrained craft militancy in the textile machinery trade and fundamentally conflicts with the image of paternalism and

deference presented by Joyce.⁴ Indeed it was the most violent and bitter episode in a long series of battles involving skilled engineering and foundry workers at the firm of Dobson and Barlow, which had begun in 1831 and subsequently resurfaced in 1851, 1852, 1865-68, 1887, 1891, 1897-98, 1910 and 1913. The strike had strong socialist influences and subsequently brought class warfare and anti-police rioting reminiscent of the 1830's and 1840's, followed by prolonged military occupation. Closely following the London unemployed workers' riots of January 1886, the Bolton strike was a further indication to the authorities of the threat to order and stability posed by even the elite of the urban working class.

The mill-building boom of 1889-1892,⁵ brought a boom in the machinery making industry which encouraged a rash of strikes of artisan societies to enforce wage advances and reductions in the working day. This was followed by a trade depression which delayed further developments until 1896. That year was marked by a number of skirmishes involving the craft societies, and was followed in the spring of 1897, by what became known as 'the Great Strike in the Oldham Iron Trade' which saw a renewal of craft union militancy. This was led by the small Grinders and Glazers Society, but was given strength in depth by the radical local leadership of the A.S.E. The employers, including the giant firm of Platts, were taken on and soundly defeated, though the defeat stung the management of Platts into preparations for an effective counter-attack, the opportunity for which soon arrived when the national lock-out commenced in July.

Although the lock-out began outside Lancashire, the 'machine question' crisis which underpinned it, was already boiling up in the county, notably at Dobson and Barlow's, Bolton works. In addition, it is significant to note that the subsequent settlement's

'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes' owed much to the lessons learned by Platts during the Oldham strike of 1897. The comprehensive victory of the Employers' Federation in 1898 was followed by a period of near impotence of the A.S.E. leadership until the outbreak of the Great War, which saw the union lose the prime position it had held in the trade union movement as a whole since its creation in 1851. That this victory did not fulfil the employers' hopes of wresting control of the labour process from the artisans, despite repeated attempts to break the power of shop floor militants by blacklisting, owed much to the resolute 'guerilla' style resistance of the grass roots, and the emergence of a powerful 'localism' in the A.S.E. which could not be controlled by the employers or the union's leadership. This local and shop floor power within the A.S.E., was to prove the platform for an effective demolition of the 1898 settlement in the boom years of 1912-14.

The prolonged campaign of the A.S.E. in Bolton, the Oldham strike, and the campaign leading to the national lock-out of 1897-8, all revealed the strength of militancy which had developed in the engineering artisan societies; these disputes also revealed, despite the catastrophic defeat of 1898, their financial and organisational power. The decade 1887-97 also brought the emergence of unions of the textile machinery industry's less skilled workers, the financial parlousness and organisational fragility of which contrasted starkly with the A.S.E., F.S.I.F., Patternmakers and the other skilled societies.

As Hobsbawm argued,

"Only rarely did the craft union feel impelled to extend its jurisdiction over new groups of unskilled or semi-skilled men. Either the awkward new grades could be sent to form unions of their own, which would not complicate or weaken the craftsmen's bargains ... or the craftsman could attempt to capture the machine for himself."⁶

The notable exception in the Lancashire machinery making industry was the unification of the skilled smiths and semi-skilled strikers, with the creation of the Manchester-based, United Kingdom Amalgamated Society of Smiths and Strikers in 1886. This was a product of the unique relationship of these workers, which had encouraged the smiths to assist the development of a strikers' society in south Lancashire in the Chartist era. In 1865 a loose federation, the Sons of Vulcan United Society of Smiths and Strikers had been formed which was the basis of the later, more formal amalgamation.⁷ By 1899 the Smiths and Strikers Society had over 4,000 members, the majority of whom were located in Lancashire and the adjacent industrial areas.⁸

Outside the smithy, in foundry or machine shop, Hobsbawm's point is endorsed by developments in the Lancashire textile machinery industry. In the industry's foundries the coremakers eventually consolidated fragmentary localised societies into an "Amalgamated Society", based on a federation created in 1889, whilst the spread of new moulding technology led to the development of a union representing Plate and Machine Moulders in 1890.⁹ In the machine shops the most dynamic of the 'new unions' was the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, inspired in Lancashire by J. R. Clynes. This union, which also organised foundry labourers, filled the vacuum left by the disregard of the A.S.E. and the U.M.W.A. for the lower grades of semi-skilled machinists and the industry's labourers.

The impetus to develop these 'new unions' in the industry might have come, as Duffy suggests, from the general spreading downwards through labour's ranks of the need for self-respect.¹⁰ It might also have been encouraged, as Clynes and Pete Curran of the G. and G.L.U. repeatedly stressed to their potential recruits, by the

effects of industrial action taken by the skilled men which also threw the unskilled, un-unionised men out of work onto the mercies of the Poor Law, whilst they themselves remained incapable of industrial action in their own right.''

The experience of the textile machinery industry's 'new unions' in the 1890's provides a number of excellent case studies of their financial and organisational weakness, especially when faced with strong employer resistance or poor economic conditions. The failure of the Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders' Society in its 1896/97 campaign for wage advances in the loom making industry of north-east Lancashire, and the very limited gains at great cost, made by the G. and G.L.U. in Blackburn in the 1890's and Accrington in 1913, contrasts with the localised successes of the artisan societies in the county over the same period.

The eventual success of the 'new unions' in terms of membership building in Lancashire engineering, is demonstrated in Appendix F, Tables F and G. Some narrowing of wage differentials could be expected between 1885 and 1914 as a reflection of the emergence of this new bargaining force in textile machinery making industrial relations. Pollard, argues that although the statistics should be treated with caution, they show a negative result in the engineering industry as a whole, as time rates of unskilled men fell from 60% of the skilled rate in 1880 to 59% in 1890 and 58.6% in 1914.¹² However, available figures from six textile machinery districts, show that from the early 1880's to 1914 the wage rates of labourers increased from 53% of the basic rate paid to fitters and turners, and 47.8% of that of the skilled moulders to 57.5% and 50.4% respectively. In simple cash terms however, the average fitter/turner wage rate rose by just under six shillings to 36/6,

that of the moulder by 7/8 to 41/8 whilst the labourers' wage rate rose by only 4/9 to 21/- by 1914.¹³

The widening of the actual gap in wage rates between skilled and unskilled reflects the inability of the new unions to mount a sustained campaign where employer opposition was strong or when economic conditions were unfavourable. Susceptibility to the importation of blacklegs was an ongoing problem. For all the socialist rhetoric of Will Thorne and other G. and G.L.U. leaders, the weakness of the union's position often compelled it to take an industrial relations stance of greater moderation than the craft societies. In 1896, for example, the widespread use of 'free labour' compelled the union to accept arbitration and the negative decision of the arbitrators, following a lengthy dispute in Blackburn. Another explanation of the widening differential was the simple tendency of the less skilled societies either to submit wage claims of only one shilling per week; or having claimed two shillings, to accept a compromise of one, especially after 1898, when faced with the might of the Employers' Federation. In contrast, the skilled unions almost invariably claimed two shillings and were far more likely to prolong the bargaining until demands were met.¹⁴

II. The Bolton Engineers' Strike of 1887

The Bolton textile machinery makers had a long record of industrial militancy behind them. The 1831 strike at Dobson and Barlow (then known just as Dobsons) was perhaps the first ever major strike of engineering workers since the industry had become factory-based. The same firm's workers had been among those locked out in 1852, and between 1866 and 1868, they had fought a persistent

campaign to maintain their position. In 1871 the Bolton moulders had taken advantage of the prevailing good trade to follow the lead of the Sunderland engineers and mount a successful 'nine hours' campaign.¹⁵ Four years later, the Bolton engineers had been able to push up the district time rate to thirty two shillings per week and thus achieve parity with the highest paid fitters and turners in the country, in Manchester.¹⁶

In 1887 the firm of Dobson and Barlow employed perhaps three or four thousand men.¹⁷ Along with other Bolton engineering firms, Dobson and Barlow proclaimed in January 1886 that,

"In consequence of the depressed state of trade and the high cost of production in this district, the wages of all workmen in these works will be reduced by about seven and a half per cent or to the rates paid in the early part of 1879."¹⁸

Trade had revived in 1887, and this brought an A.S.E. request for an advance in pay of two shillings per week on the basic time rate; this it was claimed, would bring the Bolton men on a par with their opposite numbers in Oldham, yet two shillings behind the Manchester men. Chairman of the Bolton unions' joint committee, Charles Haugh, pointed to the erosion of the standards of skilled men since 1851, when millwrights had been, "three half guinea men", and were by 1887 only earning thirty shillings.¹⁹

Dobson and Barlow refused to accede to the demand and so the unions replied by banning overtime. The firm's response was to put up notices stating that,

"Workmen engaged in the works will be required to work overtime when necessary, and any workman refusing will be discharged at once, and this must be taken as formal notice thereof."²⁰

The result was a strike which commenced on May 16th, 1887 and which almost immediately obliged several firms to concede the higher rate

of pay. Dobson and Barlow and three other firms engaged in other branches of engineering, resisted.²¹

The Bolton strike is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it stands out for the scale of violence and destruction alone. Secondly, it is remarkable for the degree of local class solidarity with the strikers and against the employers who brought in blackleg labour, the tradesmen who supplied the latter with goods and services, and the police and military forces who protected them. Thirdly, the strike reveals the first major impact of 'new unionism' in Lancashire with its radicalising effects on the A.S.E. and other craft unions, and in a more limited manner, on local politics.²² Fourthly, it is remarkable for its having almost completely escaped the attention of labour historians.²³

The violence in Bolton engendered by the strike was remarkable both in its extent and its selectivity. Within a week of the start of the strike three of the four firms involved, began to import blacklegs. Such was local hostility to them that none could find secure accommodation and so the firms were obliged to quarter them on their premises. On May 24th, crowds began to attack carts carrying bedding for the 'knobsticks' as they were termed, and this escalated into attacks on Woods' Garside Street foundry.²⁴ The continued importation of blacklegs, brought matters rapidly to a head. On June 29th, the manager of Woods was attacked by a crowd at Trinity Street Station and was rescued only, "with great difficulty", by police.²⁵

On the following day, huge crowds massed outside Dobson and Barlow's Kay Street works, the textile machinery firm being seen as the worst offender as regards the use of knobsticks. The firm had anticipated trouble and had stationed men armed with swing hammer shafts to guard the works. In the resulting attacks, every single

window on the Kay Street side of the works was smashed; even frames and shutters were knocked out by the sheer weight of the volleys of stones and iron bolts. Elements in the crowd demanded that the works be burned to the ground, and the defenders, who included local and county police from Manchester, Ashton, Bury and North-east Lancashire, were in danger of being overwhelmed. When the mayor, who called for the crowd to disperse, was stoned, the military were called in. The thirteenth Hussars from Hulme barracks, Manchester, eventually succeeded in breaking up the crowd.²⁶

The violence was, however, selective and not indiscriminate. The firm of Musgroves, which had supported the others, but had refrained from using blacklegs, was left completely untouched, even at the height of the rioting. Moreover, on the night of the most serious troubles, June 30th, the crowd repeatedly pronounced, "cheers" for Musgrove, alternating with "groans" for Dobson, a point which casts some further doubts on the picture of Benjamin Alfred Dobson as a well-loved, paternalistic employer. The violence resumed on the following day, and recurred on a declining scale until July 13th. So great was the damage that the Kay Street works was closed completely for a week from that date so that essential repairs could be carried out.²⁷

Apart from the violence, the strike was most remarkable for the high degree of organisation shown by the strike committee (and by the employers). The strike involved 1,300 men initially and subsequently over 2,000, including non-society artisans, and financial support was very well organised. Football and cricket matches were put on to raise funds and a brass band contest with seven bands, which brought ticket sales of 3,500, was among the other events organised.²⁸ Lancashire branches of unions involved, took an active supporting role. In Blackburn, non-society men were

pressured to match the contributions of unionists to the strike appeal, whilst the Bury branches organised donations from 'setters-up', working as far afield as Russia.²⁹ Wider union support came from several Lancashire textile unions, the Carpenters and Joiners, Felt Hat Makers, Tin Plate Workers, and the Typographical Association among others.³⁰ In addition, from its headquarters at the Rope and Anchor pub, the strike committee had organised teams of pickets who intercepted the imported blacklegs and escorted them to the pub, where they were informed of the nature of the dispute and given the train fare home. This proved so successful that the firms needed police escorts to continue the bringing in of new men, a development which tended to provoke further crowd violence.³¹

Almost from the start of the dispute, a local boycott was organised to deny any comforts to the knobsticks. Local employment was very much dominated by the engineering and textile trades; many of the machinery making artisans had wives or daughters in the local mills. Thus in the central areas of the town where the affected firms were located, community solidarity was great, and local tradesmen and publicans owed their livelihoods to the custom of these workers and their families.³² The local newspapers, during the strike period, contained several apologies from tradesmen who had dealt with the firms or their blacklegs. Munro's brewery, for example, apologised for supplying a cask of beer, "in ignorance", which had found its way to the knobsticks. A greengrocer regretted the sale of goods to a foreman and donated ten shillings to the strike fund, whilst a baker offered ten pounds as a challenge to anyone who could prove charges that he had sold bread to the blacklegs.³³ Even the local clergy were expected to conform to the boycott and risked the community's wrath if they didn't. One clergyman was persuaded by his own Sunday School teachers and

pupils to refrain from giving spiritual guidance to the men besieged in the three works and was "chaired" away from Dobson and Barlows when he was suspected of having changed his mind.³⁴ Another, who did conduct services in the "knobstick barracks" was menaced by the crowd, his daughter being subsequently attacked and covered in filth.³⁵

Finally in this connection, the strike committee made a particular point of condemning the local magistrates who had ordered the closure of pubs in those areas of Bolton near the strike-hit works. Magistrates had blamed the excesses of the rioters on the effects of drink, but the committee saw the move as a plan by sympathisers of the employers to shut off vital sources of financial support, since valuable collections had been organised in the pubs and the publicans themselves had strongly supported the strike.³⁶

The attitude of the community towards the police and the military should also be stressed. The violence at the end of June and in early July 1887, was reminiscent of the north of England anti-police rioting of the 1830's and 1840's. The introduction of extra police from other Lancashire towns tended to exacerbate the problem. The editor of the Bolton Journal observed that,

"the general idea seemed to be that the menacing attitude of a number of police drafted into the town was one of the chief causes of the outbreak of the riot. The bearing of the men seemed to be altogether provocative and this attitude, even to a good humoured English crowd, is always resented."³⁷

By the end of July, a strong local campaign had been organised, with considerable middle class support, to remove the County police and the Hussars who had been encamped in the town since the rioting on the night of June 30th. An estimated 3,000 people attended an "indignation meeting" on August 2nd,³⁸ and Radical M.P. Charles Bradlaugh was persuaded to take up the matter in the House of Commons. "The continued presence of this extra military force is

obnoxious to the ratepayers and is producing irritation amongst the population", he claimed, and he asked the Home Secretary Matthews, "whether under the circumstances the Government will consider the advisability of withdrawal of the troupes." The troops, however, remained for a further week and Matthews justified this on the basis of the requests of the mayor. The ultimate withdrawal of the soldiers was perhaps due to a second parliamentary initiative from Bradlaugh, and the arrival at Westminster of a strong deputation of Bolton citizens.³⁹

The Bolton engineers' strike is also significant in that it shows the extent of the impact of 'new unionism' in the Lancashire textile machinery making centres before 1889, the traditional starting point of this explosive development in trade union history since the writings of the Webbs.⁴⁰ The Social Democratic Federation organised its first Bolton branch meeting most significantly on the day of the most violent clashes, June 30th.⁴¹ Tom Mann came to Bolton during the strike, remarking to John Burns that he found the town, "easy to work", and in the following year the S.D.F. set up Mann as a newsagent and tobacconist, in order that he could build on the successful start made during the strike.⁴² In spite of opposition from authorities, Mann and other S.D.F. speakers addressed twice-weekly meetings from the Town Hall steps. Charles Glyde recalled that, "Tom drew very large crowds to the Town Hall Square. Street corner and propaganda meetings were held in the surrounding towns and villages."⁴³ The Bolton S.D.F. could, by the middle of 1888, claim a membership of 170.⁴⁴ Tom Mann joined the local A.S.E. branch and was sent as the Bolton A.S.E. delegate to the 1888 International in London.⁴⁵

The Bolton Trades Council would not support S.D.F. candidates in the December 1887 local elections, and Harris sees the failure of

the latter's nominees as a sign of the lack of political consciousness generated by the strike.⁴⁶ The Trades Council's own candidates were, however, very successful; eight out of ten were elected, five topping the ward polls. One of the successful candidates was the licensee of the A.S.E. strike headquarters and club house, the Rope and Anchor; a second was licensee of the Falcon, a pub opposite the Dobson and Barlow Works on Kay Street. During the dispute he had chaired the strike committee, and prior to it had worked at the firm.⁴⁷

In terms of the craft unions themselves, the strike provides another notable illustration of a central theme of this work, the failure of supposedly strong centralised union executive councils to control the grass roots militancy and enthusiasm of the membership. The United Patternmakers' Executive had, from the start, strongly supported the strike, and even voted a special allowance to cover the personal expenses of the union's delegate on the joint strike committee.⁴⁸ However, it refused to grant the request of its Bolton branch for the General Secretary to join a mass demonstration through the town, planned for August 13th. The refusal brought resolutions,

"from the whole of the Lancashire branches containing votes of censure upon the E.C. for refusing permission to the General Secretary to attend the recent demonstration in Bolton."⁴⁹

The conflict arising between local and national interests in the A.S.E. was much greater. The Executive Council of the A.S.E. noted that,

"every effort was made to hold our members in check from striking, because it appeared to that body, that although trade was good in Bolton, it was not generally so, and the issue of a premature strike might defeat the object in view, namely a general return of the 2/- per week reduction throughout Lancashire in the early part of 1886."⁵⁰

In fact, the conclusion of the strike brought the censure of the Bolton branches by the Executive because the former had put,

"certain resolutions before an aggregate meeting of the men on strike in defiance of the direct and express orders of the Council.⁵¹

The aftermath of the strike brought progress in the organisation of the less skilled textile machinery workers. There is evidence of the creation of union for labourers and drillers in 1888 and by 1892 of a Machine and General Labourers Union.⁵² The latter proved so successful that the increasingly powerful Gas Workers and General Labourers Union which was organising the lowest paid sections elsewhere in Lancashire, was unable to establish itself in Bolton until the national lock-out of 1897-8.⁵³ The better-paid machine men of the U.M.W.A. had built up their membership in Bolton during the period of the strike, and the coremakers and plate moulders developed branches in Bolton in 1889 and 1891 respectively.⁵⁴ The A.S.E. itself, in Bolton, expanded its membership from 1,111 in four branches in 1887 to 1,279 in 1890 and 1,893 in six branches by the time of the lock-out in 1897.⁵⁵

The employers' actions too reflected the increase in the scale of industrial conflict due to the Bolton strike. The three most resolute opponents of the strike attempted systematic recruitment of blacklegs from all over Britain to defeat the strikers. Further, the three iron works were quickly fitted out to accommodate the imported labour when it became clear that it was impossible to guarantee the safety of any men lodged in private dwellings or hotels. Dobson and Barlow's works acquired dormitories, kitchen and dining room, baths and recreation room and was described as a, "model lodging house", by the press.⁵⁶

The employers were also prepared to escalate the conflict by calling on the Iron Trades Employers' Association for support. Sir

Alfred Dobson was in fact an Executive Council member of this predecessor of the Engineering Employers' Federation.⁵⁷ The I.T.E.A. General Committee brought together, "representative employers from every important engineering centre of the kingdom", and placed the Association's funds at the executive's disposal to aid the Bolton firms almost from the start of the strike. The level of support was stepped up in late July in the belief that the longer the struggle continued, the stronger the employers' bargaining position would become. The Association did, however, acknowledge the relative ineffectiveness of its propaganda effort by comparison with that of the strike committee and undertook to rectify that situation.⁵⁸

After protracted negotiations which centred on the comparability of Bolton wages and conditions with those prevailing in Manchester and Oldham, the unions agreed to call off the strike on October 29th, 1887 and to return to work at the existing wage rates, while the employers agreed to confine overtime to breakdowns and shop repairs.⁵⁹ Both sides accepted the appointment of a board of conciliation and inquiry, consisting of five men from each side, with the Oldham rates of pay as the basis of an eventual settlement.⁶⁰ However, perhaps inevitably, the board failed to agree on a settlement and so both sides decided to accept the final ruling of an umpire, the Recorder of Bolton, Samuel Pope Q.C. In January 1888, he ruled in favour of the employers, reasoning that the state of trade when the strike commenced did not warrant an increase in wages, and his decision was quietly accepted.⁶¹ The unions did, however, achieve their wages advance by the middle of April 1888, following renewed pressure as trade improved.⁶²

In spite of the somewhat inglorious conclusion, the General Secretary of the Patternmakers' Society concluded that,

"the unanimity of the men, the determination of the employers, the extraordinary interest taken in the progress of the dispute throughout the country by every class of society, and the splendid support given to the men on strike by their fellow workmen, constitute it the most important and memorable strike since the Sunderland strike."⁶³

III. 'New Unions' in the Textile Machinery Industry

With the diffusion of new machine shop and foundry technology in the 1890's, the A.S.E. and the F.S.I.F. as the respective dominant craft societies, faced the challenge of the emergence of new semi-skilled grades. The A.S.E. had already accommodated the development of the United Machine Workers Association in the textile machinery making industry. From its foundation in 1844 the U.M.W.A. had been allowed to consolidate its position in organising planers, borers, slotters and drillers, mainly in the larger, technologically more advanced plants in Manchester, Oldham, Salford and Bolton.⁶⁴ By the 1890's, however, the A.S.E. was increasingly coming under pressure to secure the future of its members through the policy of 'capturing the machine', a policy which brought clashes with the U.M.W.A. and the newer unions representing the semi-skilled, notably the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union.

The opposite line was taken by the F.S.I.F. Its membership of skilled 'loose' moulders was, along with the highly skilled patternmakers, traditionally the highest paid in the Lancashire engineering industry. The new methods of plate and machine moulding, and the associated growth of piece work by the late

1880's, were shunned by the F.S.I.F. in a manner reminiscent of the A.S.E.'s towards semi-automatic tools in the late 1840's.

The expansion in production of all types of textile machinery in the late nineteenth century created the need to produce long runs of standardised iron castings for large machinery orders, especially for the foreign market. This had encouraged firms to increase foundry capacity and to invest in plate and machine moulding technology. Platts and Howard and Bullough, for example, had both extended their foundries in 1881 with Platts extending capacity again in 1890 and 1906, and Howard and Bullough adding new foundry capacity between 1895 and 1897.⁶⁵ The applicability of plate and machine moulding to systems of payment by results attracted employers who were thus at last able to contemplate breaking the F.S.I.F. stranglehold on the control of the foundry labour process. Further, the wages of a semi-skilled plate or machine moulder were only two thirds or those of a 'loose' moulder, whilst it was also relatively easy to 'train-up' a foundry labourer to plate or machine moulding to prevent any union attempts to restrict labour supply.⁶⁶

By the early 1890's, the new methods had been established, not just by industry's giants like Platts, but by several of the smaller loom making firms whose need for standardised long-runs of castings for their most popular export models could justify the investment in a limited adoption of plate and machine moulding.

The Amalgamated Friendly Society of Plate and Machine Moulders was very much a product of the Lancashire textile machinery making industry, and its adoption of the new foundry technology. Its origins were among the semi-skilled moulders of Platts, who formed the Friendly Society of Plate Moulders, Oldham and District, in March 1890.⁶⁷ Several of the Oldham activists had subsequently toured the Lancashire machine making towns to encourage the

establishment of new branches.⁶⁸ In October 1891, the branches of Oldham, Manchester, Burnley, Blackburn, Accrington and Bolton came together at the Greaves Arms, Oldham, to establish the new union.⁶⁹

The 'Amalgamated' moulders' society also owed its foundation to the spirit of optimism engendered by the triumphs of 'new unionism' in 1889-90 and to the disdain felt by the F.S.I.F. for this semi-skilled foundry work. The latter did agree to give the new union, "every encouragement and support (morally) ... in their endeavours to organise their class of labour."⁷⁰ The plate moulders' secretary, Sam Howard, frankly admitted in an appeal to the F.S.I.F. members that,

"our work robs your men of their work, but we ask you to ... remember that this system of working in the moulding line is here with us ... and the sooner we can get these men organised, the sooner we can have a certain amount of control over it."⁷¹

In reality, day to day relations between the two societies were poor. Sam Howard later remarked that,

"the iron founder at this date (up to 1896) looked upon himself as the aristocrat of the labour world ... and so for a number of years plate and machine moulding and the men connected with the work were held to be of no account."⁷²

The plate moulders' early delegate meeting minutes contain several references to the need to improve relations, most notable being a resolution of the 1894 Accrington meeting which called for a closer understanding,

"so that in the future we may be able to work more amicably together to the mutual benefit of both classes of workmen and to show in the same the ill-effects of the want of sympathy and encouragement of the I.F.S. members towards Plate and Machine Moulders."⁷³

Such poor relations were to divide the foundry workers and undermine the resistance of both grades of moulder to the initiatives of management, not only during the 1890's, but right through to the 1920's.⁷⁴

The explosion of new unionism also brought about the consolidation of a Coremakers' Union, the Amalgamated Society of Coremakers and again the textile machinery making industry was the forcing ground. The original, Manchester-based Coremakers' Society had been founded as early as 1860, but had virtually withered away with the severe recession in the iron trades in 1879. A revival centred on a wages claim in 1888, resulted in the establishment of a federation of Lancashire coremakers' societies in 1889.⁷⁵

The coremakers, in their 1888 campaign achieved a basic time rate for Manchester of 32 shillings; by 1900 this was 35 shillings, yet their skill was not deemed sufficient to merit admittance to the F.S.I.F. In the rank-order of foundry workers, the coremakers were perhaps second only to the skilled moulders; at the other end of the economic scale were the foundry labourers whose weekly wages ranged from as little as 16 shillings to one pound.⁷⁶

The labourers were, from 1890 organised in both foundry and machine shop, by Will Thorne's Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union and by 1892 there were branches in Blackburn, Gorton, Bury, Burnley, Salford, Oldham, Accrington, Manchester, Heywood, Stockport and Darwen.⁷⁷ True to the militant origins of the union, an aggressive stance was adopted. The 1892 Annual Report recorded the achievement of a standard basic rate of wages in Oldham and an advance of up to 2 shillings in the Blackburn machinery making firms. In those early years, however, the union's existence in the engineering trade in Lancashire was precarious and fluctuated wildly; branches were formed, acquired large memberships, and then disappeared either because of mounting unemployment or the defeat of a strike, or both. Will Thorne, speaking of Lancashire in 1891, could delight at the union, "having succeeded beyond our expectations in the District".⁷⁸ Yet by 1894 as economic conditions

continued to deteriorate, the Lancashire organiser, Patrick Connor reported that,

"during the past year bad trade has caused a large number of members to cease paying to the union. Another cause is the strike at Heywood, where the membership has fallen off considerably, for in the latter case the men were beaten by the master.

"We have at the present a strike on at an iron works in Blackburn, and the men are again beaten; and we would appeal to all branches of our union, under the present depression of trade, not to have recourse to strikes under any consideration whatsoever."⁷⁹

As Hobsbawm has observed, it was the very nature of a 'general' union that enabled it survive slump and the attacks of employers, since if one section came under attack, others with members in employment, could maintain the union's fighting strength.⁸⁰ It is thus interesting to compare the modest achievements of the labourers in the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union in the period up to 1900 with all their market weakness, with the near total destruction of the Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders' Union in the same period.

By the summer of 1896, the G. and G.L.U. in Lancashire had ridden out the depression, despite a reduction in membership from 1760 to 1021 from 1894.⁸¹ The up-turn in trade brought a renewal of the struggle in Blackburn, where the union had been established in strength since 1891 and where despite defeat in 1894, it had succeeded in reducing the labourers' working week from 54 to 53 hours, and raising the minimum wage from 16 shillings to 18 shillings for machine shop workers, and 19 shillings for foundry workers.⁸² A strike began at Yates and Thom's Canal Ironworks over a claim for a one shilling time rate advance and more generous overtime payments. It had the great advantage of adding to the disruption caused by a strike organised by the Smiths and Strikers Society in all the town's loom making works to gain a similar

advance for smiths' strikers, which had begun two weeks earlier.⁸³ However, other Blackburn machine making employers, fearing they could be each picked off in turn by strikes, enforced a lock-out, which soon rendered between 1,500 and 2,000 men idle. The three plants of the Blackburn Loom Company: Willan and Mills (Rosehill), John Dugdale (Soho) and William Dickinson (Phoenix), were shut down completely, and the other loom makers in the town partially so.⁸⁴

The G. and G.L.U. paid ten shillings to each man in strike pay and mounted such effective picketing that although a plentiful supply of what Pete Curran, the union's general organiser, called, "a reserve army of industrial destructors", was mobilised by the employers, it could not be set to work.⁸⁵ The settlement of the smiths' strikers' dispute and the setting up of accommodation in the works of Yates and Thom for Glaswegian 'free labour' persuaded Curran and J. R. Clynes, the Lancashire organiser, to accept arbitration. The dispute had already, in one week, cost the union £125 in strike pay and £25 in fares to send home potential blacklegs.⁸⁶ The arbitrator's decision went against the union but the conduct of the dispute and work of Clynes and Curran after the conclusion of the dispute, brought a growth, not a decline in membership.⁸⁷ By the beginning of 1897 the union was firmly established in Lancashire's machine making industry in two leading centres: Blackburn and Oldham.

The strike of Oldham grinders and engineers which lasted from March to May 1897, threw many labourers into destitution; it did, however, allow the G. and G.L.U. to make great strides in recruitment in the town. Clynes and Curran both addressed mass meetings and pointedly contrasted the efficient local organisation and solidarity of the skilled men with the weakness of the unorganised labourers. Clynes observed,

"The skilled iron workers' strike has kept hundreds of labourers locked out for weeks. They were too weak to ask for an advance and had not insured themselves against the consequences of others doing so. They are finding out for themselves now what others could not teach them before. They are learning a lesson and have found time to think of what they have lost by not having learned it sooner."⁸⁸

The national engineering lock-out re-inforced this lesson when it reached Oldham in mid-August. In both disputes many labourers had been kept from destitution by skilled union collections; some had been obliged to go to their employers for loans. The result was that by the end of 1897, the G. and G.L.U. had increased its Lancashire membership by 1,964. This was an increase of almost 40% on the previous year, with the Oldham textile machinery industry the leading area of advance.⁸⁹ Clynes could boast that,

"throughout the prolonged Engineering Trades lock-out all our locked-out members entitled to pay have regularly received same, without there being any fear of the funds running short."⁹⁰

The Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders' Society, in contrast to the Gas Workers' Union, remained highly localised with a specialised, restricted membership. That the new union remained sectional was not due to any wish to imitate the craft unions. With the very limited training necessary to 'up grade' a labourer to plate moulder, this was clearly impracticable. The Coremakers' Society was engaged in an attempt to enhance the status of its members to that of craftsmen and so this group was excluded from any amalgamation with the Amalgamated Moulders. In March 1892, the latter sought amalgamation or federation with the Bolton-based Machine and General Labourers Union which would have provided links with the semi-skilled machine shop grades in textile engineering, and would thus have given a broader-based organisation with greater financial stability. The plan was rejected, however, on the grounds of the extreme youth of the new Moulders' organisation.⁹¹

The Amalgamated Moulders actively advanced their society in the textile machinery centres of Lancashire by organising shop and public meetings, and by developing a network of shop stewards in all foundries where a presence was established.⁹² In many respects the Amalgamated Moulders' organisation had numerous advantages over the Gas Workers'; it was highly localised which facilitated good communications, and enabled its central officials to more easily promote and maintain branch development. Further, with weekly membership contributions raised to a shilling a week in 1895 as compared to only twopence in the Gasworkers' Union, the society offered not merely a fighting fund but a substantial range of benefits to attract members.⁹³

However, in towns outside the union's original sphere of influence, it proved difficult to establish and maintain new branches. In Keighley for example, the wages of plate moulders were so poor that special half-rate contributions and benefits were allowed, whilst at Castleton where economic conditions were favourable, the union like all others, was faced with uncompromising opposition to the very existence of a local branch, from the management of Tweedales and Smalley.⁹⁴ The absconding of the union's president with about £50 of the central funds was a further set-back in late 1895.

The poor state of trade between 1892 and 1895 brought mounting unemployment in Lancashire's foundries.⁹⁵ The 'new' unions found survival itself their main goal and were obliged to accept a two shilling reduction in wages in most of the textile machinery making firms. A promise was made, however, by the Burnley employers that upon the revival in trade, the two shillings would be restored.⁹⁶ Improvement in trade in 1896 led the Plate Moulders to request the restoration of their district wage rate in the autumn of that year,

and when this was rejected, they turned out in all the Burnley textile machinery firms and were supported by similar action in Blackburn, at the Rosehill foundry of Willan and Mills.⁹⁷

The employers in both towns responded to the strike by taking on labourers and training them as plate moulders, a process which, it was claimed by a critic of the union, only took two days.⁹⁸ In addition, at the local level, the F.S.I.F. were not merely unhelpful but frequently took over the striking plate moulders' jobs. The Plate Moulders' delegate meeting sent a letter to the F.S.I.F. Executive Council,

"expressing deep disgust at the action of their Burnley branch in blacklegging themselves by doing our men's work while our men are on strike for an advance in wages."⁹⁹

In Blackburn too, it was angrily pointed out by delegates that the F.S.I.F. were, "taking every advantage they could think of in getting their men to take over our men's places while our men were out on strike."¹⁰⁰

The F.S.I.F. had requested its Burnley and Blackburn branches,

"to refuse to instruct labourers on plate moulding, also to refuse to finish the work of plate moulders, and to refuse to do any work previously done by plate moulders now on strike, and if they have to leave through such refusal to be allowed dispute (benefit)."¹⁰¹

This appears to have brought the Blackburn F.S.I.F. branch into line, but the Burnley branch unilaterally took up the A.S.E. policy of, 'capturing the machine'. It resolved, "that we draw the attention of the E.C. to the preface in the rules respecting men having no claim to our trade," and stated that its members would carry on "to the uttermost", the claim to all moulding work. This was followed by a strong direct attack on the plate moulders.

"We the iron founders of No. 3 district, claim all plate work as our work and you are doing the same under the Iron founders' standard rate of wages."

They concluded, branding the plate moulders, "usurpers of our trade".¹⁰²

The Plate Moulders' Executive failed to persuade its Blackburn branch to accept an offer from Willan and Mills of a 4% increase on piece rates and in January 1897, the town's other loom makers threatened to extend the conflict.¹⁰³ The strike was thus called off and all efforts concentrated on Burnley, but successive levies on working members brought growing dissatisfaction. In March 1897, support for labourers and non-society men had to be abandoned and in June 1897 the strike finally petered out and the Burnley branch collapsed amid recriminations over, "paying branch funds away indiscriminately against all rule and without any authority."¹⁰⁴

The plate moulders' ill-fated strike is perhaps a classic case study of the limitations of the 'new unionism'. Plate moulding was a rapidly developing trade; the piece work earnings of the union's members were far higher than those of industry's labourers, and the high level of contributions had provided a strong financial base. Even these assets proved insufficient in the face of determined opposition from the united strength of the Burnley engineering employers. The strikers, lacking the skill of the 'loose' moulders, could be quickly replaced by trained labourers, and in a period when unemployment remained quite high, there was no shortage of blacklegs. Unlike the Gas Workers, the plate moulders, having failed to gain a swift victory, dared to undertake a war of attrition which they could not hope to win because of their weak market position, only admitting defeat when the strike had cost over £2,000.

The subsequent strike of grinders and engineers in Oldham, and the national lock-out of 1897/8, neither of which directly involved plate moulders, completed the financial destruction of the union

which only survived the lock-out with the generous assistance of the coal miners' and textile workers' organisations.¹⁰⁵

IV. The Great Strike in the Oldham Iron Trade, 1897

Since the great lock-out of 1852 when Platts of Oldham had taken the leading role in Lancashire in defeating the newly formed A.S.E., industrial relations in Oldham had been relatively peaceful with society members at Platts having to maintain a very low profile. In the 1890's the Oldham engineering industry was still very much dominated by the two textile machine making giants, Platts and Asa Lees. The advance of machine shop and foundry technology had created new grades of semi-skilled machine men and foundry workers, and several new unions had emerged to organise these workers. The Plate and Machine Moulders' Society which had been founded by Platts foundry men, maintained its central office in Oldham and one of the eight founding branches of the Coremakers' Society was composed largely of Platts and Asa Lees men, whilst the Gas Workers and General Labourers, organised in Lancashire by J. R. Clynes, had made great advances among the lower grades of machine men and labourers.¹⁰⁶

The early 1890's had brought to fruition in Oldham what Keir Hardie had earlier called, "a new spirit" in the labour movement. The 'new' unions had begun to make their impact and Clynes had been elected, in 1894, as secretary to the Trades Council in place of Thomas Ashton who had declared that a Trades Council, "never prospers when trade questions are mixed up with politics".¹⁰⁷ The "new spirit" was not merely confined to the 'new' unions of the less skilled workers, however. The A.S.E. in 1890 inspired the T.U.C.'s

call for the eight hour day. In Oldham, this was opposed by Ashton and the major textile unions, and following a bitter power struggle, the Workman's Times could record in 1893 a, "good socialist majority in control of the Oldham Trades Council."¹⁰⁸

The improvement of trade in 1896 brought a rash of minor disputes in the Lancashire textile machinery industry. In July 400 skilled moulders at the Oldham firms, notably Platts and Asa Lees, had gained a two shilling wages advance, and were successfully followed by the moulders in Bury and Colne (September) and Preston (October). In September the Preston fitters and turners gained similar advances, as did some of the lowest paid unskilled workers at Platts of Oldham.¹⁰⁹

The patternmakers, the most highly skilled men in the textile machinery industry, gained a two shilling advance in Bury, Blackburn and Manchester in July, and having been turned down in Oldham in June, renewed the claim in August.¹¹⁰ A second refusal led to 54 men coming out on strike, of whom exactly half were U.P.A. members.¹¹¹ Such was the extreme difficulty of replacing these highly skilled men in a period of expanding trade, that the U.P.A. and the other unions involved were confident in taking on such giants as Platts and Asa Lees. After just under two months of strike action the strike achieved some success as the U.P.A. Monthly Report noted,

"Messrs. Asa Lees and Co. have since conceded the advance but Platt Bros. and Co. remain obdurate, and are getting their work done by blacklegs, carpenters, nondescripts and lads, working this motley crowd all the overtime they can stand, and sending out the work they cannot overtake."¹¹²

The stubbornness of Platts' resistance surprised the U.P.A. which was obliged to abandon the strike in November 1896, declaring the firm a 'black shop' which it remained for over a decade, as far as that union was concerned.¹¹³ The strike's success at Asa Lees

and the smaller firms gave encouragement to the local union leaderships, but its failure at Platts re-inforced that firm's directors' determination to resist what they saw as an, "aggressive attitude", in the unions which, "had everywhere become more pronounced at this time than it had for a very long time previously".¹¹⁴ Thus a relatively minor dispute involving just over 50 men proved to be a rehearsal for a full-scale confrontation in the following spring.

The defeat of Platts' patternmakers was the only significant exception to the pattern in a year which had brought successful conclusions to the initiatives taken by the skilled men. In March 1897, a four day strike of 290 Blackburn engineers secured an advance of nearly two shillings to continue this trend.¹¹⁵ The outbreak of this dispute exactly coincided with the start of the "Great Strike" in Oldham, a strike which along with that in Bolton a decade earlier, provides the best insight into the new aggressive spirit demonstrated by the artisan societies in Lancashire. In addition, the failure of the employers to break the Bolton engineers' strike in 1887, and the successes achieved by the artisan unions in 1896/7 provided a stark contrast to the fragile existence of the less skilled workers' unions in the latter period, exemplified by the defeat of the plate and machine moulders and the Gas Workers having to accept a negative arbitration award so as to avoid a vain struggle in order to return to building up membership.

In addition to the above contrast, the Oldham strike, like that in Bolton, emphasised the plight of labourers and semi-skilled men who were not even party to the dispute, yet were thrown out of work and cast into the worst depths of poverty. Also of significance is the contrast between the two employers involved in the dispute. Asa Lees which remained a private limited company before the Great War,

was organised on more traditional lines than its giant neighbour; its far more restricted investment in new machine shop and foundry technology had meant that a large proportion of its artisans were employed on traditional time rates, whereas Platts, by 1897, were heavily committed to systems of payment by results.¹¹⁶ Perhaps the most vital aspect of the dispute as far as the future conduct of industrial relations was concerned, was the success of the unions, which led them to contemplate further action to enforce a shorter working day with a high degree of optimism. On the other hand, the unions' success led Platts to re-think their strategy in industrial relations and to anticipate to a notable extent the settlement which was to follow the national lock-out in 1898.

At the end of January 1897, the A.S.E., S.E.M., the Smiths and Strikers' Society and the Grinders and Glazers submitted a claim for a weekly advance of two shillings on the grounds that, trade had for,

"the last few years been consistently good, and with the development of new industries we may safely assume that it will continue so for a considerable length of time and very materially benefit you either directly or indirectly ... seeing that advances have already been conceded throughout Lancashire, we appeal to you to show your recognition by your acquiescence to a class of skilled artisans whose every effort is directed to maintain that standard of efficiency which has been characteristic of our members in the past and which is so essential in the future."¹¹⁷

The managements of Platts and Asa Lees, after joint discussions, went some way to meet the claim by offering advances of one or two shillings on time rates, "to such men as they consider to be deserving of it."¹¹⁸ The offer was typical of Platts' style of management. Having led the lock-out of 1852, the firm had maintained a policy of no discussions with the unions. Like Dobson and Barlow in Bolton and Howard and Bullough in Accrington, the firm's directors, especially the Platt family, maintained a high

social and political profile in the locality and laid great stress on their benevolent, paternalistic attitude to employees.¹¹⁹ The minutes of the directors' meeting of February 17th confirm that in the eyes of the management,

"the question has resolved itself into one of policy. The Directors have tried to meet it by a policy of avoiding direct dealings in labour questions with the representatives of the men's unions or of Associations of the men's unions. The question is now before the company in a more determined form than it has assumed for many years and the present crisis will probably decide whether the Directors can, as in the past, successfully overcome this objectionable method of settling such questions and maintain the old lines of direct dealing with the men."¹²⁰

Platts' offer to the men was in any case far less generous than it appeared, since it took advantage of an ambiguity in the claim to award only one or two shillings to time workers, leaving piece rates unchanged. Since Platts had rapidly forced ahead the transition to piece work, overriding the resistance of the artisans after the 1852 lock-out, their directors acknowledged, "the increase would have been but a comparatively small matter for this firm, on account of their almost universal system of piece work."¹²¹ The union joint committee's claim for proportionate piece work advances was dismissed as, "an entirely fresh matter".¹²²

Platts' offer did succeed in dividing the workforce, as a number of non-society artisans at the Hartford Old Works accepted the award and even sent a letter of thanks to the Board praising their additional generosity in granting an extra shilling a week to the unskilled labourers.¹²³ On the other hand, the perceived duplicity enraged many, and provoked a walk-out of grinders on March 10th. The following day saw the walk-out of the A.S.E., S.E.M., and the smiths and by Saturday March 13th, 3,600 were on strike as Asa Lees' artisans followed out the men of Platts. The disruption to the output and despatch of machinery and parts was so great that

Asa Lees' Soho Works was forced to close completely on March 23rd, and Platts were only able to keep going limited or semi-autonomous sections, e.g. the spindle and flyer department. As workers were rendered idle through the lack of skilled labour, 13,000 men were affected by the end of the month.¹²⁴

It appears that Asa Lees, perhaps because of an excessive build-up of competitive pressure, were willing to negotiate a swift settlement, as they had done with the patternmakers in the previous year. The A.S.E. District Delegate, Frank Rose, in negotiations with them, even offered to cajole Lees' turners on piece work to go on to time work in order to bring the dispute to a swift conclusion. However, a combination of Platts' pressure on Asa Lees' directors to hold firm on one hand, and the determination of the men to stand out for piece rate increases on the other, torpedoed the settlement. Platts convinced Lees' directors Lawton and Taylor, that if piece work were negotiated away it would be lost for good, whilst the strikers were annoyed that Rose seemed keener on maintaining A.S.E. traditionalism in opposing piece work, than he was on securing an increase in wages.¹²⁵

As the strike continued the benefits of membership of a wealthy trade society became more apparent, and the unskilled and semi-skilled suffered increasing hardship. The 'new unions' however, showed great solidarity with the artisans on strike. Clynes and Pete Curran of the Gas Workers and General Labourers, and Sam Howard of the Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders addressed the A.S.E.'s mass meetings.¹²⁶ Clynes' union had 150 members at the two firms who were paid dispute benefit, but many more were driven to the Poor Law for relief, or were able to tide over this crisis thanks to the paternalism of Platts, whose loan scheme was taken up by, "several hundreds".¹²⁷ The Amalgamated Moulders' Society, then still engaged

in the futile Burnley strike, was eventually obliged to pay out a further £1,200 to its Oldham members.¹²⁸

In contrast, the A.S.E. in Oldham exuded confidence even in the conflict with such daunting employer opposition. Local officials and rank and file members were clearly in touch with the new spirit of militancy;¹²⁹ the district secretary, Harris, spoke of the A.S.E. having been, "lying dormant", for the previous forty years.¹³⁰ The A.S.E. Monthly Journal, commenting on the vigour of the Oldham campaign, hinted heavily at the likelihood of further militancy to bring about the shorter working day.

"At Oldham our members have sustained a strike for three weeks, the object being an advance of wages at Messrs. Platts and Asa Lees. At the present time, the temper of our members there is excellent; they are being well supported and the non-society element is pouring into our ranks as fast as the Oldham branches can admit. We can therefore afford to wait a week or two but perhaps by that time the men will not feel disposed to get to work so early in the morning as has been customary."¹³¹

The management of Platts was clearly aware of the change and was set to resist the militancy. The A.S.E., they claimed,

"were determined to force a rupture in order to bring about what they have often threatened, to bring Platt Bros. and Co. Ltd. to their knees."

Thus, although Platts were faced with the prospect of severe disruption to large domestic and foreign orders they were determined to resist. The directors argued that,

"If a struggle could be by any means averted for the present occasion, an opportunity would be sought by the joint committee in the near future for pressing further demands and in all probability when such demands were made the firms would have less power to resist them. ... The aggressive attitude of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had everywhere become more pronounced at this time than it had for a long time previously. This was evidenced by the trade disputes in the north of England and Scotland which had forced into existence the then recently formed Associations and Federations of Employers in the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades. In the immediate neighbourhood this aggressive attitude had also been manifested in the recent strike of the patternmakers in which, however, this firm had fortunately been able to come off wholly victorious."¹³²

On April 29th, Asa Lees came to an agreement with the A.S.E. Their skilled men were to receive two shillings if paid 32 shillings or less, or one shilling if paid at a higher rate; the union demands on piece rates were also conceded.¹³³ The A.S.E.'s action was, however, unpopular with the Grinders Society, since most of its men were paid over 32 shillings, and could have gained a one shilling advance without a fight. The Grinders' militancy had precipitated the strike, and Platts' management had acknowledged that, "the Grinders' action was a severe blow at this firm and crippled the firm very much."¹³⁴ Yet the sheer weight of A.S.E. bargaining power, obliged the small sectional societies to fall into line.

Meanwhile, Platts, who had constantly refused to negotiate directly with union officials, using instead the medium of Asa Lees directors, maintained at the least the facade of continuing in a fight to the finish; chairman S. R. Platt had ostentatiously left Oldham for a yachting holiday on April 26th.¹³⁵ However, having initially refused to meet a joint union delegation, Platts sued for peace on May 6th, and accepted virtually the same terms as Asa Lees. Indeed, the circumstances of the final settlement suggest extreme urgency on the part of Platts' management, an aggregate 564,000 working days having been lost.¹³⁶

The delivery books indicate that supplies of machinery and parts to the home market were virtually choked by the strike as Table 1 indicates.¹³⁷ Foreign deliveries were better maintained, especially what were presumably extremely vital large orders for Japan, but these were extremely limited when compared with the pre-strike period and that after the dispute.¹³⁸

Table 1: Platts' Home Deliveries of MachineryMarch to August, 1897Self-Acting Mules Roving Frames Single Cards Ring Frames OthersMarch 13th to May 10th (Strike Period)

1	3	1	0	18
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May 10th to August 31st (Post Strike Period)

85	19	265	12	94
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("Others" were mainly looms, plus assorted pieces of preparatory machinery.)

Source: DDPSL1/78/4 Home Delivery Book

As far as the A.S.E. was concerned the strike action was an almost complete success. The occasioning of the strike action was the responsibility of the rank and file, notably the Grinders and Glazers; the underlying causes came from the growing radicalism and self-confidence within the A.S.E. in Lancashire which with the improving economic condition of 1896/7, could no longer be held back.¹³⁹ However, with the dispute successfully resolved, officials such as O. D. D. Rose whose role in the negotiations with Asa Lees had been considerable, if at times unpopular with the piece workers, could take particular pleasure in the settlement with Platts which eventually resulted. He commented that,

"This huge concern is certainly the largest, wealthiest and most exclusive machine shop in the world, and its founders were in 1851 keen advocates of the celebrated declaration note. They have never until now recognised any trade union, so that the members will readily understand that other issues have been at stake than any involved in advances of wages. The final settlement is, however, all that could be desired, our terms being conceded in the first place; every man being expressly guaranteed his old situation back without prejudice; the society recognised as the proper bargaining medium for the arrangement of trade matters; and a very considerable accession of members to crown the rest."¹⁴⁰

The increase in A.S.E. membership of almost 9% in four months in Oldham, notably at Platts and Asa Lees, as shown in Table 2, confirms Rose's claim and that of the younger, radical artisans that in the right circumstances, a militant policy of industrial action would benefit the society more than one of excessive caution and restraint imposed by the Executive Council.

Table 2: Membership of Oldham and District A.S.E. Branches

(February and June 1897)

<u>Branch</u>	<u>February</u> <u>(Prior to Strike Action)</u>	<u>June</u> <u>(After the Strike)</u>
Oldham No. 1	363	394
" No. 2	266	296
" No. 3	291	308
" No. 4	336	316
" No. 5	343	391
" No. 6	167	195
" No. 7	185	212
Royton	48	48
Hollinwood	258	258
Chadderton	101	116
Total Oldham Membership	1951	2112

Source: A.S.E. Monthly Journal

The memberships for the adjacent areas of Royton, Chadderton and Hollinwood are included to show by their nil or limited growth that the membership boom in Oldham was due exclusively to the strike at Platts and Asa Lees, since workers at the two firms would be most unlikely to live beyond the 'catchment area' of the seven Oldham branches.

Perhaps of primary concern however, as Rose himself acknowledged, was the question of union recognition, delayed at Platts since the lock-out of 1852. Platts' management, in spite of the apparent diehard attitude of the chairman, was beginning to see the value of a more formal negotiating structure. Indeed, the enforced conduct of negotiations via their considerably weaker bargaining partner, Asa Lees, and the latter's early capitulation, must have strengthened this trend. Further, the relative moderation and flexibility of the A.S.E.'s officials, although observed only through the medium of Asa Lees negotiators, was increasingly apparent, and contrasted with the uncompromising stance of the emerging shop floor spokesmen of the 1890's.

A report drawn up by John Dodd, Platts' Vice-Chairman, confirms the shift of policy, though the firm's severe reverse is painted over with a generous coat of gloss.

"The recent strike has shown how difficult it is to end a strike once begun without entering into relations with the official representations of the men on strike. To ignore the strike officials means that the fight must be carried on up to the absolute collapse of one side or the other. It is, I think, open to doubt whether too much has not been made of the danger of having relations with Trade Unions. The same courage and firmness which has kept them so long at bay would surely suffice to keep them in their places and prevent them from effectively interfering with our business, so long as we acted fairly with our work people. The recent strike clearly proved that the officials were more easy to deal with than the men. I feel sure that the men would never have accepted the settlement ultimately agreed to if the question had had to be settled departmentally between ourselves and them. Platt Bros. whilst holding no direct relations with the officials during the earlier and longest period of the strike were really in close touch with them nearly the whole period of the strike through the medium of Messrs. Asa Lees and Co. Ltd., and we really had as much to do with Messrs. Asa Lees and Co. Ltd. settlement as they themselves had, the real struggle being carried on through Asa Lees and Co. Ltd. By these means Platt Bros. prepared the way for their own settlement, for the officials, having accepted one settlement could not reject the same terms when offered by us. By these means Platt Bros. were able to end the strike, although at the end they were obliged to enter into relations with the strike officials before the men could be got to work."¹⁴¹

The settlement conceded by Platts was undoubtedly, in the short term, a great triumph for the artisan societies in Oldham. However, although Dodd's report acknowledges a retreat by his firm, the retreat was a tactical one which, as the report implies, anticipated in many respects, the aims of the Engineering Employers' Federation in their 1898 'Terms of Settlement'. The acceptance of formalised negotiations with union officials to curb the militancy of the shop floor, whilst preventing the interference by the former in the firm's business, was the keystone of the 1898 settlement. That Platts had made no more than expedient concessions is more apparent when the aftermath of the national lock-out in Oldham is considered. The victimisation of union activists and branch officials by Platts exceeded any other Lancashire textile machinery making firm within the Employers' Federation. The essentially unchanged attitude of Platts' management to trade unions was demonstrated in a speech made by S. R. Platt in February 1899 to a meeting of the Manchester Engineering Employers' Association. "The trade unionism of this country," he warned, was, "their absolute enemy; an enemy relentless and ruthless."¹⁴²

V. The 1897-98 Lock-Out and the Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry

The 1897-98 lock-out in the engineering industry was a major landmark in British industrial relations. It was the first truly national dispute; and the defeat of the A.S.E. and its allies, almost exactly coinciding with the adverse legal judgement on picketing in the Lyons and Wilkins case, has been seen as a vital element in the retreat of the trade union movement from the industrial initiatives which had begun in the late 1880's, towards

the political action which ultimately led to the emergence of the Labour Party.¹⁴³

The magnitude of the unions' defeat was such that Robert Blatchford likened it to that of the French army at Sedan in the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁴⁴ The background to, and the conduct of, the lock-out in Lancashire's textile machinery industry provides an important insight into the reasons for the defeat of what was then the country's wealthiest and most powerful trade union, dubbed, "the Brigade of Guards in the army of industry", by John Burns in the early stages of the conflict.¹⁴⁵

Firstly, the general climate of opinion should be considered. John Saville demonstrated the waning of public support for trade unions even during the later stages of the 1889 dock strike. He adds that,

"through all the decade of the nineties and well into the new century, a hostility developed towards trade unionism in general and new unionism in particular that bordered at times on the hysterical."¹⁴⁶

Thus despite all the efforts of George Barnes and the A.S.E. Executive to fight on the relatively favourable cause of the eight hour day, the unions fought an uphill battle against the employers' propaganda which successfully convinced public opinion of the virtue of their cause, the right of management to manage the workshops.

Secondly, the fundamental divisions within the A.S.E. which underlay its superficial unity on the issue of the shorter working day, should be considered. The advanced socialist supporters of Tom Mann, seeking to break down barriers between 'craftsmen' and 'semi-skilled', in establishing a pre-determined agreed 'rate for the job', contrasted with the traditionalists seeking to minimise the inroads of unapprenticed labour into the industry. Divisions within

the A.S.E. were compounded in Lancashire where piece working was entrenched in many textile machinery districts. The pecuniary rewards of the system were sufficiently great as to engender deep local suspicion of the Executive's orthodoxy which continued to strive to return to universal time working; this had surfaced during the major Oldham strike of 1897.

Thirdly, the strength and unity of the newly-created Federation of Engineering Employers' Associations, which in Lancashire was inspired by the Manchester firms, John Hetherington and Company and Brooks and Doxey, proved more than a match for the unions, and its durability under the pressures of the dispute, certainly surprised them. Indeed, in textile machinery making in Lancashire, the Federation which initially included only the above firms, and Dobson and Barlow of Bolton, developed a 'snowball' effect which eventually brought in most of the industry's major firms. The only notable exceptions were Howard and Bullough and Tweedales and Smalley in the spinning machinery sector, and Mather and Platt in the finishing machinery sector; virtually all the north Lancashire loom manufacturers joined as the lock-out developed.

The decade prior to the lock-out in the Lancashire textile machinery industry provides an excellent illustration of the development of rank and file artisan militancy, taking the initiative on wages questions, the shorter working week, and the control of the labour process against a largely defensive and divided collection of employers. Their great victory in 1898 presented the initiative to the employers, but in many respects the years from 1898 to 1914 reveal a continuity of many of the trends existing prior to the lock-out. The Employers' Federation had indeed subdued, even emasculated the A.S.E.'s central organisation and was, at least prior to 1911, able to use its strength to enable

members to deflect or delay wage advances, extend piece work, blacklist shopfloor militants, and accelerate the introduction of de-skilling technology. However, although union leaderships were effectively bound up by the settlement of 1898, the rank and file militancy remained, albeit on the defensive, to fight the challenge to artisan control of the labour process in virtually every employer initiative. Out of this resistance grew the shop stewards' organisations and the renewed widespread industrial action of 1911-14.

The 1880's had seen the commencement of another phase of introduction of new technology to both foundry and machine shop. During this decade, most employers tended to increase the numbers of well-established machine tools such as planing, boring, slotting and drilling tools and increase the number of 'machine men' to operate them. From the early 1890's new machine tools such as capstan and turret lathes, the radial drill and new grinding and milling machines were introduced, largely by the major firms in the spinning and preparatory machinery sector.¹⁴⁷ The extension of piece work and systematic overtime accompanied the above trends, as employers sought to maximise the return on investment during the upturns in trade. In 1891, 27% of Platts' labour force was engaged on some form of piece work but by 1897 the minutes of directors' meetings refer to the company's, "almost universal system of piece work".¹⁴⁸ The small firms, however, especially those engaged in loom manufacture, lacking the investment capital of the giants in the spinning machinery sector, tended to remain technologically little changed and even the large, but rather more conservative firms such as Asa Lees, employed relatively few skilled men on piece work by 1897.¹⁴⁹

The existence of such technological diversity within just one sector of the engineering industry, provides some explanation of the policy difficulties facing the A.S.E. leadership. On the one hand the radicals and socialists could point to the renewed expansion of the use of automatic machine tools and the increasingly rapid unionisation of the semi-skilled machine men, and could thus argue that the A.S.E. should abandon its exclusivity to incorporate these grades. This would give a broad-based union a position of strength in negotiation, and enable it to negotiate on 'rate for the job' and thus maintain control over the machines, both new and old. In 1892, Tom Mann had revealed the strength of this feeling within the union by coming close to success in a campaign for the General Secretaryship. In this he advocated extension of the scope of the society's recruitment, "to embrace all those who are engaged in the trade who are called upon to exercise skill in the performance of their duties."¹⁵⁰ Table 3 shows the voting pattern in Lancashire and indicates that Mann gained greatest support in Oldham and Manchester where technological change had been most drastic. The Manchester branches actually went on to develop the radical movement in a more formal sense by forming a 'Progressive Party' to hold regular meetings to further co-operation and bring eventual amalgamation of the various unions in the engineering industry.¹⁵¹

The spirit of 'new unionism' being generated in other unions in textile machinery making must have also made its mark on the A.S.E. The creation of the United Kingdom Society of Smiths and Strikers in 1886 had successfully united the interests of skilled and semi-skilled men. The most important of the semi-skilled men's societies: the United Machine Workers Association, had been able to develop with the first phase of technological change in the 1840's.

Table 3: Returns in A.S.E. General Secretary Elections in
Lancashire: May 1892

		Anderson	Mann	Glennie
Accrington	)	65	0	0
Blackburn (2)	)	199	5	0
Burnley	)	42	5	0
Colne	) N. Lancs.	6	7	0
Preston (2)	)	179	8	2
Darwen	)	6	23	5
Todmorden	)	30	15	0
Rochdale (2)	)	174	91	0
Bury (2)	) Rochdale and Bury	180	61	5
Ramsbottom	) areas	5	18	0
Heywood	)	28	27	0
Bolton (5)	)	702	228	2
Farnworth	) Bolton area	38	4	0
Radcliffe	)	25	6	0
Oldham (6)	)	475	525	3
Royton	) Oldham area	5	25	1
Middleton	)	18	9	0
Hollinwood	)	39	63	1
Manchester (9))		762	462	3
Gorton (2)	)	189	217	0
Openshaw (3)	) Manchester area	313	275	2
Longsight	)	50	90	0
Collyhurst	)	54	48	0
Hulme	)	88	71	1
Salford (3)	)	337	132	1
Broughton	) Salford area	144	65	0

Source: A.S.E. Monthly Journal, May 1892

However, partly because of a long term desire to amalgamate with the A.S.E. it had developed a growing exclusivity of its own. Thus the lower grades of semi-skilled machinists were left in a vacuum, which was rapidly filled from 1890 by Will Thorne's Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, the Bolton-based Machine and General Labourers Union, and the Oldham-based Amalgamated Machine Workers Union.

The A.S.E. leadership, prompted by its radical wing, made tentative moves to extend its membership, but the extension was far from comprehensive, taking in mainly older 'skilled' men whose qualifications had previously been deemed insufficient to merit entry.¹⁵² Nonetheless this was viewed as a potential indicator of further positive developments, sufficient at least to justify the Workman's Times describing them as, "one of the most encouraging signs of progress of socialist thought and action in trades unionism."¹⁵³

However, the fifty-day delegate meeting in Leeds in 1892 at which the above rule changes were made, devoted far more of its business to improving the efficiency of the Society's bureaucracy. A full-time Executive was created, to be elected by eight regional divisions. It was to be assisted by six full-time Organising District Delegates whose role was to liaise between the Executive and the local officials.¹⁵⁴

In the period from 1892 to the year of confrontation with the employers, 1897, the A.S.E. leadership, despite the continued promptings of its radical wing, failed to address itself to the possibility of co-operation with the unions of the less skilled, to the related matter of labour politics, or to the problem of overtime, which was deeply entrenched in textile machinery making in south Lancashire. Such was still the strength of traditionalism in

the A.S.E. that from the 1892 meeting, strong pressure was exerted to use the Society's might to 'capture' the new machine tools being introduced, even at the expense of conflict with the unions of the less skilled, whilst also attempting to keep the Society off the socialist path.

In 1893, Clynes of the G. and G.L.U. was displaced as President of the Oldham Trades and Labour Council by the local A.S.E. secretary, who described himself as, "a believer in no politics in the trade unions".¹⁵⁵ In the following year, a by-election called in Manchester's Gorton constituency, starkly revealed the fundamental divisions then appearing within the A.S.E. The local I.L.P. wished to put up Tom Mann as their candidate, since the area had a high proportion of voters who were employed in the engineering industry, notably at the Beyer Peacock locomotive works, and Brooks and Doxey's principal Union works. Mann declined because of commitments elsewhere and so another socialist, George Barnes, the future A.S.E. General Secretary, was approached. However, the A.S.E. Executive remained fixed in its opposition to independent labour representation, and refused Barnes support, obliging him to withdraw.¹⁵⁶ Ironically the victor in the contest, Sir William Mather, of the textile finishing machinery firm, Mather and Platt, was himself to play a major role in the events leading up to the crisis in the engineering industry in 1897, and in the negotiations during the lock-out itself.

The 1892 delegate meeting had allowed local officials to negotiate piece work agreements, "subject to the consent of the Executive".¹⁵⁷ This was essentially the belated recognition of a fait accompli, for the system was making rapid advances in Oldham, Manchester, Bolton and Accrington, in the most technologically advanced textile machinery making establishments, and the potential

financial gains made it popular with the grass roots membership in these districts.¹⁵⁸ In order to prevent individual firms attempting to reduce piece rates, the Manchester district committee had drawn up a code of rules and had supported shop committees in the bargaining to establish prices. However, this efficient local pragmatism was bitterly attacked by the Executive as devoting too much time and effort to the defence of the interests of piece workers.¹⁵⁹

The mill-building boom and the consequent boom in textile machinery making lasting from 1889-93, had encouraged the consolidation of the 'new unions', whilst the A.S.E. effectively papered over the cracks, as a unity of policy was achieved in seeking wages advances and a further reduction in the working week. The Bolton strike of 1887, and strikes led by the Grinders and Glazers Society at Hackings of Bury and Masons of Rochdale,¹⁶⁰ ushered in this period of militancy. The major conflict involving the artisan societies was fought in 1891, as the Manchester branches put forward a demand for a 53 hour week. The A.S.E. took the lead and was supported by the S.E.M., the U.P.A., the Boilermakers and Metal Planers.¹⁶¹ Strike action was threatened and the employers, most of whom were members of the Iron Trades Employers' Association, were caught divided and unable to put up effective resistance.¹⁶² With trade then so good and faced with a powerful union alliance, the employers conceded piecemeal, Mather and Platt's being among the first of the major firms to give way along with Hetheringtons, and within a week the unions were victorious.¹⁶³ In August 1891, the Smiths' Strikers began a successful fifteen week strike for an advance of wages and a standard district rate of pay, and in the autumn of the following year, the Grinders' Society took successful

industrial action to pursue a wages claim at Hetheringtons in Manchester and later at Threlfalls of Bolton.¹⁶⁴

Following a period of enforced inactivity and some wage reductions, the revival of trade in 1896 created labour shortages in the industry and a widespread union offensive to secure wage advances in the summer and autumn, a period described by the labour correspondent of the Bolton Journal as one of, "general exceptional activity".¹⁶⁵ Such was the favourable position of the artisan societies that many claims were met with only token opposition or were immediately conceded. The F.S.I.F. gained 2 shilling advances in Oldham, Bury, Preston and Colne; the U.P.A. gained similar success in Bury and at Asa Lees in Oldham. Only the might of Platts was able to stem the tide and defeated the patternmakers in November, after a struggle lasting over two months.¹⁶⁶

The winter of 1896-97 brought a long and bitter strike of the Spindle and Flyer Makers Society in Oldham, Manchester and Bolton. The strike involved half the union's members and, lasting five months, consequently strained its finances almost to the limit. It succeeded in securing a 2 shilling wages advance and better conditions of payment for 'improvers' i.e. young men who had just completed apprenticeships, but had not progressed to the full journeyman's rate.¹⁶⁷ This strike was concluded in February 1897 and was soon followed by the successful Oldham engineers' strike of March-May 1897.

The two periods of sustained industrial action by the unions, 1887-92 and 1896-97, had also begun to create a greater awareness among the employers of their growing inability to stand together against well planned and co-ordinated strike action. In 1887 the I.T.E.A. had provided substantial financial support to Dobson and Barlow and the other three Bolton firms then locked in the

relentless conflict with the A.S.E., but was obliged to acknowledge its own inferiority in the accompanying propaganda battle.¹⁶⁶ For most of the following decade, the weakness of the I.T.E.A. and its local constituent associations became relatively more pronounced.

In 1892 the A.S.E. had even complained, as McIvor notes, that it had no official relations with the I.T.E.A. and was therefore obliged to negotiate separately with each individual firm or local engineering employer association.¹⁶⁹ The 53 hour week campaign by the A.S.E. and other artisan societies in Manchester in the previous year, had quite clearly demonstrated the employers' disunity in a period of very good trade, which had encouraged individual firms to seek quick settlements to avoid losses in production.

The second rash of strikes in 1896-97 was, however, perhaps quite notable in that it had a sufficiently profound effect on the Lancashire machine making employers, to drive them towards closer collaboration before the impact of Colonel Dyer's Employers' Federation of Engineering Employers, was fully felt in the county. The spindle and flyer makers' strike had brought together the Bolton, Manchester and Oldham employers on the initiative of the board of Dobson and Barlow, represented in this instance by W. Higginson.¹⁷⁰ Dissatisfaction with the role of the I.T.E.A. was mounting, as representatives of two Manchester firms noted that it had been, "out-manoeuvred and defeated", by the unions during 1896.¹⁷¹ The Blackburn and Burnley loom makers too, were by January 1897, seeking some kind of federation with the Bury and Bolton machine makers to deal collectively with wage claims.¹⁷²

Meanwhile, the Employers' Federation of Engineering Associations had emerged in April 1896 from an informal committee representing the marine engineering firms of the north-east coast, Barrow, Belfast and Clydeside. Its first president Colonel Dyer was, as

managing director of Armstrong-Whitworths, already directly involved in the Manchester engineering industry.

The tentative steps towards closer ties among the textile machine makers were consolidated and extended on March 29th, 1897 when Dyer addressed a meeting of Manchester employers at the Grand Hotel. The result was the creation of the Manchester Engineering Employers' Association which affiliated to the Federation.¹⁷³ Very prominent in the new association were two textile machinery firms: John Hetherington and Brooks and Doxey; Mr. J. McQueen of the former and Mr. S. H. Brooks of the latter, were both members of the original Manchester committee. Brooks was subsequently elected to the Federation's Executive Board.¹⁷⁴

From the start, the Manchester Association made every effort to bring in Platts of Oldham because of the firm's size and proven record of resisting union militancy. At the Association's first meeting, "the great desirability of gaining the firm of Platt Bros. of Oldham as members", was unanimously resolved.¹⁷⁵ Even at the national level the bringing in of Platts was given priority. When representatives of Platts' Board were unable to attend a meeting with the Federation's Executive Board, Colonel Dyer prompted the establishment of a special ad hoc sub-committee of four to negotiate directly with them.¹⁷⁶ However, as Platts procrastinated, perhaps fearing a loss of freedom in the conduct of industrial relations, the Bolton Engineering Employers' Association was admitted to the Federation. The association was significantly dominated by the three firms which had brought in blackleg labour to combat the A.S.E. during the 1887 strike, and its representative on the Federation's Executive Board was Benjamin Alfred Dobson, chairman of Dobson and Barlow.¹⁷⁷ However, even before the Lancashire section of the Federation was consolidated, the Manchester, Bolton and

Oldham employers were already meeting to discuss the impending problems of dealing with the unions who were beginning to take up the initiative on the 'machine question' and the 48 hour week.¹⁷⁸

The socialist element within the A.S.E. had since 1884 been extremely critical of the trade union leaders' failure to come to terms with the problem of unemployment. Tom Mann had published his influential pamphlet, 'What a Compulsory Eight Hours Day Means to the Workers', in 1886, and had subsequently gained the endorsement of several 'new unions', notably the G. and G.L.U. for a statutory eight hour day. However, his own union failed to address itself seriously to the issue until the deterioration in trade in 1893. In 1887 and 1889 the A.S.E. General Secretary had even gone on record in opposition to such a policy.¹⁷⁹ In 1893 unemployment in the A.S.E. itself had reached 9% and support for the eight hour day policy rapidly gathered momentum. By the winter of 1894-95, the F.S.I.F. recorded unemployment of over 22% in Burnley, where only just over a year before, the A.S.E. had been very critical of the excessive hours its members were obliged to work.¹⁸⁰

In March 1893, the A.S.E. and its allies achieved their first major breakthrough when the leading manufacturer of bleaching and dyeing machinery, Mather and Platt of Salford, introduced the 48 hour week for a one year experiment. The firm, which then employed about 1,200 men at the Salford Iron Works, scrapped the traditional pre-breakfast working period and thus replaced the two-break day and 53 hours week with a single-break day of eight hours in a 48 hour week.

William Mather, the head of the firm, had motives which were a mixture of philanthropy¹⁸¹ and perceptive awareness of the potential economic advantages to be gained from eliminating the unpopular

pre-breakfast working period. In the 1860's when Mather had entered the partnership, the firm had adopted a more paternalistic approach to the workforce. An evening school for apprentices had been started in 1873 and a large dining room for the employees was opened in 1878.¹⁸²

Mather's son L. E. Mather, later commented that,

"as a result of personal experiences in his apprenticeship days, and stimulated by a true philanthropy, father came to the conclusion that the claim for a shorter working day was not only just and right, but expedient even from the employers' point of view ... disregarding the grumbles and remonstrances of those who thought otherwise, he, first among British engineers, established the forty-eight hour week at Salford Iron Works in 1893. The result fully bore out his anticipations. Not only were the men and their families benefited to a degree which it is difficult for those unacquainted with working conditions to realise, but the business of Mather and Platt, so far from suffering, improved both as regards quality and quantity of output."¹⁸³

The trial, which was maintained for a year to prevent any attempt by the workforce to produce a 'spurt' to create artificially high productivity to justify the shorter working day, was a resounding success to Mather. Absenteeism was cut from 2.46% to 0.46%, and Mather believed the shorter day produced more harmonious industrial relations, and a healthier workforce whilst maintaining the firm's previous level of output. The two pre-breakfast hours, he observed,

"were not worth the pains and trouble they cost, whether to workpeople or to employers ... their effect on the physical and mental condition of the men (was) to depreciate the vigour, freshness, and brightness which ought to prevail throughout the working day, if the best results are to be obtained."¹⁸⁴

The reaction of the majority of employers and the A.S.E. to the Salford experiment forewarned of the conflict which was to lead to the lock-out. The I.T.E.A., "spent a very considerable sum of money," in Lancashire attempting to demonstrate that Mather's scheme,

"would result in a very large increase in the cost of production (and) would enable our foreign competitors to secure control of the market, and therefore bring ruin to many firms."¹⁸⁵

Yet William Mather himself praised the A.S.E.'s calm and patient toleration of the experiment, "in the midst of general agitation for shorter hours," and accepted that it was now entitled, "to raise the question for general consideration."¹⁸⁶ The A.S.E. soon contemplated the extension of the shorter hours system. Its Monthly Report noted rather optimistically that, "our employers are beginning to realise that it must come."¹⁸⁷

Although the 48 hour week question in London was the ostensible cause of the lock-out, the underlying conflicts went much deeper and centred on the determination of the leading employers, through the Engineering Employers' Federation, to turn back the tide of trade union militancy which had developed in the 1880's, and in particular, to reassert claims to control the labour process which had lapsed since their victory in 1852.¹⁸⁸ In fact, although perhaps rather less centrally than in 1852, the Lancashire textile machinery industry played a far more vital role in the 1897-98 dispute than has been acknowledged.

The A.S.E. victory in Oldham in May 1897 encouraged not only the shop floor militants but the district officials to retain the initiative, and hint very strongly at a further campaign to enforce the shorter working day. It had also brought union recognition at Platts for the first time since 1852, but had revealed to the firm's management that union officialdom, if sufficiently constrained by formal structured bargaining procedures, could be used to attenuate the influence of unofficial shop floor leaders. The report of Platts' Vice Chairman, John Dodds, to the board, at the end of the 1897 strike, shows these lessons had been learned, and contains much

of the spirit of the eventual 1896 settlement of the national lock-out.

The 'machine question' and the issue of workshop control was also coming to a head in Lancashire in 1897 and, had it not been subsumed in the wider national dispute, could well have provoked a strike or lock-out throughout the textile machinery industry in the county. The Bolton A.S.E. branches, strongly influenced since the 1887 strike by the ideas of Tom Mann, determined in July 1897 not to resist the inroads of semi-skilled machine men at firms like Dobson and Barlow, but to demand for them a 'rate for the job' of 34 shillings per week where they were promoted to work hitherto the preserve of fitters or turners. The response of the Bolton and Manchester Engineering Employers' Associations in which Dobson and Barlow, Brooks and Doxey and John Hetheringtons were all prominent, was swift and decisive. The E.E.F. Executive declared on their behalf that,

"Whereas a demand has been made upon our Bolton members by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers that all machine men be paid at the full rate of fitter and turner, it is resolved that in the event of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers calling their members out in support of this demand, we will lock-out the members of that society in defence of our Bolton members."¹⁸⁹

In March 1897, the Manchester employers had also discussed the deepening conflict with the A.S.E. over workshop control on the occasion of their joining the Federation. J. McQueen, chairman of Hetheringtons, stressed the need for strong and successful resistance to the union. He claimed that,

"The textile machinists were more interested in the present dispute than any other section. If they had to put skilled labour on those machines it would be difficult to work at all."¹⁹⁰

McQueen's concern was echoed in June 1897 by S. R. Platt in another address to the Manchester Association whose minutes record that he,

"emphatically expressed his approval of the Federation's action, and his determination to contest the machine question and the 48 hours demand as being vital to the existence of his firm."¹⁹¹

When the lock-out commenced in London, the Federation could be certain only of the support of the Manchester and Bolton firms in Lancashire. Less than a week after the 'machine question' had threatened to explode in Bolton, on July 6th, lock-out notices were posted by Dobson and Barlows, Brooks and Doxey and Hetheringtons. On the same day, McQueen travelled to Oldham to try to secure the support of Platts, which was granted two days later.¹⁹² Within a week of this success, the representatives of Brooks and Doxey persuaded the Manchester Association to visit, "outside districts", of Lancashire in order to widen the Federation's basis of support.¹⁹³

During July and August, the Federation's ranks were swelled by the powerful Oldham firms, followed by the seven loom making firms of Burnley and Colne, which together employed over 1800 men, the Bury firms of Hackings (loom manufacture) and Bentley and Jackson (finishing machinery), and by October 1897, the Blackburn and Preston loom makers.¹⁹⁴ It is perhaps a serious indictment of the over-confidence of the A.S.E. leadership that this cumulative strengthening of the Federation was not anticipated. As late as June, 1897, Tom Mann, who was striving to build support for the taking of industrial action, still expressed confidence that most sectors of the engineering industry would not make common cause with the Federation which was at that point, heavily dominated by the marine engineers.¹⁹⁵

By the winter of 1897, the ranks of the textile machinery makers in Lancashire were fairly solid behind Colonel Dyer and the Federation's Executive. There were, however, three very notable

exceptions. In addition to Mather and Platt, two of the large scale, technologically advanced firms of spinning machinery manufacturers remained aloof: Howard and Bullough of Accrington, and Tweedales and Smalley of Castleton, near Rochdale. These firms were still very much family dominated concerns, which they remained until after World War One. Their desire to maintain a strictly independent line perhaps explains this aloofness. The absence of these firms, which dominated the engineering industries of their respective towns, was the Federation's major failure in Lancashire.

The absence of the two large scale firms in spinning machinery manufacture did not however, provide much comfort for the unions. Howard and Bullough continued to deny any union recognition whatsoever, and effectively thwarted A.S.E. attempts to build up membership until after 1910. Indeed the A.S.E. District Delegate, F. H. Rose, had to work hard to restrain the society's members at Howard and Bullough who wanted to take action in support of the men locked out in neighbouring districts.¹⁹⁶ At Tweedales and Smalley the situation was even worse. The management refused to accept the obligations of joining the Federation, yet took full advantage of the lock-out to attack the A.S.E. Rose noted that the directors had,

"suddenly discovered that they desired to 'conduct their own business' and have forthwith discharged all our members, having first generously offered them the alternative of leaving the Society ... The opportunity was too good a one to be lost."¹⁹⁷

In addition to the 'machine question' and the dispute over the eight hour day, another issue emerged, as a tactical element in the Federation's campaign in the short term. In the longer term, this issue, the attempt to wrest the loyalty of foremen from the artisan societies, was to have fundamental consequences in the conduct of industrial relations. As a rule these men were recruited from the

ranks of the senior artisans and would be rewarded with higher rates of pay and much greater security of employment in periods of trade depression.¹⁹⁸

In the larger, technologically advanced firms, the role of foremen was significantly changing. Their function as senior craftsmen, assistants in the recruitment of labour, overseers of apprentices, and agents of shop floor discipline, was being extended with the increasing adoption of systems of payment by results. Their role as rate-setters in the machine shop was consequently expanding, as was their function as troubleshooters in disputes over rating of jobs or demarcation. The loyalty of these men to their union was a potential threat to the introduction of new methods, and so the Federation (and some independent firms) sought to break this loyalty by a combination of direct pressure and the establishment of a counter-attraction in the form of a client organisation which could provide the various friendly benefits available through membership of societies such as the A.S.E., F.S.I.F. and U.P.A. Thus, the Foreman's Mutual Benefit Society was planned at the height of the dispute, in December 1897, when the Federation's Executive Board had pronounced the, "importance of all Foremen and Under Foremen being unconnected with any union".¹⁹⁹

The events at Brooks and Doxey's two Manchester works in July 1897, in fact indicate that this problem too was erupting in the textile machinery industry before being overtaken by the national lock-out. Intense friction was being created at the Union Iron Works in Gorton and the Junction Works in Miles Platting, arising from the increasingly ambiguous role of foremen. The firm's piece workers, notably the A.S.E. members, seeing the foremen as having become more the agents of management control than hitherto, demanded that piece prices should no longer include the wages of these men.

Mass meetings were organised and support for the men in dispute was pledged. Fearing industrial action, the management had first tried to enlist Federation support, but then agreed to the men's demands. The decision was, however, overtaken by the events of the lock-out.²⁰⁰

Attempts to break the link of foremen with the artisan societies were certainly not new. Platts, for example, had set up the Hartford Trust in 1873 to facilitate the purchase of company shares.²⁰¹ In August 1897, the firm's directors anticipated the Federation by establishing a system of welfare benefits for foremen who left their unions, notably a superannuation payment of 10 shillings per week, which was payable at the early age of 55, subject to board approval.²⁰² Tweedales and Smalley even provided good quality terraced housing for foremen, close to their new Globe works in order to attract loyal men, notably ex-employees of Howard and Bullough.²⁰³

The A.S.E. did all in its power to counter the new organisation, even establishing a system of secret membership for foremen who wished to retain their rights to the society's benefits and protection, and despite considerable promotion the F.M.B.S. made only very limited headway in Lancashire by 1913 as Table 4 shows.

Table 4: East Lancashire Membership of the Foreman's Mutual Benefit Society, 1913

Manchester	240
Oldham	134
Bolton	55
Blackburn	6
Preston	1

Source: MSS237 Foreman's Mutual Benefit Society, Annual Report

The mis-handling of a prolonged dispute in Belfast and on Clydeside led to the downfall of the A.S.E.'s traditionalist General Secretary, Anderson, who had defeated Tom Mann in 1892, and his replacement by the socialist George Barnes, in August 1896. This led to expectations of an aggressive trade policy, but Barnes was only too aware of the dangers of a battle with the employers on the issue of workshop control. In 1852, John Platt had won over public sympathy by claiming that the A.S.E. sought to challenge the employer's right to manage his own works. Barnes claimed to have, "averted the fight upon an unpopular issue, and have shunted it onto a question upon which we ought to get ... the support of our fellow workers."²⁰⁴ Thus the A.S.E. strove to keep the propaganda battle to the issue of the 48 hour week, though in this it achieved only limited success.

Even in the engineering industry the A.S.E. gained few allies. It did obtain the direct support of the Steam Engine Makers, the Smiths and Strikers and the U.M.W.A., and in Oldham was supported by the local branch of the Grinders and Glazers Society, despite a ruling to the contrary of that society's executive. Two of the most powerful unions in the textile machinery industry, the F.S.I.F. representing the skilled moulders, and the Patternmakers' Society remained aloof, as did the Boilermakers. Such was the perceived strength of the A.S.E., however, that it was thought capable of defeating the employers almost single-handed.

However, such was the organisation of Colonel Dyer's Engineering Employers' Federation that the effect of the lock-out on production was minimised and as new firms joined the Federation's ranks, the cumulative financial strain on the unions gradually became intolerable. The major firms were able to keep production going by the intensive use of available local non-union men, the importation

of blacklegs from as far away as Ireland, and by extending delivery dates for orders. The impact of the lock-out on production of machinery is difficult to assess, such is the complexity of the available output and delivery data. Despite the disruptions of the Spindle and Flyer Makers' strike ending in February, and that of the A.S.E. and Grinders from March 23th to May 17th, Table 5 shows that both Platts and Asa Lees did succeed in maintaining a fairly high level of output during 1897.

Table 5: Platts and Asa Lees Production of Mules and Ring
Frames (Spindles) 1895-99

<u>Year</u>	<u>Platts Output of Mules</u>	<u>Platts Output of Ring Frames</u>	<u>Asa Lees Output of Mules</u>
1895	527,577	427,440	485,084
1896	538,248	518,792	365,516
1897	414,592	425,014	236,666
1898	687,194	502,908	400,040
1899	960,716	344,142	617,168

Source: Kirk op. cit. pp.573 and 595

A detailed examination of Platts' delivery books for home and foreign markets indicates quite clearly that the strike of engineers and grinders in the spring of 1897, was far more disruptive of production than the national dispute which began to affect Oldham in September. They tend to indicate that perhaps Platts had learned the lessons of the earlier dispute in terms of maintaining output, for although the pickets did quite seriously hamper output during the first weeks of the lock-out, by the November of 1897, major foreign orders, notably for the far east, were being despatched without major difficulty.²⁰⁵

In the loom making sector, trade was still so poor in 1897, as the effects of the depression of 1894-96 lingered on, that at the time the dispute affected north-east Lancashire, many firms had a large proportion of their hands working only alternate weeks. Thus with much justification, the local A.S.E. officials could claim that the employers had little to lose and everything to gain by joining the Federation and supporting the large south Lancashire firms in the lock-out.²⁰⁶

The A.S.E.'s less wealthy allies and the unions of labourers and machine men, made idle by the lock-out which didn't directly concern them, were reduced to a desperate state within a few weeks of the start, and this soon proved a serious drain on the A.S.E. funds. (In order to minimise blacklegging, the A.S.E. paid non-union engineers 10/- lock-out benefit per week if married, and 8/- if single.) By the middle of October, as the Federation was beginning to consolidate its ranks in Lancashire, Matthew Arrandale the General Secretary of the U.M.W.A. lamented at a mass meeting in Manchester's Free Trade Hall, that of his society's 4164 members, the majority of whom were in Lancashire, 2460 were locked out and only 1634 were working. The result of this situation was that the union's income, excluding donations, was only £230 per week, whilst expenses were £1,250.²⁰⁷ U.M.W.A. men in work were faced with a 6d. a day levy to assist their locked-out colleagues and branches were pressing for amalgamation with the A.S.E., as it was believed the union's, "very existence depends on some such arrangement being made."²⁰⁸ The A.S.E. response highlighted that union's lingering craft exclusivity which was to cost it dearly in terms of wider support from the labour movement. The U.M.W.A. men, the A.S.E.'s most loyal allies, were put on the same basis as non-society men

when their union's funds were exhausted and obliged to hand over donations from supporters to the A.S.E.²⁰⁹

The Bolton-based Machine and General Labourers' Union which had emerged after the violent strike of 1887, was only able to survive into September 1897 because of support from the local miners and cotton spinners.²¹⁰ Similarly, the Oldham-based Iron workers' Labourers Society, a splinter union from the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, was rendered helpless at a very early stage in the lock-out, its finances having been eaten away by the Grinders' and Engineers' action in the spring.²¹¹ Also, the Oldham-based Plate and Machine Moulders' Union, which had no vested interests in machine shop disputes, was bankrupted by its vain struggle with the Burnley and Blackburn textile machinery employers which had cost over £2,000, the Grinders' and Engineers' strike in Oldham which had cost it £1,200, and the lock-out which cost it £2,000. Its secretary, Sam Howard claimed, "we are practically at the mercy of the trade unions and with winter staring us in the face, our prospects are not very bright."²¹²

The Gas Workers and General Labourers Union's district organiser, J. R. Clynes, bitterly remarked on the plight of the labourers and machine men in the Lancashire engineering industry who were frequently thrown out of work because of disputes which involved the skilled men.

"There are always two chances to one against the labourers, as trouble can be forced on him by both employers and skilled workmen taking action against each other ... In the Lancashire district during the past three years we have paid dispute money in a very large number of cases, but only in two cases have these disputes been the outcome of any action of ours."²¹³

This union had by the autumn of 1897, 30,000 members nationally, and almost 5,000 in its 34 Lancashire branches. Indeed the lessons of the Oldham Grinders' and Engineers' strike had done a great deal to

boost membership in Lancashire which rose by almost 2,000 during 1897.²¹⁴ The sheer size and the diversity of membership of the union meant the desperate plight of the smaller, highly localised societies was avoided. Clynes could claim that,

"throughout the prolonged Engineering trades lock-out, all our locked out members entitled to pay have regularly received same without there being any fear of the funds running short."²¹⁵

The major Bolton and Oldham textile machinery makers tried to use the plight of the labourers to weaken the A.S.E.'s position. The Board of Dobson and Barlow, in a manner reminiscent of their aggressive conduct of the 1887 dispute, blatantly approached the secretary of the Machine and General Labourers Union, which was on the verge of collapse, with the offer of blackleg jobs to relieve the members' distress.

"It is necessary that the planing, slotting, milling, boring and turning machines should be worked and I shall like you to say how far you can arrange to supply this labour."

This work included jobs hitherto done by skilled A.S.E. men as well as machinists and thus the bait was made all the more tempting by a promise that, "if a man working any machine is found suitable he will be maintained in the position after the termination of the strike."²¹⁶ The offer was, however, refused. Platts made similar moves in Oldham, and helped to establish a relief fund for meals for needy children, and a loan scheme to provide 5/- per week to assist non-union labourers.²¹⁷

Thus as the winter of 1897 approached and the Federation's ranks grew stronger, the pressure on the A.S.E. to find a basis for settlement, grew.²¹⁸ William Mather whose firm had been among the first to concede the eight hour day, attempted to persuade Colonel Dyer to do the same on behalf of the Federation, if the unions abandoned all claims which threatened the right of employers to manage their own establishments. When this was rejected he

eventually brought the two sides together, acting through Charles Ritchie of the Board of Trade.²¹⁹ Dyer, however, attempted to take maximum advantage of the unions' weakness, and his terms were harsh in the extreme. George Barnes argued that the whole principle of the proposals entailed, "the employer dealing with the individual workman", which meant the Federation was asking the unions, "to sign our death warrant".²²⁰ Fifteen Oxford dons were provoked to write to the Daily Chronicle describing Dyer's plan as,

"a deliberate attempt to overthrow the principle of collective bargaining ... an absolute denial of the legitimate action of trade unionism as such."²²¹

Thus despite their suffering, the A.S.E. members rejected the terms by 68,214 votes to 752. The Federation subsequently offered a 51 hour week, but this too was overwhelmingly rejected by the A.S.E., by 42,082 votes to 8,515.²²²

The A.S.E.'s rapidly worsening position was further hit by the refusal of the T.U.C. Parliamentary Committee to organise a conference to marshal further financial assistance, an act bitterly criticised by Pete Curran of the Gas Workers and General Labourers at the 1897 Congress, who seconded a motion regretting the committee's, "deplorable attitude and apathy", and calling for wider supportive action by the trade unions.²²³ The A.S.E. then called off its demand for the eight hour day and again balloted its members on a revised settlement, which was accepted by 28,588 votes to 13,927.²²⁴ The voting in Lancashire textile machinery centres is indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Lancashire Branch Returns in the Ballot Which Ended
the 1897-98 Dispute

A.S.E.

Burnley	38 for	87 against
Bolton	1071 for	394 against
Blackburn	34 for	350 against
Oldham	976 for	202 against

Other Societies

Oldham Grinders and Glazers	98 for	10 against
Oldham Smiths and Strikers	23 for	0 against
Oldham U.M.W.A.	303 for	19 against
Salford U.M.W.A.	43 for	10 against

Sources: Oldham Chronicle 26.1.1898, Blackburn Times 29.1.1898
and U.M.W.A. Salford Branch Minutes, 26.1.1898.

The result of the negotiations was the 'Terms of Settlement' which are set out in full in Appendix D. The 'terms' gave employers the freedom to employ non-union labour if they desired, and recognised the rights of the men to join a union. Employers were to be free to implement systems of payment by results and to negotiate with the workmen concerned to fix rates of pay. In addition, a set of guidelines on overtime working was established. There was to be no restriction on the use of apprentices and employers were to have complete freedom to appoint and train whomsoever they chose for their machines. The settlement also contained 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes', a formal machinery for industrial relations which established a hierarchical system of negotiation procedures, viz. a works level conference involving deputations of men and the employer or his representatives, a local level conference involving

local union officials and the local employers' association, and if a settlement could still not be agreed upon, a national conference would take place involving the unions' national officials and the Federation's Executive Board.

The lock-out was marked by considerable victimisation of shop floor militants and union activists. This process was effectively stepped up as the Federation consolidated its position among the makers of textile machinery, making blacklisting a more potentially viable exercise. In the very week in which the Manchester firms posted lock-out notices, the A.S.E. complained that Brooks and Doxey had dismissed two men because, "they took more than ordinary interest in the Society's business".²²⁵ During the lock-out many workers, in particular labourers and machine men, were driven back to work through semi-starvation and the Oldham firms, in particular, were subject to accusations of making the return to a job conditional on renunciation of union membership.²²⁶ In a subsequent outline history of the Plate and Machine Moulders Union, a society not directly involved in the dispute at all, the Secretary complained of Platts' aggressive, uncompromising policy.

"At the shop where our union had its birth, every man was compelled to leave the union and the officials who worked there were practically all victimised."²²⁷

The Oldham branch of the Grinders and Glazers Society had supported the A.S.E. in 1852, and together they had inflicted a serious defeat on Platts in the strike which had ended in May 1897. On the occasion of the lock-out the Society's Executive sought neutrality, but the Oldham men once more came out with the engineers. Their action became an acute source of embarrassment for both Executives, especially when the local A.S.E. District Delegate, F. H. Rose, sought assistance for them. Rose, a stout defender of local autonomy in the A.S.E., was eventually suspended from office

for his attacks on the Executive for their reluctance to assist victimised Grinders in the aftermath of the lock-out.²²⁸

The evidence suggests that the Lancashire textile machinery firms, in particular Platts, took maximum advantage of the Federation's victory to strike hard at the A.S.E. and especially the known local militants. In April 1898, Rose complained that,

"At Oldham, Rochdale, Bolton and Birkenhead our federated friends have been pleasantly engaged in 'rubbing it in' with a vengeance. At the close of the quarter some 600 of our members were still idle in these places and many I regret to say, life-long servants of the various firms."

This, he noted, was not even excusable by changes in workshop practice, "which generally appears to be much the same as before the lock-out."²²⁹

In May 1898, with many A.S.E. men still idle in Oldham, the Executive reduced benefit payments. Rose despatched a letter which condemned those of the Executive who voted for reduction as, "bloody curs - who should have a twelve months semi-starvation to teach them common humanity".²³⁰ The A.S.E. General Council did, however, receive a special deputation from Oldham, which complained that,

"Messrs. Platt ... were specially harsh and had victimised a number of our old members, many of them the best in the district, who were now in very straitened circumstances."²³¹

The General Council was subsequently condemned by George Barnes and the E.C. for receiving the deputation, but none the less, "strongly recommended", the latter to, "at once take steps to relieve our unfortunate brethren".²³² The post lock-out developments at Oldham and the suspension of Rose in November 1898, indicate the strengthening of the strong localist tendencies in areas like Lancashire which proved, eventually, too strong for the Executive to control.

In June 1898, J. R. Clynes noted that there were still over 300 engineers locked out in Oldham who were,

"unable to get work even in other towns on account of the extensive boycott and victimisation practised by the employers."²³³

Such practices were, of course, applied to other unions. The Lancashire branches of the U.M.W.A. still had many men out of work in October 1898 when that union's Executive discontinued lock-out pay. This too provoked a localist reaction as some Lancashire branches defied the ruling and continued to pay benefit, at least until December.²³⁴

The Federation followed up its victory by systematising the 'enquiry note' procedure to deal with militants and local organisers. There is evidence that the more zealous members such as Hetheringtons were trying to extend the system to bring in reluctant 'independents' such as Tweedales and Smalley. Hetheringtons' Board drew up a letter to the Manchester Engineering Employers' Association which claimed that, "Tweedales and Smalley had refused any information in response to our 'enquiry note' in regard to their workpeople." It was regretted that since that firm was not in the Federation, "none other than moral suasion could be made with a view of bringing them into line."²³⁵ Ironically, in October, Hetheringtons were hoist by their own petard, for having taken on new apprentices who had previously worked for other firms from whom they had failed to obtain the requisite documents. The firm were thus reprimanded, the Manchester Employers' Association writing to them, "drawing their attention to the necessity in the future of the systematic adoption of the enquiry note."²³⁶

The use of the enquiry note system was kept up, at least by the major firms, until 1914. In October 1901, Brooks and Doxey blacklisted a number of striking planers and shapers who had gone on strike against reductions in piece rates. In December, the U.M.W.A. General Secretary, Matthew Arrandale, complained that those of his

members who had been dismissed, were unable to obtain new employment because of blacklisting.²³⁷

In August 1912, the same firm acted against members of the Grinders and Glazers Society who had taken strike action to attempt to secure the replacement of an unpopular foreman. The strikers were dismissed and blacklegs brought in. The Society replied by undertaking a close and systematic picketing of the works and so the strikers were blacklisted. The Federation was keen to support Brooks and Doxey against a union which although small had proved a most obdurate opponent in south Lancashire of the major textile machinery firms. Thus considerable financial assistance was given to the firm and the struggle continued through the spring of 1913. Eventually, in June, the Grinders Society was obliged to remove the pickets and waive the demands regarding the foreman in order to persuade the Federation to terminate its blacklisting of the Society's members in Lancashire.²³⁸

In conclusion, the conduct of industrial relations by the Federation and by the unions defeated by it, should be considered in the period 1898-1910, in outline, in order to understand the rank and file-led militancy of the period which followed, and which continued beyond the outbreak of war in 1914. Initially, the effect of the lock-out on the domestic circumstances of the men involved, was sufficiently devastating to deter further prolonged or large scale industrial action in the short term. William Owen Davis a skilled tool setter at Hetheringtons, a middle aged man with working children still living at home, would have been among the economic elite of the working class. Yet his daughter-in-law later recalled that the effects of the lock-out were such that,

"the furniture was sold until there was nothing left but the table and beds. Heavy debts were incurred at the local tradesmen's shops which took years to repay ... it was years

before my husband's family recovered from the financial set back."²³⁹

The period 1898-1910 was characterised by the consolidation of victory by the Federation which was able to keep a demoralised and increasingly directionless A.S.E. Executive subjugated and virtually impotent. However, it was frustrated in its desire to exercise this dominance to the full by determined rank and file resistance which was to some extent inherent in the nature of the textile machinery artisans, but at this time, was greatly re-inforced by the centrifugal drift of power to the branches within the Society.

Following their victory, the Lancashire employers went on to formalise and strengthen the links of their autonomous associations within the Federation. In 1898, Platts and Asa Lees had established a separate Oldham Engineering Employers' Association which would give them far greater influence on policy than had they joined the Manchester Association which had assiduously courted them during the early stages of the lock-out. However, in the summer of 1899, a strike of F.S.I.F. skilled moulders at Messrs. Taylor Lang of Stalybridge, who had also joined the Oldham Association, necessitated closer collaboration with the powerful Manchester firms. A deputation led by S. R. Platt and John Dodd of Platts, and H. Lawton of Asa Lees, sought the assistance of Manchester since they feared the spread of the strike to Oldham, and doubted whether even the combined strength of the three firms could resist it.²⁴⁰

The result of this was the creation of the Central Consultative or Advisory Board for Lancashire, which brought in not only the Oldham and Manchester firms, but those of Bolton and the mid-Lancashire Associations, thus embracing virtually all the Federated textile machinery making establishments.²⁴¹ The new board continued

to function through monthly meetings of representatives of the constituent associations.

Zeitlin has argued that the economic circumstances of sectors such as textile machinery making, discouraged manufacturers from undertaking a wholesale transformation of production after their victory in 1898. This, combined with the overall industrial relations strategy of the E.E.F., and the relative weakness of the A.S.E. Executive vis a vis its rank and file, ultimately undermined that victory.²⁴² A number of factors encouraged the relatively conservative investment strategy. In most markets, competition was intense within the Lancashire network of firms, yet the overseas challenge was still extremely weak. In addition, the very nature of the industry's productive capacity was a barrier to radical change. Most firms had built up their capacity over the previous half century or more, and operated on fairly restricted urban sites.²⁴³ This discouraged ambitious schemes of workshop and foundry re-organisation, and encouraged continued limited re-equipment and the gradual extension of piece work and the proportion of semi-skilled machine men and 'apprentices' who were little more than cheap labour. This piecemeal change, with its continued threat to artisan controls, encouraged the building of relentless 'guerilla' style resistance around the local committees and the embryonic shop stewards' organisations.

The strategy of the E.E.F. as Zeitlin argues, was that of using its strength to frustrate district-based wage advances at a peak in the trade cycle until a downturn justified the denial of an increase. This was combined with a policy of using the procedure of local and central conferences, established in 1898, to override objections brought by the artisan societies on questions of machine

manning, a policy which was pursued with inflexible determination, as the Federation's case registers show.

The Lancashire textile machinery industry provided an excellent example of the former policy, applied in the 'Mid-Lancashire' area in 1899. A demand from the A.S.E., the S.E.M. and the Smiths and Strikers Society in January, for a two shilling advance was met, initially, by the employers' rejection of any increase at the local level. The procedure reached national conference level in April 1899, when the Federation conceded a one shilling advance, with effect from July 1899, "if the state of trade is as good then as now."²⁴⁴ In July the firms argued that trade had deteriorated and thus no advance was merited. After some bitter exchanges within the A.S.E., the branches were persuaded to accept arbitration, which granted the one shilling advance to skilled men and sixpence to the smiths' strikers in late September. Perhaps even more significantly, the E.E.F. Case Registers show a very large number of claims abandoned by the unions at local or national conference level, indicating the success of this delaying tactic.

The mid-Lancashire episode illustrates not only the ability of employers and the Federation to delay and restrict wages claims, but also the mounting divisions between an A.S.E. Executive Council bound to moderation by its settlement of the previous year, and a rank and file far less willing to compromise. The Bury men had voted 90 to 3 for strike action, and District Delegate Rose warned his Executive that a failure to extract a satisfactory settlement, "would lose hundreds of members in mid-Lancashire", and advocated a ban on overtime.²⁴⁵ However, with Federation threats of, "a serious extension of the area of conflict," if the men did take action, the local officials were eventually persuaded to accept the arbitration. The dilemma of the A.S.E. Executive, caught between the potentially

overwhelming sanctions of the Federation, and the aspirations of the rank and file, was eventually to lead to the resignation of Barnes in 1908, and its own total collapse in 1913.²⁴⁶

The Federation's 1898 victory and the consequent settlement initially appeared impregnable and was able to subdue the A.S.E. leadership, but into that power vacuum, emerged the grass roots militancy which had been characteristic of the textile machinery artisans since the Bolton strike of 1831. Such was the perceived threat of the employers' challenge to artisan control of the labour process, after 1898, that the relentless intensity of opposition which met virtually every employer initiative, eventually halted the challenge, and after 1910 formed the basis of a successful counter-attack. As Phelps-Brown most eloquently states, the employers, found themselves,

"combating a whole culture, a heritage of values. The craftsmen maintained a ceaseless, pervasive pressure, a molecular bombardment of management. It came about in the nature of these men, and despite agreements about the prerogatives of management entered into at the national level ... local branches and district committees who for years had been struggling against piece work, for stricter overtime limitation; for maximum proportions of apprentices, for the right of craftsmen to man machines, for the union shop, could not suddenly stop the struggle."²⁴⁷

FOOTNOTES

- 1 The new machine shop tools were capstan and turret lathes, grinding and milling machines. The skilled moulders unaffected by new technology in the 1840's and 50's, were faced with new plate and machine moulding techniques.
- 2 H. A. Clegg, A. Fox, and A. F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, Vol. 1 1889-1910, Oxford 1964.
- 3 A. E. P. Duffy, 'New Unionism in Britain, 1889-1890: A Reappraisal', Economic History Review, Vol. 14, 1962, p.308.
- 4 Joyce, op. cit., p.184 singles out Dobson and Barlow as a paternalistic firm with great employee loyalty and deference.
- 5 D. A. Farnie, The English Cotton Industry and the World Market, 1815-96, Oxford 1979, p.225, notes this boom involved the re-fitting of existing mills with new machinery as well as the building of new larger factories, the largest having 132,000 spindles, as compared to 84,000 in 1885.
- 6 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'General Labour Unions in Britain 1889-1914', in Labouring Men, p.195.
- 7 Tuckett, op. cit., pp.75-76.
- 8 ibid. p.114.
- 9 See Part III of this Chapter.
- 10 Duffy, op. cit., p.318.
- 11 See Part IV for the impact of the Oldham engineers' strike.
- 12 S. Pollard, 'Trade Unions and the Labour Market 1880-1914', Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research, Vol. 17, 1965, pp.100 and 103, quoting the statistics of K. G. J. C. Knowles and D. J. Robertson, 'Differences between the Wages of Skilled and Unskilled Workers 1880-1950', Bulletin of the Oxford Institute of Statistics, Vol. 13, p.111.
- 13 The Districts selected were: Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Accrington, Bury, Oldham.
- 14 Engineering Employers' Federation, Wage Movements, London 1922, passim.
- 15 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.77.
- 16 Jefferys, op. cit., p.98.
- 17 DDP SL 2/38/3 'Early History of Dobson and Barlow' claims 3,000 were employed in 1891, whilst A. Boltonian (pseudonym of B. P. Dobson), Bolton's Rise and Progress, Manchester 1925, p.59, claims 4,000 were employed by 1890.
- 18 DDP SL 2/38/3 'Notices to Workmen'. The year 1879 had seen the worst depression of the Lancashire iron trade since 1850, with

172 out of 934 of the Bolton A.S.E. members unemployed in April of that year; the 1886 situation was far less serious.

- 19 Bolton Journal, 21.5.1887 and 5.7.1887.
- 20 DDPSL 2/38/3 'Notices to Workmen'
- 21 Bolton Journal, 21.5.1887. The other firms were: Hick Hargreaves, Wood's Foundry and John Musgrove and Company.
- 22 P. H. Harris, 'Class Conflict, the Trade Unions and Working Class Politics in Bolton', unpublished M.A. dissertation, Lancaster University, 1971, provides a discussion of the strike within the context of the progress of working class political representation in Bolton.
- 23 The strike is not discussed at all by Jefferys and by the general trade union studies of the late nineteenth century. This perhaps reflects lack of attention focussed upon it by official A.S.E. sources; almost all the source material is purely local. The notable exception, is the account given by William Mosses, History of the United Patternmakers' Association, pp.82-83.
- 24 Bolton Journal, 28.5.1887. It seems that most of the attackers were not actually the strikers themselves, but their wives, families and sympathisers.
- 25 ibid. 2.7.1887. The station was the primary entry point into the town for blackleg labour.
- 26 ibid. and Bolton Evening News, 1.7.1887. The papers estimated the size of the crowd at between eight and ten thousand people.
- 27 Commonweal, 16.7.1887.
- 28 Bolton Journal, 16.7.1887 and 30.7.1887.
- 29 ibid. 30.7.1887.
- 30 ibid. 9.7.1887 and 30.7.1887.
- 31 ibid. 16.7.1887.
- 32 Coalmining, the other great employer of labour, was largely confined to the town's western suburbs.
- 33 Bolton Journal, 28.5.1887, 2.6.1887, 9.6.1887 and 16.6.1887.
- 34 ibid. 23.7.1887.
- 35 ibid. 30.7.1887.
- 36 Commonweal, 16.7.1887. Harris, op. cit., p.31 points out that the two publicans who had closest connections with the organisation of the strike, were elected to the town council as Trades Council candidates in November 1887.
- 37 Bolton Journal, 2.7.1887.

- 38 Bolton Evening News, 2.8.1887.
- 39 Hansard, 1887, Vol. 318, pp.1166-1167, and p.1529 for Bradlaugh's second question to the Home Secretary.
- 40 For further discussion of this general theme, Duffy, op. cit., p.307 ff.
- 41 Bolton Chronicle, 2.7.1887.
- 42 Dona Torr, Tom Mann and His Times, London 1956, p.251.
- 43 Tom Mann, Memoirs, London 1923, p.69.
- 44 Torr, op. cit., p.255. The S.D.F. had actually established a branch as early as March 1884 in nearby Blackburn, whilst Burnley to the north-east was to become the Federation's major provincial stronghold and the platform for H. M. Hyndman's attempts to gain election success.
- 45 Mann, op. cit., p.70.
- 46 Harris, op. cit., pp.30-31.
- 47 Bolton Evening News, 3.11.1887.
- 48 United Patternmakers Association, Executive Council Minutes, 6.6.1887.
- 49 ibid. 3.8.1887 and 5.9.1887.
- 50 A.S.E., Abstract of the Executive Council's Proceedings, 1884-1887.
- 51 A.S.E., Monthly Report, October 1887. The Executive were critical of local agreements which failed to secure employers' withdrawal of 'enquiry notes'.
- 52 Bolton Evening News, 16.3.1888 and Bolton Chronicle, 24.9.1892.
- 53 Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, Second Quarterly Report, 1898. The Bolton-based union had higher subscriptions and benefits. It finally amalgamated with its larger rival in 1916 but retained some autonomy until 1923.
- 54 MSS 41/APM/1/1 Minutes of the Representative Delegate Meetings of the Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders Society, and MSS 41/ASCM/4/1 Amalgamated Coremakers Society, Annual Report, 1918.
- 55 A.S.E., Annual Reports.
- 56 Bolton Journal, 9.7.1887. All kinds of devices were used to smuggle these men past the vigilant pickets; one group was disguised as policemen and their escorts were armed with revolvers loaded with blank cartridges, ibid. 30.7.1887.
- 57 E. Wigham, The Power to Manage, London 1973, p.18.
- 58 Bolton Journal, 2.7.1887 and 30.7.1887.

- 59 Mosses, op. cit., p.82.
- 60 Commonweal, 22.10.1887.
- 61 Bolton Evening News, 17.1.1888.
- 62 ibid. 16.4.1888.
- 63 U.P.A., Annual Report, 1887.
- 64 By 1896, outside these centres, it had established only two small branches in textile machinery making towns: Preston and Blackburn. U.M.W.A., Annual Report, 1896.
- 65 DDPSL 1/90/2 Platts' Directors' Meetings Minutes. For Howard and Bullough, Accrington Observer, 20.3.1920 and DDPSL 3/31/2, Wages Book.
- 66 By the end of 1890 basic time rates for skilled loose moulders ranged from 34 shillings in Bury and Burnley, to 36 shillings in Oldham and Bolton and 38 shillings in Manchester. Plate and machine moulders' wages were, by 1896, 26 shillings per week in Blackburn, but perhaps rather more in Oldham and Manchester.
- 67 MSS 41/APM/2/1. Oldham Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders Society Cash Book.
- 68 From an interview with Mr. Joe Banks.
- 69 MSS 41/APM/1/1 Minutes of Representative Delegate Meeting, 3.10.1891.
- 70 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.95.
- 71 ibid.
- 72 MSS 41/APM/4/1 Amalgamated Moulders Union, Annual Report, 1915.
- 73 MSS 41/APM/1/1 Representative Delegate Committee Minutes, 23.6.1894.
- 74 Significantly the Amalgamated Moulders Union which remained essentially a Lancashire union, stayed out of the amalgamation which created the National Union of Foundry Workers in 1920, and chose only to amalgamate with its larger and wealthier rival in 1967, to form part of the Amalgamated Engineering and Foundry Workers Union.
- 75 MSS 41/ASCM/4/1 Annual Report, 1918. The federation was consolidated into the Amalgamated Society of Coremakers in September 1901, following a delegate meeting in Bury.
- 76 Blackburn Standard, 17.10.1896; Robert Hall and Co. (Bury), Staff Analysis Book, DDHL 3742, and Butterworth and Dickinson Wages Book, 1904-08.
- 77 In 1889 branches were formed in Salford, Oldham and Manchester, but these were almost certainly restricted to local authority and utility workers. By July 1890, there were special 'engineers' labourers and machine men's' branches; the first in

Lancashire appear in 1891, at Oldham, Blackburn, Gorton and Salford, Half Yearly Reports and Balance Sheets, 1890-4.

- 78 G. and G.L.U., Annual Report, 1891 (Lancashire District).
- 79 ibid. Half Yearly Report, December 1894. By 1896, 6 Oldham branches had fallen to 2 and the 3 Gorton branches were all defunct, as were those in Heywood, Burnley and Accrington.
- 80 Hobsbawm, op. cit., pp.191-192.
- 81 G. and G.L.U., Half Yearly and Quarterly Reports.
- 82 Blackburn Standard, 24.10.1896. According to the Blackburn Trades and Labour Council Annual Report for 1896, the union had 400 members in the town; the union's own membership figures are not broken down beyond the district level. The Blackburn branch had from 1888 been an S.D.F. stronghold.
- 83 The U.K. Society of Smiths and Strikers, with 63 men on strike, gained wage advances for the strikers of one or two shillings, depending on the grade of work.
- 84 Blackburn Standard, 17.10.1896.
- 85 ibid. 17.10.1896 and 24.10.1896.
- 86 G. and G.L.U., Fourth Quarterly Balance Sheet, 1896.
- 87 G. and G.L.U., Quarterly Reports, and Blackburn Standard, 31.10.1896.
- 88 G. and G.L.U., First Quarterly Report, 1897.
- 89 ibid. and Fourth Quarterly Report. This was perhaps more impressive because of competition from a splinter union in Oldham, the Amalgamated Machine Workers Union.
- 90 G. and G.L.U. Fourth Quarterly Report. The union paid out £1125 in lock-out money to its Lancashire members in this quarter of 1897, due to the engineering dispute.
- 91 MSS 41/APM/1/1 Representative Delegate Committee Minutes, 26.3.1892.
- 92 ibid.
- 93 ibid. 2.1.1895. Minutes of Special Rules Revision Meeting. Eight pence was to go to central funds for purposes of benefit and pursuance of disputes, four pence to branch funds. The level of contributions was actually the same as the U.P.A. and the A.S.E.
- 94 ibid. 28.12.1895 and 14.2.1896.
- 95 See Appendix F.
- 96 Burnley Express, 14.10.1896 and Burnley Gazette, 17.10.1896.

- 97 MSS 41/APM/1/1, Delegate Committee Minutes, 6.10.1896 and 7.11.1896. There were five textile machinery making firms in Burnley: Butterworth and Dickinson, George Keighley, Harling and Todd, Cooper Bros., and Pembertons, which together employed about 1800 men. About 70 men were initially directly involved in the strike.
- 98 Burnley Gazette, 21.10.1896.
- 99 MSS 41/APM/1/1, Delegate Meeting Minutes, 21.11.1896.
- 100 ibid.
- 101 MSS 41/FSIF/1/5/1, F.S.I.F. Executive Council Minutes, 21.10.1896.
- 102 MSS 41/FSIF/1/21/1, F.S.I.F. Burnley Branch Committee Minutes, 26.10.1896 and 26.11.1896.
- 103 MSS 41/APM/1/1, Delegate Meeting Minutes, 26.9.1896, 21.11.1896 and 2.1.1897.
- 104 ibid. 26.6.1897. Only the delegate committee member Charlie Berry remained to represent the branch on the strike's collapse.
- 105 MSS 41/APM/4/1, Annual Report, 1915.
- 106 See Part V.
- 107 Oldham Trades and Labour Council, Centenary Booklet, Oldham, 1967.
- 108 This was achieved at the cost of the cotton unions temporarily leaving the council.
- 109 Board of Trade Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs, Parliamentary Papers, 1897, Vol. 94 cd.8643, pp.60-67.
- 110 ibid. pp.66-67 and U.P.A. Executive Council Minutes, 23.6.1896, 2.7.1896 and 26.8.1896.
- 111 U.P.A., Monthly Report, August 1896, and W. Mosses, op. cit., p.125. The A.S.E. represented 19, the S.E.M. 2 and there were 6 non-society strikers.
- 112 ibid. October 1896.
- 113 ibid. November 1896. In the following spring, the Oldham patternmakers' joint committee noted that Platts' pattern shops were being run by, "non-society men ... assisted by lads, dummy joiners and nondescripts", who were working three shillings below the weekly district rate, Oldham Chronicle, 18.3.1897.
- 114 DDP SL 1/90/2, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.
- 115 Board of Trade Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs, Parliamentary Papers, 1897, Vol. LXXXIV, cd.9012, pp.40-41.
- 116 Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.

- 117 Oldham Chronicle, 8.5.1897.
- 118 Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897. The two boards continued to co-operate closely throughout the strike and in the autumn of 1897, despite the persistent overtures of the Manchester textile machinery makers, decided to form the nucleus of a separate Oldham Engineering Employers Association within the Federation.
- 119 A good example of this was the opening of a new workers' dining hall in 1894 with places for over 1,000 men; each worker was allotted a numbered seat and provision was made to boil eggs and supply fresh bread and butter, "especially for the convenience of unmarried men and apprentices", DDPSL 15/1/1 'Platts of Oldham' (typescript) p.45.
- 120 Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 17.2.1897.
- 121 ibid.
- 122 Oldham Chronicle, 8.5.1897.
- 123 Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897. Many of the non-society fitters and turners did continue to work throughout the strike despite the attentions of A.S.E. pickets.
- 124 Oldham Chronicle, 23.3.1897 and 31.3.1897.
- 125 Many turners and grinders on piece work could earn between 45 and 50 shillings per week; a return to time work would have put them onto a basic wage of 34 to 38 shillings. Oldham Chronicle, 13.3.1897 and 18.3.1897, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes 20.5.1897.
- 126 Oldham Chronicle, 22.3.1897 and 30.3.1897.
- 127 ibid. 17.4.1897. Five shillings per week was offered, repayable in weekly instalments.
- 128 MSS 41/APM/4/1, Annual Report, 1897.
- 129 Oldham's six A.S.E. branches and the adjacent branches of Royton and Hollinwood had returned a majority for Tom Mann in the 1892 election for the union's General Secretaryship. See Table 3.
- 130 Oldham Chronicle, 22.3.1897.
- 131 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, April 1897.
- 132 Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.
- 133 Oldham Chronicle, 30.4.1897.
- 134 Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.
- 135 Oldham Chronicle, 5.5.1897 and 8.5.1897. The latter issue provides a near verbatim account of the two sides' correspondence.

- 136 Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897. The minutes show that the terms of the settlement were rushed by special delivery by Platts to the joint committee's headquarters at the Roebuck Hotel at 10 p.m. In order to allow a full discussion, special permission was granted by the Chief Constable to keep the meeting going after closing time. The meeting did in fact go on until 1.45 a.m.
- 137 The large order for Highfield Mill is a good example. During the strike period the only machinery delivered was: 1 single card, 1 intermediate frame, 3 roving frames, 1 self-acting mule, 1 bale breaker, 1 hopper feeder, 1 opener and 1 scutcher. (The mule and 1 roving frame were delivered on the strike's very first day.) In contrast, prior to the strike, 8 single cards, 6 drawing frames, 2 slubbing frames, 2 intermediate frames, 5 roving frames and 5 self-acting mules were delivered. After the settlement, the residue of the order: 30 single cards, 6 drawing frames, 4 intermediate frames, 8 roving frames, and 26 self-acting mules, was despatched. DDPSL 1/78/4, Home Delivery Book.
- 138 DDPSL 1/78/25 and 1/78/26, Foreign Orders Delivery Books.
- 139 The A.S.E., Monthly Journal, March 1897, indicates that the local ballot of members on February 27th, went 1060 to 56 in favour of taking strike action.
- 140 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, May 1897.
- 141 Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.
- 142 Oldham Chronicle, 18.2.1899.
- 143 J. Saville, 'Trade Unions and Free Labour. The Background to the Taff Vale Decision', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.) Essays in Labour History in Memory of G. D. H. Cole, London 1967, pp.348-50.
- 144 The Clarion, 29.1.1898.
- 145 Bolton Chronicle, 31.1.1897.
- 146 Saville, op. cit., p.317.
- 147 Howard and Bullough Wages Book, DDPSL 3/31/2, shows that by 1895 the firm had 42 men operating turret lathes and 65 operating milling machines, most of them on piece work.
- 148 M. Holbrook-Jones, op. cit., p.73 and Platts Directors Meetings Minutes 20.5.1897. The latter view is supported by the A.S.E. claim in that year that 80% of Platts' employees worked by the piece, A.S.E. Jubilee Souvenir, p.105.
- 149 In the five Burnley firms, for example, semi-skilled 'machine men' remained an insignificant minority before 1914, and piece work for skilled men was unheard of. For Asa Lees very limited use of piece work, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 20.5.1897.
- 150 B. C. M. Weekes, 'The Amalgamated Society of Engineers 1880-1914', Warwick University Ph.D. Thesis, 1970, p.24.

- 151 Workman's Times, 19.11.1892 and 26.11.1892.
- 152 A.S.E. Rule Book, 1893. Rule XXII introduced 'Trade Membership' for 30 to 40 year old skilled men who paid a 6d. weekly subscription and received no superannuation. Rule XXIII introduced, 'Trade Protection' membership, at 4d. weekly subscription for 40 to 55 year old men who were entitled only to dispute pay and death benefit. Rule XIX, did extend membership to admit a small proportion of 'machine men'.
- 153 Workman's Times, 20.8.1892.
- 154 Jefferys, op. cit., pp.136-137 and Weekes, op. cit., pp.34-36.
- 155 Workman's Times, 2.12.1893.
- 156 Weekes, op. cit., p.44.
- 157 ibid. p.36.
- 158 Royal Commission on Labour, Parliamentary Papers, 1893, Vol. 32, Appendix XLVI, p.149.
- 159 A.S.E., Quarterly Report, December 1893.
- 160 Amalgamated Machine, Engine and Iron Grinders and Glazers Society, Executive Committee Minutes, April and June, 1888.
- 161 Manchester Courier, 22.4.1891, and Manchester City News, 25.4.1891.
- 162 Further set-backs due to a lack of cohesion in the I.T.E.A. led to the Federation of Engineering Employers establishing itself in Manchester by early 1897.
- 163 Manchester Examiner and Times, 25.4.1891 and 27.4.1891.
- 164 Bolton Chronicle, 29.8.1891 and Grinders and Glazers Society, Executive Committee Minutes, September and December 1892.
- 165 Bolton Journal, 21.11.1896.
- 166 See Part IV of this Chapter.
- 167 Board of Trade Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs 1896. Parliamentary Papers, 1897, Vol. LXXXIV, cd.5643, pp.xxxii and 188 and Bolton Journal, 26.12.1896, 13.2.1897 and 20.3.1897.
- 168 See Part II.
- 169 A. McIvor, 'Employers Associations and Industrial Relations in Lancashire, 1880-1939', Manchester University Ph.D. Thesis, 1983, pp.204-5.
- 170 Bolton Journal, 9.1.1897.
- 171 E. Wigham, The Power to Manage, London 1973, p.25.

- 172 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 29.3.1897.
- 173 ibid. 2.4.1897.
- 174 MSS 237 Employers Federation of Engineering Associations, Executive Board Minutes Vol. 1, 20.5.1897.
- 175 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 2.4.1897.
- 176 Engineering Employers' Federation, Executive Board Minutes, 29.4.1897.
- 177 ibid. 17.6.1897 and 1.7.1897.
- 178 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 15.6.1897.
- 179 A.S.E., Annual Reports, 1887 and 1889.
- 180 A.S.E., Quarterly Report, September 1893. It was noted that in Blackburn and Burnley, "a twelve or fourteen hour day has been more familiar than a nine hour day pure and simple". F.S.I.F. Monthly Reports, for that society's unemployment position.
- 181 Mather had been an influential member of the Salford School Board from its inception, and went on to play a major part in the development of elementary education and the provision of training facilities for infant teachers in Manchester and Salford. He became President of Manchester Kindergarten Training College in 1912, which was later renamed Mather College in his honour. He also became President of the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes (U.L.C.I.) in 1908, having played a leading part in the development of technical education in Salford and Manchester. See J. H. Reynolds, 'Education and Social Activities', in L. E. Mather (ed.) The Right Honourable Sir William Mather, London 1920, for a discussion of Mather's philanthropic activities.
- 182 Mather and Platt Ltd., Salient Dates in Mather and Platt History, Typescript n.d.
- 183 L. E. Mather, op. cit., p.19.
- 184 W. Mather, 'Report on a Year's Work with a Forty Eight Hour Week in the Salford Iron Works, Manchester', in L. E. Mather, op. cit., p.285.
- 185 McIvor, op. cit., p.207.
- 186 Mather, op. cit., p.284.
- 187 A.S.E., Monthly Report, February 1894.
- 188 Weekes, op. cit., p.62 ff. and R. O. Clarke, 'The Dispute in the British Engineering Industry 1897-98: An Evaluation', Economica, Vol. XXIV, 1957, provide detailed accounts of the national background. Clarke perhaps plays down the eight hour day

- question rather too much in calling it the "Sarajevo" of the conflict.
- 189 MSS 237, Executive Board Minutes, Vol. 1, 1.7.1897.
 - 190 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 29.3.1897.
 - 191 ibid. 15.6.1897.
 - 192 Manchester Association Minutes, Vol. 1, 6.7.1897, and DDPSL 1/90/2 Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 8.7.1897. Platts and Asa Lees subsequently decided to form a separate Oldham Engineering Employers' Association rather than going into the Manchester Association.
 - 193 Manchester Association Minutes, Vol. 1, 12.7.1897.
 - 194 Burnley Gazette, 21.8.1897, Bolton Chronicle 31.7.1897 and Blackburn Times, 16.10.1897. A possible link between the firms and the Federation was the Burnley firm of Harling and Todd whose Order Book shows it regularly undertook sub-contract work for Brooks and Doxey and Hetheringtons.
 - 195 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, June 1897.
 - 196 ibid. August 1897.
 - 197 ibid. September 1897. The firm continued to deny union recognition until May 1917.
 - 198 J. Melling, 'Non-Commissioned Officers, British Employers and their Supervisory Workers, 1880-1920'. Social History, Vol. 5, 1980, provides a very detailed study of what he describes as the "pivotal" position of these workers during this period.
 - 199 MSS 237, Executive Board Minutes, 30.12.1897.
 - 200 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, August 1897.
 - 201 Kirk, op. cit., p.233.
 - 202 DDPSL 1/90/2, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 19.8.1897. Significantly, John Dodd, vice-chairman of Platts was invited to chair the Federation's committee which was to draw up plans for the Foreman's Benefit Society.
 - 203 Kirk, op. cit., p.234.
 - 204 Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op. cit., p.164.
 - 205 DDPSL 1/78/25 and 1/78/26, Platts Delivery Books for Foreign Markets in 1897, and DDPSL 1/78/4 Platts Delivery Book for Home Markets in 1896-1901.
 - 206 Burnley Gazette, 1.9.1897.
 - 207 Blackburn Times, 16.10.1897.
 - 208 U.M.W.A., Salford Branch Committee Minutes, 5.9.1897.

- 209 Weekes, op. cit., p.119.
- 210 Bolton Chronicle, 4.9.1897.
- 211 Oldham Chronicle, 6.9.1897.
- 212 MSS 41/APM/4/1, Annual Report, 1897.
- 213 G. and G.L.U., Third Quarterly Report and Balance Sheet, 1897.
- 214 ibid. Fourth Quarterly Report.
- 215 ibid.
- 216 Oldham Chronicle, 9.9.1897.
- 217 DDPSL 1/90/2, Platts Directors Meetings Minutes, 14.10.1897 and 17.11.1897.
- 218 Jefferys, op. cit., p.292, notes that by the end of 1897 the A.S.E. General Fund was £105,000 or £1-2s-10³/₄d. per member; in late 1896 it had been over £254,000 or £2-18s-3¹/₄d. per member.
- 219 Mather, op. cit., p.20.
- 220 Wigham, op. cit., p.58.
- 221 A.S.E., Monthly Journals and Annual Report, 1897. Appendix to the combined volume, p.133.
- 222 Clegg, Fox and Thompson, op. cit., p.166. Information on the response of the lesser unions is almost non-existent. That of the Salford branch of the U.M.W.A. was perhaps typical in view of the extremely harsh terms. It voted 86 to nil against acceptance. U.M.W.A. Salford Branch Minutes, 11.12.1897.
- 223 Clarke, op. cit., p.135.
- 224 Oldham Chronicle, 26.1.1898, and Blackburn Times, 29.1.1898.
- 225 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 13.7.1897.
- 226 Oldham Chronicle, 15.9.1897.
- 227 MSS 41/APM/4/1 Amalgamated Moulders' Union, Annual Report, 1915.
- 228 Weekes, op. cit., p.219.
- 229 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, April 1898. Rose's comment lends support to Zeitlin's thesis that in sectors such as textile engineering there was no radical transformation in production techniques.
- 230 Letter of F. H. Rose to A.S.E. Executive 15.5.1898. Quoted by Weekes, op. cit., p.219.
- 231 A.S.E., Monthly Journals and Annual Report, 1897. Appendix to the combined volume, p.133. The Monthly Journals show that from June 1897 to February 1898, the seven A.S.E. branches in Oldham

- lost over 14% of their membership, a far higher figure than in any other major textile engineering centre. Burnley lost almost 8%, Rochdale over 4%; the rest lost very few members. Only the small Todmorden branch where most members were employed at Lord Bros. works, suffered comparably with losses of over 10%. This would appear to add weight to the complaints of victimisation at Platts. No complaints appear to refer to the other major Oldham firm, Asa Lees.
- 232 *ibid.*
- 233 G. and G.L.U., Second Quarterly Report, 1898.
- 234 U.M.W.A., Salford Branch Minutes, 8.10.1898 and 13.12.1898.
- 235 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 1, 5.7.1898.
- 236 *ibid.* Minute Book No. 2, 4.10.1898.
- 237 *ibid.* Minute Book No. 3, 28.3.1901, 1.10.1901 and 3.12.1901.
- 238 *ibid.* Minute Book No. 7, 5.2.1913 and 4.6.1913, and MSS 237 Emergency Committee Minutes, 31.1.1913 and 27.6.1913.
- 239 C. S. Davis, op. cit., p.103.
- 240 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Minute Book No. 2, 6.6.1899 and 9.6.1899. The F.S.I.F. had not been involved in the national lock-out and was therefore not bound by the settlement and its guidelines on industrial relations. The Society was attempting to press a wage claim for a two shilling advance to a basic rate of 40 shillings per week.
- 241 *ibid.* 4.7.1899.
- 242 J. Zeitlin, op. cit., p.41.
- 243 By 1910, there were three very notable exceptions: Tweedales and Smalley's Globe Works at Castleton, opened in 1891, Dobson and Barlow's Bradley Fold Works, opened in 1906, and Butterworth and Dickinson's new Globe Works at Rosegrove, opened in 1908. All were single storey buildings, located close to railway lines and set out so as to achieve maximum economies in internal production flow from foundry through to fitting shop and packing department. Platts had contemplated comprehensive changes in February 1891, but never carried this out. Between 1890 and 1914 Platts actually added twenty major extensions to their two works, whilst Howard and Bullough added significantly six times to their Accrington works.
- 244 Weekes, op. cit., p.224. The Mid-Lancashire Association embraced firms from Bury, Rochdale, Blackburn, Burnley and Preston.
- 245 *ibid.* p.225.
- 246 Appendix E provides a detailed account of cases dealt with through the Federation's 1898 procedure.
- 247 H. Phelps-Brown, op. cit., p.214.

Chapter SixThe Grass Roots Militancy of 1910-14I. Introduction

The quinquennium prior to the Great War brought an extremely sharp increase in the level of industrial disputes in the U.K. as Table 1 indicates.

Table 1: Industrial Disputes in the U.K. 1907-14

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Disputes Commencing in the Year</u>	<u>Total Number of working Days Lost (in 000's)</u>
1907	585	2,150
1908	389	10,790
1909	422	2,690
1910	521	9,870
1911	872	10,160
1912	834	40,890
1913	1,459	9,800
1914	972	9,880

Source: H. Pelling, 'The Labour Unrest, 1911-14, in Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain, p.149

Sir George Askwith, the government's chief industrial adviser and trouble shooter explained the commencement of the increase of unrest in 1910-11 by a coincidence of rising prices, with a failure of wages to keep pace, a trend towards ostentatious displays of wealth and luxury by the newly motorised upper classes, and the effects of improved national news communications.' To these factors, historians have added others; the 1906 Trades Disputes Act freeing unions from the shackles of the Taff Vale Decision, disillusion with the parliamentary road to working class advance, especially with the impact of the Osborne Judgement, and the impact

of Syndicalism or rather its moderated British variant, Industrial Unionism.²

Most attention has focused on the bitter and frequently violent disputes in the industries whose leading unions eventually formed the triple alliance in 1914: coalmining, the dockyards and the railways. However, from 1911, the textile machinery making sector of the engineering industry produced a wave of industrial unrest little short of those of the better documented industries, and inextricably linked with the development of the shop stewards' movement.

The economic factors are clear enough. Feinstein's index of retail prices reveals an increase of eleven points in the decade prior to the Great War and fifteen points in the sixteen years following the national lock-out's settlement in 1898, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: Feinstein's Index of Retail Prices, 1898-1914

1898	86	1904	90	1910	94
1899	84	1905	90	1911	95
1900	89	1906	91	1912	98
1901	88	1907	93	1913	100
1902	88	1908	91	1914	101
1903	89	1909	92		

Source: C. H. Feinstein, National Income, Expenditure and Output of the U.K., Cambridge, 1972, p.140

Wage rates for most time rate workers in Lancashire textile machinery making increased by 2 to 3 shillings over the 1898-1913 period i.e. under 10% for most skilled workers.³ Furthermore, the years 1908-09 had a sharp recession in engineering and fairly widespread wage reductions; thus with the revival in trade in 1910 a

rash of disputes could be predicted as employers, especially those within the Federation, tried to resist the inevitable claims for wage advances.

Indeed, as trade recovered, unemployment in machinery making fell to very low levels, another contributory factor to the level of militancy from 1911. The Accrington and Burnley branches of the F.S.I.F. had experienced severe unemployment in 1908-10. In Accrington, between 19 and 21 men out of a branch membership of just over 100 were persistently unemployed between October 1908 and March 1910; in Burnley between 24 and 52, out of a membership of between 155 and 200 were affected throughout. By 1911-12 the maximum number unemployed was only 7 in either branch, and by the end of 1912 there was a combined total for the two branches of only 5.⁴

In the years 1912 and 1913, the Board of Trade recorded 12 disputes which affected textile machinery making in Lancashire; these involved 10,466 men and boys directly and a further 9,604 indirectly.⁵ Only the Bury and Manchester districts avoided serious troubles, yet in the latter, over 9,000 men had been involved in industrial action in the engineering industry in general in the previous year, losing 60,000 aggregate working days.⁶ Of these disputes, about half were directly attributable to wages claims; the others reflect continued artisan resistance to employers attempting to place labourers on skilled work, attempts to secure union recognition, and resentment of apprentices at the introduction of National Insurance contributions in 1912.

Following serious problems at Livesey's Greenbank works in Blackburn in 1912, the strikes of the next two years, also reflect the continuation of the abysmal industrial relations record of two of the industry's leaders, Brooks and Doxey and Dobson and Barlow; and the rapid deterioration of relations at a third, Howard and

Bullough of Accrington, which remained independent of the Employers' Federation and had stayed clear of the 1898 lock-out and the resultant settlement. The strikes at Dobson and Barlow and Howard and Bullough, provide excellent illustrations of what Zeitlin refers to as, "the continuing capacity of craftsmen for local resistance", which along with the industry's market position, contributed to the eventual failure of the employers to hold down the settlement of 1898.⁷ The 'localist' militancy, perhaps strongest in Bolton and Accrington, developed around the nascent shop stewards' movement, and bluntly rejected the hesitancy and compromising policies then characteristic of the leadership of the A.S.E. in particular. In addition, the strikes also demonstrate moves towards closer co-operation, at least at the local level, between the artisan societies and the unions of the less skilled men.

The defeat of 1898 led to a crisis in the A.S.E. as its leadership was caught in the clutches of the settlement imposed by the Employers' Federation. This had encouraged employers to use the collective strength of the Federation to press home bargaining advantages and thus ride roughshod over artisan society attempts to defend craft controls, whilst blocking or delaying wage claims or attempts to improve conditions of work. Thus A.S.E. leadership was obliged to defer to Federation strength and in doing so was increasingly held in contempt by local activists, and by 1912 was seen to be losing the leadership of the trade union movement as a whole which it had held since its foundation in 1851.⁸ Indeed, in 1912, a trial of strength between Brooks and Doxey and the small but relatively more militant Grinders' Society re-inforced the doubts surrounding any attempt to re-open trials of strength with the Federated firms. A minor dispute arising over attempts to secure the dismissal of an unpopular foreman, led to a strike of grinders

and their dismissal by the firm. The union replied with close and systematic picketing. The Federation provided financial assistance as its members blacklisted the strikers, and after a struggle lasting nine months, the union had been obliged to give way.⁹

However, as McIvor has argued the Federation's strategy was becoming more flexible by 1910.¹⁰ In the textile machinery industry this is discernible in contrasting the stance taken in Brooks and Doxey's conflict with the Grinders' Society and that in Blackburn in Livesey's conflicts with the G. and G.L.U. and the A.S.E. Whilst it was determined to support Brooks and Doxey to the hilt on what was clearly an issue of management prerogatives of control in the workshop, it was in almost simultaneous cases, prepared to compromise where the precedents were perceived to be less vital. By the end of 1912 and the start of 1913 it is clear that as the central authority of the A.S.E. degenerated and was replaced by militant 'localist' resistance, the Federation sought no longer to threaten retaliation in an escalation of the struggle, but tried to isolate and restrict the local upsurges, even attempting to co-operate more closely with the A.S.E. leadership to do so.

The G. and G.L.U. had since the early 1890's made great progress in unionising the less skilled machine shop and foundry workers in Blackburn's loom making firms. In June 1912, the union claimed a minimum district wage in the engineering industry of 20 shillings for machine shop labourers and 21 shillings for foundry labourers.¹¹ The resistance of the employers brought strike action first at Liveseys, and then at Dickinsons, Yates and Thom and Willan and Mills. Almost 600 men were involved directly and 2,000 indirectly as the above firms were brought to a virtual standstill.¹² The strikers were strongly supported by other unions at the local level,

and having rejected arbitration, were able to win their basic demands.¹³

More fundamental perhaps since it involved a dispute over the 'machine question' and workshop control, rather than a simple wages claim, was the conflict between the A.S.E. and Liveseys which had begun in May 1911. This arose over the placing of unapprenticed men on new capstan and bush lathes, and having gone through the Federation's disputes procedure, eventually resulted in strike action of 276 engineers which commenced on August 10th, 1912, just one week after the labourers' strike had ended.¹⁴ The firm's managing director, Robert Livesey, having effectively used the Federation's conference system to postpone any confrontation, admitted that in view of the recent labourers' action, resistance could only be maintained for one month at the most.¹⁵ As a result, the Federation duly supplied assistance of a financial nature and blackleg labour was imported to keep the machinery going.

The Federation arranged a meeting with the A.S.E. at the highest level in order to bring about a swift settlement. Its representatives included Secretary, Allan Smith, J. L. Rushton (Chairman of Dobson and Barlow) and the chairmen of three other leading Blackburn firms: Robert Livesey, W. Harrison and W. Thom; those of the A.S.E. were its General Secretary, Jenkin Jones, two Executive Councilmen, and District Delegate, R. O. Jones.¹⁶ As a result of the meeting, two of the capstan lathes were to be transferred to fully skilled turners, and a tool fitter was to be placed in charge of the setting and alteration of the remaining lathes, three of which were to be given over to apprentice turners; the remaining six capstan lathes were to remain with semi-skilled men but their use was to be restricted.¹⁷

The A.S.E. leadership accepted this compromise, but an omen of the two years ahead was the rejection of the settlement by the Society's local officials and the artisans directly involved, who demanded nothing less than the dismantling of the machines and their removal from the works.¹⁹ Indeed the strike continued and the local joint trades committee sanctioned sympathetic strike action by the F.S.I.F. moulders and the Smiths and Strikers' Society if the firm persisted in the use of blackleg labour.²⁰ Rapidly improving trade and prospects of the further extension of the conflict persuaded the management of Liveseys to seek a new agreement. Following further meetings which again involved the Federation and A.S.E. leaders, the firm acceded to the men's demands; the blacklegs were withdrawn and the offending capstan lathes were withdrawn. It was further agreed that,

"the work hitherto done on these machines shall be distributed throughout the shop, turners' work being done on lathes by turners and the remainder by automatic machines."²⁰

The final settlement was a major triumph for the local officials and rank and file militants in Blackburn who, with the assistance of the allied trades, the smiths and moulders, had continued the struggle beyond the compromise settlement and very much against the wishes of their union's leaders. It was a remarkable triumph of artisan determination to resist loss of controls over the labour process and created a major breach, in Lancashire machinery making, in the Federation's monolithic settlement. It was a notable precursor of the later and greater struggles at Dobson and Barlow and Howard and Bullough, demonstrating the centrifugal shift of power within the A.S.E. and the vital lesson that, at least in a favourable economic climate, the Federation was not invincible.

The tide of militancy was, however, not confined to unionised artisans and labourers. In a remarkable and virtually spontaneous

action, 250 Burnley apprentices came out on strike, without official union backing, against the mandatory payment of National Insurance contributions. They complained that their contributions of 5d. per week for those between 16 and 18 years old, and 6½d. if between 18 and 21, were excessive in view of their low wages which ranged from 9/- at 16 to 14/- per week at 20, and they sought a shilling pay advance to compensate for the deductions.²¹ The strike, which began on August 20th, 1912 involved many non-union apprentices and initially had no funds. However, by touring the town's engineering works, foundries and cotton mills they gained new recruits, including lads under 16 who would pay nothing under the Act, and financial assistance through shop floor collections.²²

Initially four firms: Butterworth and Dickinson, Harling and Todd, Cooper Bros., and Pembertons were affected; the fifth major textile machinery firm averted a walk out thanks to a personal intervention by chairman George Keighley. After a week's strike a return to work began, following promises of favourable consideration of their demands; the last strikers, at Pembertons, returning on September 2nd.²³

The strike is important both as another example of the grass roots militancy in the textile machinery industry at this time, and as an illustration of Henry Pelling's argument that,

"the extension of the power of the state at the beginning of this century, which is generally regarded as having laid the foundations of the welfare state, was by no means welcomed by members of the working class, was indeed undertaken over the critical hostility of many of them, perhaps most of them."²⁴

In fact the Burnley strike was followed on September 5th, 1912 by an apprentices' strike throughout the engineering industry of south-east Lancashire, which involved 6,500 lads and lost 95,000 aggregate working days, thus meriting a high ranking in the Board of Trade's list of "Great Disputes" in the decade 1893-1913.²⁵

II. The Dobson and Barlow Dispute 1913-14

From the first major recorded 'turn-out' in the textile machine making industry, in 1831, until the Great War, Dobson and Barlow had undoubtedly the worst record of industrial relations of the leading firms in the trade. A limited benevolent paternalism only superficially concealed an aggressive anti-union management stance which had given the firm a leading role in the major lock-outs of 1852 and 1897-8, had brought prolonged troubles in the 1860's, the violent engineers' strike of 1887, and strikes of smiths' strikers (May - August 1891), and spindle and flyer makers (October 1896 - February 1897). In January 1911 a further 15 week strike of spindle and flyer makers had eventually been settled through a conference arranged by the Employers' Federation.²⁶

Dobson and Barlow was, in terms of willingness to invest in the new technology of production capacity, only a little behind the industry's leaders: Platts and Howard and Bullough. The firm had become a private limited company in 1891 and a public limited company in 1907, though control of policy was still dominated throughout the period, by the Dobson family: Benjamin Alfred Dobson and then Benjamin Palin Dobson, and the Rushton family (originally local bankers): T. H. Rushton, and then J. L. and H. L. Rushton.²⁷ The correspondent of Engineering magazine recorded, after a visit to the firm in 1894 that,

"subdivision of labour is a point to which much attention is here paid, and the machine tools in the works have been designed with a view to economy of production."²⁸

The management sought to streamline the production of ring and ring doubling frames in particular, which they concentrated at their new single-storey works at Bradley Fold, which was opened in 1906, and was extended in 1908 and 1911.²⁹

Dobson and Barlow's traditional family-based management, combined with an eagerness to keep up with the industry's technological pace-setters, was perhaps a recipe for recurring labour troubles, as craft controls were overridden whilst wage rates at the firm tended to compare with the smaller Bury or Blackburn firms rather than Platts or Howard and Bulloughs.³⁰

The management pressed ahead with a policy of recruiting more semi-skilled machine men to do fitters' work on ring frames at the Bradley Fold Works. This eventually provoked determined opposition from the A.S.E. in October 1913, which brought local and central conferences under the 1898 disputes procedure with a "failure to agree" in the latter bringing 500 fitters and turners out on strike by the beginning of December, 1913, at both Bradley Fold, and the main Kay Street Works.³¹ By Christmas 1913 2,500 were out as the strikers were joined by the firm's apprentices, non-union artisans and A.S.E. "section E" machine men, whilst the virtual closure of the drilling, boring, and milling departments brought unwanted idleness to machine men in the U.M.W.A. and Machine and General Labourers' Union.³²

Management first sought to outflank the strikers by subcontracting work to their allies in the 1887 dispute, Woods and Co., in order to complete urgent orders. However, this was soon prevented as the latter's joiners were persuaded to refuse work blacked by the striking patternmakers and millwrights.³³ Again following the pattern of 1887, blacklegs were imported which brought a stepping up of picketing and the organisation of large demonstrations which re-kindled fears of a repetition of the violence of that year.³⁴ Meanwhile the A.S.E. in Bolton gained substantial support from most of its south Lancashire branches which was needed to help sustain the labourers and machine men who had

been reduced to severe distress, and might succumb to the temptation of swelling the ranks of the blacklegs if not assisted.³⁵

By the end of January Dobson and Barlow were obliged to accept the Federation's advice to come to a compromise with the A.S.E. They agreed not to extend the employment of semi-skilled men on the fitting and erecting of ring frames and ring doublers, and to re-start all strikers as soon as possible with no victimisation, with a local conference to follow.³⁶ This was rejected overwhelmingly by the men who saw the opportunity to press home their advantage to bring wages into the discussions. Moreover, local militancy brought rejection of an unspecific offer to bring wages under discussion, despite recommendation by the A.S.E. Executive to accept.³⁷ The skilled moulders of the F.S.I.F. took maximum advantage of the Board's plight to give notice of action against the continued encroachment by semi-skilled machine moulders on their work.³⁸ This perhaps encouraged the firm to settle the dispute as quickly as possible by promising that there would be no extension of the use of semi-skilled men in the Bradley Fold fitting departments and that wage rates in the latter for semi-skilled men were to be increased to the rates paid in Accrington and Oldham districts. (In order to match the wages paid by Howard and Bullough and Platts, 30 to 40% increases were necessary on average.) In addition, certain other workers were to have wages levelled up to those paid in the main Kay Street Works.³⁹

The strike not only illustrates the rank and file artisan militancy in this period, but indicates the recognition by the latter that co-operation with the unions of the semi-skilled to improve the wages and conditions of machine men, was more in their long term interest than craft sectionalism. In purely financial terms the machine men had gained most from the artisans' strike, yet

this would prove an additional disincentive to further encroachment on the work of the skilled men. The strike also shows, more clearly than the Blackburn strike of 1912, a victory for rank and file militancy, over a powerful and determined opponent and a fundamental reverse for the Federation's policy of maintenance of the rights of management control over the 'machine question'.

III. The Burnley and Colne Strikes 1913-14

The five Burnley textile machinery making firms: Butterworth and Dickinson, George Keighley, Harling and Todd, Cooper Brothers and Pembertons, together with the two Colne firms: W. B. White and Sons, and Pillings, completely dominated the engineering industry's production and employment in their respective towns. All the firms were primarily specialists in loom manufacture, but none were large scale organisations.⁴⁰

The two towns had long radical traditions, and from the 1890's, Burnley had become a stronghold of the Social Democratic Federation, second only to London's east end.⁴¹ The local engineering industry, however, was, in the words of the town's historian, "more free from labour troubles than any other major industry".⁴² This perhaps represented a compromise between an artisanate which accepted wages which were low by comparison with other districts further south, and a group of employers who lacked the capital and the will to impose drastic technological change on these artisans. There had been minor disputes in the depressed years of 1878-9, and in 1896/7 the local branch of the new Plate and Machine Moulders Union had been broken in its attempt to reclaim a wage reduction, but apart from

the national lock-out of 1897/8, there had been no serious break down of industrial relations.

However, in addition to, and perhaps to some extent because of, the growth of the S.D.F., the influence of socialism was mounting within the craft unions in the textile machinery industry. In 1894 the F.S.I.F. delegates to Burnley Trades Council were advocating support of "labour members" in the local elections.⁴³ A decade later, the F.S.I.F. branch committee was, "very strongly," urging its members,

"to assist by all means where it is possible, the return of men of their own class to Parliament, and on municipal and public bodies."⁴⁴

Both the Burnley branches of the A.S.E. and F.S.I.F. resolutely opposed any concession on the issue of piece work. Even with the victory of the Federation in 1898 and the establishment of the employers' right to manage, artisan opposition was so entrenched that even by 1914 it was limited to a small number of plate moulders and machine men.⁴⁵ Even after the impact of the Great War on technology in the industry, the chairman of Burnley's second largest firm, George Keighley, was criticising the engineers', "absolute refusal to accept the system of payment by results."⁴⁶ The Burnley branch of the F.S.I.F. retained a specific bye-law which stated that,

"all piece or contract work be prohibited in this branch and any member or members violating this law shall be fined for the first 2/6 and for the second 5/- and for the third his case shall be submitted for the consideration of the E.C."⁴⁷

Although the seven firms had all joined the Engineering Employers' Federation during the 1897-8 lock-out, artisan control over the labour process remained considerable; in trades such as moulding and patternmaking apprenticeships were still partially restricted by family connection.⁴⁸ Since most orders were limited

in scale and production runs were consequently limited, the Burnley and Colne employers were reluctant to undertake a venturesome capital investment policy which would in any case incur the stubborn opposition of the artisan societies.

In Burnley and Colne, as in other north Lancashire towns, low wages were to some extent paid on the assumption that the wives of engineering workers enjoyed full-time employment, usually as weavers, a fact observed as late as 1938 by the Pilgrim Trust.⁴⁹ R. O. Jones, the A.S.E. District Delegate singled out the Burnley employers as, "some of the worst gradgrinds in Lancashire."⁵⁰ Indeed most men were obliged to work overtime on a systematic basis, when this was available, to supplement earnings.⁵¹ This was very much the case at Butterworth and Dickinsons where a strong paternalism, rivalling that of the industry's giants such as Platts, was an alternative means of retaining highly valued and trusted skilled labour.⁵² Indeed, by 1909, it was estimated that over 25% of the firm's workforce had 20 years or more service with the firm.⁵³

The combination of rising prices and the security of full employment led the Colne A.S.E. to submit a two shilling pay claim in February 1913, followed by Burnley in April. The predictable rejection by the employers was followed by the Federation's procedure of local and national conferences resulting in Autumn 1913 in an equally predictable, "failure to agree".⁵⁴ This break down in relations was not, however, purely and simply the result of a rejected wages claim; it was the culmination of a year of deteriorating relations in the industry. In November 1912, Harling and Todd had been obliged by the threat of a major strike to re-instate two dismissed grinders and in January 1913, Cooper Brothers briefly locked out A.S.E. and S.E.M. members for infringement of

company rules on lost time, until advised by the Federation to use its formal negotiations procedure. In June 1913, in a mounting attack on excessive overtime, the A.S.E. and S.E.M. took up the cause of their fitters over the interpretation of which was "urgent" and what was "repair work" in outworking in weaving sheds; and in August 1913, Pembertons were obliged to back down when the A.S.E. challenged their employment of an unapprenticed man on a horizontal drilling machine.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the Burnley A.S.E. District Committee and the shop stewards began, "a very active campaign to strengthen our ranks. Several shop and open meetings have been held, resulting in between 50 and 60 members being made."⁵⁶ The committee also began to develop its attack on overtime which had been initiated in June 1913; in July 1913 a limit of 32 hours per man per month was set.⁵⁷

The Burnley A.S.E. took strike action on October 24th, 1913 to secure its two shilling claim, initially bringing out 700 men; in Colne the strike began a week later.⁵⁸ The strikers were confident in the justice of the cause, for as the A.S.E. Monthly Report had noted, the employers had had, "a glorious year ... Firms do not run their works for months on overtime if things are as bad as they represent them."⁵⁹ The dispute, however, dragged on into 1914, affecting about 2,000 men, an amicable settlement perhaps being delayed by the absence of a suitable local mediator. In similar local disputes this task had usually fallen to the mayor but the incumbent of this office was George Keighley, chairman of the Burnley textile machinery firm.⁶⁰

Evidence suggests, however, that by March 1914 the build-up of orders was putting great pressure on the firms to conclude a settlement.⁶¹ However, the employers were also aware that a negotiated settlement with union officials might prove meaningless

in view of the tide of rank and file militancy. The chairman of Butterworth and Dickinson wrote to the firm's European agents, Tattersall and Holdsworth of Enschede, Holland, in March 1914, stating that whilst he thought a settlement was close,

"we cannot be sure of anything, as the workmen may easily throw over their official leaders and refuse to go back to work even if their leaders instruct them to do so."⁶²

However, the Burnley men did settle for a compromise one shilling advance in mid April. In Colne, however, where the men were lower paid and the strike had assumed a rather more violent nature because of Pillings use of blacklegs,⁶³ the strike continued for a further month. The employers and the A.S.E. did arrange a local conference which conceded the strikers' demand for the full two shilling award.⁶⁴ Even with these awards, however, the rates of pay in Burnley and Colne remained below those in most other textile machinery making centres in Lancashire. The upsurge in local militancy and the eventual success of the strike did, however, greatly boost A.S.E. membership, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3: A.S.E. Branch Membership 1910-14 (Burnley and Colne)

	<u>Burnley (2 branches)</u>	<u>Colne</u>
1910	309	67
1912	450	89
1914	580	161

Source: A.S.E. Annual Reports

IV. The Howard and Bullough Strikes 1913-14

The firm of Howard and Bullough, with about 4,500 workers in 1913, was Accrington's largest employer by far.⁶⁵ Through exploitation of the rapidly expanding market for ring frames it had achieved remarkable growth from the 1870's, as Table 4 indicates.

Table 4: Employment at Howard and Bullough, 1853-1913

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>
1853	40
1856	150
1864	300
1878	700
1887	1,800
1894	2,014
1900	3,424
1905	3,766
1909	4,302
1913	4,500

Sources: DDPSL 3/38/17 Howard and Bullough Scrapbook
for 1853-1887 and 1913, and DDPSL 3/31/2/
Wages Book for 1894-1909

The firm was in many ways exceptional. It alone of the machine makers of north-east Lancashire specialised in spinning machinery; the far smaller firms in the adjoining districts of Blackburn, Burnley and, to the south, in Bury, were largely loom making concerns. Howard and Bullough also maintained a policy of splendid isolation from the mainstream of industrial relations in Lancashire's engineering industry. In spite of overtures from the Engineering Employers' Federation, and the growing militancy of its workforce, participation in the lock-out of 1897-8 was avoided and membership of the Federation repeatedly rejected.

Until the early years of the twentieth century, Howard and Bullough had maintained an almost unblemished record of industrial relations. This was achieved, during the regime of John Bullough (i.e. to 1890) by a policy of benevolent paternalism. He had been

among the first employers in north Lancashire to introduce the 54 hour week, and had subsequently taken a leading role in promoting technical education and sport, not only among the company's employees, but in the town as a whole. Bullough took a leading role in promoting Accrington's football and cricket teams and provided considerable assistance for the local Mechanics' Institute.⁶⁶ His establishment of the Howard and Bullough Technical School reflected his desire of, "combining theoretical with practical knowledge ... to raise the standard of the workmen." The school was first opened to apprentices in 1882, but was extended to all workmen in 1889.⁶⁷

The firm's paternalism, however, was combined with a ruthless opposition to any attempts to unionise the workforce in an overt manner, or to any attempts of the unions to seek recognition at the firm. Another factor contributing to the passivity of the workforce was the recognition throughout the district that Howard and Bullough paid top wages.

Howard and Bullough, had become a private limited company on the death of John Bullough, in 1891, but it remained very much a family concern with his eldest son, George, as chairman, owning over half the 4,051 shares, and younger sons Tom and William taking seats on the board.⁶⁸ In 1894, the firm became a public company and the role of the Bullough family appears to have diminished in terms of day to day management. In 1888, John Bullough had purchased the Hebridean Isle of Rhum, and George Bullough spent increasing time there, whilst his brother Tom purchased and developed estates at Fasnacloich in Argyllshire.⁶⁹ The diminution of the family involvement, with day to day business increasingly in the hands of Alfred Hitchon and C. A. Peltzer, cannot be ruled out as a contributory factor in the decline of harmonious industrial

relations in the decade before the Great War, as the machine making business was seen merely as an income yielding concern.⁷⁰

In October 1903, a walk-out of 800 men, mainly in the spindle and flyer, and roller making departments, had been called off after a few hours, but the cause of the problem, a misunderstanding over a wages reduction, was largely due to divisions and poor communication within the firm's upper management structure.⁷¹ Just over a year later, the firm's directors sought to head off mounting discontent without admitting union recognition by establishing a committee, comprising managers and foremen, to meet deputations of workmen who wished to air grievances.⁷²

The Gas Workers and General Labourers Union which had established a solid membership in the loom making firms of Blackburn, during the 1890's, had from 1902 made a determined attempt to organise the labourers and lower grade machine men at Howard and Bullough. By 1904, the union claimed 1,500 members at the firm and in view of the denial of union recognition, advised the men to elect their own union-based deputations to discuss pay and conditions with management.⁷³ In 1905, the Gas Workers claimed 1,700 members at the company and tried to get the support of the firm's other unions: A.S.E., F.S.I.F., and Grinders and Glazers, to take joint action to secure recognition.⁷⁴

When the Gas Workers Union took the initiative and requested higher rates of overtime pay for about 50 of its members, the full force of Howard and Bullough's anti-unionism was felt. The union's deputation was offered wage increases, but when these were rejected, in February 1906, the management reacted swiftly, and abolished overtime in the departments concerned and introduced a three shift day.⁷⁵

The firm was also quite open in its use of blacklisting of union activists. In the same month, its engine room labourers had tried to build up support for a wages advance. This was met by management's posting up a notice which warned that, "the directors wish it to be known throughout the works that a special register will be kept of all employees who remain loyal to the firm."⁷⁶ Subsequently, about 40 G. and G.L.U. men were dismissed for resistance to the new three shift system. Despite the great strides made in unionising the firm's lower paid employees, the union was powerless to continue the fight, since Howard and Bullough could recruit replacements without difficulty, given their reputation as a high wage employer. In addition there was the prospect for unskilled labourers, of advancement, as 'machine men', to much better earnings. The firm claimed that it was,

"well known in the district that the positions vacated by the labourers are regarded by the firm and its employees as legitimate stepping stones to more responsible and better remunerated positions."⁷⁷

J. R. Clynes, the G. and G.L.U. Lancashire Organiser had continued to build up membership, assisted by occasional visits to the area by Will Thorne. The role of the shop stewards' organisation at the works was also of growing importance, albeit acting in a clandestine manner. Between 1900 and 1914, Howard and Bullough had spent £12,572 on new machinery and had added four major extensions to the works.⁷⁸ This had brought a drive to extend the system of piece work and consequently, despite A.S.E. opposition, this gave more opportunities for the G. and G.L.U. to extend membership and bargaining opportunities in the machine shops. The District Committee of the A.S.E. had in April 1913 noted that, "the system of day rating had fallen into disuse."⁷⁹

It was on one such issue of piece work rating that the first major strike arose at Howard and Bullough, in June 1913. The problem arose in the milling department where the men claimed that some jobs were so badly rated that even the best workers could never earn above 26s. 6d. per week.⁸⁰ They claimed a 10% increase in piece prices, but were offered only a re-timing of the most unpopular jobs. Clynes feared that his members would be provoked into strike action and sought to restrain them, "until cases can be taken in hand by the agents of the society". To his regret and that of the A.S.E. District Delegate, R. O. Jones, 75 milling room hands walked out on June 6th.⁸¹

The firm's attitude to trade unions in general, and the G. and G.L.U. in particular, can usefully be discussed at this point. Clynes, had, in 1910 described the firm's attitude as one of, "contemptuous silence".⁸² In 1913, it appears that the fears of Clynes and Jones regarding precipitate action were justified as the Bullough family correspondence indicates that the firm's directors saw their chance to challenge the union advance, reverse it, and perhaps even destroy the G. and G.L.U. in Accrington. They began by bringing in men and boys from other departments to operate the milling machines; a move described as, "high handed and un-British", by the union's branch secretary.⁸³ As the union countered with picketing, and the throstle, drilling and cast iron roller departments joined the strikers, the management replied by locking out most of the workforce on June 14th and considered the offer of assistance from the Free Labour Association.⁸⁴

Tom Bullough, writing to fellow director, George Ormerod from his Fasnacloich estate, determined that,

"the works would not re-open until a sufficient quantity of our men notified their loyalty as to justify us in doing so. Now

the battle has begun we must win at all costs, when we shall have peace and proper control."⁸⁵

The directors meanwhile set up a £100,000 contingency fund, "in the event of a prolonged struggle".⁸⁶ Another director, C. A. Peltzer, wrote to Tom Bullough in a tone which further indicates that the management policy was largely aimed at denying the unions any control over the labour process and even at the elimination of their influence in Accrington, and in Lancashire as a whole. Commenting on the orderliness of the men being paid off and given their cards, Peltzer went on to argue that,

"it goes to show again that what we are really up against is the union, by whom the men are being misguided ... the issue is not merely local interest; the industrial world at large is looking to Howard and Bullough to stem this tide of union ridden propensity."⁸⁷

A further letter from Tom Bullough added that it was essential that the company, "stand firm not only in our own interest, but in that of the trade generally. All Lancashire has its eyes on us."⁸⁸ Another expressed the hope that if the company were to remain firm in its resolve it would, "probably dish the union as far as Accrington is concerned."⁸⁹

However, the uncompromising stance of the directors probably handed Clynes and the other G. and G.L.U. leaders a district propaganda advantage. Clynes argued that it was,

"an extraordinary thing that in the greatest trade union country in the world, there should be a body of men shrinking to some extent from participating fully in those rights of association which their forefathers won."

He also claimed that eventually,

"the point would be reached when the heads of the firm would wonder at their folly and would come to understand that the men claimed and would not forfeit the claim to act through their Association and the branch secretaries of their organisation. Disputes were not avoided by the firm mechanically denying the right of the united action of its men."⁹⁰

In other circumstances the battle fought by Clynes' union might have ended like that of the Burnley Plate Moulders in 1897, as a costly and utter defeat, but for a fortuitous combination of circumstances which led to Howard and Bullough lifting the lock-out after two weeks, re-instating the milling room men with no victimisation, and amending the timings on badly paid jobs as they had promised. The firm also provided a general advance in wages after a further two weeks, which it was claimed, had been planned for some time.⁸¹

Firstly, the union's cause was aided by the fact that Howard and Bullough had a full order book, and had, prior to the strike, "been running night and day." The dispute had, with the general lock-out, reduced the weekly output of completed machines from an average of over 150 in April and May 1913, to 47 and 4 respectively for the middle two weeks of June (see Table 5).

Table 5: Production of Textile Machinery at Howard and Bullough
April to July 1913

Completed Machines (all types) for Delivery

<u>Week Ending</u>	<u>No. of Machines</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>	<u>No. of Machines</u>
April 5th, 1913	159	June 7th, 1913	80
April 12th, 1913	166	June 14th, 1913	47
April 19th, 1913	142	June 21st, 1913	4
April 26th, 1913	150	June 28th, 1913	56
May 3rd, 1913	154	July 5th, 1913	121
May 10th, 1913	152	July 12th, 1913	113
May 17th, 1913	86	July 19th, 1913	120
May 24th, 1913	147	July 26th, 1913	150
May 31st, 1913	239		

Secondly, the G. and G.L.U., despite the walk-out of its milling room hands, gained the support of the other unions by a virtually unanimous vote of the local Allied Trades Committee. This support was perhaps partly a reflection of the A.S.E.'s concern to establish union recognition and partly a reflection of the new militancy of that society, which led it to assist a union which it had frequently chided for allowing labourers to encroach upon the work of its fitters and turners. The committee resolved that the members of its constituent unions would,

"refuse to touch, make or make good any work required for the milling or any other department in dispute and to notify the firm to this effect in the first instance."⁹²

It was further resolved that if the firm did not give way, another meeting would be called, "to obtain the approval of their E.C.'s to withdraw their members until the dispute is ended."⁹³ Such approval of sympathetic strike action by artisan unions such as the A.S.E., F.S.I.F. and the Grinders in support of a general union of labourers and machine men, was at least one step along the road towards Tom Mann's syndicalist vision.

Thirdly, the strikers were assisted by pressure put on Howard and Bullough by the impending visit to Accrington of King George V, for as a letter of the town's Mayor to the local newspapers acknowledged, "the King and Queen should find everybody happy and peaceful and contented and that the town should not be torn by industrial strife."⁹⁴ The Mayor was particularly concerned as outbreaks of violence had started to build up, directed at those who had taken the places of the men who had stopped work in the milling room.⁹⁵

The directors of the firm decided, after a lengthy meeting with the Mayor, to end the lock-out on June 26th. Although they had failed to break Clynes' union in Accrington, they had still given no

recognition to unions in general or their officials. The general advance in wages was perhaps already in the pipeline as was claimed by the directors, but the prospect of concerted industrial action by all the major unions at the firm perhaps had to be appeased by a fairly generous offer which increased some basic rates of pay by four shillings a week.

The milling room men returned to work to find, as the firm had warned, that they would not all be put immediately back on their old jobs. However, after four days they returned to strike action, claiming that management were deliberately preventing their return to milling room work.⁹⁶ The Allied Trades Committee again promised support and picketing re-commenced, but the strike appears to have fizzled out, probably because the G. and G.L.U. leaders felt unable to bring out their men a second time in view of Howard and Bullough's apparently reasonable settlement. The advantage now lay with the firm who did not, on this occasion, bring in blackleg labour and could blame the trouble on the, "recklessness of a few".⁹⁷

Thus the strike ended with some degree of satisfaction to the management of Howard and Bullough. There was still no union recognition and the shop floor militants in the milling room had been isolated and defeated. Yet the dispute had cost the firm a substantial all-round wages settlement and the re-timing of milling room jobs had been accepted. Perhaps more significantly, the shop floor organisation of stewards had gained vital experience; union membership had begun to expand rapidly in many departments, and the prospect of joint or sympathetic action through the Allied Trades Committee loomed on the horizon, should any other serious breakdown of industrial relations occur.

The milling room dispute of June 1913 had proved a major stimulus to the A.S.E. in Accrington. Its members had secured an increased minimum time rate of 34 shillings for a 53 hour week, ⁹⁸ but more significantly the firm's use of a lock-out had provided a great boost for rank and file organisation. Membership had been greatly stepped up by the shop stewards and the degree of local militancy had been demonstrated by the A.S.E.'s role in the Allied Trades Committee. The local officials had shown themselves willing to initiate sympathetic strike action in support of an erstwhile rival union in the recruitment of machine men. The prospect of such industrial action brought an extension of the network of shop stewards at Howard and Bullough to maintain the recruitment drive and represent hitherto poorly organised departments. ⁹⁹

By the beginning of August 1913, the A.S.E. felt sufficiently confident to state its two major aims: a minimum rate of 36 shillings and most significantly, union recognition. ¹⁰⁰ The district committee prepared a detailed comparative study of rates of pay and hours throughout the Lancashire textile engineering district to support its claim, whilst the shop stewards stepped up the membership recruitment campaign. ¹⁰¹ The remarkable success of the stewards' recruitment effort can be seen in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: A.S.E. Membership in Accrington 1912-14

<u>Date</u>	<u>Membership</u>
June 1912	211
February 1913	217
May 1913	252
August 1913	440
November 1913	575
June 1914	589

Source: A.S.E. Monthly Reports

(N.B. Most A.S.E. members in Accrington worked at Howard and Bullough. There were small pockets of membership at Lang Bridge and Company, Altham Colliery and the local locomotive depot of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.)

Table 7: Departmental Membership of the A.S.E. at Howard and Bullough (including apprentices) in 1913

<u>Department</u>	<u>Membership</u> <u>3.8.1913</u>	<u>Membership</u> <u>6.10.1913</u>	<u>Total Eligible</u>
Flat Cards	40	44	60
Scutcher	21	27	34
Drawing Frame	13	16	20
Roving Frame	34	42	52
Machine Joinery	16	22	27
Boring	5	8	12
Sliding	6	8 (plus 1 S.E.M)	20
No. 1 Turning	N/A	40	57
Ring Frame	N/A	108	124
Tapes	N/A	16	20

Source: Accrington District Committee Minute Books 1912-13 and 1913-16

The developments in the Accrington District A.S.E. prior to the strike of engineers at Howard and Bullough in 1914, reflect the prevalence of grass roots activism in Lancashire. This activism was a feature of the A.S.E. and the other artisan societies, which had regularly surfaced to counter centralising Executives and frustrate the ambitions of employers seeking to break artisan holds on the labour process. The weakness of the A.S.E. Executive Council following the 1898 settlement had created a power vacuum into which local committees and shop stewards were able to move.

When G. N. Barnes had been forced to resign as General Secretary in 1908 it was essentially an admission of failure, that he and the Executive had vainly hoped that the Employers' Federation would give concessions in wage bargaining in return for A.S.E. concessions on the machine question and workshop control. Following a

constitutional crisis in 1912 the Executive itself was replaced, having continued to prove itself impotent in pressing effective trade policy in the face of stonewall resistance from the Federation.¹⁰² The delegate meeting of 1912 which had tried to reform the Executive had had a very radical, socialist complexion; its Lancashire representatives in particular reflected this growing tide of opinion in the Society.¹⁰³ The new Executive, however, appeared to grass roots membership to depart little from the hesitant policies of its predecessor.

In 1913-14, the continuing weakness of the A.S.E.'s central authority in a period of rising prices, with employers, at least the larger firms, pressing ahead with the introduction of automatic machine tools, brought a re-doubling of local militancy. The mounting threat to the artisans' position through new technology, and the introduction or extension of payment by results, led to a gathering of resistance around the local committees or shop stewards, whose position rendered them most capable of fighting a rearguard action, or of wresting maximum advantage from negotiations on changes in working practice. Weekes concludes that,

"the local organisation and leadership of industrial action was familiar to many A.S.E. district committees; they were accustomed to industrial struggle based on the shop floor without the support of their full-time officials."¹⁰⁴

The milling room dispute of June 1913 had given the Accrington A.S.E. officials and stewards the experience of a lock-out and had given a major boost to recruitment of new members. The strikes in Burnley and Bolton, in the winter of 1913-14, had brought close co-operation between officials and activists in those districts and those in Accrington. In May 1913 there had been discussions to amalgamate the A.S.E. branches in Burnley and Accrington, and the mounting industrial troubles in the Burnley loom making firms had

led to blacklisted union activists being forced to obtain work at Howard and Bullough, which remained beyond the Federation's 'enquiry note' system.¹⁰⁵ Also in 1913, the Accrington and Bolton district committees began to work closely to co-ordinate counter-measures to the initiatives of Howard and Bullough and Dobson and Barlow. This co-operation eventually led to, "a representative meeting being held to embrace all textile engineering centres."¹⁰⁶ This was a most significant enterprise, a rank and file movement across east Lancashire to counter the co-ordinated advances of the employers which could by-pass the sanctions of the Executive and its full-time officials.

Perhaps because of the paucity of primary local sources, the attention of labour historians has tended to focus on the breakdown of industrial relations into strikes or lock-outs which are documented in national union records, newspapers and secondary sources. Richard Price has attempted to re-adjust the focus to the day to day struggle for control of the work process.¹⁰⁷ In the Lancashire engineering industry in the period 1912-14, the numerous disputes are vital areas of study, but an examination of the surviving local records produces a picture of a bitter shop floor struggle for control, with full-time union officials unable or unwilling to become deeply involved. Nowhere was this more true than at Howard and Bullough in 1913 and 1914.

As Howard and Bullough sought to press ahead with the introduction of more labourers to do what hitherto was fitters' work in the flat card, drawing frame, speed frame, throistle frame, and combing departments, the emerging shop stewards' organisation fought doggedly to resist, and was closely supported in this action by the district committee. In December 1913, the fitters of the flat card department, outraged at the encroachment of labourers on their work

and boys doing apprentices' work, obliged local officials to make their feelings known to the national leadership.

"We, the members working in the Flat Card Fitting department at Howard and Bullough, deeply resent the apathy shown to us by our E.C. in our grievances at the above firm, believing that such action is detrimental to the interests of our society."

They also requested the Executive to,

"notify the firm to withdraw all unskilled labour who have been drafted on to fitters' work in that department. Failing redress the E.C. to take immediate steps to withdraw all our members working at the firm."¹⁰⁸

The district officials felt so strongly over the issue that they proposed to send a deputation to London to express personally the strength of concern.

This action was followed by protests from the throstle frame fitters, at labourers filing cap bars and fitting bearing brasses; from the Combing department fitters at labourers filing scrolls; and from the Sliding and Boring departments at labourers doing the work of turners.¹⁰⁹

The Executive noted with some satisfaction in January, 1914 that Howard and Bullough were, "nettled at the growth of our organisation locally", but were keen to add that it hoped, "that precipitate action will not be indulged in".¹¹⁰ The Executive Council, had written to Howard and Bullough stressing the mounting unrest of the membership which was leading to, "the whole question ... drifting into open rupture", and so a meeting between its members and the firm's management was requested,¹¹¹ but in view of the firm's continued refusal to recognise unions, the approach was completely ignored.

The failure of the E.C. to gain a response brought renewed intensity to grass roots activity, notably in attempts to place union men in occurring vacancies, and in the 'blacking' of jobs re-timed by management to reduce earnings.¹¹² Local anger, meanwhile

was vented on the District Delegate, R. O. Jones. The committee was pressured by mounting discontent to, "inform Bro. Jones of his apathy re his duties to the district."¹¹³ In May 1914, they were obliged to write to the Executive, notifying them that,

"this committee, tiring of the numerous grievances of our members employed at Howard and Bullough and the struggle to keep our members at work under the tyrannical conditions imposed by the firm, call an aggregate meeting at an early date and demand the presence of Bro. R. O. Jones, O.D.D."¹¹⁴

The aggregate meeting produced a six point request for Howard and Bullough:

- i) a 37 shilling minimum time rate for millwrights, toolmakers and machine joiners.
- ii) a 36 shilling minimum for fitters and turners.
- iii) overtime payment at time and a quarter for the first two hours, and then time and half, with double time for Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas.
- iv) Holiday work at other times to be paid at time and a quarter.
- v) recognition of the union.
- vi) no further encroachment on the work of journeymen.

The meeting further resolved that if the directors continued to ignore union communications, a request should be made to the E.C. for a strike ballot.¹¹⁵

Further E.C. procrastination brought expressions of indignation, and eventually permission for a ballot was given, with no communication being received from the firm.¹¹⁶ The strike, which initially involved some 500 men was received quite objectively by the local Accrington press; it was however seen as another symptom of subversive and dangerous tendencies in other quarters. The leader column of the Manchester Courier, for example, expressed great alarm at the power of, "new local Robespierres" in the A.S.E.

and added that, "there is nothing for it but to close down when you are not allowed to manage your own business."¹¹⁷ Within a week of the commencement of the strike on July 2nd, the firm did in fact apply lock-out, which co-incided with the expiry of notice given by the semi-skilled Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders Society which represented over 200 men. At a joint meeting, the two societies which in terms of tradition, skill and, workplace, had very little in common, determined that, "neither society shall resume work until union recognition be conceded and each society receives satisfaction."¹¹⁸

The outbreak of war had encouraged Howard and Bullough to re-open the works and to attempt to produce an acceptable offer to divide the strikers such as that which had successfully terminated the G. and G.L.U.'s resistance in June 1913. The firm was under great pressure to complete and despatch as many orders as they could. The works was re-opened on August 17th with about 400 men, less than 10% of the total workforce. This provoked the unions into stepping up the activities of pickets,¹¹⁹ whilst large crowds assembled to protest, bringing, "great scenes of rowdysm", and necessitating a large scale police presence in the town.¹²⁰ The attempt to re-start production tempted in about 200 members of the Gas Workers' Union which was consequently split for the second time in just over a year. However, it provoked a sympathetic strike of the firms skilled moulders in the F.S.I.F., which effectively denied the firm any fresh supplies of castings.¹²¹ The failure to recruit sufficient men to re-start production on a significant scale, plus the action of the skilled moulders, led Howard and Bullough to close their works again on August 22nd, the directors blaming the high level of violence and intimidation for their action.¹²²

The Howard and Bullough works remained virtually at a standstill for the remainder of August and the whole of September. The A.S.E., meanwhile, in addition to organising fund-raising activities, began a major propaganda campaign to counter charges of violence and irresponsible conduct.¹²³ Eventually, the local M.P., Harold Baker, did succeed in persuading Howard and Bullough to accept the intervention of the Board of Trade's Chief Industrial Commissioner, Sir George Askwith.¹²⁴ As a result of Askwith's conciliation, the firm conceded the A.S.E. claim for new time rates for all except machine joiners. They would, however, grant nothing to the moulders, nor make any concessions on piece work and overtime payments, nor, perhaps most importantly, make any concession to the recognition of trade unions. The offer was consequently overwhelmingly rejected.¹²⁵

Table 8: Howard and Bullough's Delivery of Textile Machinery
(All Types) May to November 1914

<u>Week</u> <u>Ending</u>	<u>Machines</u> <u>Delivered</u>	<u>Week</u> <u>Ending</u>	<u>Machines</u> <u>Delivered</u>	<u>Week</u> <u>Ending</u>	<u>Machines</u> <u>Delivered</u>
2.5.14	142	11.7.14	54	26.9.14	0
9.5.14	145	18.7.14	1	3.10.14	4
16.5.14	147	25.7.14	3	10.10.14	0
23.5.14	149	1.8.14	0	17.10.14	0
30.5.14	246	8.8.14	4	24.10.14	5
6.6.14	33	15.8.14	0	31.10.14	71
13.6.14	115	22.8.14	0	7.11.14	94
20.6.14	132	29.8.14	3	14.11.14	93
27.6.14	146	5.9.14	0	21.11.14	83
4.7.14	114	12.9.14	1	28.11.14	88
		19.9.14	0		

Source: DDPSL 3/10/1, Delivery Book 1903-19

By the middle of October, 1914, the company was obliged to accept defeat, for there seemed no likelihood of breaking the strikers' solidarity and there had been a catastrophic loss of production, which with the outbreak of war, had produced a major backlog of uncompleted orders. Table 8 indicates the impact of the strike on Howard and Bullough's delivery of machinery.

The A.S.E. District Committee, and the representatives of the two moulders' societies were able to present their memberships with an offer from Howard and Bullough which was in fact superior in several respects to the original A.S.E. claim. The main terms of the offer were:¹²⁶

- i) 37 shillings minimum time rate for all skilled machine shop workers.
- ii) 32 shillings minimum for 21 year olds, 34/6 for 22 year olds (skilled workers).
- iii) An advance of one shilling or one shilling and sixpence on time rates for skilled and semi-skilled moulders.
- iv) Piece rates to be based on the new higher time rates.
- v) Overtime and holiday pay at time and a quarter, with overtime above two hours at time and a half; Sunday, Good Friday and Christmas work to be paid at double time.
- vi) No further encroachment on real fitters' work.
- vii) Representatives of the workforce would be met by management, "regarding any grievance at the works".

The victory was, however, won at great cost; an estimated £100,000 in wages had been lost.¹²⁷ In addition, such was the cumulative impact of the closure of Accrington's major employer of labour, that as one newspaper observed, "the town was reduced to an abject state of poverty."¹²⁸ However, despite his rough handling by the local members, A.S.E. District Delegate Jones could delight in a

victory over such a powerful opponent, a firm whose attitude to labour he claimed could be epitomised in the by-word, "servility". So crucial was the victory that he claimed, "the outlook for the future is brighter; the dawn of a new era has arrived."¹²⁹

Despite the undoubted delight of Jones and the A.S.E. leadership, this was a victory achieved almost exclusively by the solidarity of the rank and file engineers and moulders and the tireless efforts of their shop stewards and local joint committees. Not only had the Jones and the E.C. tended to ignore the requests for support from Accrington in the months leading up to the strike, but they had successfully acted to prevent the strike taking place in January 1914. Moreover, once the strike was underway, the E.C. suggested abandoning the action on two occasions: the planned re-opening of the works early in August, and following the intervention of Askwith in late September, 1914.¹³⁰ It had also taken the visit of an Accrington delegation to London to persuade E.C. members, Rose and Hutchinson to address the strikers; the visit to Accrington not surprisingly, involved the latter in, "a lengthy and somewhat heated discussion", on August 11th, 1914.¹³¹

V. Conclusion

The period 1910-14 had brought renewed prosperity and rapid expansion to Lancashire's textile machinery industry, with the export market for ring frames in particular playing an important role. In 1912, both Platts and Howard and Bullough achieved record production of ring frames, and in 1912-13, Dobson and Barlow, Asa Lees and Tweedales and Smalley all achieved impressive output figures.¹³² By 1913, the U.K. held 87% of world trade in spinning

machinery and 64% of world trade in weaving machinery, with the total value of exports reaching £8.28 million in that year.¹³³

However, the combined effects of full employment, the erosion of real wages by inflation, and growing impatience with the weakness of union leaders in negotiations with the E.E.F. under the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes', had sparked an outburst of grass roots 'localist' militancy. This had proved strongest in the A.S.E. where dissatisfaction with leadership was strongest and the embryonic network of shop stewards was perhaps best established. Successive disputes in Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley and Accrington had rocked the industry and demonstrated the strength of militancy in Lancashire.

When war broke out in August 1914, the most serious of these disputes, at Howard and Bullough's Globe Works in Accrington, was at its height. Skilled engineers, supported by moulders and other trades had taken strike action over pay, encroachments on skilled men's work, and union recognition in July 1914. The T.U.C., Labour Party and the General Federations of Trade Unions had declared their willingness to support the government with a joint resolution, dated August 24th, calling for, "an immediate effort ... to terminate all existing trade disputes, whether strikes or lock-outs."¹³⁴ However, the dispute at Howard and Bullough carried on, with increasing bitterness until mid-October. Such was the effectiveness of A.S.E. and F.S.I.F. picketing that only 16 completed machines were delivered by the firm from mid-July until the termination of the dispute.¹³⁵

The Howard and Bullough dispute was a resounding success for the unions who secured most of their financial and manning demands and perhaps most significantly gained recognition by the firm. This recognition left Taylor Lang of Stalybridge and Tweedales and Smalley of Castleton, near Rochdale as the only major textile

machinery makers who refused to give way on this issue. It was to prove significant for the future conduct of industrial relations during the war, that on one hand the strikers refused to abandon their campaign in spite of appeals to their patriotism by the Howard and Bullough directors,¹³⁶ and on the other that Tweedales and Smalley still refused all recognition to union officials.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Cabinet Papers, September 1911, Cab.37/107/107/P.R.O.
- 2 See R.W. Sires, 'Labour Unrest in England 1910-14', Journal of Economic History XV, 1955 and G. Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, London 1935, p.195 ff. for useful summaries of the collective causes of the discontent.
- 3 See Appendix H, and Engineering Employers' Federation, Wage Movements: Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Manchester and Oldham Sections.
- 4 MSS 41/FSIF/4/4 Monthly Reports. The Accrington and Burnley branches were selected since they, of all Lancashire F.S.I.F. branches were most exclusively recruited from textile machinery making firms. Nationally, F.S.I.F. unemployment fell from 17.7% in 1910, to 2.7% in 1913.
- 5 Board of Trade Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs. 1912, Parliamentary Papers, 1913, vol. 48 cd. 7089, pp.88 and 1913, Parliamentary Papers, 1914, vol. 36 cd. 7658, pp.114-124.
- 6 ibid. 1913, p.82.
- 7 Zeitlin, op. cit., p.35 ff.
- 8 Weekes, op. cit., p.314.
- 9 See Part V of Chapter Five.
- 10 McIvor, op. cit., p.240.
- 11 Northern Daily Telegraph, 1.7.1912.
- 12 ibid. The strike also affected the lesser general engineering firms; Clayton and Goodfellow, Wards, and Ashton and Frost.
- 13 Board of Trade Report on Strikes and Lock-Outs, 1912. J. R. Clynes successfully organised mass meetings and brought in speakers such as John Burns M.P., then a cabinet minister. The G. and G.L.U. men were given strong support by 'white collar' unions such as the National Union of Clerks, an indication of local trade union militancy breaking down class barriers. It is notable too that the only sustained opposition within the trade union world came from the A.S.E., from local members, and from the Organising District Delegate, who expressed alarm at the potential violence of the labourers and the G. and G.L.U.'s poaching of potential semi-skilled recruits to their union. A.S.E. Monthly Report, August 1912.
- 14 A.S.E. Monthly Report, September 1912.
- 15 MSS 237 Engineering Employers' Federation, Emergency Committee Minutes, 31.5.1911, 28.7.1911, and 30.8.1912. The local A.S.E. Secretary had claimed in May, 1911 that, "war might be averted", if the firm's management had met the strikers, but they had refused, relying instead on the delaying powers of the Federation's procedures.

- 16 ibid. 30.10.1912.
- 17 ibid. and A.S.E. Abstract of Executive Council Proceedings, 1912.
- 18 ibid. 29.11.1912.
- 19 ibid.
- 20 ibid. 2.12.1912.
- 21 Burnley Gazette, 21.8.1912. I am grateful to Pam Simpson for drawing my attention to this strike.
- 22 ibid. 24.8.1912 and 31.8.1912.
- 23 ibid. 31.8.1912.
- 24 H Pelling, 'The Working Class and the Origins of the Welfare State', in Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain, p.2.
- 25 Board of Trade, Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs, 1913, p.88.
- 26 Bolton Journal, 27.1.1911.
- 27 R. Kirk, op. cit., pp.180-181.
- 28 Engineering, 10.8.1894.
- 29 A. Boltonian (pseud. of B. P. Dobson), Bolton's Rise and Progress, Manchester 1925, p.60, and Dobson and Barlow, A Short History, Bolton 1927, p.140.
- 30 Writing in the A.S.E. Monthly Report, November 1914, O.D.D. Jones commented that, "In comparison with their competitors in the textile machinery trade, both as regards wages and conditions, this firm are very unfavourable".
- 31 Bolton Journal, 21.11.1913 and 5.12.1913.
- 32 ibid. 26.12.1913.
- 33 ibid. 2.1.1914.
- 34 ibid. 9.1.1914 and 16.1.1914.
- 35 A.S.E. Monthly Report, January 1914. Support came from Oldham, Ashton, Bury, Manchester, Middleton, Rochdale and Todmorden.
- 36 MSS 237, Engineering Employers' Federation: Emergency Committee Minutes, 30.1.1914.
- 37 ibid. 26.2.1914.
- 38 Bolton Journal, 6.2.1914.
- 39 ibid. 13.3.1914 and A.S.E. Monthly Report, March 1914.

- 40 Butterworth and Dickinson at the Globe Works, employing 700 men, was the district's leading firm.
- 41 Both towns had been Chartist strongholds whilst Colne had been the centre of organised anti-police rioting in the early 1840's. H. M. Hyndman had contested Burnley 4 times (1895, 1906 and twice in 1910) and had come very close to success, in 1906, and in January 1910.
- 42 W. Bennett, History of Burnley, Burnley 1948, p.115.
- 43 MSS 41/FSIF/1/21/1, Burnley Branch Minutes, 5.7.1894.
- 44 ibid. 22.3.1904.
- 45 By 1908 Butterworth and Dickinson with 700 employees had little more than a score of men on piece work, Wages Book 1904-8, *passim*.
- 46 Burnley News, 14.6.1922.
- 47 MSS 41/FSIF/1/21/2, Burnley Branch Bye Laws, 1888.
- 48 This is to some extent borne out by a study of names in the surviving Butterworth and Dickinson Wages Book, 1904-8, and is further substantiated by the oral evidence of Mr. W. Smith, former shop steward at the firm and later A.E.U. District Secretary for Burnley.
- 49 The Pilgrim Trust, Men Without Work, Cambridge 1938, p.85. It was also observed by a Board of Trade Survey in 1905, which recorded relatively low wages in Burnley, Preston and Blackburn where over 30% married women were in full-time employment, Quoted by E.Roberts, 'Working Class Standards of Living in Three Lancashire Towns 1890-1914'. International Review of Social History XXVI, 1981/2, p.54 ff.
- 50 A.S.E. Monthly Report, January 1914.
- 51 The Butterworth and Dickinson Wages Book 1904-8 *passim*, indicates that for all grades of worker, a 60 hour week or more was the norm for well over half of each recorded year; in many cases this exceeded two thirds. The basic district working week was then 53 hours.
- 52 Butterworth and Dickinson Annuals 1908-12 record the existence of a library of over 500 volumes, a savings club, football, cycling, rambling, cricket, and rifle clubs, and lunchtime lectures which even included visiting socialist speakers.
- 53 1909 Annual.
- 54 Burnley Gazette, 25.10.1913.
- 55 MSS 237 Engineering Employers' Federation, Case Registers File Vol. 2, 1906-13 *passim*.
- 56 A.S.E. Monthly Report, August 1913.
- 57 ibid. July 1913.

- 58 Burnley Gazette, 29.10.1913 and 1.11.1913.
- 59 A.S.E. Monthly Report, November 1913.
- 60 The A.S.E. accused Keighley of deliberately prolonging the dispute. *ibid.*
- 61 Butterworth and Dickinson, Private Letter Book 1914-49, March 1914.
- 62 *ibid.* 30.3.1914.
- 63 There were a number of arrests for intimidation under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act. Colne Times, 7.11.1913, 14.11.1913 and 5.1.1913.
- 64 One shilling was to be paid immediately, one shilling six months later. Burnley Gazette, 11.5.1914.
- 65 Since the total population of Accrington was only 45,029 according to the 1911 census, the firm would have employed virtually one in three of the local male population aged over 14.
- 66 R. S. Crossley, Accrington Captains of Industry, Accrington 1930, pp.97-99. Crossley notes John Bullough's advocacy of co-operative principles in both the textile and machine making industries, in his early speeches and letters.
- 67 E. Stones, The Development of Education in Accrington, Accrington 1957, pp.310-312 points out that Bullough saw the need to promote the literacy and numeracy of the employees, especially in view of local deficiencies in elementary education, following Accrington's rejection of a School Board. The firm's technical school clearly aimed to provide standards of excellence; it was equipped not only with a lecture room capable of seating 200, but a physics laboratory and workshops containing the whole range of Howard and Bullough's products. To direct the school, Bullough appointed Robert Mitchell, formerly a lecturer and demonstrator at the Royal College of Science, South Kensington. Bullough himself had been educated at Glasgow University.
- 68 R. Kirk, op. cit., p.171.
- 69 The Observer, 24.8.1909.
- 70 The role of Tom and Sir George Bullough, during the disputes of 1913-14 was largely confined to despatching instructions and advice by letter from their Scottish estates. The Daily Mirror, 25.3.1909 described Ian Bullough, step brother of Sir George and Tom as, "a Scottish Landowner". His successive marriages to musical comedy 'stars' Maudie Darrell and Lily Elsie in March 1909 and November 1911 provide further examples of the Bullough family's growing affection for the 'aristocratic' lifestyle and their divorce from the running of the firm. The advocacy of tariff reform by George and Tom Bullough in 1910 had alienated them from many local political allies, including the town's leading newspaper, Accrington Observer, 18.6.1910.

- 71 Textile Mercury, 17.10.1903.
- 72 Accrington Gazette, 5.11.1904.
- 73 Gas Workers and General Labourers Union: General Executive Council Minutes, 1904. That year's bi-ennial conference, in May, at Swansea, had re-organised the union's administration to lessen the dominance of London and stimulate provincial development. Lancashire delegates had led the reform movement. The membership claim appears to be a major exaggeration. Membership of 320 in 1913 noted by the A.S.E. District Committee Minutes 2.4.1913 is probably more realistic.
- 74 G. and G.L.U., General Executive Council Minutes, 12.11.1905. It was not until 1913 that this joint committee began to function effectively.
- 75 Textile Mercury, 17.2.1906.
- 76 DDPSL 3/38/17/Howard and Bullough Scrapbook.
- 77 Textile Mercury, 17.2.1906.
- 78 DDPSL 3/14/6 and Accrington Observer, 20.3.1920.
- 79 A.S.E. Accrington District Committee Minutes, 2.4.1913.
- 80 DDPSL 3/31/2, Wages Book, shows most men in this department were piece workers.
- 81 G. and G.L.U. Third Quarterly Report, 1913. A.S.E. Monthly Report, July 1912.
- 82 Accrington Observer, 7.5.1910.
- 83 ibid. 10.6.1913.
- 84 ibid. 14.6.1913 describes the start of the lock-out. An estimated 700 men were already out at that stage. DDPSL 15/6/4 Bullough Correspondence gives details of the Free Labour Association involvement.
- 85 DDPSL 15/6/14, Letter dated 14.6.1913.
- 86 Accrington Observer, 14.6.1913.
- 87 DDPSL 15/6/14, Letter dated 14.6.1913.
- 88 ibid. Letter to George Ormerod, 19.6.1913.
- 89 ibid. Letter to George Ormerod, 23.6.1913.
- 90 Accrington Observer, 14.6.1913. Clynes continued to receive sympathetic coverage from this newspaper which, perhaps because of the Bullough stance on free trade, tended to praise the firm more for its past glories than its contemporary management policy. The Manchester Guardian, 12.6.1913 claimed that the impression created was that the lock-out was essentially a challenge to the union.

- 91 Accrington Observer, 5.7.1913.
- 92 A.S.E. Accrington District Committee Minutes, 11.6.1913. The committee, comprising A.S.E., (7 members), Grinders (2 members), F.S.I.F. (1 member), Plate Moulders (1 member) Sheet Metal Workers (2 members) and Gas Workers (2 members) voted 'nem con' with only one abstention, to support the strikers.
- 93 ibid.
- 94 Accrington Observer, 24.6.1913.
- 95 ibid. The role of the mayor, Captain Harwood, is in itself an interesting aspect of this dispute. As a director of the Blackburn firm of textile machinery makers, Henry Livesey and Company and chairman of the board of the small Accrington firm of jobbing engineers and finishing machinery makers, Lang Bridge and Company, his interests were very much with the employers. In order to gain a propaganda advantage, Clynes had offered to accept the mediation of Harwood or the Board of Trade. The selection of the former perhaps restored some advantage to Howard and Bullough. In a report carried in the Accrington Observer, 24.6.1913, he attacked the strike as "premature", and "a great mistake", and warned the union representatives that they risked an indefinite lock-out if they did not accept a quick settlement. Earlier in the dispute in a letter from C. A. Peltzer to Tom Bullough of June 14th 1913, the former re-assured Bullough that Harwood had warned the strikers that their action would be in vain as, "Howard and Bullough would spend quarter of a million on this issue as easily as they (the men) would spend sixpence." Peltzer also notified Bullough that a gift from the latter to Harwood should be temporarily withheld lest, "in the present circumstances (it) be misconstrued as a bribe.", DDPSL 15/6/14.
- 96 Accrington Observer, 28.6.1913. It is perhaps significant that the milling room men held their meetings in the local British Socialist Party rooms.
- 97 Manchester Guardian, 30.6.1913. The strikers continued action until at least the middle of July, Accrington Observer, 15.7.1913.
- 98 This was still inferior to most other textile machinery district minima.
- 99 Accrington District Committee Minutes, 25.6.1913.
- 100 ibid. 3.8.1913.
- 101 ibid. 7.8.1913 and 3.8.1913.
- 102 Weekes, op. cit., p.316 ff. gives a very detailed account of the demise of the Executive.
- 103 Of the six Lancashire delegates, three were avowed socialists, a fourth probably so. One was a, "supporter of Marxist economics", another was a supporter of land nationalisation. Weekes, op. cit., Appendix 6. The victor in the south and mid-Lancashire division in the election for the new E.C. was W. H.

Hutchinson who reflected the growing socialist influence among rank and file engineers. His platform had been

i) support of the 1912 Delegate Meeting.

ii) amalgamation of skilled and machine men in a single engineering union.

iii) Labour representation in parliament without its being bound by what he called, "an effete party system".

104 ibid. p.365.

105 Accrington District Committee Minutes, 16.5.1913.

106 ibid. 9.5.1914.

107 R. Price, 'The Labour Process and Labour History', Social History, Vol. 8 No. 1, passim.

108 Accrington District Committee Minutes, 19.12.1913.

109 ibid. 30.12.1913.

110 A.S.E. Monthly Report, January 1914.

111 Letter of A.S.E. Executive Council to Howard and Bullough 24.12.1913. Quoted in Accrington Observer, 14.7.1914.

112 Accrington District Committee Minutes, 15.3.1914. and 29.3.1914.

113 ibid. 29.3.1914.

114 ibid. 15.5.1914.

115 ibid. 4.6.1914 and 12.6.1914.

116 ibid. 19.6.1914 and 26.6.1914.

117 Manchester Courier, 10.7.1914.

118 Accrington A.S.E. District Committee Minutes, 21.7.1914.

119 ibid. 17.8.1914 and 19.8.1914. The A.S.E. took action to fine those its members who neglected picket duty.

120 Accrington Observer, 15.8.1914 and 18.8.1914. Crowds were estimated at 3 to 4 thousand near the works.

121 Accrington Observer, 18.8.1914.

122 ibid. 22.8.1914. Violence was in fact quite limited despite the directors' claim that, "the disorder amounted to rioting". In all, ten men were arrested, with most of the trouble coming from the attempts of the Plate and Machine Moulders and G. and G.L.U. strikers to stop G and G.L.U. men returning to work. Only three of those prosecuted were actually A.S.E. members. The firm's claim was given credence by the fact that the Chief Constable was one of those injured when the crowd stoned a blackleg contingent being escorted by the police.

- 123 Accrington A.S.E. District Committee Minutes, 25.8.1914. One aspect of the campaign was the printing of 10,000 handbills for distribution in the district.
- 124 ibid.
- 125 Accrington A.S.E. District Committee Minutes, 1.10.1914. The A.S.E. ballot went 231 to 11 against acceptance of the offer.
- 126 ibid. 18.10.1914 for points i, ii, and iv to vii. MSS 41/APM/4/1 Amalgamated Society of Plate and Machine Moulders, 1915 Annual Report and MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, F.S.I.F. Annual Report, 1914 for point iii.
- 127 Accrington Observer, 24.10.1914.
- 128 Daily Citizen, 5.6.1914.
- 129 A.S.E. Monthly Report, November 1914.
- 130 Accrington A.S.E. District Committee Minutes, 8.8.1914 and Accrington Observer, 3.10.1914. Local anger was also aroused by the E.C.'s refusal to seek a national levy in support of the strikers. District Committee Minutes, 27.8.1914.
- 131 ibid. 11.8.1914. E.C. Chairman, J. T. Brownlie appears not to have accepted a subsequent invitation to the town; the offer is recorded in the D.C. Minutes of 20.8.1914.
- 132 R. Kirk, op. cit., p.383.
- 133 R. Kirk and C. Simmons, 'Engineering and the First World War: A Case Study of the Lancashire Cotton Spinning Machine Industry', World Development, Vol. 9, 1981, p.774.
- 134 G. D. H. Cole, Trade Unionism and Munitions, Oxford 1923, p.52.
- 135 See Table 8.
- 136 Accrington Observer, 10.10.1914. Director, Mr. C. A. Peltzer had pleaded for a return to work because of what he termed, "this most momentous crisis in England's history".

Chapter Seven

Industrial Relations During the Great War

I. Introduction

The coming of war had a general soothing effect on industrial relations. The Board of Trade had reported that from about 100 strikes recorded prior to the outbreak of war, the total known to it in August 1914 was only 20, and by January 1915, only 10; from 72,000 men on strike in July 1914, the total by February 1915 was virtually nil.¹ However, this honeymoon was short-lived and the incidence of strikes, particularly in the engineering industry, was already beginning to rise by the end of February.

The spring of 1915 brought costly military setbacks in France and dashed hopes of a fairly swift end to the war with Germany. The reverses were attributed to shortages of shells by the British and French General Staff and these charges were profitably used by Northcliffe in the Daily Mail to attack the Liberal government in what became known as the 'shells scandal'. This broke in May 1915 and followed the disasters of the Gallipoli landings on April 25th. According to A. J. P. Taylor, the Asquith government was already doomed when the 'shells scandal' broke, but the latter did provide the necessary impetus to Lloyd George's campaign for a new specialist ministry to control the supply of munitions.²

In March 1915, Lloyd George had already negotiated the 'Treasury Agreement' with the representatives of the major engineering and foundry unions in order to bring about a voluntary relaxation of trade practices for the duration of the war. During the negotiations with Arthur Henderson of the F.S.I.F. and William Mosses of the U.P.A., Lloyd George had proposed an extension of government controls to bring many large engineering firms into the

manufacture of munitions, in order to supplement the increasingly inadequate output of the government ordnance factories and the specialist arms manufacturers such as B.S.A. and Vickers.³ In fact, the consultations with these union representatives were little more than window dressing upon existing plans. Regulations issued under the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Act on March 22nd, 1915 in fact already empowered the government to, "commandeer the output or plant of any factory, or workshop, to direct the work done or the engagement or employment of workmen."⁴

Following the establishment of a coalition government (which included Arthur Henderson in the Cabinet), the new Ministry of Munitions was created on June 9th, 1915. Under the Munitions of War Act (Part Two) which soon followed in July, a new class of 'controlled establishments' was created to produce arms, over which, the new Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George, acquired extensive powers. The act gave legal teeth to the 'Treasury Agreement' which was seen as, "little more than a dead letter", in government circles, and thus regulated employers' profits, introduced compulsory arbitration of disputes, suspended restrictive practices, and introduced, 'leaving certificates' (requiring a worker to obtain his employer's consent before he could leave his job).⁵

The leading textile machinery making firms in Lancashire, were thus brought under Ministry control by November 1915, as Table 1 indicates.

Production of textile machinery quickly gave way to the production of munitions such as shells, cartridge cases, fuses, cast iron practice shot for the Admiralty and, in the later stages of the war, even tank parts.⁶ At Howard and Bullough, for example, prior to the 1914 strike, weekly output of machines tended to be between 140 and 150. During the period of government control, however,

Table 1: The Extension of Controls over the Textile Machinery Industry, July-November 1915

<u>Firm</u>	<u>Date of Control</u>	<u>Code Number</u>
John Hetherington	26. 7.1915	2 CE 546
Brooks and Doxey	18. 8.1915	2 CE 264
Dobson and Barlow	18. 8.1915	2 CE 398
British Northrop	6. 9.1915	2 CE 252
Howard and Bullough	6. 9.1915	2 CE 569
Lord Bros.	6. 9.1915	2 CE 642
Platt Bros.	6. 9.1915	2 CE 779
Robert Hall	6. 9.1915	
Tweedales and Smalley	6. 9.1915	2 CE 997
Asa Lees	1.11.1915	2 CE1380
Taylor Lang	1.11.1915	2 CE1328
R. Threlfall	1.11.1915	2 CE1333
Butterworth and Dickinson	11.11.1915	2 CE1642

Source: R. Kirk and C. Simmons, op. cit., pp.775-6 except for Robert Halls, DDHL 3742 Staff Analysis Book, and Butterworth and Dickinson, Private Letter Book, 19.7.1916.

output only very seldom reached 100, and was normally limited to between 20 and 30.⁷ As the war progressed, production of munitions increased, and textile machine output steadily withered, as Table 2 shows.

The new Lancashire munitions producers were faced with an immediate need to expand production to meet the needs of the western front, a problem aggravated by the steady drift of skilled, experienced men into the armed forces. The records of two unions give a fair indication of the loss of skilled men to the colours in Lancashire's textile engineering centres. The skilled iron moulders' union, the Friendly Society of Iron Founders and the small

Grinders and Glazers Society had several Lancashire branches which contained a high proportion of men employed in the foundries and grinding shops of the textile machinery firms.

Table 2: Quarterly Output of Complete Machines (all types) from
Howard and Bullough 1914-1919

Jan - March 1914 - 1946	Jan - March 1917 - 445
April - June 1914 - 1781	April - June 1917 - 367
*July - Sept 1914 - 177	July - Sept 1917 - 157
**Oct - Dec 1914 - 775	Oct - Dec 1917 - 158
Jan - March 1915 - 1131	Jan - March 1918 - 151
April - June 1915 - 1001	April - June 1918 - 145
July - Sept 1915 - 839	July - Sept 1918 - 123
Oct - Dec 1915 - 774	Oct - Dec 1918 - 159
Jan - March 1916 - 617	Jan - March 1919 - 445
April - June 1916 - 634	April - June 1919 - 695
July - Sept 1916 - 497	
Oct - Dec 1916 - 441	

* production severely hit by the strike of engineers.

** only 9 machines completed before October 24th due to the strike

Source: Derived from DDPSL 3/10/1

If the assumption is made that the proportion of F.S.I.F. men who enlisted was similar to that of the non-society moulders, and that the proportion enlisting from the textile machinery firms was similar to that from Lancashire engineering as a whole in the branches concerned, the figures will provide a reasonable indication of the loss of skilled foundry labour. This would appear to have ranged from just under 10% to over 25% as Table 3 indicates.

Table 3 : Enlistment from F.S.I.F. Branches in East Lancashire in
1916 and 1918

<u>Branches</u>	<u>1916</u>		<u>1918</u>	
	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Enlistment</u>	<u>Membership</u>	<u>Enlistment</u>
Accrington	148	43	172	43
Blackburn (2)	374	99	381	78
Bolton	269	49	295	56
Burnley	123	22	183	26
Bury (2)	372	21	398	66
Oldham (2)	566	55	573	99

Source: Derived from F.S.I.F. Monthly Reports. MSS 41/FSIF/4/4.

The Grinders' Society was even more a union of the textile machinery industry, with eight of its twelve branches in Lancashire. With the exception of Manchester, all these were overwhelmingly dependent on textile machinery manufacture. By the end of 1916, the union had only 663 members still working at their trade, with 253 having joined the colours.⁸

The potential problems of the industry, as the war progressed, were outlined by the Managing Director of Butterworth and Dickinsons in March 1915.

"Owing to the large numbers of men daily enlisting in the army, and the drafting of mechanics to the armaments workshops, there is already a considerable scarcity which will be much greater soon. Consequently all workshops running on ordinary civil employment will be greatly handicapped (apart from the higher rates of wages) by being only able to keep partially employed whilst their fixed expenses will not be reduced. Their output will be further reduced through their only being able to secure older, less active and less skilful men."⁹

The extension of munitions production to firms like Butterworth and Dickinson however, soon solved many of Mr. Butterworth's problems by facilitating the dilution of skilled labour and a

transformation of production impossible in the manufacture of textile machinery.

II. The Machinery Makers and the Problems of Dilution

The needs of war production brought potentially revolutionary change to workshop technology and practice. The rapid phasing in of the manufacture of long runs of relatively simply produced munitions at the expense of textile machinery, threatened to swamp the artisans' ability to exercise control over the labour process. In spite of the defeat of 1898 such controls had been maintained by relentless 'guerilla' campaigns, which had brought notable success in the pre-war quinquennium. The new Ministry of Munitions had ominously announced that,

"every factory now engaged in munitions work is more or less in the position of a bulk repetition manufacturer and can afford to utilise machinery and methods which have not been previously justified by its ordinary activities."¹⁰

The agreements reached between unions and government indicate the generally harmonious relations at the top levels of official contact. On the other hand, they were viewed by the rank and file as being likely to accelerate the erosion of the artisans' wage differentials, and craft control over the labour process.¹¹ The pre-war militancy and the weakness of central leadership in the A.S.E., was followed in the war years by closer collaboration of government, employers and union officialdom. This further enhanced the grass roots determination to stand out against attempts to steamroller changes in the name of patriotism, which ran against their long-term interests. Hosbawm goes so far as to claim that,

"buying off the craftsmen, became the major task of the 1914 war economy."¹²

Since their defeat in 1898, the engineering workers at the local level had re-built a powerful bargaining position. The employers, in theory, held the right to employ which workmen they chose on any operation. In practice, however, where unions like the A.S.E., F.S.I.F., U.P.A. or the Smiths and Strikers were entrenched, many machines and operations were limited by strict, if unwritten rules, to those men deemed fully skilled. The plethora of disputes in the 1912-14 period had largely focused on pay claims, but in federated firms (e.g. Liveseys and Dobson and Barlow) and non-federated (e.g. Howard and Bullough), the artisan societies had successfully counter-attacked management attempts to encroach further upon the traditional work of their members.

G. D. H. Cole noted in his detailed analysis of trade unionism in the munitions industry, that the very strong position of the artisan societies was,

"clearly revealed by the fact that these rules and regulations, although most of them did not exist in writing, required for their enforced suspension during the war period, not only Acts of Parliament, but also a great deal of national, local and workshop negotiation and involved a considerable amount of conflict between the craft unions on the one side, and the employers and the Government on the other."¹³

Taking account of Cole's observations, it would appear that there is much justification for James Hinton's assertion that the skilled engineers were in,

"the vanguard of the wartime class struggle ... Not only were they, as munitions workers, of primary importance to the war effort, but, in order that they should play their part adequately, their working conditions and practices required a more radical transformation than those of any other group of workers."¹⁴

The growing insecurity which was to arise from dilution, combined with their potential to undertake militant action which

could put the war effort in jeopardy, made the engineering and foundry workers such a volatile and explosive force. The first attempt to obtain the formal acceptance of dilution by the leading engineering unions, was the 'Shells and Fuses' Agreement of March 4th, 1915. This had followed the third report of the Committee on Production and came out of a special conference at Sheffield between the E.E.F. and the unions. It contained fourteen clauses, the most important of which were:

- Clause 6: "Operations on which skilled men are at present employed, but which by reason of their character, can be performed by semi-skilled or female labour, may be done by such labour during the war period."
- Clause 8: "Any federated employer shall at the conclusion of the war, unless the Government notify that the emergency continues, reinstate the working conditions of his factory on the pre-war basis, and as far as possible afford re-employment to his men who are at present serving with His Majesty's Forces."
- Clause 9: "These proposals shall not warrant any employer making such arrangements in the shops as will effect a permanent restriction of employment of any trade in favour of semi-skilled or female labour."¹⁵

This agreement largely covered the employment of women and young workers on large numbers of single-purpose automatic machines, many of American design, which turned out shells, fuses or cartridge cases. Even before this agreement was ratified the 'Treasury Agreement' was drawn up between March 17th and 19th. The trade union side of these negotiations included representatives of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., the A.S.E., S.E.M., F.S.I.F., U.M.W.A., U.P.A., G.W. and G.L.U., E.T.U. and others. Significantly only the A.S.E. representatives refused to sign; they demanded and got further safeguards which were contained in a supplementary agreement concluded on March 25th.

The most important aspects of the original agreement were contained in clauses 4 and 5.¹⁶ The former stated,

"during the war period the relaxation of the present trade practices is imperative, and that each Union be recommended to take into favourable consideration such changes in working conditions or trade customs as may be necessary with a view to accelerating the output of war munitions or equipments."

The latter was an attempt to balance this by concessions to the unions whereby the employers undertook that,

"Any departure during the War from the practice ruling in our workshops, shipyards and other industries prior to the War, shall only be for the period of the War,"

and that,

"No change in practice made during the War shall be allowed to prejudice the position of the workpeople in our employment, or of their Trade Unions, in regard to the resumption and maintenance after the War of any rules or customs existing prior to the War."

The clause also established priority in post-war re-employment for men in employment at the outbreak of war, and provided for the payment of district rates for higher grade work for dilutees 'promoted' to 'skilled' work.

The pre-war upsurge of militancy in the A.S.E. is reflected in the supplementary Treasury Agreement, notably paragraphs 1 and 2.

The first stated that,

"it is the intention of the Government to conclude arrangements with all important firms engaged wholly or mainly upon engineering and shipbuilding work for war purposes, under which their profits will be limited with a view to securing that benefit resulting from the relaxation of trade restrictions or practices shall accrue to the State."

The second added that,

"the relaxation of trade practices contemplated in the Agreement relates solely to work done for war purposes during the war period."

It was to be the subject of the second clause which was ultimately to provoke the strongest rank and file reaction against employers' abuses of dilution and the constraints on industrial relations, in the events of the spring of 1917, which began in the Lancashire textile machinery industry.

The Treasury Agreement was only voluntary and was considered inadequate by Lloyd George, who quickly gave it legal sanction through the Munitions of War Act. The act thus gave legal application to the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes' (Clause 2 of the Treasury Agreement), and in cases of 'failure to agree' provided for compulsory arbitration.

Clauses 6 and 7 of the Act should also be mentioned. The former gave legal sanction to the 'War Munitions Volunteers Service' whereby skilled men could agree to work for a given period at any 'controlled' establishment to which the Ministry might allocate them, providing for penalties for defaulters. The latter was later acknowledged as a major contributing factor in the explosion of resentment in the strikes of 1917 in Lancashire. This was the notorious 'leaving certificate' clause. This was designed to restrict labour mobility, stating that,

"A person shall not give employment to a workman, who has within the previous six weeks ... been employed on or in connection with munitions work ... unless he holds a certificate from the employer by whom he was last so employed that he left work with the consent of the employer, or a certificate from the munitions tribunal that the consent was unreasonably withheld."¹⁷

To many artisans the certificate was not just a means of preventing them from obtaining the highest reward for their labour, it was also seen as being yet another variant of the hated 'quittance paper' or 'character note' system. Employers could cooperate to brand a worker without such a certificate as a 'marked man', or the reason for his leaving could be directly indicated on the document, labelling him as a 'troublemaker' or 'slacker'.

Dilution, as Robert Roberts observed, was a nightmare for the skilled engineer who,

"saw himself, at best as a mere troubleshooter looking after rows of 'automatics' run by women and common labourers, all doing his old tasks with a speed and efficiency he had never approached. And when peace came and with it a return to normal production, what then?"¹⁸

The entry of large numbers of women into munitions work from the textile mills presented the exclusively male artisan societies with perhaps their most serious problem. In the machinery making towns north of Rossendale, there were only eight women employed in engineering and machinery making in 1901, and in Lancashire as a whole there were under 800, most engaged upon semi-skilled work in the major firms in Oldham, Bolton and Manchester.¹⁹ Writing in 1917, Barbara Drake summed up the situation well.

"The problem of women in the engineering trades, although not yet acute, dates from before the war, and a struggle had begun already between the employers and the trade unions, showing on the one side, the determination of the employer to exploit for profit a new and unlimited supply of cheap and docile female labour, and, on the other side, the equal determination of the trade unions to resist the encroachment of the blackleg and 'sweated' woman worker and progressive degradation of the men's standard of living."²⁰

For the A.S.E. traditionalists, the influx of female labour into the industry revived the pre-war problem of extending the scope of membership, but in a greatly magnified manner. Drake herself dispassionately noted that.

"Although the average trade unionist is neither an altruist nor a feminist, the root of his objection to admit women to the trade lies against blackleg and not female labour."²¹

Indeed the artisans need only have perused the pages of The Engineer in 1915 to be fully aware of the dangerous long term consequences of the influx of female labour, if this were not carefully regulated by the unions.

"It is only the trade unions which after the war will stand in the way of our realising the anticipation that we may be able to reduce our workshop costs by the employment of women."²²

The Gas Workers and General Labourers Union, which in July 1916 became the National Union of General Workers, had recruited women 'machinists' in the pre-war period on equal terms with men, and during the war had pushed ahead with the unionisation of female dilutees. This created a dilemma for the A.S.E. which had always

denied membership to women on the grounds that since they were not taken on as apprentices they could not be classified 'skilled'. The leadership neatly evaded the issue by concluding an agreement, in June 1915, with the National Federation of Women Workers, which through the work of Susan Lawrence, had itself set about the organisation of dilutees. Thus the A.S.E. could, through this alliance, check the rapid advance of a vigorous and potentially rival union, and could, by supporting N.F.W.W. demands for equal or better wage rates, protect its members without opening the society up to women.²³

However, it proved very difficult to secure what the A.S.E. considered appropriate wages for women.²⁴ In only a small minority of cases did female dilutees directly replace skilled men to justify a retention of the rate of pay. Employers argued that since skilled men were not available there was no question of displacement and some argued that the costs of new automatic tools should be debited from the wage rates of dilutees. Eventually the A.S.E. was obliged to support a N.F.W.W. demand for minimum wages for women in spite of fears that this would nullify the equal pay campaign.²⁵ The result was that whereas many women had earned only 12 to 15 shillings per week, i.e. about five to eight shillings less than an unskilled labourer in a textile machinery works in 1914/15, they were now paid £1 for work not hitherto done by skilled men and were promised the normal male piece work rates for work normally done by men.

The problem of dilution and conscription of skilled men underlay the most serious breakdown of industrial relations in engineering in Lancashire, but wages problems were an important secondary cause of artisan discontent. The rapid erosion of pre-war wage differentials, combined with the rapid inflation in the price of essential commodities to build up resentment. For many fitters and

turners the extra earnings from systems of payment by result attenuated the discontent; for others the earnings of wives or daughters on munitions work meant rising living standards. However, for the most highly skilled men such as, patternmakers, smiths, loose moulders and toolsetters, there was only a perceived deterioration in standards. In addition, as if to add insult to injury, for many men there was the indignity of earning little more than the semi-skilled dilutees whom they were instructing or for whom they were setting up automatic machine tools.

In 1914, the time rates for skilled men in textile machinery making ranged from about 37 shillings for fitter or turner, to about 42 shillings for a loose moulder or patternmaker in the districts outside Manchester. Time rates for semi-skilled men ranged from about 23 shillings for a 'machine man' engaged on fairly undemanding work, such as drilling, to 28 or perhaps 30 shillings for plate moulder or core maker.²⁶ The earnings of these semi-skilled men would more often be enhanced by piece work bonuses; according to the 1906 Wage Census, machine men could add up to 18½% to their basic time rate when working by the piece. By the summer of 1918, Bowley estimated that the basic wages of machine men had risen by 113% from July 1914, those of skilled men by only 73%, with the former increasing from 59% to 76% of the latter, on average.²⁷ If the greater availability of piece work to the semi-skilled workers is taken in account, then their enhanced earnings might narrow considerably further, or even eliminate, the differentials of the skilled men. To the erosion of differentials, was added the general problem of falling real wages; an estimated decline of 20% had taken place by July 1917.²⁸

The father of Robert Roberts, by the time of the Great War a small shopkeeper in Salford, was by trade a skilled engineer and by

attitude, a craftsman of the old-style. Roberts observed his fury when the wife of a mere foundry labourer, benefiting from her, and her husband's earnings on munitions work, had the affrontery to complain that the shop did not stock tins of lobster or jars of gherkins. "Before the war", he raged, "that one was grateful for a bit o'bread and scrape."²⁹ The episode perfectly illustrates the effect of the war and the munitions industry in breaking down the traditional economic barriers within the engineering industry. The long term effect was to destroy much of the sectional elitism of the artisanate, but in the short term, considerable resentment and bitterness built up. However, much of this was directed at the employers who were seen to stubbornly resist what were believed to be reasonable demands, whilst piling up great profits at the nation's cost.

In July 1916, the F.S.I.F. claimed 5 shillings advance for all its Lancashire districts; the employers, whose representatives included Mr. R. Livesey of Henry Livesey and Company (Blackburn), Mr. W. Thom of Yates and Thom (Blackburn) and Mr. W. Dickinson of Butterworth and Dickinson (Burnley) opposed this at the Manchester-based Board of Conciliation. The F.S.I.F. representatives claimed a 45% loss of real wages since the start of the war, and significantly added that,

"the limitation of profits in controlled establishments is very unsatisfactory to us ... it is not considered sufficient when compared with the workers' sacrifices in life as well as in wealth."³⁰

The claim was subsequently dismissed by the chairman, Mr. R. Matthews of Armstrong Whitworth.

William Mosses, General Secretary of the Patternmakers' Society was pleased that his union remained 'untainted' by dilution, yet lamented that,

"whilst in pre-war times the average earnings of our trade were more than in any time working branch of the engineering trade, during the war we were about the worst paid of the skilled time working section of that industry."³¹

By the end of 1916, he contrasted the 16% rise in his members' earnings with a 93% increase in prices in that year.

The first serious signs of trouble in Lancashire arose from September 1916, when a claim of 9 shillings on the weekly time-rate brought for the claimants, the A.S.E., S.E.M., U.M.W.A. and U.P.A., an award of only 3 shillings from the Committee on Production. This was in line with the award given to the skilled moulders' claim in July which had gone to arbitration. This drove the Manchester patternmakers, who in 1914 had been the highest paid of all the Lancashire textile machinery artisans, to take strike action.³² They were joined by the engineers, and by December 22nd, an estimated 2,000 men were on strike. The A.S.E. and U.P.A. Executive Councils intervened and persuaded the disgruntled strikers to return to work, but significantly for the future events of 1917, the strike committee remained in existence and merged into the Manchester joint engineering shop stewards' committee in March 1917.³³ In February meanwhile, the strike committee had secured the extension of the 3 shilling award to piece workers after threats of a general engineering strike in the city.

It is often stressed by economic historians that the war served to widen the basis of wage bargaining from district to national level. However, the pressures of inflation and dilution also had the effect of giving a much more prominent role to workshop-level bargaining, especially in the higher-paid districts such as Lancashire, where the national awards were seen not only to favour the employer, but local awards were seen to be of real advantage only to the lowest paid districts of the country. Thus more avenues

to influence the conduct of industrial relations opened up to the shop stewards in the textile machinery industry. A summary of the general wage movements as they affected one major textile engineering district, Blackburn and Accrington, is provided in Appendix I.

As Jefferys points out, the Manchester fitter or turner who had taken home 39 shillings in 1914 for 53 hours work was taking home over 88 shillings in 1920. However, his basic rate for the now 47 hour week was only 46 shillings. The difference between the basic rate and the take home pay consisted of several war bonuses, which are noted in Appendix I and in Jefferys' words were, "as unstable as a house of cards".³⁴

Dissatisfaction over declining living standards was compounded in the summer of 1916 by the effects of the Somme offensive which brought extensions in conscription to skilled munitions workers despite government assurances to the contrary. The then Minister of Munitions, E. S. Montagu was presented with a list of 600 names, by the A.S.E., of men who had been wrongly conscripted. Conscription of a fitter in Sheffield touched off strikes which brought support in other areas, notably Barrow. Of the strike's organisers, it was acknowledged by the authorities that,

"The rapidity and completeness with which they effected their purpose was remarkable. Their success was a sinister omen for the Ministry."³⁵

Further co-operation of government and A.S.E. leadership ended the troubles with the drawing up of the Trade Card Agreement on November 18th, 1916. The system gave immunity to A.S.E. members and subsequently to members of other skilled unions, but left out the semi-skilled and general unions.³⁶

The influence of the A.S.E. is perhaps illustrated in the text of the agreement's third clause which gave much of the control over selection for military service to the unions themselves.

"All skilled men on war work or who have enrolled as War Munitions Volunteers shall be provided with a card of exemption from service. The form of this card will be authorised by the Army Council and the card will be issued through the trade unions. Orders will be issued by the Army Council to all recruiting officers that no man who produces such a card to the local recruiting officer shall be removed from his work without a specific authority from the War Office, which will not be given without reference to the Ministry of Munitions and the Executive of the man's union."³⁷

The system began to operate from February 1917, but it was rapidly overtaken by the insatiable manpower needs of the western front. In April the government repudiated the agreement and sought to introduce instead of it, a "Schedule of Protected Occupations", which would effectively remove much of the unions' influence and would lead to the conscription of increasing numbers of skilled men whose work places would be filled by older men, those unfit for the army, or those injured in the early stages of the war. There followed a rash of objections that dilutees were remaining at work whilst skilled men were enlisted. On April 29th the Accrington A.S.E. District Committee demanded that, "all dilutors must be called up for military service before skilled men and apprentices are called up."³⁸ The government attempted to deflect the indignation by stressing the complaints of the general unions at their exclusion from the Trade Card system. In Lancashire, this succeeded in re-opening divisions in the labour movement as several A.S.E. branches turned their anger on J. R. Clynes of the N.U.G.W. The Executive Committee of Clynes' union recorded that he,

"had been subjected to hostile criticism by A.S.E. members and others in the Lancashire area, it being alleged that he had been largely instrumental in getting the Trade Card Agreement withdrawn from the craft unions".³⁹

Clynes was even obliged to publish an open letter to his critics and offered to tour the engineering centres of the county to explain his position.

The abolition of the trade card on its own might not have led to a major confrontation, at least in Lancashire, but it coincided with government plans to extend dilution to private commercial work in the 'controlled' establishments. E. S. Montagu had, in October 1916, planned to extend dilution in this manner to meet the need for more skilled men on munitions work and replace them with dilutees on commercial work, in order to keep industries like textile machinery manufacture going, to meet vital current orders, and maintain a reasonable basis for recovery in the post war period. The plans were strongly opposed by the A.S.E. and were thus left in abeyance. In December 1916, Dr. Christopher Addison, one of Lloyd George's very few close political allies, became Minister of Munitions in the new coalition war cabinet. Addison revived Montagu's plans, and his bill, presented to the Commons in the spring of 1917, proposed that,

"where the Minister of Munitions is satisfied that it is of national importance that all or any of the provisions of the Munitions of War Acts of 1915 and 1916, should be extended to work of any particular class or classes, or to all or to any work in a particular establishment or class of establishment, he may issue a certificate to that effect and by order direct that those provisions shall be extended accordingly."⁴⁰

In March 1917, the bill was suspended pending a ballot of the unions concerned, but G. D. H. Cole makes the telling point that the ballot proposal put to the unions was, "drawn up as if the agreement had already become law."⁴¹ Such was the new government's over-confidence in the compliance of union leaders and their ignorance of the growing rank and file discontent. Progress of Addison's scheme was thus overtaken by mounting opposition for which the catalyst was the rank and file resistance to the autocratic management of the textile machinery firm of Tweedales and Smalley.

III. The Tweedales and Smalley Dispute and the 'May Strikes' of 1917

Tweedales and Smalley's Globe works was a modern purpose built plant, located at Castleton, near Rochdale. The firm had become a private limited company in 1906, and was controlled by its three founding partners: Samuel and Edmund Tweedale, and Joseph Smalley. It had a notoriously anti-union reputation and, like Howard and Bullough, preferred independence in industrial relations to the security of the E.E.F. In 1898, however, it had taken full advantage of the defeat of the A.S.E. by the Federation, to attempt a complete purge of all declared trade unionists at the works. By 1914, there was still no recognition whatsoever granted to union officials in the firm's bargaining process.

By 1917, it was claimed that Tweedales and Smalley employed a higher proportion of female dilutees than any comparable firm in the area.⁴² In February of that year, having just completed a major munitions order, the firm acted in advance of the governmental process, to introduce dilutees to the manufacture of textile machinery. Ten men, ordered to instruct the female dilutees in the grinding of ring spindles on February 20th, refused and were immediately dismissed.⁴³ These men were well established workers with between eleven and twenty-five years service to the firm behind them, and to prevent an escalation of trouble, the Ministry of Munitions quickly stepped in.

The firm had maintained its tough negotiating policy in the war years and in 1915 had unilaterally opposed a 3 shilling pay advance granted throughout the Rochdale engineering district. Although obliged, under the wartime controls to accept arbitration, the firm refused to comply with the decision, which had gone in favour of the

unions pressing the claim.⁴⁴ Mr. Hadfield, the Ministry's Assistant Investigation Officer for the North West was quickly made aware of the management's approach to industrial relations. The chairman, Samuel Tweeddale, when asked by Hadfield if the firm was, 'controlled', reputedly replied, "Yes, and I control it."⁴⁵ This he followed by bluntly telling Hadfield that the board,

"had never recognised unions and never would. If the men objected to the women working on their machines they could take their leaving certificates and clear out."⁴⁶

During the first week of March 1917, a further six men were dismissed for the same reason and a further 30 were given notice on the grounds of slackness of trade, even though it was well known that new female dilutees were being recruited. The secretary of the local Engineering Allied Trades Committee, Tom Parkinson, wrote to the directors on March 11th, seeking an interview, and when no reply was forthcoming, informed them that members of the unions involved would hand in a week's notice.⁴⁷ Hadfield made a second approach, but was told that the firm,

"did not intend to alter their methods for the Ministry or anyone else; if they were to be forced to give way to the trade unions, they would close the works."⁴⁸

Lloyd George commented that the directors of Tweedales and Smalley were,

"that stubborn, autocratic type that was in its way at least as dangerous to industrial peace as the worst communist agitator."⁴⁹

The Ministry's Chief Investigating Officer, Mr. Welford, held the same view, and thus urged immediate prosecution of the firm, who were technically guilty under the Defence of the Realm Act, since he feared other firms would soon follow the precedent and widespread strike action could be the ultimate result. Addison, however, rather naively believed that the firm's directors could be persuaded to give way. One of his junior ministers later explained that,

"it was obviously desirable in the interests of all parties, to exhaust every means of conciliation before proceeding to other steps."⁵⁰

Thus the Ministry of Munitions procrastinated, and failed to initiate legal proceedings until April 12th; the letter to the firm explaining this was not sent until April 23rd, and no reply was received until May 1st. The Ministry was, in fact, sent several communications, warning them of the dangerous situation which they were allowing to develop: three from the A.S.E. Executive Council (April 18th, 20th and 30th), one from the A.S.E. District Delegate, Binns (April 17th), two from Parkinson of the Allied Engineering Trades (April 23rd and 29th), and two from Coates of the U.M.W.A. (April 23rd and 29th). Meanwhile, on April 29th, a mass meeting of 2,000 men in Rochdale resolved,

"to resist to the utmost the extension of dilution on private commercial work ... and failing a satisfactory settlement on or before 2nd May, that the whole of the workmen employed in the trade in Rochdale and district cease work on 3rd May as a protest against the continuity of this dispute."⁵¹

The A.S.E. District Delegate had warned the Ministry that without swift, decisive action, "all Lancashire would be ablaze". On April 30th, having received instructions to prepare a case against the firm, pending their reply, he could only reply,

"Your wire is useless. Lancashire determined to have matter settled. Cannot control position. Too long delayed."⁵²

The storm centre of the strike had passed to Manchester and the initiative had passed from the hands of Rochdale A.S.E. and U.M.W.A. officials, to the Manchester Joint Engineering Shop Stewards' Committee.

However, before considering reasons for the rapid spread of the strike, the reasons for the initial drastic steps in Rochdale should be considered. The ruthless anti-union policy of the firm has already been outlined; at least four of the initial victims of

dismissal, in February 1917, would have had personal memories of the firm's purge of trade unionists in the 1897-98 conflict. Moreover, the introduction of dilutees to commercial work, prior to any legislation and without consultation, re-inforced the views of many workers, that the law was used in a one-sided manner. Joseph Binns, who did much to try to contain the conflict, remarked that,

"if the workmen adopt similar action to what this firm is allowed to do, we would be threatened with martial law inside three days."⁵³

Perhaps of more fundamental significance was the unique position of the Lancashire engineering industry during the First World War. The Ministry of Munitions recognised that in Lancashire,

"feeling against the dilution bill ran strongest owing to the magnitude of the textile machinery trade."⁵⁴

Although, as Table 4 indicates, production of textile machinery had been considerably reduced as munitions production was expanded, the former still provided an important proportion of Lancashire's engineering production. At Howard and Bullough, for example, in the crucial first quarter of 1917, total output of textile machines was still about 23% of that of the first quarter of 1914.⁵⁵ The value of Tweedales and Smalley's total sales of textile machinery was still over £100,000 in 1916, and was £44,500 in 1917.⁵⁶ Taking into account the fact that exports in 1914 formed 2/3 of total production, Table 4 indicates the continued significance of textile machinery output, in Lancashire, in 1917.

Thus, as the Ministry of Munitions had noted, with commercial work still so important in the Lancashire textile machinery firms, the extension of dilution there, presented far graver threats to the position of the artisan than elsewhere in the country where the Trade Card issue tended to be the primary cause of hostility.

Table 4: Exports of Textile Machinery 1912-19

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tonnage</u> (<u>thousands</u>)	<u>Nominal Value</u> (<u>£ million</u>)	<u>Real Value</u> (<u>£ million</u>)
1912	150.4	7.0	7.3
1913	178.1	8.3	8.3
1914	116.4	5.8	6.1
1915	56.9	3.3	2.7
1916	59.1	4.1	2.8
1917	49.3	4.1	2.2
1918	36.5	3.9	1.9
1919	65.9	8.4	3.5

Source: R. Kirk and C. Simmons, op. cit., p.777. The real values were obtained by deflating the nominal value by Feinstein's indices of plant and machinery prices, with 1913 = 100.

Aided by the skilled men's fears of the consequences of extending dilution to commercial work, with all its implications for the post war period, the Manchester-centred Shop Stewards' Committee was able to command widespread support in Lancashire. As the historians of the Ministry of Munitions later recorded, the shop stewards were able to maintain the momentum of the strike call since suspicion of government was by then so great that its promises on dilution and conscription were now viewed merely as, "scraps of paper".⁵⁷ J. T. Murphy, one of the leading national figures in the shop stewards' movement, noted that,

"the workers felt convinced that even on war work the employers were exploiting the war situation for their own profitable ends and regarded the talk of the government and the trade union officials about the 'control of profits' as so much idle chatter. When, therefore, they were faced with the extension of dilution to commercial work, the skilled workers felt this to be the last straw."⁵⁸

Following a ballot held on April 22nd, the Manchester men came out on April 29th, on which day they were boosted by the resolution

in Rochdale to walk out on May 3rd if no action were forthcoming from government. The Manchester Engineering Employers telegraphed Addison on the 3rd, "Position serious. Requires immediate attention."⁵⁹ Both the employers and government officials, from Addison downwards, were not only reluctant to deal directly with strike leaders, which the former saw as, "aversive to all discipline",⁶⁰ but they mistakenly believed that by using the recognised union officials they could still control the strike.

Officials sent by the A.S.E. to Lancashire were told by the Shop Stewards' Committee that,

"they (the stewards) had taken this action which had nothing to do with the Societies. It was purely a rank and file movement, taken unofficially and with full knowledge of their responsibilities."

The union officials were informed that they, "were powerless to do anything in the matter."⁶¹ A statement issued to the Manchester Guardian confirmed the nature of the strike and its root causes.

The strikers, the statement noted,

"had consented to dilution as far as war work was concerned and have taught incomers how to do work because we saw it as necessary in the interests of the nation; but not to be extended to work of a purely private and commercial character."

It was added that the strike was,

"a movement too of the rank and file. The officials of the trade unions have nothing to do with it."⁶²

Faced with mounting pressure, the board of Tweedales and Smalley backed down and on May 4th, agreed to re-instate the men dismissed, to cease dilution on private work, and to recognise trade unions for the duration of the war.⁶³ The latter concession was seen by the board as the ultimate sacrifice; to them union recognition was the underlying cause of the dispute.⁶⁴ On the following day, government gained the agreement of the A.S.E. on a revised "Schedule of Protected Occupations", with Addison urging its delegates to keep

the men at work. On May 8th, a General Munitions Tribunal fined Tweedales and Smalleys under the Munitions of War Act. However, by the time the tribunal was sitting, the strike had taken hold in Rotherham, Sheffield and Coventry and, by the 12th, was general in and around London.⁶⁵ The fine imposed on the firm, £25 with 10 guineas costs for not providing due notice of the changes in practice, and £10 with 10 guineas costs for not giving opportunities for local consultations with the workers involved, probably tended to incite rather than conciliate most strikers.⁶⁶ In Rochdale, however, the defeat of such a hard-line employer was sufficient to lead the men to return to work.

The general situation beyond Rochdale remained crucially balanced. In the House of Commons, the government came under great pressure from private notice questions asked by Labour M.Ps. W. C. Anderson and T. Wilson. In response to a question from the latter, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bonar Law, was obliged to admit the seriousness of the unrest and apportion blame, not merely to Tweedales and Smalley's stubbornness, but also to the ending of the Trade Card system, and the bill to extend dilution to commercial work.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, teams of motorcyclists attempted to co-ordinate the strike centres. In reply the government threatened ring leaders with life imprisonment and even had leaflets printed, which were purported to come from the Kaiser and Von Hindenburg, headed, "Engineers on Strike. Kamerads. Greetings and Thanks".⁶⁸ The return of the Rochdale men however, led to a return to work vote in neighbouring Oldham on May 12th, and on the same day, A.S.E. officials in Manchester felt confident enough to take on the strike leaders and recommend an end to the strike, labelling the latter, "an irresponsible and unauthorised body".⁶⁹ During the third week of May, Lancashire's engineering industry slowly returned to normal.

The implications of the 'May Strikes', as they became known, for the future conduct of industrial relations in the textile machinery industry, were far reaching, both in terms of the government's application of dilution and conscription, and in terms of the balance between official trade union power, and that of the rank and file of the workshop and foundry.

The Executive Council of the A.S.E., in contrast to the leadership of the other 'craft' unions, refused to recommend the extension of dilution to commercial work, and the ballot of its membership rejected the plan by 46,851 votes to 8,945.⁷⁰ The publication of the result of the ballot in July 1917, coincided with the transfer of Addison to the Ministry of Reconstruction and the appointment of Winston Churchill in his place. When the amended Munitions Bill was brought before a committee of the Whole House on August 15th, Churchill stated, in response to questions, that the clause extending dilution to private work had been deleted. Further, employers would have to provide 21 days clear notice of any extension of dilution and would have to obtain a Ministry certificate to prove its necessity. In addition, Churchill noted that the hated 'leaving certificate' clause of the original 1915 Munitions Act would also be abandoned.⁷¹ The strength of the engineers' position had clearly been demonstrated, as Jefferys concludes,

"the Government which had started 1917 with the aim of gaining further concessions from the engineers, found that as a result of the mass movement it had itself been forced to give ground."⁷²

The government's concessions owed much to Churchill's realism and to the report of a Commission of Enquiry into the unrest which was appointed in June 1917. The Commission, which included J. R. Clynes, took evidence in Lancashire from A.S.E. District Delegates,

Joseph Binns and R. O. Jones and Tom Parkinson of Rochdale, and the Blackburn textile machinery employer, W. Thom (of the firm Yates and Thom). The North-West Area Report strongly criticised the leaving certificate system as,

"certainly the cause of great unrest ... the whole system has been entirely unsatisfactory and the men no doubt regard them as a gross interference with the liberty of the subject, and a form of industrial conscription."

On dilution, it was stated that the effects of extension were liable to be unsettling and that there should be more effective consultations before it were applied.⁷³ The report also criticised the selectiveness of the trade card system but added that the proposed new system of scheduled occupations would need extremely careful handling or, "there will again arise trouble".⁷⁴

The persistent campaigns of W. C. Anderson in the Commons also contributed to the eventual decision to abandon the planned extension of dilution. He effectively exposed government hypocrisy by quoting to the House promises made by Lloyd George when Minister of Munitions, that he would not support employers' applying dilution to commercial work, since,

"that would be taking advantage of war work in order to advance their own particular interests."⁷⁵

Anderson went on to point out that such dilution plans would be further evidence of a Government attitude, "which has entirely shattered working class confidence in any promises the government may care to make."⁷⁶ The ultimate impotence of even the government in the face of mass resistance at grass roots level, was perhaps the most telling aspect of Anderson's attack.

"The Ministry of Munitions hope to abolish all strikes and stoppages of work by simply declaring them to be illegal and by imposing very heavy penalties in the case of men who resort to stoppage of work. You have not done anything of the kind. You have not by the Munitions Act or any coercive laws prevented stoppages of work taking place. You have made them illegal. They still take place. You have made them insurrectionary and revolutionary, but you have not stopped them."⁷⁷

IV. Conclusion

The serious unrest of March to May 1917 was, as far as Lancashire was concerned, avoided for the remainder of the war, although the threat of renewed trouble surfaced in early 1918. A new 'manpower' bill, designed to 'comb out' more skilled men who had not previously been selected for the army, was hurried through parliament in February. The A.S.E. balloted its members, and at the mass meetings in Lancashire which followed, the men of Howard and Bullough of Accrington demanded that the Executive hold the government to its promises of May 1917, and resolved that, "in the event of no satisfaction being obtained, we are prepared to support a down-tools policy."⁷⁸

The subsequent Manchester delegate conference followed up the ballot, which opposed the new measures, with a resolution in favour of national strike action against the 'comb out', even though most other unions, including the powerful Miners' Federation, had accepted it. However, the last desperate German offensive in France, using troops freed by the collapse of the Russian front, began in March, and led to the holding of a second ballot, which reversed the decision of the first by a large majority.⁷⁹

The war had accelerated the processes which had furthered the radicalising trends of 1910-1914. Unions such as the F.S.I.F. and the A.S.E. were obliged to become less exclusive; in the latter, 'the percentage of machine men' rose from just over 6% in 1914, to over 10% by the end of hostilities.⁸⁰ In addition, the A.S.E. had had to work increasingly closely with the U.M.W.A., the leading 'specialist' machinist union in Lancashire, which led to their ultimate amalgamation in 1920.⁸¹ The A.S.E. experienced greater difficulties with the National Union of General Workers, especially

over the implementation of, and the eventual scrapping of the Trade Card system, but this issue aside, the two unions were able to work closely together on the issues of female dilutees, demarcation of recruitment of new members, transfer of members, and the organisation of joint approaches on matters of pay and conditions.^{e2}

The pre-war advocates of 'industrial unionism' within the A.S.E. had been an influential but comparatively small minority, and the new rules of both the A.S.E. and F.S.I.F., introduced in 1912 to widen the membership base, had brought less success than had been desired. By 1917, however, the operation of local 'allied trades committees' such as those which emerged in Accrington and Rochdale, reflected the growing commonality of interest of skilled and semi-skilled, as munitions work and payment by results eliminated many traditional differences in work practices. By the summer of 1917, the Accrington A.S.E. District Committee was already pressing the Executive in London for sweeping amalgamation. It was argued that,

"sectionalism of trade unions is useless and that we call upon the E.C. to recall the Delegate meeting to further the cause of amalgamation of all the unions in the engineering industry."^{e3}

The breaking down of sectionalism went parallel with the continued centrifugal shift of power within the A.S.E. from the Executive to the branches, and with the growth to maturity in Lancashire of the shop stewards' organisations. In the immediate pre-war years, 1912-14, the movement had begun to flex its muscles, notably in the strikes at Dobson and Barlow and Howard and Bullough. From 1915, on the one hand, the leadership of the engineering unions was enmeshed in the legal and procedural network set up by the government for the effective prosecution of the war; on the other, the adjustment to munitions production, payment by results, the trade card system, and dilution in general, all encouraged the

extension of the role of the shop steward. G. D. H. Cole observed that,

"the almost hourly problems arising out of dilution in every big establishment were largely instrumental during the earlier years of the war, in setting the shop stewards' organisation firmly on its feet, and in bringing about its development from the stage where the stewards of each trade and shop remained more or less isolated, to the stage when workshop and works committees in other establishments became a regular feature of factory organisation."⁸⁴

As W. C. Anderson and other critics of government policy during the debate on the Tweedales and Smalley strike, had pointed out, the Ministry of Munitions had refused to negotiate with the rank and file representatives, whilst having previously used its legal powers to weaken the official union leaderships' ability to represent, and if necessary, restrain the mass of the membership. Anderson claimed that the Ministry had,

"very largely destroyed the authority and power of an executive council when any stoppage of work does take place, for the very obvious reason that the executive council cannot be a guiding, restraining, or moderating force, because the executive council, in case of any stoppage taking place, is supposed to be barred out by various laws, and especially by the Munitions Act, from taking any part or from having anything to say."⁸⁵

The A.S.E. leadership had actually emerged from the crisis in 1917 with considerable prestige, having refused to countenance an extension of dilution to commercial work, once the strikes were over. However, it is clear that its resistance to the Ministry's plans was stiffened by the basic desire to keep control over the membership, especially in Lancashire, in the face of the challenge from the 'unofficial movement' which had temporarily seized the initiative at the height of the strike campaign. The direction of authority from the Executive downwards to the shop floor, via District Delegates and branch officials, had been dramatically thrown into reverse. The origins of the reversal lay in the defeat of 1898 and the subsequent development of 'localism' and rank and

file defence of workshop controls; the process gathered momentum in the militancy of 1912-14, and was further consolidated by the effects of wartime legislation and the enhanced bargaining strength of artisans and their shop stewards.

The Lancashire District Delegate, R. O. Jones, had already, in 1914, come under fire from the branches for his over-cautious methods. The rank and file representatives at Howard and Bullough and the Accrington branch officials, had bitterly attacked him, and the Executive, for their failure to take the fight for union recognition, wage advances, and preservation of workshop controls, to the company.⁸⁶ In 1918, he was to express his, "abhorrence", at the proceedings of the militant Manchester-based, 'unofficial conference' movement.⁸⁷ Yet, in 1917, he had spoken out dramatically against the constraints which government policy imposed upon union officials, on the occasion of the Tweedales and Smalley crisis. Speaking directly of the district and local official, he complained that with the close co-operation of government and top union leaders,

"no longer is he supposed to truly represent the feelings and aspirations of the men in the workshop. With freedom of speech denied to him, there is only room for one side of the cause to be heard ... the time has arrived when we should take stock of the situation and find out which side we are on."

As far as the morality of the government was concerned, he was even more direct.

"Honesty of purpose is their last consideration. They are soulless as they are tyrannical."⁸⁸

As the war threatened to undermine the artisans' traditional workshop practices and privileges, and, at the same time, rendered many of their traditional defences obsolete or illegal, many began to question the very organisation of society and economy. The soaring prices, and tragic loss of life which struck many of their

families obviously pressed this change upon them. Robert Roberts observed that,

"in the machine shop and the foundry, discussion among men took on a common drift."

An elderly fitter of his acquaintance had grumbled that it was very much limited to trade unionism, before the war, but afterwards it was all talk of, "profit an t'bosses, an socialism, an there bein' no God."⁸⁹

Before 1914, the A.S.E. in Accrington had struggled to build up its membership at Howard and Bullough, and to establish a network of shop stewards. By 1917 the A.S.E. men at Howard and Bullough were pressing the branch officials to take radical, socialist steps. In June, the branch resolved that the Executive be requested,

"to get into communication with the E.C.'s of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, National Union of Railwaymen, and Transport Workers, to take joint action, and to compel the government to take over and distribute all foodstuffs for the people, and put a stop to the disgraceful profiteering going on at the present time."⁹⁰

In August, it resolved that government should,

"conscript the resources of the country, productive, and distributive, for the national welfare, and thus stop the criminal exploitation and profiteering which is being carried on at the present time by the monopoly interests of the country."⁹¹

Thus, it can be argued that, to a limited but clearly discernible extent, the Lancashire textile machinery makers had begun to transcend the limited, sectional trade union consciousness, which Lenin sternly reproved in, 'What is to be Done?',⁹² and had moved towards a more complete class consciousness. This development, along with the heightened expectations bred of wartime sacrifices, contributed much to the major clashes with the leading employers and the E.E.F. in the deteriorating economic climate of 1919-22.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 History of the Ministry of Munitions, H.M.S.O. 1921, Vol. 1, p.32.
- 2 A. J. P. Taylor, English History 1914-45, Oxford 1965, p.30.
- 3 D. Lloyd George, War Memoirs, London 1936, p.178.
- 4 G. D. H. Cole, Trade Unionism and Munitions, Oxford 1923, p.69.
- 5 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. 1, p.31 and G. D. H. Cole, op. cit., pp.78-81.
- 6 Butterworth and Dickinson, Munitions Order Books, show that firm to have produced: fuses, cast iron bomb-heads and 18 pounder high-explosive shells.
- 7 DDPSL 3/10/1, Howard and Bullough Delivery Books of Completed Machines.
- 8 Grinders and Glazers Society, Annual Report, 1916.
- 9 Butterworth and Dickinson, Private Letter Book, Letter to S. Sarabjee (Bombay), 25.3.1915. By July 1916, textile machinery amounted to only 15% of the firm's total production, and ironically the cut-backs in loom production were to hinder the completion of orders of cloth required by the government. Letters of 14.3.1916 and 26.7.1916 to the Munitions Works Bureau, Burnley.
- 10 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. IV, pp.14-15.
- 11 The socialist element of the rank and file was not hostile to dilution as such which would bring down barriers between skilled and unskilled, but feared a dilution process which they could not control, which would simply be means of introducing cheap labour. Thus whilst contrasting themselves with the Luddite opposition to new technology, they were determined to resist any changes which threatened to undermine the continuation of workshop control and denied a fair 'rate for the job'.
- 12 E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Artisan or Labour Aristocrat', in Worlds of Labour, p.370.
- 13 Cole, op. cit., p.46.
- 14 J. Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement, London 1973, p.55.
- 15 Cole, op. cit., p.67 ff. and A.S.E. Monthly Journal, April 1915.
- 16 ibid. p.72 ff.
- 17 ibid. p.81.
- 18 R. Roberts, The Classic Slum, Manchester 1971, p.159.
- 19 Census of England and Wales, 1901, 63 Vict. C4, County of Lancaster, pp.144-181.

- 20 B. Drake, Women in the Engineering Trades, London 1917, p.13.
- 21 ibid. p.12.
- 22 The Engineer, December 1915.
- 23 N.U.G.W., Executive Committee Minutes, 15.7.1916, give details of the subsequent agreement it made with the N.F.W.W. The basic principle was that where either union already organised a majority of women in a particular workshop, it was to have first claim on new recruits. Arrangements were also made to transfer, 'isolated groups', to the dominant union in any works, or district. The A.E.U. only admitted women for the first time at the height of World War Two; at its triennial delegate meeting of May 1915, a motion to admit women to the A.S.E. was rejected by a large majority.
- 24 The subject of employment of women was dealt with in the second of the 'L circulars', communications from the Ministry of Munitions to 'controlled' establishments. Circular L2 is quoted verbatim by Cole, op. cit., pp.89-91. Clauses 1 and 6 deal with the issues of payment of women on munitions work.
- 25 See Appendix I and the F.S.I.F., U.P.A., and A.S.E. Monthly and Annual Reports.
- 26 U.M.W.A. Annual Report, 1914, Amalgamated Moulders' Union Annual Report, 1914, Amalgamated Moulders' Union, Annual Report, 1919 and E.E.F. Wage Movements, passim.
- 27 A. L. Bowley, Wages and Prices in the United Kingdom 1914-20, Oxford 1921, pp.125-31.
- 28 S. Pollard, Development of the British Economy, 1914-67, London 1969, p.78.
- 29 R. Roberts, op. cit., p.160.
- 30 MSS 41/FSIF/3/6. Report of the Board of Conciliation for the Ironfounding Industry of Lancashire, 17th July, 1916.
- 31 W. Mosses, op. cit., p.257.
- 32 ibid. p.263.
- 33 E. and R. Frow, To Make that Future Now!, Manchester 1976, p.80. Hinton, op. cit., p.199 points out that the major source of discontent was among the relatively low paid textile machinery workers. He also notes that one of the emerging leaders of the shop stewards' committee was William MacLaine, member of the B.S.P. and later the Communist Party, who became the leading historian of early engineering unionism by the late inter-war years.
- 34 J. S. Jefferys, op. cit., p.135.
- 35 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.38.

- 36 Ministry of Munitions Papers, MUN 5/79, P.R.O., pp.16-22. Twenty-five unions in all were signatories, but the Army Council vetoed further additions to the list.
- 37 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.39.
- 38 A.S.E., Accrington District Committee Minutes, 29.4.1917.
- 39 National Union of General Workers, Executive Committee Minutes, 9.5.1917.
- 40 Cole, op. cit., p.144. Addison justified the extension by stressing the need for skilled men to be switched to manufacture of vital war work such as aeroplanes, and to rapidly expand production of agricultural machinery to counter-act the German 'U' boat blockade. Dilutees would thus help bolster commercial production to maintain the goodwill of customers for textile machinery, etc. Hansard, 1917, Vol. XC, p.1905.
- 41 ibid. p.149.
- 42 The Plebs, June 1917.
- 43 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.103. This official history notes that the men dismissed were members of the U.M.W.A. Most other sources, notably Hinton, op. cit., and Frow, Engineering Struggles, Manchester 1982, claim that they were A.S.E. members.
- 44 The Plebs, June 1917.
- 45 E. G. Smalley, 'A History of Textile Machinery Making in Rochdale', Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society Transactions, Vol. XXIV, 1960.
- 46 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.103.
- 47 ibid. and Rochdale Observer, 9.5.1917.
- 48 D. Lloyd George, op. cit., p.1149.
- 49 ibid.
- 50 Hansard, 1917, Vol. XCIII, p.615.
- 51 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.105.
- 52 Jefferys, op. cit., p.183.
- 53 A.S.E., Monthly Journal, May 1917.
- 54 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.109.
- 55 See Table 2.
- 56 DDPSL, Tweedales and Smalley, Private Ledger No. 1, 1891-1926. The figures are current prices; at constant prices (1913), the respective 1916 and 1917 figures would have been approximately £68,200 and £23,800.

- 57 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.109.
- 58 J. T. Murphy, Preparing for Power, London 1934, p.137.
- 59 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Urgency Committee Minutes, 3.5.1917.
- 60 ibid. Executive Committee Minutes, 10.5.1917.
- 61 A.S.E., Manchester District Committee Minutes, 4.5.1917.
- 62 ibid.
- 63 Ministry of Munitions Papers, MUN 2/28, P.R.O., Report 90, p.13.
- 64 E. G. Smalley, op. cit.
- 65 Hinton, op. cit., pp.200-201.
- 66 This was the view of Murphy, op.cit., p.138.
- 67 Hansard, 1917, Vol. XCIII, p.1068.
- 68 W. Kendall, The Revolutionary Movement in Great Britain, London 1909, p.37.
- 69 History of the Ministry of Munitions, Vol. VI, p.113, and Hinton, op. cit., p.203.
- 70 Jefferys, op. cit., p.184, and MUN 2/28, Report 101.
- 71 The 'leaving certificate' was introduced to prevent skilled men taking advantage of the wartime scarcity by repeatedly switching jobs to move to the highest bidding employer. However, its effect was unfortunate, as employers were able to withhold certificates to restrict the movement of workers. If a man went ahead and left without the document he was obliged to wait six weeks before he could apply for another job, and even then might find difficulty gaining work as he would be seen as a potential malcontent or idler. See Part II.
- 72 Jefferys, op. cit., p.185.
- 73 Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest, No. 2 Division (North West Area), June 1917, cd. 8663, p.20.
- 74 ibid. p.11.
- 75 Hansard, 1917, Vol. XCIII, p.1878. Lloyd George's original pronouncement against dilution in commercial work was made on February 24th, 1916.
- 76 ibid. p.1881.
- 77 ibid.
- 78 A.S.E., Accrington District Committee Minutes, 19.3.1918.
- 79 Cole, op. cit., p.140.

- 80 A.S.E. Annual Reports, 1914 and 1918.
- 81 A.S.E. and U.M.W.A. Monthly Reports, passim.
- 82 G. and G.L.U./N.U.G.W., Executive Committee Minutes, especially the agreements with the National Federation of Women Workers (thus indirectly with the A.S.E.) 15.9.1916 and with the A.S.E., S.E.M., U.M.W.A. Smiths and Strikers and others, 28.9.1916.
- 83 A.S.E., Accrington District Committee Minutes, 26.8.1917.
- 84 G. D. H. Cole, Workshop Organisation, London 1923, p.56.
- 85 Hansard, 1917, Vol. XCIII, p.1881. See also the similar comments of Major Hamilton, p.1893.
- 86 See Chapter Six, Part IV.
- 87 A.S.E., Accrington District Committee Minutes, 7.4.1918.
- 88 A.S.E., Monthly Report and Journal, June 1917.
- 89 Roberts, op. cit., p.178.
- 90 A.S.E., Accrington District Committee Minutes, 1.6.1917. Losses of life had been particularly severe among the town's young men, especially in the Somme offensive with the near annihilation of the local "Pals" battalion.
- 91 ibid. 12.8.1917.
- 92 V. I. Lenin, What is to be Done?, Oxford University Press, 1963 Edition, p.101 ff.

Chapter EightConclusion: The Retreat from Craft Control during the Inter-War PeriodI. Introduction: The Post War Boom

By 1914 the A.S.E. and the other artisan societies had recovered from the catastrophic defeat of 1898. The economic circumstances of the Lancashire textile machinery industry had made employers reluctant to undertake comprehensive re-tooling and the re-structuring of workshop and foundry organisation. In addition, the domestic and export market booms prior to the Great War had kept skilled labour at a premium, adding considerable bargaining power to the deeply entrenched artisan resistance to employer attacks on their ability to control the labour process. Moreover, the weakness of the A.S.E.'s central authority structure vis a vis the Engineering Employers' Federation had encouraged the growth of 'localist' resistance around branch officials and works shop stewards' organisations. In spite of the effects of dilution, the Great War had done much to extend and consolidate this grass roots power, such was the bargaining strength of the skilled engineering workers. The strength of local militancy in Lancashire had been amply demonstrated during the spring of 1917 by the Tweedales and Smalley dispute and the subsequent 'May Strikes'.

The return to peace created a boom in textile machinery manufacture as the industry faced a huge backlog of domestic and export orders which had been delayed because of the need to transform production to munitions output. Such was the pressure of demand that the leading firms such as Platt's were able to promise preferential delivery only to those customers willing to pay higher prices. In addition, customers with contracts drawn up at relatively low prices during the early war years were obliged to

renegotiate or face undefined delays in the completion of their orders.' The economic conditions of 1919-20 thus proved ideal for the development of the militancy which had taken hold in the previous decade.

G. D. H. Cole, who had been taken on by the A.S.E. as an adviser in 1917, saw control over the labour process, not merely in terms of defence, but as a springboard to fundamental changes in the country's economic structure.

"From trade union control in the workshop, backed by a strong natural organisation of trade unionism, will follow an extension of trade unionism over management. The capitalist will be gradually ousted from his dictatorship in the control of production and with the atrophy of one of his two primary functions will go a shifting in the balance of economic power and a weakening of the wage system."²

Cole, who had been greatly influenced by pre-war French syndicalist ideas and subsequently by the Guild Socialism of Orage and Hobson in the columns of their journal New Age, stressed the importance of the war in amplifying the issue of workers' control. In retrospect he noted that the advocates of such measures,

"were quite right in insisting that control could mean nothing to most workers unless it began at the bottom - in the actual workshops, and that the mere admittance of a few trade union leaders to high positions in industry would avail nothing."³

However, in endorsing a point made by Pribicevic, he underlines a vital reason for the Movement's failure to maintain the wartime momentum. Most of its leaders, he notes, became pre-occupied with the central problem of class power and, "lost sight of the essential purpose of the movement for workers' control in its relation to ordinary men and women."⁴

The battle over workshop control did continue, however, at national and shop floor levels. In the former, a notable breakthrough was the making of an agreement, in May 1919, with the Employers' Federation which led to the recognition by federated

firms of Works Committees and Shop Stewards. The agreement, which initially involved the A.S.E., U.M.W.A., Smiths and Strikers, Spindle and Flyer Makers and N.U.G.W., was seen as a vital step towards industrial democracy by many activists. Shop Stewards who served on Works Committees were formally granted the right, "to visit any shop or portion of a shop in the establishment", in order to pursue their duties.⁵

On the local level, the Chairman of Butterworth and Dickinsons, the largest of the Burnley loom making firms, complained in December 1919, of a determined local effort to wrest control from management. He noted, "the general spirit of unrest amongst the workers", and that the A.S.E. in particular,

"by their refusal to allow their members to do piece work or to work overtime under any conditions whatever, and by the deliberate 'go slow' policy enforced by their shop stewards, have done much to retard production during the past year. We find from enquiries that practically every firm in the same or similar branches of engineering work, has had the same difficulties with labour."⁶

Such feelings lay behind the determination of the Federation employers to repeat their victory of 1898 and re-establish the rights of management in terms of control of the workshop. The rapid deterioration of trade in engineering as a whole made such a counter-attack possible by 1922.

Two other factors which had boosted the militants in the engineering industry and at the same time, had doubtless struck a further note of apprehension among the Federated employers, were the continued rapid growth of union membership, and the completion of the second amalgamation of the industry's unions. To the great satisfaction of 'industrial unionists' within the A.S.E. an agreement was concluded, in May 1919, to create the Amalgamated Engineering Union from the A.S.E. and seventeen lesser unions. This agreement failed to bring in important groups such as the major

foundry unions (three of which concluded their own amalgamation soon afterwards), the patternmakers and the grinders, but did bring in the Smiths and Strikers Society, the U.M.W.A. and the S.E.M. The new union, which finally emerged in July 1920, was a powerful industrial force comprising almost half a million men, appropriately perhaps, led by the veteran syndicalist, Tom Mann, as its General Secretary.⁷

Meanwhile, throughout 1919 and 1920, the boom in textile machinery sales continued, almost unchecked, and contributed to a wave of speculation which led to a large slice of the industry's capacity changing hands. In December 1919, a syndicate of Rochdale businessmen acquired a controlling interest in Tweedales and Smalley following the acceptance of their offer of £1.25 million. This was followed, in August 1920, by the simultaneous buying out of Brooks and Doxey of Manchester and Lord Bros. of Todmorden by a consortium which subsequently traded as Brooks and Doxey (1920) Ltd.⁸

One factor which should be considered, in addition to Cole's point regarding the changing outlook of the wartime rank and file leaders, is that although the post war boom did in some ways enhance the bargaining strength of the unions, the related inflationary spiral of 1919-20 tended to deflect some radical ambitions of industrial democracy into a short term policy of defending living standards. Retail prices had risen from a 1913 index of 100 to 211 in 1919 and subsequently rose to 244 in 1920.⁹ The A.S.E. and its allies had successive claims for a 15 shilling wages advance turned down by the Court of Arbitration in February and July 1919, whilst a third, in October, brought an advance of only 5 shillings.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the skilled moulders, having taken industrial action in support of their own 15 shilling claim in September 1919, were also offered only 5 shillings, and subsequently fought the E.E.F. for

over four months before returning to work, defeated in January 1920.¹¹

By 1921, the overseas market for coarse yarns and cloths was collapsing and the bubble of speculative expansion in these sections of the Lancashire textile industry burst. The rapidity of the collapse is reflected in the records of Platts' 'home market' production of both mules and ring frames. The former declined from 289,000 spindles in 1920, to 23,112 in 1921, whilst the latter declined from 151,536 to 3,700.¹² However, although the mechanical engineering industry in general was entering a spiral of decline by the end of 1920, the textile machinery industry remained relatively buoyant, being supported by a healthy overseas demand for machinery and by the relative stability of Lancashire's 'Egyptian' section. Even in November 1920, the E.E.F. calculated that the average number of weeks' work on hand in three textile machinery towns: Blackburn, Bolton and Oldham, was 77.1, 89.3 and 147.5 respectively. This compared extremely favourably with 23.2, 15.8 and 33.1, respectively, in the boom period prior to the Great War, in June 1914.¹³

II. The National Ironmoulders' Strike, 1919-20

This lengthy and bitter dispute was overshadowed by the railway strike of September-October 1919, and has since been given scant attention by historians. It was, however, in the Lancashire textile machinery towns, a notable example of militant, grass roots resistance by the skilled foundry workers to the continued erosion of their traditional craft control of the labour process and their relatively privileged economic status. The strike also indicates the long term problems which the major skilled foundry union, the

F.S.I.F., built up for itself by holding aloof from the unionisation of the semi-skilled plate and machine moulders, the new grades of workers emerging with the new foundry technology of the late nineteenth century. Thirdly, the strike is a further good example of the strong sense of autonomy in the F.S.I.F. Lancashire branches which had flourished since the 1840's when the leadership had first embarked upon a policy of systematic centralisation of power.

In the mid nineteenth century the F.S.I.F. had established a very strong position in the Lancashire textile machinery industry. Unlike the A.S.E. it was not then threatened by new technology and new classes of semi-skilled operatives. It had even rejected the proposal of amalgamation with the A.S.E. on the grounds that the latter's rates of contributions and benefits were not sufficiently high.¹⁴ By the 1880's however, the new processes of plate and machine moulding were being adopted by the larger Lancashire machine making firms, who could justify the initially high capital outlays by the production of long runs of castings, using quickly trained, low paid semi-skilled labour. It is significant that on the tide of 'new unionism' the major semi-skilled foundry union, the Amalgamated Society of Plate and Machine Moulders, emerged in 1891, at the Oldham firms of Platts and Asa Lees.

In 1919/20 the F.S.I.F. was to pay dearly for its failure to unionise the plate and machine moulders in the late nineteenth century. It had on occasion been overtly hostile to the new plate moulders' union during the latter's early conflicts with the employers in Burnley and Blackburn. By 1907, the F.S.I.F. had, with the growing influence of socialism and industrial unionism in its ranks, initiated a campaign to amalgamate all the foundry unions. It proposed a single union with contributions ranging from ninepence, providing simply trade protection, to two shillings and

sixpence for the full range of the Society's benefits. The new rules of 1912 opened up the F.S.I.F. to, "all foundry workers capable of earning the standard rate of wages applicable to their section of the industry." As the union's historians comment, however, the new spirit came about twenty-five years too late.¹⁵ By 1912, the 'new unions' in the foundry had established themselves and were making great progress in organising the less skilled, whilst the progress of technological change in the foundry was sapping the traditional craft bargaining power of the F.S.I.F.

In 1914 a skilled moulder could command a basic time rate, in Lancashire, of between thirty-eight and forty-three shillings for a fifty-three or fifty-four hour week.¹⁶ Along with the patternmakers, the skilled moulders were the elite of the Lancashire textile machinery workers in terms of wages, and would expect a differential of two to five shillings above the rate paid to fitters and turners. This differential was in part a reflection of the highly skilled nature of the work, but it was also a recognition of the hazardous and unhealthy conditions in the foundry.¹⁷ By 1914 systems of payment by results had made inroads in skilled foundry work, though in Lancashire's textile machinery industry, they were limited to the large spinning machinery firms such as Platt's and Howard and Bullough. In such firms a skilled moulder could earn over four shillings in excess of the time rate.¹⁸

In contrast, by 1914, the plate and machine moulders could earn a basic time rate of twenty-eight to thirty shillings, although the incidence of piece work was much greater.¹⁹ Coremakers, traditionally paid little better than foundry labourers, could earn as little as twenty-two shillings, but where their own sectional union, the Amalgamated Society of Coremakers, had established itself

in strength, their wages were comparable to those of the semi-skilled moulders.²⁰

In the years of industrial unrest immediately before World War One, the F.S.I.F. had largely been able to maintain the position of its members, notably by the opportunist method of taking or threatening industrial action in the wake of action taken by the Lancashire A.S.E. branches. In February 1914, at Dobson and Barlows, and in August 1914 at Howard and Bullough the moulders' actions had proved decisive in gaining success for the A.S.E. and had achieved the F.S.I.F. objectives of wages advances, with minimum cost to the Society itself.²¹

The 1914-18 war had completely upset the pattern of gradual change in the foundries of the Lancashire textile machinery firms. Production of castings, from the end of 1915, was switched increasingly to munitions, rendering foundry work generally less skilled as long runs for shells, mines, practice shot etc., replaced short runs of the more intricate 'textile' work. Thus the larger firms tended to accelerate programmes of investment in plate and machine moulding for war work, and dilution of labour in most foundries followed. The war had in fact finally upset the balance of power between the moulders and the employers and precipitated the crisis which came in September 1919. Those skilled moulders who had been unwilling to accept payment by results during the war, or whose work was unsuited to the system, were left behind in the inflationary spiral of the war and the post-war boom, in significant contrast to their less skilled colleagues.

By the summer of 1919, skilled moulders on time rates in textile machinery firms, could earn from 66/6 plus the 12½% war bonus, to 72/- plus the bonus.²² In some foundries the pre-war differentials

had all but disappeared where the incidence of piece-work was high. In the Burnley loom making firms, the Amalgamated Moulders had claimed a basic time rate of 69/5 in August 1918, and although the claim failed, a more moderate claim of 63/5 was successfully pressed by these semi-skilled workers after a brief strike at Harling and Todd, in January 1919. This was followed by similar successes at the Blackburn firms, Tweedales and Smalley, Platts and Asa Lees. Even greater achievements were made at Dobson and Barlow and Howard and Bullough, where by January 1919, a guaranteed minimum of 80/- was secured for plate and machine moulders on piece work and 65/- for those on time rates.²³

In 1919, the textile machinery firms were rapidly turning to the challenge of record order books for machinery after the wartime demand for munitions had subsided. Howard and Bullough, for example, had stepped up their production of completed textile machines from 159 in the last quarter of 1918, to 847 in the last quarter of 1919. Weekly output in September 1919 had surpassed 80 machines, a figure which approached the output of the period between the 1914 engineers' strike and the shift to munitions manufacture.²⁴ The situation appeared ideal to the majority of rank and file skilled moulders in Lancashire to redress what were felt to be intolerable grievances.

Under great pressure from the membership, the F.S.I.F. Executive called a national delegate conference at the Milton Hall, Deansgate, Manchester on August 21st, 1919. The union's Honorary President, Arthur Henderson argued that,

"having regard to the conditions of mind on the part of the men; having regard to the serious increase in the cost of living; having regard to the fact that other classes of workmen not requiring such great skill, have fared better during the last four or five years than have the men before me and the men they represent; having regard to the fact that during recent months the prices of castings have increased, the men have not received

... that share of the increase to which you very properly are entitled." ²⁵

The meeting, by 239 votes to 57, resolved to give notice of withdrawal from the national agreement with the Engineering Employers' Federation of 1917 which bound the union to arbitration. The expiry of the agreement would be followed by claim of 15 shillings on the adult time rate and 7/6 on that of apprentices, with proportionate piece rate adjustments.

The Executive admitted that originally it had,

"no intention of seeking a national advance in wages in this form ... But owing to the fact that the Executive Council had received numerous resolutions from up and down the country, they realised to some extent that if they did not take action in regard to this matter someone else would take action in the country and if not handled, the Society would witness spasmodic strikes in more parts of the country than one, whether the strikes were official or unofficial." ²⁶

Significantly, the Lancashire branches were prominent in this movement and in Rochdale, 231 men and 13 apprentices had walked out before the meeting, in spite of the attempts of the Executive to restrain them. ²⁷

The Executive's initial moves towards industrial action were inept to say the least; it proposed strike action without first giving due notice of withdrawal from the 1917 agreement and thus gave the Engineering Employers' Federation ample time to prepare for the forthcoming struggle. The Burnley branch led the campaign to demand its resignation as a result, another indication of the strongly independent and forthright line adopted by the Lancashire branches throughout the dispute. ²⁸ Eventually, following a formal rejection of the employers' offer of a five shilling advance, and the expiry of the notice of withdrawal from the arbitration agreement, the strike commenced on September 20th, 1919; the F.S.I.F. being supported by its Scottish equivalent, the Associated Iron Moulders, the Amalgamated Society of Coremakers and the small

Iron Steel and Metal Dressers Society. The employers' opposition to the strike was co-ordinated by the Engineering Employers' Federation Executive Board on which Lancashire textile machinery firms were prominent.²⁹

Following the settlement of the railway dispute, Arthur Henderson initiated moves to bring together the executives of the unions and employers' Federation. A meeting took place on October 10th and 11th and a return to work was agreed upon, to be followed within a week by a conference to fix new district minimum rates, with the difficult problem of the general advance to be sent to arbitration. Amid very hostile scenes the subsequent joint delegate meeting resolved that,

"this conference of delegates representing the rank and file absolutely refuse to accept the terms of the settlement as submitted by our Executives and recommend non-acceptance to our members."³⁰

The strongest opposition to settlement was led by Lancashire with Manchester F.S.I.F. vainly proposing an amendment to reject the terms of settlement without taking a ballot. So strong was the feeling of the rank and file that the plan for an early return to work was overwhelmingly rejected, and with the Employers' Federation also determined to stand firm, a lengthy conflict was thus inevitable.

The early impact of the strike was limited for a number of reasons. Some firms, such as Mather and Platt obtained castings from small, non-union foundries; others had anticipated the action and had built up stocks of castings before the strike commenced.³¹

The strikers' biggest handicap was the continued working of the plate and machine moulders of the Amalgamated Moulders' Union (formerly the Amalgamated Society of Plate and Machine Moulders). The A.M.U., after its early struggle for survival in Lancashire, was

expanding more quickly than its 'craft' counterpart; and the post-war shortage of skilled labour combined with the increased adoption of plate and machine moulding, was working to its advantage. Significantly, by 1919/20, in Oldham, Accrington and Rochdale where the most dynamic of the largest textile machinery firms were located, the A.M.U. membership exceeded that of the F.S.I.F.³² In this probably lies the key to the strike's eventual failure, for as the industrial correspondent of the Oldham Chronicle pointed out, firms like Platts and Asa Lees, "are able to carry on their businesses ... due to Oldham being a big plate moulding centre."³³ Thus in the county of its origin, headquarters and arguably its greatest strength, the F.S.I.F. was unable to hit the employers hard enough and early enough to achieve even an acceptable compromise settlement.

By November 1919, some smaller firms were in difficulties; four of the five Burnley loom manufacturers had been forced to close completely and Threlfalls of Bolton had tried to negotiate a separate settlement.³⁴ However, the major firms, although reduced to short-time working, were able to meet some of their orders. Table 1 indicates the output of machinery from Howard and Bullough during the dispute and shows how the firm maintained approximately half production for the first seven weeks of the strike and that delivery of machines was not halted completely by lack of castings until the end of November.

The A.M.U. refrained from joining the dispute; its Executive Council merely instructed branches that the loose moulders' work,

"should not be touched by them, and further, if the work was transferred from loose to plate, and the Ironfounders had previously made the job on loose, our members shall not make the job on plate."³⁵

Table 1: Production of Completed Machines by Howard and Bullough
September 1919-February 1920

<u>Delivery of</u> <u>Machines</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>	<u>Delivery of</u> <u>Machines</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>
72	6. 9.1919	0	6.12.1919 +
80	13. 9.1919	0	13.12.1919 +
80	20. 9.1919	22	20.12.1919 +
81	27. 9.1919	0	27.12.1919 **
43	4.10.1919 *	5	3. 1.1920 **
43	11.10.1919 **	0	10. 1.1920 **
39	18.10.1919 **	0	17. 1.1920 **
47	25.10.1919 **	0	24. 1.1920 **
38	1.11.1919 **	28	31. 1.1920
37	8.11.1919 +	58	7. 2.1920
23	15.11.1919 +	74	14. 2.1920
15	22.11.1919 +	75	21. 2.1920
1	29.11.1919 +		

* Works closed 1 day

** Works closed 3 days

Source: DDP SL 3/10/2

+ Fitting departments closed all week

**+ Whole works closed all week

The Executive was, however, compelled to tour its Lancashire branches, "opposing what we considered a desire by many of our members to enter into hasty and ill-advised strikes." Only with great difficulty were the Oldham, Burnley and Blackburn branches restrained.³⁶ The only A.M.U. men allowed to take strike action were those who shared work with the F.S.I.F. members yet were in a minority on that particular process at a foundry. The hopes many of the F.S.I.F. rank and file held for wider strike action were dashed

when the A.M.U., the A.S.E., the United Patternmakers, and the Grinders' Society all accepted a five shilling advance in response to a fifteen shilling claim, in December 1919.³⁷

The moulders were however, temporarily helped by action taken by sheet metal workers in Lancashire in late November 1919. Their union placed an embargo on certain types of work in pursuance of a claim for better overtime payments. The Mid-Lancashire area of the Engineering Employers' Federation, having obtained the backing of the Central Management Committee, retaliated by threatening to dismiss every member of the union working for affiliated firms in the area, unless the embargo was lifted.³⁸ Negotiations followed, in which J. L. Rushton, chairman of Dobson and Barlow and H. Platt Hall of Platts, took a prominent role. The result was that the union backed down and was obliged to accept the Federation's Provisions for Avoiding Disputes.³⁹

Meanwhile, the Metal Dressers and the Coremakers' Societies had been financially broken, and the Scottish Moulders were unable to prevent an increasing flow of 'black' castings going over the border and down into Lancashire.⁴⁰ After the failure of a conference with the employers, the Executives of the foundry unions were persuaded by representatives of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. to resume work and to accept the five shilling award. However, just as the unions' leaders were forced to initiate the strike to meet rank and file pressure, so they were forced to continue the struggle for the same reason. The Executives had agreed on January 2nd, 1920 to accept the Federation's terms, having been guaranteed no victimisation and the right of the strikers to return to their old jobs. However, on January 8th, the membership overwhelmingly rejected the capitulation by 16,718 votes to 9,631.⁴¹ Again Lancashire's militancy was pronounced, as Table 2 indicates.

Resolutions sent in to the Emergency Committee of the F.S.I.F. from Colne and Stockport demanded that the Executive hold out for the full fifteen shilling claim.⁴²

Table 2: Lancashire F.S.I.F. Branch Returns in the Return To Work Ballot, January 8th, 1919

<u>Branch</u>	<u>F.S.I.F. Membership</u>	<u>For Acceptance</u>	<u>Against Acceptance</u>
Oldham	582	45	510
Burnley/Colne	265	11	120
Bury	494	14	342
Salford	575	76	368
Preston		206	316

Sources: Bolton Evening News, 8.1.1920 and Oldham Chronicle, 8.1.1920.

The Executives of the striking unions were thus obliged to call a national delegate conference in Manchester on January 15th in which Arthur Henderson argued that the terms could not be improved, and that due to the suffering inflicted on families and the dire financial straits of the unions, a return to work was inevitable.⁴³ He was perhaps also aware that the Employers' Federation during the previous week had actually stepped up its campaign by launching a national propaganda fund; and was insisting on a general return to work, with future negotiations controlled by the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes'.⁴⁴ The conference was thus presented with a resolution which stressed that, "the unions involved in the dispute could no longer continue the dispute from a financial point of view", and a return to work should be accepted.⁴⁵ By a vote of 124 to 71 this was accepted.

The national ballot which followed on January 20th, showed that the majority of the F.S.I.F. membership nationally, were at last

willing to accept defeat. In Lancashire, the rank and file spirit of resistance remained unbroken and proved a serious embarrassment to a leadership seeking honourable terms of surrender. Table 3 indicates the strength of opposition to the settlement from the Lancashire moulders.

Table 3: Lancashire F.S.I.F. Branch Returns in the Return To Work Ballot, January 20th, 1919

<u>Branches</u>	<u>Membership (1919)</u>	<u>For Acceptance</u>	<u>Against Acceptance</u>
Oldham	582	92	492
Burnley/Colne	265	13	123
Bury	494	66	343
Accrington	196	43	101
Rochdale	377	130	199
Bolton	690		A majority of 560
Todmorden	65		A substantial Majority
National Vote		17,667	11,263

Sources: Accrington Observer, Burnley News, Bury Times, Rochdale Times and Oldham Chronicle, all 24.1.1920 and Bolton Chronicle and Todmorden District News, 23.1.1920

The Oldham branches followed up their overwhelming rejection of the terms by demanding the resignations of Honorary President, Henderson, and national organiser, Davison.⁴⁶ The Rochdale branch secretary simply commented, "we have lost because we have been let down by our leaders."⁴⁷

The militancy and determination in the textile machinery centres would, had it been followed elsewhere, have prolonged the dispute for many more weeks; the F.S.I.F. Executive and Arthur Henderson in particular were considered needlessly defeatist and weak by the Lancashire moulders. The leadership did, however, succeed in obtaining a fairly honourable settlement from the Engineering

Employers' Federation. There was no significant victimisation in Lancashire; men taken on during the strike were dismissed as the strikers were allowed to reclaim their jobs; and apprentices were not penalised, in that the strike period was allowed to stand as part of the apprenticeship. A. J. McIvor contrasts the terms of this settlement with the uncompromising attitude of the Lancashire and Manchester employers in the pre-war period.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most notable success achieved by Henderson was the persuasion of the E.E.F. Executive to allow some flexibility in the final settlement. Clause 3 of the settlement put to the January 20th ballot, allowed for further negotiation on the questions of minimum district wage rates, working conditions and rates of pay of apprentices.⁴⁹ As a result of this flexibility, the lower rated Lancashire districts: Preston, Burnley, Blackburn and Bolton were able to negotiate rates up to the level of the higher paid Manchester men by May 1920.⁵⁰

The bitter experience of the strike certainly accelerated the amalgamation processes and in June 1920 the F.S.I.F., the Associated Iron Moulders of Scotland and the Amalgamated Coremakers' Society, formed the National Union of Foundry Workers.⁵¹ At the end of the strike, the F.S.I.F. Executive had considered that,

"had the fight, in the first instance been undertaken by the whole of the foundry trades, there is little doubt that the result would have been different."⁵²

In spite of these sentiments, the Amalgamated Moulders' Union, which dominated the plate and machine moulding trade in Lancashire, remained outside the new union to continue the fundamental weakness which had done much to undermine the strike in the textile machinery industry.

III. The End of the Boom and the 1922 Lock-Out

The increasingly severe problems of the mechanical engineering industry in general were to cause serious problems in the industrial relations of the temporarily still buoyant textile machinery sector. In March 1921, the Employers' Federation sought to impose wage reductions, whilst individual firms pressed ahead with renewed attacks on craft controls. These tended to follow the traditional lines of increasing numbers of apprentices and semi-skilled workers and extending the systems of payment by result.

The major engineering and foundry unions were first obliged to accept a six shilling wage reduction, though they were able to insist on its being implemented in two stages. A three shilling reduction was applied on July 15th, 1921 and a further three shillings were lost a month later. This was followed by a phased three stage reduction of 12½% in time rates.⁵³ The centralised negotiations between the E.E.F. and the unions, which involved the A.E.U., M.U.F.W., U.P.A. and N.U.G.W., did not, however, include several localised Lancashire unions. These included the A.M.U., the Grinders and Glazers Society, the Operative Mule and Ring Spindle Makers and the Spindle and Flyer Makers Society. All but the last-mentioned were pressured by the Federation into following the textile machinery industry's nationally-based unions with only minimal delays. However, the Spindle and Flyer Makers stood firm despite a very strong ultimatum from the Federation's textile machinery sub-committee.⁵⁴

The Spindle and Flyer Makers Society was the largest of the clutch of sectional societies whose members worked exclusively in textile machinery making; most of the membership was confined to Manchester, Bolton and Oldham.⁵⁵ The society, in October 1920, had taken on the might of Platts by taking strike action to enforce a claim for a four shilling wages advance and the re-grading of presser-makers as fully skilled men. Platts were obliged to call on the Federation for support in January 1921 when the strike seriously began to affect production.⁵⁶ Yet having obtained the Executive Board's promise of a lock-out, Platts conceded the pay claim and agreed to a special meeting to discuss the re-grading.⁵⁷

Perhaps because of that recent strike, the Platts' employees refused to follow the union's leadership in resisting the reduction, as did the men at Dobson and Barlow in Bolton. Thus the industrial action centred on the Manchester firms: Brooks and Doxey, Hetheringtons and William Ayrton, as well as the specialist spindle manufacturers such as William Bodden and Sons of Oldham. The latter firm resigned from the E.E.F. rather than implement the cuts and face being brought to a standstill. In addition, Brooks and Doxey, a firm in a very weak position following serious overvaluation and undersubscription of the share issue in the take-over of the previous year, also threatened to collapse under the pressure and split the employers' ranks more deeply.

Brooks and Doxey were also hit by a strike of Manchester engineering apprentices against the wage cuts which began on June 27th.⁵⁸ Within a week of the walk-out, Brooks and Doxey's management took the strikers back at their old rates of pay and even gave a written guarantee that this agreement would be adhered to. However, following protests from Hetheringtons, the E.E.F. intervened and Brooks and Doxey were obliged to tear up the

agreement and apply the reductions.⁵⁹ This crisis had barely subsided when the firm again capitulated under the impact of the Spindle and Flyer Makers' action. From August 23rd the Brooks and Doxey employees returned to work at the old time rates, and even some of Hetheringtons' strikers were taken on.⁶⁰

Brooks and Doxey's weakness threatened to undermine the whole settlement in Manchester, and so Hetheringtons were again obliged to seek E.E.F. assistance. The firm's incensed and somewhat desperate chairman, claimed the firm had,

"a considerable number of machines in the works ready for delivery and only waiting to be fitted with spindles and unless his firm were assisted in their difficulty, they would either have to shut down altogether or come to some arrangement with the Spindle and Flyer Makers."⁶¹

The Federation had quickly applied pressure to support Hetheringtons. The Manchester Association was advised to deal with Brooks and Doxey, "with a view to the expulsion of the firm in accordance with the rule of the Association."⁶²

The E.E.F. subsequently negotiated with the Spindle and Flyer Makers but when the talks broke down, the Federation went on to the offensive, promising resolute support of firms who stood firm and advising those affected to train semi-skilled men to take over the jobs of the strikers, and that those men taken on,

"should not be discharged to make room for the men presently on strike when a settlement be arrived at."⁶³

By the third week of December 1921, after 22 weeks of strike action, the Spindle and Flyer Makers were obliged to call off their action, to accept the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes', and give assurances that no sanctions would be applied to either the men who refused to join the strike or to those strike breakers taken on to replace men engaged in the dispute.⁶⁴

As in 1852 and 1897/8, Platts of Oldham were to play a major role in the build up of conflict between engineering employers in Lancashire and the A.E.U. In April 1921, the local A.E.U. officials in Oldham placed an embargo on overtime in response to the growing unemployment among the membership and the proposed wage reductions agreed the previous month. They also refused to allow work to proceed on several machines which Platts were attempting to transfer from skilled men to semi-skilled men and apprentices.⁶⁵ Faced with E.E.F. retaliation the A.E.U. backed down, but this merely postponed what was seen by both sides as an inevitable conflict over the issue of control of the work process. Platts claimed that they had the absolute right, "to select the men to operate the machines in question", whilst the Manchester employers issued a memo to the A.E.U. branches that they alone had, "the right to decide when overtime is necessary", and that union claims to be consulted were a challenge, "to the whole principle of control".⁶⁶

By 1922 there had been a major deterioration in the employment situation in Lancashire as Tables 4 and 5 indicate. The situation

Table 4: United Patternmakers Association: Lancashire Branch
Members Receiving Unemployment Benefit 1920-1922

<u>Branch</u>	<u>August</u> <u>1920</u>	<u>April</u> <u>1921</u>	<u>September</u> <u>1921</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1922</u>	<u>August</u> <u>1922</u>
Manchester	0	32	54	49	39
Manchester (South-east)	0	12	28	32	17
Bolton	0	34	26	41	38
Blackburn	0	12	24	35	21
Preston	0	5	44	45	31
Bury	0	6	23	34	10
Oldham	1	21	25	33	16
Rochdale	0	2	6	7	7

Source: Monthly Reports

Table 5: Persons in Receipt of Poor Law Relief in Lancashire Towns. A Comparison of January 1921 and January 1922

<u>District</u>	<u>Total Receiving Outdoor Relief</u>		<u>Men in Receipt of Outdoor Relief Due to Unemployment</u>
	<u>1/1/1922</u>	<u>1/1/1921</u>	
			<u>1/1/1922</u>
Blackburn	4,503	1,038	610
Bolton	2,185	969	143
Burnley	5,952	1,031	923
Bury	1,253	489	109
Oldham	853	407	29
Preston	640	279	106
Rochdale	972	280	147

Source: Ministry of Health: Report on the Engineering Trade Dispute (Poor Law Relief), Parliamentary Papers, 1922, Vol. XVII cd.1693, p.179 ff.

in textile machinery making, although still fairly bright in some districts, notably Oldham, was extremely poor in others, notably Blackburn and Burnley.⁶⁷

G. D. H. Cole observed that,

"it would suit the engineering employers just now to have a national lock-out. Orders are very slack ... A temporary shutting down will be good business from the purely commercial standpoint; it will be better business if it carries with it the defeat of the workers."⁶⁸

The Federation thus pressed its claim of unilateral control of overtime working which was condemned by the Manchester shop stewards as, "a betrayal of the unemployed", following a unanimous vote of approval of the claim by the local Engineering Employers Association.⁶⁹ The A.E.U. Executive, very pessimistic of the union's hopes of resisting the Federation, put the matter of employer control of overtime to a ballot of members, but recommended acceptance. The tide of militancy at branch level was, despite the unemployment problem, sufficient to ensure rejection by 50,240 votes

to 35,525.⁷⁰ The conditions for confrontation were so favourable for the employers that the Federation took the fight to the other engineering unions, (47 in all) on the question of management controls; on this occasion rejection was more decisive: 164,759 votes to 49,503.⁷¹ In this they anticipated the desire of several A.E.U. branches to escalate the conflict. The Accrington branches, for example, almost immediately the dispute began, sought to persuade the Executive to open negotiations with the other unions, "with a view to obtaining a complete stoppage in the Engineering Industry."⁷²

Once the dispute had begun, the Federation's propaganda stressed the single theme of managerial control, just as in 1852 and 1897/8. Allan Smith, meeting the Manchester and Lancashire firms argued that,

"it was incumbent that the Federation should take such action as would ensure that employers in the future, would have the right to manage their own workshops as they deemed desirable, even though to enforce such a position, a lock-out was necessary."⁷³

The adverse vote of the A.E.U. it was argued by the Federation's Executive Board, was,

"a direct challenge of this fundamental principle ... (of) ... the right of employers to exercise managerial functions in their establishments".⁷⁴

The Bolton Employers' Association, strongly influenced by Dobson and Barlow, issued a pamphlet which likened the town's engineering industry to a ship,

"in which the orders of the officers are liable to be challenged and set aside by the crew or by outside persons."

It went on to claim that,

"the completion of work is delayed to the dissatisfaction of customers or delivery cannot be guaranteed. No-one would travel or send goods by a ship, in which the orders of the officers were constantly questioned or disobeyed by the crew. That is the position in which we are placed today."⁷⁵

Lancashire employers were also keen to point to, "the influence of industrial extremism", behind the A.E.U. rejection of the employers' terms. George Keighley, Chairman of the Burnley and District Engineering Employers' Association and head of the town's second largest loom making firm, claimed the,

"fomentation of every spirit of indiscipline and disorder has been a speciality amongst the syndicalist fraternity and every advantage is taken of workshop discontent and unrest."⁷⁶

The propaganda of the A.E.U. and its allies in Lancashire was symbolised in a cartoon, first published in the union's Monthly Journal and subsequently more widely distributed. Entitled, "Engineers Lock-Out - The Real Issue", it depicted a stalwart engineer in the foreground, and a second engineer with wife and children in the background. The former asks, "Must I work overtime whilst my mate and his family starve for want of work?"⁷⁷

The unions were also able to depict the employers as greedy men who having profited from a war in which the workers sacrificed much, were trying to renege on all agreements made during the national crisis. In Bolton, the parallels of the dispute to 1852 were pointed out, especially with regard to the working of systematic overtime. In addition it was stressed that,

"the slight concessions the men were able to command during the boom period have proved an irritant to the employers, and the hard faced men who did so well out of the war are determined that no vestige of wartime concessions shall remain. 'Back to 1914' is the employers' slogan".⁷⁸

In spite of the growing privations, the 1922 lock-out remained extremely peaceful. The district committee minutes of the A.E.U. in Accrington repeatedly stressed the need for the peaceful conduct of picketing and demonstrations. The Accrington committee established a distress committee after the dispute had lasted six weeks, so pressing was the economic plight of those directly involved in the conflict and those rendered idle because of it.⁷⁹ During the first

few weeks of the lock-out there were actually several successful applications for outdoor relief to the Poor Law. The Minister of Health, Sir Alfred Mond had actually ruled that Boards of Guardians could allow grants of outdoor relief if they, should,

"come to the conclusion that any applicants for relief are, in fact, unable to return to work".⁸⁰

This actually prompted the E.E.F. formally to end the lock-out by opening the federated works on May 3rd to deny such an avenue of assistance to the unions. In Manchester, the local Engineering Employers' Association suggested that local deputations of ratepayers be organised to protest to Guardians still allowing relief payments.⁸¹

The rapidly worsening financial situation obliged the A.E.U. to ballot members with a recommendation to accept the employers' terms. The union's benefits had been cut from 20 shillings to 10 shillings and its funds stood at only £32,572, little more than 1% of the level at the time of the union's creation.⁸² The return to work began on June 14th following a two to one vote to end the dispute.

The employers' side, despite its overwhelming strength, failed, however, to maintain a completely united front in Lancashire textile machinery making. In Rochdale, Tweedales and Smalley, traditionally a maverick in employers' ranks, remained outside the Federation and in full production throughout the dispute.⁸³ In Blackburn, British Northrop, made the most of the still buoyant demand for automatic looms and also remained in full production.⁸⁴ In Burnley, however, where the industry had been severely depressed prior to the lock-out, the local employers were divided as to the conduct of the lock-out. Whilst George Keighley and Butterworth and Dickinsons remained loyal to the Federation, the other, smaller firms defected and

settled with the unions.^{es} The impact of the dispute on production can be illustrated by the case of Howard and Bullough (see Table 6).

Table 6: Production of Textile Machines at Howard and Bullough, February to June 1922 - Completed Machines (all types) for Delivery

<u>Week Ending</u>	<u>No. of Machines</u>	<u>Week Ending</u>	<u>No. of Machines</u>
Feb 4th 1922	113	April 22nd	0
Feb 11th	113	April 29th	0
Feb 18th	117	May 6th	0
Feb 25th	112	May 13th	0
March 4th	125	May 20th	0
March 11th	125	May 27th	0
March 18th*	56	June 3rd	0
March 25th**	0	June 10th**	0
April 1st	0	June 17th+	9
April 8th	0	June 24th	103
April 15th	0	June 30th	122

* Works closed for most of the week

** Works closed from March 25th to June 10th

+ Works closed for 3 days during the week

Source: DDPSL 3/10/2

In the short term, the employers were able to follow up their victory by re-establishing formal recognition by the unions of their control of the workplace, and by a substantial reduction in the bonuses awarded during the war. The proposed reduction of 16/6 was initially rejected by the A.E.U., and N.U.F.W. and the Spindle and Flyer Makers, but being powerless to resist, the unions accepted the

reduction when the E.E.F. offered to phase it into three instalments.⁶⁶

The combined effect of the severity of the early 1920's slump and the disillusion caused by the defeat of the unions, merely checked the growth of union membership in the Lancashire textile districts, as Table 7 indicates. Decline accelerated only as the slump in machinery making deepened from 1923/4.

Table 7: Lancashire Branch Membership of the A.E.U., Grinders and Glazers Society and U.P.A., 1920-33

a) A.E.U.

	<u>September</u> <u>1920</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1922</u>	<u>August</u> <u>1922</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1932</u>
Accrington (6 branches)	2473	2318	2190	1613
Blackburn (4 branches)	1166	1167	1138	807
Bolton (10 branches)	3182	3255	3100	2077
Burnley (3 branches)	1036	952	906	502
Bury (3 branches)	947	928	888	638
Colne	267	263	268	157
Oldham (12 branches)	4018	4111	4035	2857
Todmorden	210	253	237	126

b) Grinders and Glazers Society

	<u>1919</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1924</u>	<u>1933</u>
Accrington	66	86	84	72
Blackburn	37	32	25	18
Bolton	82	98	89	73
Burnley	43	48	36	21
Bury	16	19	14	-
Oldham	190	200	187	147
Manchester	100	141	125	81

c) United Patternmakers Association

	<u>September</u> <u>1920</u>	<u>September</u> <u>1921</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1922</u>	<u>August</u> <u>1922</u>	<u>January</u> <u>1932</u>
Manchester (2 branches)	247	266	272	263	213
Bolton	158	166	167	167	158
Bury	104	115	115	117	112
Rochdale	63	74	70	70	79
Oldham	115	125	126	121	105
Blackburn	109	115	118	114	94
Preston	119	126	125	125	124

Sources: a) A.E.U. Monthly Journals
b) Grinders and Glazers Society Annual Reports
c) U.P.A. Monthly Reports

Although the victory of the E.E.F. was even more complete than in 1898, the deepening depression in demand for textile machinery, which further weakened the ability of the unions to resist, also hindered any radical plans to transform the organisation of production, at least any which required substantial capital investment. Thus, as Zeitlin points out, employers in the more depressed sectors of engineering tended to eschew further large scale mechanisation, in favour of,

"wage cuts, short-time work, extensions of payment by results, the promotion of the semi-skilled on to existing or replacement machinery, and the reduction of total capacity through mergers and amalgamations."⁵⁷

Howard and Bullough, for example, were able within a few weeks of the end of the dispute, to force through a major extension of payment by results. In addition they were able to turn back advances made by the unions in the strikes of 1913-14, and during

the war. Management now refused point blank to discuss piece work implementation and prices with shop stewards and other local officials; such negotiations were not to be allowed, "with anybody except the man concerned".⁸⁸

The magnitude of the 1922 defeat and the economic climate ruled out such "guerilla" resistance as had eventually undermined the substance of the 1898 agreement. The spirit of resistance, however, remained. Both Accrington and Oldham districts condemned the union's leaders, notably J. T. Brownlie the President, for their meek acceptance of E.E.F. dictation over 'managerial functions' which they claimed, "had discouraged all members". In order to try to re-group local resistance, the Accrington officials embarked on a campaign designed at, "eliminating the non-unionist element", from the Howard and Bullough works.⁸⁹

In Burnley, the defeat marked even more of a break with the past. Within a week of the return to work, George Keighley sought to open negotiations with the A.E.U. with a view to implementing payment by results. These methods had never been successfully introduced for skilled men in the town, as Keighley acknowledged, "because of the absolute refusal of the men to accept the system".⁹⁰ Such was the resistance to perceived attacks on craft controls in the textile machinery industry, that payment by results was delayed in the other Burnley firms for a further decade.

IV. The Consequences of Deepening Depression

As trade declined and unemployment and short-time working increased, the ability of the artisans in the textile machinery industry to resist attacks on craft controls, was increasingly impaired, though employer initiatives were closely circumscribed by

limitations on capital available for new investment. By 1924, Platts had been forced to introduce short time working and in textile machinery making as a whole, short time working was estimated to have affected 52.5% of the labour force in that year, 53.7% in 1928, and 83.3% in 1933.⁹¹ The level of unemployment which was drastically distorted by the extent of short time working, had none the less doubled in engineering as a whole in the north-west, from 23,995 in 1925 to 50,846 in October 1930.⁹² By 1931, the numbers employed in textile machinery making had fallen to 52,642 from 69,888 a decade earlier.⁹³

In very crude terms, the erosion of craft controls can be quantified by estimating the decline in the proportion of skilled to semi-skilled workers, and by calculating the increase in the former group of the incidence of working to systems of payment by results. The proportion of skilled workers in E.E.F. firms in 1914 was 60%; by 1921 it was still 50% in spite of the accumulated effects of wartime dilution; by 1926 it had fallen to 40% and by 1933 to only 32%. The proportion of semi-skilled men had risen from 20% in 1914 to 57% in 1933.⁹⁴ The proportion of workers on systems of payment by result, based on E.E.F. surveys, as shown in Table 8, also indicates a major shift away from traditional artisan controls of the labour process.

Table 8: Percentages of Adult Male Workers on Payment by Results in E.E.F. Affiliated Firms, 1914-27

<u>Date</u>	<u>Fitters</u>	<u>Turners</u>	<u>Patternmakers</u>	<u>Moulders</u>
1914	36.8	45.8	6.7	26.2
1918	51.0	57.5	11.8	27.6
1923	41.0	52.7	29.6	51.1
1927	51.6	64.4	37.1	56.3

Source: M. L. Yates, op. cit., pp.117-118

In the slump of the early 1930's, the export market for textile machinery collapsed, and to avoid unnecessary cut-throat competition, Textile Machinery Makers Ltd. (T.M.M.) was created from six of the seven leading spinning machinery firms, in December 1931 (Platts, Howard and Bullough, Dobson and Barlow, Asa Lees, Brooks and Doxey and J. Hetherington). The seventh, Tweedales and Smalley, was brought in, in August 1933. The merger was followed by fairly rapid and drastic rationalisation of production capacity in which the older units which had grown piecemeal since the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, were closed or reduced to a secondary role. These plants were severely handicapped by the very piecemeal nature of their development, or by a multi-storey structure which hindered the flow of production. Between 1932 and 1934 it was decided to close the main Asa Lees, Hetherington and Dobson and Barlow works, and a substantial part of Platts' foundry capacity, whilst reducing the main Brooks and Doxey works to jobbing and repair work.⁹⁵

Under such rationalisation, the capacity of the artisans for resisting schemes designed to wrest from them control of the labour process, was seriously weakened. In July 1932, Platts began this process of de-skilling with the presentation of a notice to the shop stewards in the Bottom Roller department. In general terms it was indicated that, ultimately, major developments in the transformation of fluting, turning and spacing to semi-skilled work would take place, "if we are to retain this work against present day competition." Thus in the interim from August 1st, 1932,

"some of the roller turning and fluting will be done in an entirely different manner on machines operated by semi-skilled workmen."⁹⁶

Similar plans to press ahead with changes at the expense of craft controls in other departments at Platts had brought a partial

stoppage of work and the need to resort to the E.E.F.'s conference procedure.⁹⁷ This was followed, in December 1933, by a decision to force individual piece work assessment upon the men in the Ring Frame department instead of a system of collective piece work. Platts' management were determined to press this issue, "even if it involved a strike of the company's workmen".⁹⁸

Even in the smaller and infinitely more conservative loom making firms, the artisans were, at last, obliged to give ground after a century of almost completely successful defence of craft controls. As late as 1932, a director of Butterworth and Dickinson admitted that the craftsmen still viewed piece work as, "an insult to their profession and they refused to consider it." In a manner reminiscent of the 1850's, the firm's artisans,

"regarded it as their duty to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and did not need to be bribed to work. There was no objection to the system being applied to semi-skilled or 'handymen' and there was no point in pursuing this question any further."⁹⁹

However, the impact of the slump was such as to undermine such entrenched pockets of resistance as those in north-east Lancashire's loom making industry. Hitherto, firms like Butterworth and Dickinson, facing fierce resistance to any attack on craft controls, could justify inaction by retaining skilled men to operate three or four machines of the older, slower type, rather than indulging in considerable capital expenditure on new, faster machinery operated by semi-skilled men on payment by results. W. D. Butterworth pointed out that,

"Often the representative of a machine tool maker would be given a sample of our work to take away and would return a few days later with a guaranteed time which was much less than our own, but when we took him into the works and showed him one man, quietly and easily presiding over four slow machines, but producing far more parts per hour than could be done on his very expensive new proposal, and at a much lower cost in maintenance and tools, he usually had nothing more to say."¹⁰⁰

However, by 1932, Butterworth had to admit that this system was, "the worst possible when we had insufficient work to be done", and that, "a total re-organisation of our systems was required as quickly as possible."¹⁰¹

The case study of the re-organisation illustrates quite neatly Hobsbawm's "fifth act" in the artisan's historical drama, his, "gradual but far from smooth decline".¹⁰² It also indicates an important and irreversible step towards what Braverman saw as, "the progressive alienation of the process of production from the worker", as the employer sought to transfer,

"control over the labor process ... from the hands of the worker into his own. The labor process, is to be rendered independent of craft, tradition and the workers' knowledge. Henceforth it is to depend not all upon the abilities of workers, but entirely upon the practices of management."¹⁰³

The first episode in the firm's re-organisation was the appointment of a "methods engineer", a draughtsman by training, who had previously worked in Scotland, "for a well known mass production factory, which in those days," recalled Mr. W. D. Butterworth, "had a high reputation for efficiency."¹⁰⁴ The man began work dressed in black coat, striped trousers and bowler hat, and brandishing a large silver watch, proceeded to time and criticise the most senior artisans' methods. Within two months the firm's entire workforce had walked out in protest at the operations of the man who was referred to as, "that ... feed and speed merchant".¹⁰⁵

Butterworth acknowledged that his firm's artisans, who had behind them a century or more of craft tradition,

"considered themselves to be experts on their own jobs and it should be for them to decide the correct feeds and speeds according to the machines they were using and the kind of work being done."¹⁰⁶

"A workman's value to the firm", had in the past he added,

"rested at least as much upon his knowledge of textile machinery parts, sizes, and methods of production as upon his manual skill."¹⁰⁷

However, despite the vehement protest, the methods engineer was retained but his conduct was carefully circumscribed by the management to avoid further troubles.

The re-organisation which followed the above episode was of a piecemeal nature, perhaps because of the likely repetition of resistance and financial constraints, yet its implications were far-reaching. The introduction of a drawing office was planned, a system of production control and methods appraisal was to be developed, and new machine tools introduced. These changes would bring the introduction of payment by results for many skilled men and the displacement of several of the latter by semi-skilled operatives.¹⁰⁸

There were three initial changes which brought matters to a head:

- 1) The introduction of new machinery to allow boring operations on loom pedestals to be done by semi-skilled men. (Very old boring lathes with flat drills ground by the turner himself were to be replaced by capstan lathes with drills and reamers maintained by the tool room, with the semi-skilled operator merely loading and unloading the machine.)
- 2) The turning of 'pike ends' on loom take up rollers was to be transferred to new machinery and performed by semi-skilled men.¹⁰⁹
- 3) In the fitting shop (where apart from labourers for painting, packing and transport, all employees were artisans or apprentices), a separate 'assembly department' was to be created to remove the less skilled work from the fitters and to allow labourers or youths to do it.

The A.E.U. took these cases through the system of local and central (York) conferences, despite the pessimism which attended union approaches to this procedure. Butterworth acknowledged that although,

"the cases themselves were trivial ... Employer and Trade Union Executives were quick to appreciate these were only symptoms of a general nervousness caused by the Management of our firm, who had discovered that they had to make changes quickly, if they were going to cope successfully with the trading conditions of the early thirties."'''

The shop stewards fought successfully to keep the assembly department separate from the fitting shop to avoid any possibility of further surreptitious de-skilling; yet by the end of 1934 most of the firm's fitters had been put on systems of payment by results. Two years later, with the re-introduction of munitions work for the Admiralty, the firm brought in consultants to apply the Bedaux system, which itself marked a further stage in the destruction of craft controls.'''

Allan Smith, secretary of the Engineering Employers Federation was, as chairman of the Central Conferences which resulted from the Butterworth and Dickinson disputes, able to add his oratorical weight to the firm's case. He set out to demonstrate the extent to which the Burnley loom making artisans were essentially the rearguard pockets of resistance in the drawn out campaign to retain craft controls.

To A.E.U. district secretary George Hale, he pronounced that, "your people in Burnley will have to open their hearts and minds to the realities of the facts." Speaking of the union's objection to the 'de-skilling' of elements of the work of the firm's fitting shop, he pointed out that they, "ought to be jolly thankful", that they still had a skilled man to do the setting up for the semi-skilled assembly workers.

"We can give you dozens and hundreds of cases where the setting up is done by a machine man and not by a turner or a skilled man. They will have to recognise that Burnley is no more one of the engineering centres of this country and that the practice in the country is 10, 20, 30 years ahead There is no doubt that Burnley has been in a specially favoured position longer than many other branches of the industry, or many other areas. I have no doubt, and it is not that we are trying to take advantage of the skilled men, but we have to take advantage of the mechanical aids which are provided for us, and if we consider that those mechanical aids have reduced the skill to such an extent ... we are entitled to do it and that has been a subject of controversy and acquiescence I may say, in many cases, by your people since I can say, 1897."¹¹²

By the mid 1930's, Lancashire textile machinery making was a rapidly fading sector of the engineering industry, as new branches geared to a more mature phase of economic development increasingly outshone it. A revival was supported by the re-armament programme of the later 1930's, which was followed by a re-assertion of shop floor militancy during World War Two. In firms as diverse as T.M.M. and Butterworth and Dickinson, strong shop stewards' organisations were reconstructed, and at the latter, a closed shop was established.¹¹³ The brief post-war boom even brought a return to large scale industrial action in defence of artisan controls over the labour process, at Butterworth and Dickinson.¹¹⁴

The boom, however, had spent itself by 1947, and by 1952, with the industry contracting, the shop stewards' energies were increasingly absorbed in a rearguard struggle against large scale redundancies, as well as in the more traditional areas of conflict.¹¹⁵ The industry's decline was rapid and terminal. By 1970, virtually all the famous names in Lancashire textile machinery making had disappeared or continued in existence only in other branches of engineering.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 R. Kirk, op. cit., p.277. He also notes the delivery lags for ring frames ordered from Platts, p.638.
- 2 G. D. H. Cole, Self Government in Industry, London 1917, p.176.
- 3 B. Pribicevic, The Shop Stewards' Movement and Workers' Control, 1910-1922, London 1959, Foreword by G. D. H. Cole, p.vi.
- 4 ibid. p.vii.
- 5 'Memorandum of the Agreement Between the Engineering Employers' Federation and Unions Affiliated to the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation, Unions Affiliated to the National Federation of General Workers and the United Operative Spindle and Flyer Makers' Trade and Friendly Society' in A. Shadwell, The Engineering Industry and the Crisis of 1922, London 1922, pp.85-90.
- 6 Butterworth and Dickinson Ltd., Private Letter Book 1914-49, letter of Mr. J. D. Butterworth to the Times Engineering Supplement, 31.12.1919.
- 7 Jefferys, op. cit., p.191. The growth of the textile machinery industry unions from 1914 to 1920 is noted in Appendix J.
- 8 R. Kirk, op. cit., pp.282 and 284. Brooks and Doxey was purchased for £679,000 and Lord Bros. for £120,000. Kirk notes that the share issue at the floating of the new company was undersubscribed, and that after 1923 the new owners were unable to declare a dividend, with annual accounts revealing increasing debits, from £29,147 in 1924 to £153,213 in 1930. The financial difficulties of the firm perhaps go some way to explaining its extreme weakness in facing the trade unions, prior to the lock-out of 1922.
- 9 C. Feinstein, op. cit., p.140.
- 10 Engineering Employers' Federation, Wage Movements, pp.163-165 (Bolton), pp.219-22 (Burnley) etc.
- 11 See Section II of this Chapter. The A.S.E. did support the F.S.I.F. and its allies with a levy of one shilling per member which raised £11,000, and provided a loan of £30,000, A.S.E., Monthly Report, January 1920.
- 12 R. Kirk, op. cit., pp.408 and 631.
- 13 MSS 237, Numbers Employed File.
- 14 MSS 41/FSIF/4/5/5, Report of F.S.I.M. Committee of Enquiry into the Practicability of Amalgamation, 19.11.1851.
- 15 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.132.
- 16 MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, Annual Report, 1914.

- 17 During the period 1906-14 the F.S.I.F. had campaigned extremely vigorously for improved health and safety legislation for foundries, Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., pp.130-131. See Appendix H for wage differentials involving moulders and other skilled men in three districts in Lancashire.
- 18 A survey carried out by the E.E.F. in 1906 revealed that over 26% of skilled moulders worked some form of payment by result system. In smaller firms such as Butterworth and Dickinson and Robert Halls, all skilled moulders remained on time work, whereas at Howard and Bullough, by 1905, over 75% of them were employed on piece work.
- 19 MSS 41/APM/4/1, Amalgamated Moulders Union, Annual Report, 1919.
- 20 In December 1908, the Burnley Coremakers' basic time rate was only 18/6 compared to 27/- for plate moulders and 38/6 for skilled moulders, Butterworth and Dickinson Wages Book. By 1914, the basic rates varied from 24/- (Burnley) to 34/- (Blackburn), E.E.F., Wage Movements, pp.128 and 212.
- 21 See Part IV of Chapter Six.
- 22 MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, Annual Report, 1919.
- 23 MSS 41/APM/4/1, Quarterly Reports, 1918-34. The union's General Secretary, John Ryan, claimed the plate and machine moulders at Howard and Bullough were the best paid in the country.
- 24 DDPSL 3/10/1-2, Howard and Bullough, Weekly Totals of Machines Delivered.
- 25 MSS 41/FSIF/1/19, National Executive Council Minutes, 21.8.1919.
- 26 ibid. 15.9.1919.
- 27 ibid. Emergency Committee Minutes, 25.8.1919.
- 28 ibid. 15.9.1919.
- 29 Executive Board members included Sir William Thom (Yates and Thom, Blackburn), Alderman G. Keighley (George Keighley, Burnley), J. L. Rushton (Dobson and Barlow, Bolton). Substitute members included Robert Livesey (Henry Livesey, Blackburn), Henry Dickinson (Butterworth and Dickinson, Burnley), J. Tweedale (Tweedales and Smalley, Rochdale), F. Goodbehere (Brooks and Doxey, Manchester) and H. H. Hacking (Hackings, Bury). MSS 237, E.E.F. Executive Board Minutes, 22.11.1918.
- 30 MSS 41/FSIF/1/19, Minutes of Special Joint Executive Meeting, 10.10.1919 and 11.10.1919.
- 31 ibid. Minutes of Strike Committee, 17.10.1919. The Executive secured the co-operation of the Carters and Motormen's Union in an attempt to stop the local supplies of 'black' castings.
- 32 MSS 41, F.S.I.F. and A.M.U., Annual Reports. The Bolton F.S.I.F. branches had pressed the Executive to revive plans for amalgamation with the A.M.U. at the height of the dispute. Emergency Committee Minutes, 27.10.1919.

- 33 Oldham Chronicle, 11.10.1919. None the less 700 moulders and coremakers were on strike in Oldham
- 34 Burnley News, 8.11.1919 and MSS 41/FSIF/1/19, Emergency Committee Minutes, 18.11.1919. At Robert Halls where 24 moulders, 9 dressers, 2 coremakers and 4 plate moulders were on strike from September, and joined by apprentices in October and November, the firm maintained production, having to lay off only the men in the grinding shop. DDHL 3742, Staff Analysis Book.
- 35 MSS 41/APM/4/1, A.M.U. Quarterly Report, September 1919.
- 36 ibid.
- 37 E.E.F., Wage Movements, pp.644, 760 and 830.
- 38 MSS 237, Engineering Employers' Federation, Management Committee Minutes, 28.11.1919.
- 39 ibid. Executive Board Memorandum, 28.5.1920.
- 40 MSS 41/FSIF/1/19, Emergency Committee Minutes, 18.11.1919, Minutes of N.E.C. Special Meeting, 11.11.1919 and Minutes of the Joint Executive Council, 12.11.1919.
- 41 ibid. Strike Committee Minutes, 8.1.1920.
- 42 ibid. Emergency Committee Minutes, 9.1.1920.
- 43 ibid. National Conference Minutes, 15.1.1920.
- 44 MSS 237, E.E.F. Executive Board Minutes, 13.1.1920.
- 45 MSS 41/FSIF/1/19, National Conference Minutes, 15.1.1920.
- 46 ibid. Emergency Committee Minutes, 22.1.1920.
- 47 Rochdale Times, 24.1.1920.
- 48 A. J. McIvor, op. cit., p.368.
- 49 The Employers had offered similar terms in October 1919 but the F.S.I.F. had rejected their inclusion in the negotiated terms of January 2nd. MSS 41/FSIF, Joint Executive Committee Minutes, 2.1.1920.
- 50 McIvor, op. cit., p.372.
- 51 Fyrth and Collins, op. cit., p.149.
- 52 MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, Annual Report, 1920.
- 53 Mosses, op. cit., pp.334-335. The ballot taken to determine the response to the proposed reductions was extremely close in the A.E.U., 49,595 voting for acceptance and 47,312 voting for rejection of the E.E.F. terms.
- 54 MSS 237, E.E.F. Miscellaneous Minute Book No. 1, 14.6.1921. The sub-committee meeting, which authorised unified action against any dissenting society, was chaired by Henry Lawton of Asa Lees

Ltd. and had representation from Platts, Dobson and Barlow, Hetheringtons, Howard and Bullough, Hackings (Bury), Pembertons and George Keighley Ltd. (Burnley), William Dickinson, and Liveseys (Blackburn), William Ayrton (Manchester), Thomas Holt (Rochdale), Dewhursts (Preston) and Arundel Coulthard (Stockport).

- 55 The United Operative Spindle and Flyer Makers Trade and Friendly Society remained an independent craft union until amalgamation with the A.E.U. in 1962.
- 56 MSS 237, Miscellaneous Minute Book, 21.1.1921, and Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. X, 25.1.1921. Platts spindle-manufacturing works at Werneth was separate from the two major plants: the Hartford (New) Works and East (Old) Works.
- 57 MSS 237, Miscellaneous Minute Book, 17.2.1921. Platts were perhaps under pressure to complete orders and the E.E.F. were keen to bring the Spindle and Flyers within the auspices of the 'Provisions for Avoiding Disputes.'
- 58 MSS 237, Strike Committee Minutes, 11.8.1921, and Manchester Engineering Employers Association Minutes, Vol. X, 4.7.1921.
- 59 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. X, 4.7.1921, 6.7.1921 and 11.7.1921.
- 60 *ibid.* 3.10.1921. The strikers agreed to accept reduced piece work rates.
- 61 MSS 237, Miscellaneous Minute Book, Textile Machinery Makers' Sub Committee Minutes, 26.9.1921.
- 62 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. X, 19.9.1921. Brooks and Doxey had quickly dismissed the Hetherington workers, but continued in operation and narrowly escaped expulsion from the Federation.
- 63 MSS 237, *loc. cit.* 2.12.1921.
- 64 *ibid.* 20.12.1921.
- 65 Shadwell, *op. cit.*, p.51. Similar local action in Bolton (outside the textile machinery sector, at Hick Hargreaves Ltd.) had led to limited strike action and the threat of a retaliatory lock-out from the E.E.F., Jefferys, *op. cit.*, p.221, Wigham, *op. cit.*, p.118.
- 66 Shadwell, *op. cit.*, p.51, and Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. X, 3.11.1921.
- 67 Most Burnley textile engineering firms were already working short-time when the crisis broke in March 1922. In the A.E.U. as a whole unemployment had risen from 4.3% (December 1920) to 15% (March 1921) and 31% (June 1921), A.E.U. Financial Report, Year Ending 31.12.1922.
- 68 A.E.U., Monthly Journal, April 1922. The article originally appeared in Labour Monthly, March 1922.

- 69 Manchester Guardian, 7.3.1922 and Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, 1.2.1922.
- 70 Shadwell, op. cit., p.56. The lock-out commenced on March 13th.
- 71 ibid. This escalation of the conflict did not take place until May 2nd due to the suspension of lock-out notices because of further negotiations.
- 72 Accrington A.E.U. District Committee Minutes, 29.3.1922.
- 73 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. XI, 1.2.1922.
- 74 ibid. 16.2.1922.
- 75 Bolton Journal and Chronicle, 24.3.1922.
- 76 Burnley News, 25.3.1922.
- 77 A.E.U., Monthly Journal, April 1922.
- 78 Bolton Journal and Chronicle, 24.3.1922.
- 79 Accrington A.E.U. District Committee Minutes, 26.4.1922.
- 80 Ministry of Health: Report on the Engineering Trade Dispute (Poor Law Relief), Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XVII, cd. 1693, p.779.
- 81 Manchester Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, Vol. XI, 15.5.1922. In Burnley the Guardians were instructed directly by the Ministry of Health to cease paying relief since claimants were able to obtain work, Burnley News, 24.5.1922.
- 82 J. Zeitlin, op. cit., p.48.
- 83 Rochdale Engineering Employers' Association Minutes, 17.3.1922 and 12.4.1922.
- 84 Blackburn Times, 17.6.1922.
- 85 McIvor, op. cit., p.548.
- 86 A.E.U., Monthly Journal, August 1922.
- 87 J. Zeitlin, op. cit., p.48.
- 88 Accrington A.E.U. District Committee Minutes, 18.12.1922.
- 89 ibid.
- 90 Burnley News, 14.6.1922.
- 91 R. Kirk, op. cit., p.291, M. L. Yates, op. cit., p.128, Jefferys, op. cit., p.211.
- 92 Engineering Employers' Federation, The British Engineering Industries: Realities and Problems, London 1930, p.3.

- 93 M. L. Yates, op. cit., p.5.
- 94 Jefferys, op. cit., p.207.
- 95 R. Kirk, op. cit., pp.322-323. For Asa Lees and the two Manchester firms, the merger was perhaps the only alternative to collapse. An indication of their weakness in relation to the other T.M.M. component firms was the allocation of T.M.M. capital to the subsidiary firms upon the formation of the new company in 1931: Platts 46%, Howard and Bullough 25%, Dobson and Barlow 13.1%, Asa Lees 5.3%, Hetheringtons 4.6%, Brooks and Doxey 3.6%, T.M.M. Minute Book No. 1, DDPSL 13/1/1.
- 96 DDPSL 1/90/3, Platts Directors' Minutes, 21.7.1932.
- 97 A.E.U., Monthly Journal, April 1932. The Journal had noted that, "considerable discontent has prevailed at Platts", following the changes in workshop organisation.
- 98 DDPSL 1/90/3, Platts Directors' Minutes, 7.12.1933.
- 99 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.1/3.
- 100 ibid. p.1/5.
- 101 ibid. p.1/9.
- 102 E. J. Hobsbawm, Worlds of Labour, p.254.
- 103 H. Braverman, op. cit., pp.58 and 113.
- 104 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.1/1.
- 105 ibid. p.1/2.
- 106 ibid.
- 107 ibid. p.1/7.
- 108 ibid. pp.1/9 and 1/10. These changes were significant for the whole district since Butterworth and Dickinson was seen as a standard setter by the lesser firms in Burnley and Colne.
- 109 The introduction of the 'new' machinery was made possible as the liquidation of several car manufacturing firms had made modern second-hand machine tools readily available at very low prices, for example Potter and Johnson automatic lathes at £100 each.
- 110 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.1/25.
- 111 ibid. p.216. This system involved the breaking down of the labour process into separate measurable operations, each of which was allotted a 'standard' time and payment. This was all recorded in detail and a worker's performance above the 'standard' was appropriately rewarded.
- 112 MSS 237, Engineering Employers' Federation, Collective Bargaining Minutes, Central and Special Conference Proceedings, Vol. XXXIV, p.112 ff.

113 W. D. Butterworth, op. cit., p.2/1.

114 ibid. pp.3/28 - 3/35, Burnley Express, 24.1.1951, 27.1.1951 and 7.2.1951. The issue was very similar to the fitting shop dispute of 1932.

115 E. and R. Frow, Engineering Struggles, pp.211-215.

APPENDIX AResolutions of the Chartist Metal Trades Delegate Meeting held at the Carpenters' Hall, Manchester, August 11th 1842

- i) That this meeting pledges itself not to sanction any illegal or immoral proceedings.
- ii) That this meeting deprecates the late and present conduct of those employers who have been reducing wages; thereby depriving the labourer of the means of subsistence, and also destroying the home trade; but at the same time we cannot, nor do we sanction the conduct of those individuals who have been going about destroying property, and offering violence to the people.
- iii) That it is the opinion of this meeting that, until class legislation is entirely destroyed, and the principle of united labour is established, the labourer will not be in a position to enjoy the fruits of his own industry.
- iv) That it is the opinion of this meeting the people's charter ought to become the law of the land, as it contains the elements of justice and prosperity; and we pledge ourselves never to relinquish our demands until that document becomes a legislative enactment.
- v) That a committee be appointed by this meeting, to wait upon the other trades, to endeavour, if possible, to secure a more general union, before entering into any practical measures for redressing any grievances.
- vi) That a committee be appointed to draw up an address to employers in general, showing them the evil results of reducing wages.

- vii) That the trades now assembled do pledge themselves not to commence work until they have had an interview with deputations from other trades.
- viii) That the foregoing resolutions be printed, and posted in different parts of the town and neighbourhood.
- ix) That this meeting do adjourn until tomorrow afternoon, the 12th instant, at two o'clock, to be held in the Carpenters' Hall, where men of the aforementioned trades and occupations from all other trades and professions, are particularly requested to attend.

Source: Home Office Papers H.O. 45/43

APPENDIX BFamily Connections in Artisan Employment at Hibbert and Platt
and Robert Hall and Company, 1838-711. Possible Family Connections at Hibbert and Platt's East Works
1838-41 (Foundry Artisans)'

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename</u>	<u>Trade</u>
Arrandale	Thomas	Moulder
Arrandale	Thomas	Apprentice Moulder
Davies	William	Moulder
Davies	John	Apprentice Moulder
Dunkerley	George	Moulder
Dunkerley	Enoch	Moulder
Dunkerley	Robert	Apprentice Moulder
Dunkerley	J.	Filer
George	Thomas	Moulder
George	Thomas	Apprentice Moulder
George	William	Apprentice Moulder
Hickman	James	Moulder
Hickman	Joseph	Apprentice Moulder
Rodgers	John	Moulder
Rodgers	William	Apprentice Moulder
Toole	Lawrence	Moulder
Toole	James	Apprentice Moulder

Possible Family Connections at Hibbert and Platt's East Works:
1838-41 (Machine Shops)

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename</u>	<u>Trade</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename</u>	<u>Trade</u>
Beardshall	Robert	Joiner	Mortimer	John	Joiner
"	John	Joiner	"	William	Joiner
Bradbury	William	Borer	Palmer	James	Foreman
"	Joseph	Smith	"	John	Filer
"	Robert	Turner	"	Thomas	Setter Up
Chadwick	Daniel	Turner	"	Samuel	Foundryman
"	James	Turner	Schofield	Benjamin	Filer
"	James	Borer	"	Edward	Joiner
"	John	Engine Man	"	Robert	Filer
Farrow	John	Turner	"	Robert	Apprentice
"	Joseph	Apprentice	"	Thomas	Turner
"	Squire	Smith's Striker	"	Thomas	Borer
Fernally	James	Joiner	Taylor	Bradley	Turner
"	Thomas	Joiner	"	John	Apprentice
Howarth	George	Filer	"	Joseph	Apprentice
"	John	Scutcher	"	Samuel	Timekeeper
"	Samuel	Engine Man	Whitehead	James	Joiner
"	William	Stretcher	"	John	Joiner
"			"	William	Fireman
Mild	Robert	Borer	Whittaker	Richard	Screwmaker
"	Abel	Apprentice	"	Thomas	Filer
Mills	Edward	Smith's Striker			
"	John	Smith's Striker			
"	Henry	Grinder			
"	John	Apprentice			
Milne	James	Turner			
"	Jonas	Turner			
"	Thomas	Apprentice			

Source: DDPSL Platts East Works Wage Book, 1838-41

2. Possible Family Connections at Robert Halls of Bury 1845-71

<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename</u>	<u>Years Recorded in Employment</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>Forename</u>	<u>Years Recorded in Employment</u>
i. <u>Foundry Artisans</u>					
Blomeley	Thomas	1845	Kershaw	John*	1845
"	Roger	1851, 55	"	Benjamin	1855, 58, 61, 64
"	Thomas*	1851	"	Robert	1855, 58, 61, 64
"	William	1855	"	Ralph*	1864, 71
"	John	1861	Jackson	John	1848, 51, 55, 58, 61, 64
"	Solomon	1861	"	James	1851, 55
Bird	Ralph	1851, 55, 58, 61	"	George	1855, 58, 61, 64
"	Thomas	1861, 64, 71	"	James*	1855
"	Thomas	1864, 8	"	James	1861, 64, 71
"	Charles	1871	"	Isaac	1864
Clegg	Thomas*	1845, 51	"	James*	1871
"	James	1855, 58, 61, 64	Lyon	John	1845
"	George	1855, 58	"	John	1858
"	John	1871	"	Henry	1871
"	William	1871	Robinson	John	1855, 58
Galtherick	William	1855	"	David*	1858
"	Mark	1858	"	Henry	1858
Greenhalgh	see - Fitters and Turners		"	Thomas	1858
Hardman	Jeremiah	1851, 55, 58	"	William	1858, 64, 71
"	Moses	1851	Sandiford	J.	1848
"	Robert*	1855, 58	"	Anthony	1853, 61
"	James*	1871	Standring	James	1848
Holt	John	1851, 55, 58, 64, 71	"	Richard*	1855
"	James	1855	"	Robert	1855, 58
"	James*	1855, 58, 61	"	Robert	1871
"	William	1858			
"	James*	1861			
"	William*	1864			
"	Peter	1871			
"	George*	1871			

ii) Grinders

Morcliffe	Joseph	1851	Openshaw	John*	1845
"	Robert	1855	"	James*	1855
"	B. *	1858, 64	"	William	1855, 58
"	Robert*	1861, 71	"	William	1858, 64
Nuttall	William	1845	"	Joseph	1858
"	Ralph	1851	"	John	1864
"	Peter	1861, 71	"	Jacob*	1871
"	James	1864	"	Robert	1871
"	James*	1871			
"	John	1871			

iv) Boltmakers

Whatmough	Anthony	1855, 58, 61, 64, 71	Armstead	William*	1855
"	William	1855, 58, 61, 64, 71	"	Thomas	1864, 71
"	Joseph	1861, 64, 71	"	Edward	1871
			"	John	1871
			"	William	1871

iii) Smiths/Smiths' Strikers

Coop	John	1855	Pickstones	David	1855, 58, 64, 71
"	John	1855, 58	"	James	1855, 58, 64
"	George	1855, 58	"	Samuel*	1855, 58, 64, 71
"	Thomas	1858	"	Andrew*	1861
Crossley	Joseph	1864, 71			

v) Millwrights

"	John	1864	Howarth	Thomas	1856
"	William*	1861	"	Daniel	1858
"	Abraham*	1871	"	Thomas	1858
Dutson	David	1851	"	Horsfield*	1871
"	William	1851	"	John	1871
"	James*	1851	Mosedale	John	1848
"	Thomas*	1861	"	John	1855
"	Thomas*	1871	"	Joseph	1855, 58
Ingham	John	1855, 58, 61, 64			
"	James	1858, 61, 64, 71			

vi) Fitters/Turners

Baxendale	Edward	1855, 58, 64	Fletcher	James	1855
"	Robert	1855	"	Joseph	1855, 58
"	Robert	1855	"	George*	1855
"	James*	1864	"	Samuel*	1855
Booth	James*	1848	"	John	1858, 61
"	Joseph*	1848, 51	"	Joseph	1858, 61
"	Richard	1855	"	Samuel	1861, 71
"	James	1855, 58, 61, 64	"	John*	1864
"	William	1861	"	James*	1871
"	Thomas	1864	"	James	1871
"	William	1864, 71	"	Thomas	1871
"	James	1871	Greenhalgh	Robert*	1848
Brown	William	1848, 51, 55, 58, 61, 64	"	Robert*	1848, 55, 58
"	Moses	1858, 61, 64	"	Thomas	1858
"	John	1861, 64, 71	"	Thomas	1858
"	James	1864	"	Roland	1861
"	Joseph*	1864	"	Richard	1861
Chambers	Robert	1845	"	Roland*	1861
"	James	1855, 58, 61, 64	"	Frederick	1871
"	Thomas	1855, 58, 61, 64	"	Peter	1871
Cooper	James	1864, 71	"	Robert*	1871
"	George	1871	Holden	Abraham	1864
"	William	1871	"	Henry	1864, 71
Derby	William	1848	"	Joseph	1871
"	Robert	1848, 51	Ince	John	1845, 55, 58, 61, 64, 71
"	Richard	1851	"	Thomas	1851, 55, 58, 64, 71
Diggle	Squire	1845	"	William*	1851, 55, 64, 74
"	Gerard	1845	"	Robert	1858, 64
"	John	1845	"	Thomas	1861
Fletcher	Abraham	1848	Salt	James	1855
"	Daniel	1848	"	Joseph	1858, 71
"	John	1851, 55	"	Roger	1858, 71
"	Abraham*	1851, 55, 58, 64	"	John*	1858

* Denotes an artisan employed at a different trade.

Source: Robert Hall and Company, Vages Books for 1845, 1848, 1851, 1855, 1858, 1864 and 1871.

APPENDIX C

Text of the Memorandum Issued to Members of the Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers, by its Executive Committee, 24th January 1852

First: That no member of this Association shall engage, admit into (or shall have become cognizant of the same), continue in his service or employment in any capacity whatever, any member of any Trades' Union or Trades' Society, which takes cognizance of, professes to control, or practises interferences with, the regulations of any establishment, the hours or terms of labour, the contracts or agreements of employers or employed, or the qualification or terms of service.

Second: That no deputation of workmen, of Trades' Unions, committees, or other bodies, with reference to any objects referred to in Article 1st, be received by any member of this Association on any account whatever; but that any person forming part of, instigating, or causing such deputation, shall be dismissed forthwith; it being still perfectly open to any workman individually, to apply on such subject to his employer; who is recommended to be at all times open and accessible to any personal representation of his individual operatives.

Third: That employers be especially solicited, as much as possible, to avoid the delegation of the engagement or contract of their workmen to others, and to take a more personal superintendence or control of engagements with their hands - and in the most especial manner, that they impress upon every person engaged by them their anxiety that, in case of any molestation, annoyance or obstruction in pursuing their avocations, or procuring employment they should at once apply and complain to the principals of the establishment, who

should sift such complaint to the bottom, and to dismiss all persons who have been proved to have offered or abetted such molestation or obstruction.

Fourth: That no member of this Association shall engage or continue in his employment any person whatsoever, until he has read, in the presence of one witness at least, to such person the rules, if any, of his establishment, and also the following.

DECLARATION, by the undersigned, on engaging in the employment of (here insert name, address, and trade of employer) I A.B. (here insert, Christian and Surname of person declaring) do hereby honestly, and in its simplest sense and plainest meaning, declare, that I am neither now, nor will, while in your employment, become a member or contributor, or otherwise belong to or support any Trades' Union or Society, which, directly or indirectly, by its Rules, or in its meetings or transactions of its business, or by means of its officers or funds, takes cognizance of, professes to control, or interferes with the arrangements or regulations of this or any other manufacturing or trading establishment, the hours or terms of labour, the contracts or agreements of employers or employed, or the qualifications or period of service. I do also further declare, that I have no purpose or intention to call in question the right of any man to follow any honest calling in which he may desire to engage, or to make what arrangements, and engage what workmen he pleases, upon whatever terms they choose mutually to agree.

Signed

Dated

Signed

Witness

Fifth: That no member of this Association shall engage any workman who has been previously in employment elsewhere, without ascertaining from what establishment he was discharged, and whether the cause of his leaving had any reference to an infringement of the objects of the foregoing declaration.

Sixth: That no member of this Association shall, on any pretext whatever, permit or submit to dictation, interference, or direct or indirect tampering with the management of his establishment, or the engagement or conditions of the service of his workmen; but whenever any attempts are made to abrogate or compromise the free operation of the foregoing provisions, such member shall at once apply, if he requires it, for the advice, award, and assistance of the Executive Committee, who shall be bound to afford him every assistance and support called for by the circumstances of the particular case.

Seventh: That, in the event of a strike or turn-out occurring in the establishment of any member of this Association, for reasons or from causes which shall, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, entitle the employer so assailed to its countenance and support, it is hereby and shall continue to be distinctly understood, that all the members of the Association shall sustain, according to their power and ability, such member in upholding the objects of the Association; it being expressly understood and declared, that no acts shall warrant the interference of this Committee, except such as it is the declared object of the foregoing provisions to prevent.

Eighth: That, in order as far as possible lies in the power of this Association, to obviate any inconvenience which may arise to meritorious workmen, for being deprived of any advantages they may fancy they derive from the legitimate objects from which existing Trades Unions or Societies have been diverted, this Association gives

full power and authority to the Executive Committee, to submit for its sanction a plan for the establishment of a new, sound, and legitimate Benefit Society.

Source: Hughes, op. cit., pp 202-203

APPENDIX DThe 1898 Terms of SettlementThe General Principle of Freedom to Employers in the Management of their Works

The Federated Employers, while disavowing any intention of interfering with the proper functions of Trade Unions, will admit no interference with the management of their business, and reserve to themselves the right to introduce into any federated workshop, at the option of the employer concerned, any condition of labour under which any members of the Trade Unions here represented were working at the commencement of the dispute in any of the workshops of the Federated Employers; but, in the event of any Trade Union desiring to raise any question arising therefrom, a meeting can be arranged by application to the Secretary of the Employers' Local Association to discuss the matter.

Nothing in the foregoing shall be construed as applying to the normal hours of work, or to general rises and falls of wages, or to rates of remuneration.

NOTE: No new condition of labour is introduced or covered by this clause. It simply provides for equality of treatment between the unions and the Federation by reserving for all the members of all the Trade Unions, as well as for all the Federated Employers, the same liberty which many Trade Unionists and many employers have always had.

Special provision is made in the clause and in the subsequent 'Provisions for avoiding future Disputes', to secure to workmen, or their representatives, the right of bringing forward for discussion any grievance or supposed grievance.

1. Freedom of Employment: Every workman shall be free to belong to a Trade Union or not as he may think fit.

Every employer shall be free to employ any man, whether he belong or not to a Trade Union.

Every workman who elects to work in a Federated workshop shall work peaceably and harmoniously with all fellow employees, whether he or they belong to a Trade Union or not. He shall also be free to leave such employment, but no collective action shall be taken until the matter has been dealt with under the provisions for avoiding disputes.

The Federation do not advise their members to object to Union workmen or give preference to non-union workmen.

NOTE: The right of a man to join a Trade Union if he pleases involves the right of a man to abstain from joining a Trade Union if he pleases. This clause merely protects both rights. The Federation sincerely hope that a better understanding will prevent any question of preference arising in the future, and advise the members not to object to Union workmen.

2. Piecework: The right to work piecework at present exercised by many of the Federated Employers shall be extended to all members of the Federation and to all their Union workmen.

The prices to be paid for piecework shall be fixed by mutual arrangement between the employer and the workman or workmen who perform the work.

The Federation will not countenance any piecework conditions which will not allow a workman of average efficiency to earn at least the wage at which he is rated.

The Federation recommend that all wages and balances shall be paid through the office.

NOTE: These are just the conditions that have been for long in force in various shops. Individual workmen are much benefited by piecework.

A mutual arrangement as to piecework rates between employer and workman in no way interferes with the functions of the Unions in arranging with their own members the rates and conditions under which they shall work.

3. Overtime: When overtime is necessary the Federated Employers recommend the following as a basis and guide: That no man shall be required to work more than 40 hours overtime in any four weeks after full shop hours have been worked, allowance being made for time lost through sickness or absence with leave.

In the following cases overtime is not to be restricted, viz:

Breakdowns in plant.

General repairs, including ships.

Repairs or replace work, whether for the employer or his customers.

Trial trips.

It is mutually agreed that in cases of urgency and emergency restrictions shall not apply.

This basis is to apply only to members of the Trade Unions who are represented at this Conference.

All other existing restrictions as regards overtime are to be removed.

It is understood that if mutually satisfactory to the Local Association of Employers and workmen concerned, existing practices regarding overtime may be continued.

NOTE: These overtime conditions are precisely the conditions now in operation in various places, though in many Federated workshops no limitation whatever exists at the present time. In many cases this will be the first attempt to regulate or prevent excess of overtime.

4. Rating of Workmen: Employers shall be free to employ workmen at rates of wages mutually satisfactory. They do not object to the Unions or any other body of workmen in their collective capacity arranging amongst themselves rates of wages at which they will accept work, but while admitting this position they decline to enforce a rule of any Society or an agreement between any society and its members.

The Unions will not interfere in any way with the wages of workmen outside their own Unions.

General alterations in the rate of wages in any district or districts will be negotiated between the Employers' Local Association and the local representatives of the Trade Unions or other bodies of workmen concerned.

NOTE: Collective bargaining between the Unions and the Employers' Associations is here made the subject of distinct agreement.

The other clauses simply mean that as regards the wages to be paid there shall be (1) Freedom to the Employer (2) Freedom to the Union workmen both individually and in their collective capacity - that is to say collective bargaining in its true sense is fully preserved; and (3) Freedom to non-unionists.

These conditions are precisely those in operation at present on the North-East Coast, the Clyde and elsewhere, where for years past alterations of wages have been amicably arranged at joint meetings of employers and representatives of the Trade Unions.

5. Apprentices: There shall be no limitation of the number of apprentices.

NOTE: This merely puts on record the existing practice and is to prevent a repetition of misunderstandings which have arisen in some cases.

6. Selection, Training, and Employment of Operatives: Employers are responsible for the work turned out by their machine tools, and shall have full discretion to appoint the men they consider suitable to work them, and determine the conditions under which such machine tools shall be worked. The employers consider it their duty to encourage ability wherever they find it, and shall have the right to select, train, and employ those whom they consider best adapted to the various operations carried on in their workshops, and will pay them according to their ability as workmen.

NOTE: There is no desire on the part of the Federation to create a specially favoured class of workmen.

PROVISIONS FOR AVOIDING DISPUTES

With a view to avoiding disputes in future, deputations of workmen will be received by their employers, by appointment, for mutual discussion of questions, in the settlement of which both parties are directly concerned. In case of disagreement, the local Associations of Employers will negotiate with the local officials of the Trade Unions.

In the event of any Trade Union desiring to raise any question with an Employers' Association, a meeting can be arranged by application to the Secretary of the Employers' Local Association to discuss the question.

Failing settlement by the Local Association and the Trade Union of any question brought before them, the matter shall be forthwith referred to the Executive Board of the Federation and the central authority of the Trade Union; and pending the question being dealt with, there shall be no stoppage of work, either of a partial or a

general character, but work shall proceed under the current conditions.

NOTE: A grievance may be brought forward for discussion either by the workman individually concerned, or by him and his fellow workmen, or by representatives of the Union.

In no instance do the Federated Employers propose conditions which are not at present being worked under by large numbers of the members of the Allied Trade Unions.

The Federated Employers do not want to introduce any new or untried conditions of work, and they have no intention of reducing the rates of wages of skilled men.

These conditions, with relative notes, are to be read and construed together.

It is agreed that there shall be a resumption of work simultaneously in all the workshops of the Federated Employers on Monday morning, 31st January, 1898.

Parties mutually agree that the foregoing shall be the terms of settlement.

Source: E. Vigham, *op. cit.*, pp.28-29.

APPENDIX E

The Operation of the 1898 Settlement and Industrial Disputes in the Lancashire Textile Machinery Industry to 1914

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
1. 3.1898	Walkers (Bury)	U.M.V.A.	Rating of Machines	Settlement 4.3.98.
11. 7.98	Yates & Thom (Blackburn)	A.S.E.	Sacking of Union Member	Strike called off 13.7.98.
21.11.98	Platts	A.S.E.	Wages Advance and Character Note System	Local Conference, no agreement.
19. 1.1899	Dobson & Barlow	A.S.E.	Excessive Overtime	Partial ban imposed by A.S.E.
26. 1.99	All 'Central Lancashire' employers	Smiths & Strikers	2/- Wages Claim	1/- to Smiths and 6d. to Strikers after arbitration by Lord James (from July).
25. 4.99	Bentley & Jackson (Bury)	A.S.E.	Firm's refusal to employ A.S.E. Smiths	A.S.E. Executive persuaded branch to concede (24.9.99).
15. 8.99	Platts	A.S.E.	Wages Advance (see above)	2nd Local Conference.
31.10.99	Dobson & Barlow	A.S.E.	Displacement of men operating boring machinery	Central Conference to follow.
29.11.99	Liveseys (Blackburn)	A.S.E.	Objection to labourer on turret lathe	Issue dropped (see below).
21. 2.1900	Platts	A.S.E.	Wages Advance (See above)	Central Conference, still no agreement and matter not again raised.

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
21. 2.1900	Dobson & Barlow	A.S.E.	Displacement of men (see above)	Central Con- ference - men displaced by labourers but given new work.
21. 2.1900	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Labourers on turret lathes	Central Con- ference. Issue dropped.
1. 8.1900	Platts/ Asa Lees	F.S.I.F.	2/- wages advance claimed	Brief unsuccessful strike - no change.*
16.10.1900	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Objection to labourers on boring machines	Local, then Central Con- ference - no concessions.
2. 1.1901	Platts	A.S.E.	Dismissal of branch secretary by firm	
19. 2.1901	Hetheringtons	U.M.W.A.	Objection to dismissal of members	Issue dropped by union.
16.12.01	Yates & Thom	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	Reduction of overtime and night work payments	
10. 3.02	Dobson & Barlow	A.S.E.	1) Premium Bonus System 2) Reduction of prices 3) Discharge of workmen	Bonus System abandoned. Other issues resolved by local conference.
15. 8.04	Dobson & Barlow	Grinders & Glazers	Use of unskilled labour	
25. 9.05	Liveseys	A.S.E.	'Handymen' doing fitters' work on iron patterns.	
7.12.05	Butterworth & Dickinson (Burnley)	A.S.E.	Overtime payments	
29. 1.06	All Burnley firms	Grinders & Glazers	1/- pay advance claim	Granted (from 13.7.06).*

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
5. 3.06	All Burnley firms	F.S.I.F. & Plate & Machine Moulders	2/- to 3/- pay advance claim	1/6 granted (from 23.7.06).*
18. 4.06	Bury & Bolton firms	A.S.E., S.E.M. & F.S.I.F.	2/- pay advance claim	1/- agreed from 1.5.06.*
14. 5.06	Blackburn firms	A.S.E. & U.M.W.A.	2/- to 3/- pay advance claim	1/- agreed from 16.6.06.*
26.5.06	Platts/ Asa Lees	Core-makers	2/- pay advance claim	Compromise agreement by firms.*
1. 6.06	Platts/ Asa Lees	Pattern-makers	2/- pay claim	1/- granted (from 1.9.06).*
15. 6.06	Burnley firms	F.S.I.F.	2/- pay claim	1/6 granted (from 23.7.06).*
1. 8.06	Platts/ Asa Lees	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	2/- pay claim	1/- granted (from 27.8.06).*
1. 8.06	Brooks & Doxey Hetheringtons	F.S.I.F.	2/- pay claim	
25. 8.06	Blackburn firms	A.S.E.	1/- pay claim	Agreed (from 1.12.06).*
1.10.06	Blackburn firms	Grinders & Glazers	2/- pay claim	1/- agreed (from 29.9.06).*
27.10.06	Platts	A.S.E.	1) Objection to unskilled men 2) Claim overtime pay withheld	
29.10.06	Butterworth & Dickinson	A.S.E.	Claim member wrongfully dismissed.	
28.10.06	Brooks & Doxey	Grinders & Glazers	Refusal to work with unpopular foreman	Strike followed by return to work on employer's terms 11.12.06.
1. 2.07	Dobson & Barlow	A.S.E.	Objection to firm bringing in supervisor to time jobs.	Settled by local conference 15.2.07.

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
16. 3.07	'Mid Lancashire' Employers	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	2/- pay claim	
23. 4.07	Platts/ Asa Lees	A.S.E.	1/- wages claim	Granted, October 1907.
26. 4.07	Burnley firms	Grinders & Glazers	1/- wages claim	Granted by all firms except Butterworth & Dickinson, 28.5.07.
27. 4.07	Butterworth & Dickinson	Grinders & Glazers	Objection to employment of over-aged youths	Objection successful.
8. 5.07	Pembertons (Burnley)	A.S.E.	Objection to unskilled man operating centre lathe	Strike, followed by Central Conference, 21.6.07.
29. 5.07	Bury firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	1/- or 5% wages claim	
24. 6.07	Manchester firms	Grinders & Glazers	1/- wages claim	Claim successful.
23. 7.07	Bolton firms	U.M.W.A.	1/- or 2½% wages claim	Successful (from 16.10.07).
26. 7.07	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Refusal to work overtime	
27. 7.07	Platts/ Asa Lees	S.E.M.	1/- wages claim	Successful (from January 1908).
3. 8.07	W. B. White (Colne)	A.S.E.	Demand for pay- ment of locally agreed advance	
4.10.07	Pembertons	A.S.E.	Firm demands compensation for May strike	Firm given £200 and men accept pre- strike terms, January 1908.
10.10.07	Butterworth & Dickinson	A.S.E.	Objection to unskilled man on turret lathe	

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
17.10.07	Bolton firms	A.S.E., S.E.M., U.M.W.A., Smiths & Strikers	1/- or 2%% pay advance claim	Agreed 27.11.07.
29.10.07	Brooks & Doxey	All Unions	Firm seeks new agreement on overtime and piecework	
3.12.07	Hetheringtons	A.S.E.	Overtime and piecework conditions	Accepted by union.
31.12.07	'Mid Lancashire' employers	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	1/- or 2%% wages reduction	
6. 1.08	Asa Lees, Platts	A.S.E. S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	Joint union protest against excessive over- time	Rejected by employers.
9. 2.08	Bolton & Bury firms	Grinders & Glazers Core- makers	1/- wages advance	Advance granted (from 20.2.08).*
29. 4.08	Platts	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	Excessive overtime	
19. 8.08	W. B. White Harling & Todd (Burnley)	A.S.E.	Non-payment of advance	
27. 1.09	Platts/ Asa Lees	A.S.E., S.E.M., U.M.W.A., F.S.I.F.	Reduction of 2/- (5%)	1/- reduction (from 14.5.09).*
4. 2.09	Brooks & Doxey, Hetheringtons	F.S.I.F.	2/- reduction or 5%	1/- agreed upon (or 2%%).
17. 2.09	Brooks & Doxey, Hetheringtons	Grinders & Glazers	2/- reduction or 5%	1/- agreed upon.
19.2.09	Blackburn firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	1/- or 2%% pay reduction	

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
5. 3.09	Burnley firms	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	2/- or 5% reduction	Central Conference reduction of 1/- agreed, (23.4.09).
6. 4.09	Blackburn firms	A.S.E.	1/- reduction for Smiths	
5. 5.09	Burnley & Blackburn firms	Grinders & Glazers	1/- reduction	Accepted.
28.10.10	Platts	A.S.E.	Piecework advance in loom making department	
31.10.10	Dobson & Barlow	Grinders & Glazers	Advance in piece prices at Bradley Fold works	
2. 3.11	Burnley & Colne firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	2/- advance claim at Colne 1/- advance claim at Burnley	Granted (June 1911).* Granted (June 1911).*
22. 3.11	Hetheringtons, Brooks & Doxey	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	Dissatisfaction with workshop heating	
8. 5.11	Dobson & Barlow	Core- makers	Advance claimed	
24. 5.11	Platts/ Asa Lees	Pattern- makers	2/- advance claimed	1/- granted (17.11.11).*
10. 6.11	Hackings (Bury)	A.S.E.	Demand skilled man operates new machine.	
13. 6.11	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Claim for better out working allowances	
2.11.11	Burnley firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	1/- advance claimed	1/- granted.*
21. 3.12	Cooper Bros. (Burnley)	A.S.E.	Use of enquiry note	
14. 5.12	Harling & Todd	A.S.E., Grinders & Glazers	Use of enquiry note	6 day strike, followed by Local Conference. No agreement followed by Central Conference.

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
6. 6.12	Platts/ Asa Lees	F.S.I.F.	2/- wages advance claim	1/- (from 12.8.12). 1/- (from 1.11.12).*
18. 6.12	Platts/ Asa Lees	A.S.E., S.E.M. & U.M.W.A.	2/- or 5% advance claim	1/- granted (from 4.10.12). 1/- granted (from 1.1.13).*
7. 8.12	Dobson & Barlow	Grinders & Glazers	2/- or 5% advance claim	1/- granted.*
19. 8.12	Burnley firms	Gas- workers & General Labourers Union	1/- or 5% advance claim	Granted.*
28. 8.12	Burnley firms	Grinders & Glazers	1/- or 5% advance claim	Granted.*
20. 9.12	Dobson & Barlow	G. & G.L.U.	1/- or 5% advance claim	
4.10.12	Brooks & Doxey	Grinders & Glazers	Union demands dismissal of unpopular foreman	Strike
31.10.12	Brooks & Doxey	Roller- makers	1/- or 5% wage claim	Granted on condition of no further claims for 3 years.
29.10.12	Platts/ Asa Lees	Plate & Machine Moulders	Piece price advance claim	No general advance. Individual jobs improved.*
23.11.12	Harling & Todd (Burnley)	Grinders & Glazers	2 men dismissed	Strike threat, firm advised to re-instate men.
25.11.12	Platts/ Asa Lees	G. & G.L.U.	1/- wages claim	Some concessions given.*

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
6. 1.13	Cooper Bros. (Burnley)	A.S.E.	Men infringe firm's rules on lost time	Lock-out. Federation requests firm to use formal procedures.
7. 2.13	W. B. White, Pillings (Colne)	A.S.E.	2/- wages claim	Advance eventually granted after strike.* (See below.)
14.6.13	Burnley firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	Dispute over interpretation of "repairs" and "urgency" in work in weaving sheds	
20. 6.13	Platts	A.S.E.	Piece prices in loom, speed and drawing frame departments.	Union accepts firm's proposals.
26. 6.13	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Apprentice's wage claim	Firm advised by Federation to concede.
11. 8.13	Pembertons	A.S.E.	Manning of drilling machines	Firm advised by Federation to concede.
21.10.13	Yates & Thom	A.S.E.	Claim surfacing and boring machines for turners	Firm advised by Federation to concede.
27.10.13	Burnley & Colne firms	A.S.E.	Wages advance claim	Strike: 1/- granted in Burnley, 2/- in Colne.
28.10.13	Blackburn firms	A.S.E., S.E.M.	1) Rates for holiday work 2) Apprentices making up lost time 3) Pay of young journeymen 4) Outworking allowances	Local Conference 20.11.13., no agreement followed by Central Conference, agreement only on 3 and 4.

<u>Date Commenced</u>	<u>Firm</u>	<u>Union(s)</u>	<u>Cause of Dispute</u>	<u>Result if known</u>
13.11.13	Hackings	A.S.E.	Manning of new machines	Local Conference,
20.11.13	Liveseys	A.S.E.	Objection to handymen doing fitters' work	followed by Central Conference. Firm gives verbal agreement.
15.12.13	Liveseys	G. & G.L.U.	Man dismissed for refusing overtime	Man re- instated when he agreed to overtime.
21. 4.14	Butterworth & Dickinson Pembertons		Firms in dispute over enquiry note and "enticement" of workers	
5.12.14	Yates & Thom	A.S.E.	Objection to excessive use of apprentices	

Sources: MSS 237 Engineering Employers' Federation, Case Registers,
Vols. 1-3, passim.

* Supplementary information from Engineering Employers' Federation,
Wage Movements, 1896-1923.

APPENDIX FTrade Union Membership in the Lancashire Textile Machinery Making Centres 1840-1914A: Friendly Society of Iron Founders

	<u>1840</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1870</u>	<u>1875</u>	<u>1880</u>
Accrington				60	46	118	42
Blackburn	41	124	198	162	162	265	231
Bolton	106	187	333	418	397	502	489
Burnley	22	30	96	79	74	121	134
Bury	70	102	184	224	248	374	286
Colne							
Manchester	325	554	483	688	507	678	654
Oldham	70	292	348	351	379	608	540
Preston	49	94	89	92	103	136	130
Rochdale	44	88	62	117	63	172	141
Salford			198	302	292	434	387
Stalybridge		127	170	220	202	230	144
Todmorden		18	50	57	51	70	64
	<u>1885</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1900</u>	<u>1905</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1914</u>
Accrington	36	47	87	76	103	94	124
Blackburn	223	278	342	373	436	433	487
Bolton*	531	539	631	707	699	665	747
Burnley	146	155	173	166	170	150	207
Bury	283	224	231	290	284	273	327
Colne							48
Manchester*	617	728	723	953	919	946	1136
Oldham*	573	550	555	577	555	594	503
Preston	135	137	121	157	195	220	261
Rochdale	140	170	193	162	177	191	254
Salford	419	461	436	531	532	491	562
Stalybridge	130	134	111	136	140	136	176
Todmorden	50	63	58	40	46	42	35

Sources: F.S.I.F. Monthly and Half Yearly Reports

- * From 1865 there were 3 Manchester branches and 2 in Oldham. The Bolton branch was divided into 'Bolton' and 'Little Bolton' in 1864, but for convenience the two have been kept together. From 1870 there were 4 Manchester branches.

B: Amalgamated Society of Engineers

	<u>1851</u> <u>(Dec)</u>	<u>1852</u> <u>(Dec)</u>	<u>1855</u>	<u>1859</u>	<u>1865</u>	<u>1873</u>	<u>1879</u>
Accrington	22	25	26	40	76	121	90
Blackburn	222	220	173	229	368	380	411
Bolton	458	275	296	380	648	1295	934
Burnley	62	50	58	67	102	138	168
Bury	300	250	228	248	433	575	579
Colne		13	9	10	21	24	19
Heywood	61	65	61	74	120	147	137
Oldham	826	547	491		1015	1423	1380
Preston	203	190	180	176	282	343	
Rochdale	164	125	130	184	342	442	471
Salford	178	147	190	208	480	574	523
Stalybridge	57	71	65	91	144	218	221
Todmorden	43	39	29	37	76	85	78

	<u>1883</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1897</u> <u>(June)</u>	<u>1898</u> <u>(Feb)</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1912</u>	<u>1914</u> <u>(Aug)</u>
Accrington	74	84	85	76	150	211	582
Blackburn	442	490	621	627	695	837	874
Bolton	1068	1279	1893	1866	1881	1939	2214
Burnley	144	182	232	214	309	450	580
Bury	553	496	542	536	540	617	588
Colne	23	25	57	42	67	89	161
Heywood	117	130	151	152	153	152	191
Oldham	1406	1513	2122	1818	2078	2237	2763
Preston	322	346	410	414	601	580	802
Rochdale*	428	499	619	592	612	632	799
Salford	593	458	883	876	932	1102	1204
Stalybridge	203	210	243	231	202		
Todmorden	76	91	110	98	131	142	163

Sources: A.S.E. Monthly and Annual Reports

* A new Castleton branch which would have accommodated many Tweedales and Smalley workers had 74 members in 1912 and 102 in 1914.

C: United Patternmakers Association

	<u>1876</u>	<u>1883</u>	<u>1890</u>	<u>1895</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1914</u>
Blackburn	17	30	40	61	82	91	99
Bolton		33	43	59	94	113	115
Bury	-	32	41	50	86	93	97
Manchester	32	35	43	76	179	201	197
Oldham	-		25	45	51	88	93
Preston	14	20	21	24	63	80	87
Rochdale	-	-	-	-	-	8	47

Sources: Annual and Monthly ReportsD: Amalgamated Machine, Engine and Iron Grinders and Glazers Society

	<u>1846</u>	<u>1857</u>	<u>1893</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1914/15</u>
Blackburn	15	-	43	38	24	40
Bolton	37	-	43	52	70	86
Burnley	-	-	-	20	21	20
Bury	17	-	18	22	16	16
Manchester	38	23	103	136	124	109
Oldham	36	15	116	107	82	212
Rochdale	18	6	19	21	17	68
Accrington	-	-	-	-	-	56

Source: Annual Reports

E: United Machine Workers Association

	<u>1896</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1908</u>
Blackburn	23	8	11
Bolton	228	101	200
Gorton	190	240	301
Manchester	193	178	202
Oldham	288	338	660
Preston	34	17	31
Salford	122	133	166

Source: Annual ReportsF: Amalgamated Society of Coremakers

	<u>1897</u>	<u>1902</u>	<u>1906</u>	<u>1910</u>	<u>1914</u>
Bolton		86	121	100	135
Bury		39	64	68	60
Manchester		314	427	473	618
Oldham	21*	34	34	43	41
Preston		-	27	27	38
Rochdale		-	-	37	47

Sources: Quarterly Reports, except * Oldham Trades and Labour Council, Centenary BookletG: Amalgamated Plate and Machine Moulders Union

	<u>1896</u>	<u>1899</u>	<u>1914/15</u>
Accrington		18	160
Blackburn		67	40
Bolton		136	100
Burnley	70	65	130
Bury		24	8
Manchester		76	152
Oldham	205	374	471
Preston		10	6
Rochdale			54

Source: Annual Reports

APPENDIX GUnemployment in the Accrington and Burnley Branches of the F.S.I.F.
1863-1914

<u>Year</u> <u>(March/</u> <u>October)</u>	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Accrington</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Burnley</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>FSIF Annual %</u> <u>Average</u> <u>Unemployment</u> (b)
1863 - M O	45	2 3	84	23 13	13.5
1864 - M O	43	2 1	72	15 7	8.5
1865 - M O	64	4 1	92	8 0	7.6
1866 - M O	89	0 0	95	3 1	10.6
1867 - M O	86	8 19	103	20 23	20.5
1868 - M O	63	13 18	106	15 14	23.0
1869 - M O	56	19 3	86	41 22	21.0
1870 - M O	44	13 7	68	14 5	12.3
1871 - M O	84	2 1	96	0 0	7.5
1872 - M O	100	2 1	97	4 0	6.1
1873 - M O	100	0 2	97	4 6	7.6
1874 - M O	103	0 0	101	8 1	8.7
1875 - M O	113	1 1	113	0 0	8.4
1876 - M O	126	2 1	151	1 0	10.9
1877 - M O	120	8 7	142	3 10	14.2
1878 - M O	70	8 19	143	8 10	20.0
1879 - M O	52	18 10	129	58 33	28.3

<u>Year</u> <u>(March/</u> <u>October)</u>	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Accrington</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Burnley</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>FSIF Annual %</u> <u>Average</u> <u>Unemployment</u> (b)
1880 - M O	48	11 7	118	8 7	17.1
1881 - M O	42	8 6	126	0 1	14.5
1882 - M O	38	6 1	163	3 0	10.7
1883 - M O	35	4 14	158	9 10	10.8
1884 - M O	29	3 5	138	23 8	14.3
1885 - M O	34	4 5	158	27 32	9.8
1886 - M O	33	8 (1) 9 (3)	143	15 10	12.3
1887 - M O	39	5 (2) 5 (2)	183	14 12	9.3
1888 - M O	38	3 6	173	14 23	5.6
1889 - M O	40	4 5 (3)	136	7 5 (2)	1.9
1890 - M O	42	2 (1) 2 (1)	155	6 (1) 6 (1)	2.5
1891 - M O	46	2 (1) 1	159	1 5	4.6
1892 - M O	56	4 (3) 5 (1)	172	14 9	8.7
1893 - M O	75	7 (1) 2	175	10 9	10.2
1894 - M O	78	2 2	172	13 (1) 20 (4)	10.3
1895 - M O	85	6 5	165	37 12 (2)	8.2
1896 - M O	85	2 2 (1)	162	5 5	3.0
1897 - M O	82	7 (1) 5 (1)	176	13 (2)* 29 (4)*	7.1

<u>Year</u> <u>(March/</u> <u>October)</u>	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Accrington</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>District</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>Burnley</u> (a)	<u>No.</u> <u>Unemployed</u> (a)	<u>FSIF Annual %</u> <u>Average</u> <u>Unemployment</u> (b)
1898 - M O	85	6 (1) 2 (1)	166	29 (6) 4 (2)	3.5
1899 - M O	74	2 3	156	2 4 (2)	1.7
1900 - M O	78	3 (1) 5 (1)	166	3 (1) 7 (2)	2.8
1901 - M O	72	6 (2) 7	167	18 (4) 18 (4)	6.3
1902 - M O	82	4 1	152	25 (3) 16 (2)	7.3
1903 - M O	76	2 1	148	24 (2) 11 (2)	6.2
1904 - M O	88	7 4	146	29 (2) 5	9.8
1905 - M O	94	8 1	162	20 (2) 0	7.1
1906 - M O	117	0 1	180	0 0	3.6
1907 - M O	114	2 2	197	4 2	5.4
1908 - M O	113	2 19	200	11 24	15.2
1909 - M O	108	21 (1) 13 (1)	186	52 (3) 29 (3)	16.1
1910 - M O	106	21 (2) 6	155	28 (3) 20 (1)	17.7
1911 - M O	83	3 7 (3)	150	7 (2) 2	4.5
1912 - M O	79	6 (2) 3	163	4 2	3.7
1914 - M O	131	7 (2)* 31 (2)*	193	64 (2)* 35 (4)	2.7

Figures in brackets indicate number of unemployed who had exhausted benefit.

* Figures affected by industrial disputes.

Sources: (a) Derived from MS 41/FSIF/4/4, F.S.I.F. Monthly Reports.

(b) Derived from MSS 41/FSIF/4/1, Annual Reports for 1897, 1907 and 1913 and MSS/41/FSIF/4/4, Monthly Report (February 1885).

APPENDIX HWage Rate Movements (Time Rates) in Three Lancashire Textile
Textile Machinery Districts, 1834-1914 (in shillings)1. Manchester

	<u>Fitter/ Turner</u>	<u>Moulder</u>	<u>Pattern- maker</u>	<u>Machine Man</u>	<u>Labourer</u>
1834	31	28			16
1840	30	34	30	18 - 20	16
1845	28 - 31	30 - 32			
1850	30	30 - 34	30	18 - 20	15
1855					
1860	30 - 32	34	32	18 - 20	15
1865		34		21	
1870	30	34		22	16
1875	32	36	31	24	
1880	33	36	30	19 - 22	16 - 18
1885	34	34	36	19 - 22	19
1890		38		24 - 28	20
1895	36	38	38	24 - 28	17 - 19
1900	36	40	40	27 - 30	
1904	36	40	40	27 - 30	
1906	37	41		28 - 31	
1908	38	41			
1910	37	42			18 - 20
1912	38	42	42		20 - 21
1914	39	43			

2. Blackburn			3. Oldham		
Fitter/ Turner	Moulder/ Pattern- maker	Labourer	Fitter/ Turner	Moulder/ Pattern- maker	Labourer
1840			27 - 30	32	15 - 19
1845					
1850					
1855	26	32			
1860					
1865	24	30			
1870	25	30			
1875	32		31	36	
1880	30	34	30	34	
1885	32	36	32	35 - 36	
1890	32	36	30	36	15 - 17
1895		36	32	35 - 38	17 - 19
1900	35	39	34	37 - 38	
1904			34	40	
1906		40	35	40	
1908	34	40	34	40	
1910					19 - 20
1912	36		36		20 - 21
1914		41 - 42	37	42	21 - 23

Sources: Derived from: A. L. Bowley, op. cit., A. L. Bowley and G. H. Wood, op. cit., D. Chadwick, op. cit., F.S.I.F. Annual Reports, Engineering Employers' Federation Wage Movements, MSS 237, Wage Fluctuations By District, Manchester Engineering Employers' Association, Wage Fluctuations of Skilled Fitters and Turners in the Manchester District Since 1905.

APPENDIX IWage Movements in the Blackburn/Accrington Textile Machinery Districts 1914-19

(Cash claims relate to time rates, percentage claims to piece rates unless stated)

<u>Date of Claim</u>	<u>Union/Trade</u>	<u>Claim</u>	<u>Award</u>
1915 January	Grinders	3/-	2/-
February	F.S.I.F.	4/- or 10%	1/- or 10%
March	General Workers	5/-	1/-
"	Smiths/Strikers	6/-	1/6 (war bonus)
"	Plate/Machine Moulders	5/-	7½% (war bonus)
"	ASE/SEM/UNWA	5/-	3/- or 7½%
"	Coremakers	3/-	3/-
"	Grinders	5/-	2/- (war bonus)
April	Iron Dressers	5/-	3/-
"	U.P.A.	5/-	3/-
May	General Workers	Amount not stated	3/- or 7½%
July	Smiths/Strikers	1/6	1/6 Smiths, 1/- Strikers (war bonus)
1916 May	F.S.I.F.	5/-	3/-*
June	U.P.A.	3/-	1/-
"	Coremakers	4/-	1/-
July	Iron Dressers	Minimum 36/-	3/-
August	Plate/Machine Moulders	5/- or 12½%	3/- or 7½%
"	Coremakers	5/-	3/-
September	ASE/SEM/UNWA/ Smiths & Strikers	6/-	3/- or 2½%
October	U.P.A.	5/-	No Change
November	Grinders	10/-	2/- (war bonus)

<u>Date of Claim</u>	<u>Union/Trade</u>	<u>Claim</u>	<u>Award</u>
1917 January	A.S.E.	6/-	No Change
February	All Unions	10/- or 25%	5/- to 7/- (war bonus)
June	A.S.E.	100% on pre-war rates	3/- (war bonus)
"	FSIF/Plate & Machine Moulders	15/-	3/- (war bonus)
"	General Unions	10/-	3/- (war bonus)
July	Coremakers	5/-	No Change
August	Women Workers	Advance	2/6
October	ASE/FSIF and	Advance	12% (Time rate bonus)
"	other skilled trades	100% on pre-war rates	5/- (war bonus)
"	semi and unskilled men	10/-	5/- (war bonus)
December	Women Workers	Advance	3/6 (war bonus)
1918 January	Munitions Piece Workers	Advance	7% (war bonus)
February	Skilled Trades	100% on pre-war rates	No Change
"	Semi and Unskilled Men	10/-	No Change
May	A.S.E.	1/-	No Change
"	Coremakers	Advance	3/-*
June	U.P.A.	2/-	No Change
"	Iron Dressers	4/-	1/-*
"	ASE/SEM/UNWA	Advance to Manchester rate	No Change
"	Other skilled trades	100% on pre-war rates	3/6 (war bonus)
"	Semi and Unskilled Men	10/-	3/6 (war bonus)
"	Women Workers	Advance	5/- (war bonus)
October	All Unions	15/-	5/- (war bonus)
"	F.S.I.F.	Advance to Manchester rate	No Change**

<u>Date of Claim</u>	<u>Union/Trade</u>	<u>Claim</u>	<u>Award</u>
1918 October	U. P. A.	2/-	No Change**
"	Iron Dressers	3/-	No Change**
"	ASE/SEM/UMWA	Advance	No Change**
November	U. P. A.	50% on time rates	No Change
"	Brass Moulders	2/-	2/-
1919 January	Women Workers	Advance	5/-
February	ASE/SEM	Advance	No Change**
June	U. P. A.	Minimum 85/-	No Change
"	F. S. I. F.	Advance to Manchester rate	No Change**
"	Coremakers	Advance of 4/6	No Change**
"	Iron Dressers	3/-	No Change
"	ASE/SEM	1/- (to 67/6 minimum)	No Change**
June	All Engineering Unions	15/-	No Change
August	All Foundry Unions	15/-	5/-
October	U. P. A.	15/-	5/-
"	Smiths/Strikers	2/- for strikers	Basic rate to 33/-
"	ASE/SEM	1/-	No Change
"	ASE/Grinders/Plate and Machine Moulders	15/-	5/-
November	Women Workers	15/-	3/6

Sources: Engineering Employers' Federation: Wage Movements, passim. and MSS 237, Wages Fluctuations By District, and Case Registers, Vol. 3.

APPENDIX JMembership of the Major Textile Machinery Industry Trade Unions,
1914-20

	<u>1914</u>	<u>1915</u>	<u>1916</u>	<u>1917</u>	<u>1918</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1920</u>
A. S. E.	174,253	205,284	230,231	273,103	293,782	320,604	459,987
U. P. A.	8,652	9,019	9,312	10,005	10,407	12,400	11,566
U. M. W. A.	11,259	13,945	17,524	21,425	23,374	24,607	25,000
Smiths & Strikers	8,491	9,306	9,867	17,100	12,199	12,400	13,000
Grinders & Glazers	730	720	663	663	645	663	728
F. S. I. F.	25,225	23,348	28,459	32,556	33,449	38,367	40,930
Coremakers	2,485	2,767	2,815	3,192	3,262	3,540	3,800
Amalg. Moulders	1,930	1,343	1,332	1,550	1,700	2,000	3,500
Spindle/Flyer Makers	1,282	1,248	1,217	1,206	1,216	1,205	1,404
Shuttle Makers	502	534	399	543	501	539	591
Mule/Ring Spindle Makers	259	203	171	179	157	344	327
G. and G. L. U.	110,073	133,214	152,073	256,380	347,346	427,225	450,000

Source: G. D. H. Cole, Trade Unions and Munitions, pp.27-28, 199-201.

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Ministry of Munitions Papers

MUN 2/28 Ministry of Munitions Weekly Reports.

MUN 5/79 Ministry of Munitions Intelligence and Records Section Papers.

Lancashire Record Office, Preston

DDPSL Platt-Saco-Lowell Archive: Platts Directors' Meetings' Minutes, Wages Books, Machinery Production and Delivery Books; Howard and Bullough Machinery Production Books, Wages Book, Works Scrap Book; Miscellaneous records of the other constituent firms of T.M.M. Ltd. DDHL Robert Hall and Company Ltd., Bury: DDHL 37 and 38 Wages Books 1845-1920 and DDHL 3742 Staff Analysis Book 1889-1914. DDX 1328 Amalgamated Society of Shuttlemakers, Miscellaneous Documents.

Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

MSS 41 National Union of Foundry Workers archive. This contains the records of the former Friendly Society of Iron Founders: MSS 41/FSIF, the Amalgamated Moulders and Kindred Traders Union: MSS 41/APM, and the Amalgamated Society of Coremakers: MSS 41/ASCM.

41T/BOT Records of the Board of Trade Library, Labour Department. This contains a selection of engineering union annual reports, mainly covering the period 1885-1914.

MSS 237 Records of the Engineering Employers' Federation. The most important are the volumes of minutes of the Executive Board, the Emergency Committee and the Conference Committee, the Federation's Case Registers, and the Miscellaneous Minute Books which contain the records of the Federation's 'Textile Machinery' sub-committee.

The Working Class Movement Library, Old Trafford, Manchester

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