'FLYING THE RED FLAG? COMMUNISTS IN THE NATIONAL UNION OF
MINEWORKERS, 1945-1985'.

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'Flying the Red Flag? Communists in the National Union of Mineworkers, 1945-1985'.

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Contents

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Some of the material discovered during the course of the research has been used in:

Buckley, S.B, 'Division British Communism? Televising the Decline of the Communist Party of Great Britain', *British Politics,* 9, December 2014, pp 494-503.

There may be a slight replication of some of the material in:

Buckley, S.B, 'The Police, the State and the Judiciary in the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike: some observations, thirty years on', *Capital and Class,* accepted for publication April 2014.

Some of the material is currently under consideration for a chapter within an edited collection on the British far left, with Manchester University Press.

This material has formed the basis of various conference contributions.

Abbreviations

AES	Alternative Economic Strategy
BRS	British Road to Socialism
CI	Communist International
COSA	Colliery Officials and Staffs Area
CPGB/CP	Communist Party of Great Britain (herein 'CP')
ETU	Electrical Trades' Union
LCDTU	Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions
MFGB	Miners' Federation of Great Britain
MRC	Modern Records Centre
NA	National Archives
NACODS	National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers.
NCB	National Coal Board
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEDC	National Economic Development Council
NPLA	National Power Loading Agreement
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
SWMF	South Wales' Miners' Federation
SWML	South Wales' Miners' Library
SWP	Socialist Workers' Party
TUC	Trade Union Congress
UMS	United Mineworkers of Scotland
WCML	Working Class Movement Library

WFTU   World Federation of Trade Unions

YCL   Young Communist League

Flying the red flag? Communists in the NUM, 1945-85.

The thesis seeks to analyse the industrial strategy of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CP) within the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Although many historians have discussed the CP's industrial work, particularly in the pre-1945 period, this thesis is original because there is not yet a detailed study of the party's work in the NUM between 1945 and 1985. The thesis also aims to make an intervention into post-war political history more generally, beginning its coverage in 1945 with the election of the first majority Labour government, at a time when both the party and the mining industry had high hopes for the future. The research concludes in 1985, after the miners' strike, when both the NUM and the CP were irreparably divided. The thesis works within two overarching paradoxes: firstly, that the CP was believed to be ubiquitous in industry, yet weak elsewhere. Secondly, that the party ultimately imploded as a result of factionalism, which arose because of the industrial strategy that the CP had spent most of the post-war period adhering to.

Moreover, the thesis makes four original contributions to knowledge. The work uses the historical method, drawing on empirical evidence from archives in Salford, Manchester, Warwick, Kew, London, Swansea and Barnsley, along with secondary evidence and interviews with protagonists, to construct a chronological analysis of the events; this, in addition to the scope of the work, is an original methodological contribution to knowledge. The second contribution discusses the relationship between the CP and communists in industry; although this has been discussed in the existing literature, the thesis adds more evidence to this through a detailed analysis of this specific period within the NUM. The thesis also offers the findings as a hypothesis for observations about the party's industrial strategy generally, considering how the results of this study might be applied to other industries. The third original area is the theme of conflict across three groups: particularly, concerning the relationship between individual communists in the union; the party itself and communists in the union; and communists in the NUM and the union itself. The fourth area of originality derives from the thesis's detailed analysis of wage militancy in the union across this period, a focus yet to be explored in any depth.

<u>I Communism and Coal.</u>

<u>1.0 The End</u>

The year is 1991 and, sat around a table in an inconspicuous-looking canteen, the three old ladies chatting over their sausage and chips would not have looked out of place in the local bingo hall. Their topic of conversation, however, was a wistful depiction of the type of fanciful socialism that had propelled the CP through its formative years and had somewhat sustained it, at least in part, through subsequent periods of strife. But fanciful optimism had run its course; the ladies were, somewhat dutifully, delegates to the party's 43rd Congress and taking a break from the heated debates about what, if anything, was salvageable from the shipwreck of British communism. The 43rd Congress, unlike its 42 predecessors, was not looking forward to the future; instead, it was planning the end of the party. One of the ladies, 89 year old Rose Kerrigan, attempted to take stock of the situation but in fact managed to articulate one of the main reasons why the entire project was doomed from the off, saying that: 'the Soviet Union ….well, it's been a big disappointment in a way, but I don't blame them entirely for that, I think it's the fact that the whole world was against them'. [1] Bob Horne venerated the utopian idealism that had blinded the party and prohibited its evolution, arguing that 'they seem to have overlooked the fact that, although we were a small party, we were very influential'. [2]

But some party members were more realistic about the situation; one delegate took to the rostrum to announce that 'we have failed miserably in recruitment, to understand new conditions….we have failed'. [3] This view emanated from the CP's first (and, as it turned out, only) female general secretary, Nina Temple. The party had been in long-term decline, Temple told the delegates, and some form of salvation might only be found through an honest reflection on the party's history, which would mean 'unambiguously condemning positions that the party took in trying to justify the unjustifiable'.[4] There was, Temple conceded, no historical inevitability for the CP; she then opened the vote that would make the decision to form the

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[1] Rose Kerrigan was the widow of Peter, industrial organiser from 1951-66. Rose Kerrigan died in 1995, but had decided against joining the Democratic Left, although she had been in the CP since 1921; in the documentary, at least, she appeared remarkably sanguine about the situation. A documentary film crew filmed the Congress for the 1992 documentary, 'Short and Curlies'. It is available to view in three parts on YouTube.
[2] See 'Short and Curlies'. Bob Horne was one of the founders of the CP of Scotland, which by 1998 had managed to get around 360 members. The assumption is that the 'they' that Horne mentions were the modernising wing of the party, those associated with the Eurocommunist/Gramscian perspective.
[3] See 'Short and Curlies'.
[4] Hopkins, S, 'The CPGB and Moscow', *Labour History Review,* 57:3, Winter 1992, 25.

Democratic Left, which thereafter failed to recognise itself as a political party. [5] How did a party, which burst out of the Second World War confident that it could secure a position for itself politically, find itself in this situation? In no small way, the failings of the party's industrial strategy was a critical factor. Ironically, the industrial politics that the CP spent much of the post-war period believing in would be the trajectory to the 43rd Congress; exactly how this happened will now be addressed.

1.1 Being British Communists

The 43rd Congress was in some ways an inconspicuous end for a party that was once perceived to be ubiquitous and nefarious, to the extent that its industrial interventions attracted the attention of Harold Wilson. [6] Wilson, delivering a speech to the House of Commons in the wake of the 1966 seaman's strike, warned that:

The CP, unlike the major political parties, has at its disposal an efficient and disciplined industrial apparatus controlled from the CP headquarters…it may be because of the political impotence of the Communist party that it has sought expression in industrial organisation... but Hon. Members would delude themselves if they imagined that there was not a most efficient organisation on the industrial side, that it has not got fulltime officers ready to operate in any situation where industrial troubles are developing.[7]

Wilson was on to something with his observations regarding the party's general weaknesses, although he was by no means an astute pioneer of this critique. The CP was consistently weak in its function as a political party and it only ever had two elected MPs at the same time: Phil Piratin was the communist representative in Parliament for Mile End, Stepney for five years and William (Willie) Gallacher was the party's MP for West Fife for fifteen years.[8] But both were removed for good by the electorate in the 1950 general election. [9] Even the party's general secretary could not secure electoral victory; whilst Harry Pollitt lost the Rhondda East constituency seat to W.H Mainwaring by a fairly respectable 972 votes in 1945, in 1950 Pollitt again lost, but this time by a substantial 22,182 votes. [10] The party also struggled to recruit and retain members: although membership had grown to 56,000 people in 1942, largely as a reaction to Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, the reactionary support of the British

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[5] The result of the vote was: Democratic Left (124); CPGB (71); Democratic Socialist Party (10); and 2 spoilt papers. See 'Short and Curlies'.
[6] Wilson was British Prime Minister from 1964 to 1970 and 1974 to 1976.
[7] Wilson, Harold, *The Labour Government 1964-70: a personal record,* (London: 1971), 237.
[8] Branson, Noreen, *The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1941-1951* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), 207.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Gildart, Keith, *North Wales Miners: a fragile unity, 1945-1996,* (Dyfed: University of Wales Press, 2001), 43.

population for communism soon waned and by 1945 11,000 of the new recruits had already left the party. [11] Certainly these perennial weaknesses worried the CP, but they were able to attribute their electoral impotence on the two-party system, which they claimed was designed to 'deny expression to emerging parties'.[12] John Gollan, the party's general secretary from 1956-76, was able to use the 'consistent advance of communist influence and support in the trade union movement and the workshops' as evidence that communists were frozen out of the electoral arena, not because nobody wanted to vote for them, but because of first-past-the-post system, a structural barrier which the CP was powerless to overcome. [13]

The picture was not entirely bleak, however, and for a large portion of its existence the party could point to its industrial strategy as an area where it was apparently strong; indeed, Wilson's attentions must have provided the party with a sense of omnipotence, an impenetrable feeling of kudos. As John McIlroy claims, 'for much of its history, the CP saw trade unions as the primary arena for political intervention'. [14] At the party's National Industrial Conference in 1947, for example, the delegates were reminded that 'we must appreciate that in this country the party's influence has always been predominantly in industry'.[15] Willie Thompson, a historian and former party member, argued that the industrial strategy was essential because the CP 'had nothing else going for it'. [16] Even Margaret Thatcher realised that 'the communists knew that they could not be returned to parliament, so they chose to advance their cause by getting into office into the trade union movement'. [17]

The historian Henry Pelling, writing before the CP archives were freely available, noted the apparent paradox that 'the success of communist penetration of the unions was especially remarkable by contrast with their abject failure at the polls'. [18] But the situation is not as strange as Pelling would have us believe; as McIlroy has pointed out, the price that the CP paid for using its most able industrial militants to build factory branches was its political position, and

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[11] Thompson, Willie, *The Good Old Cause: British Communism 1920-1991* (London: Pluto, 1992), 218. For a discussion of the reactionary nature of British party membership see Thorpe, Andrew, 'The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920-1945', *The Historical Journal,* 43:3, 2000, pp 777-800.

[12] Gollan, John, *The British Political System,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1954), 82.

[13] Ibid.

[14] McIlroy, John, 'Notes on the CP and Industrial Politics', in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: the high tide of trade unionism, 1964-1979,* (Kent: Ashgate, 1999), 216.

[15] 'Report of the NIC', 5 January 1947, 4, CP/CENT/IND/10/07.

[16] Thompson, Willie, *The Long Death of British Labourism: interpreting a political culture,* (Pluto: London, 1993), 56.

[17] Thatcher, Margaret, *The Path to Power* (London: Harper Press, 1992), 205.

[18] Pelling, Henry, *The British Communist Party: A Historical Profile* (Adam and Charles Black: London, 1963), 137.

it was simply not large enough to cover elections, membership growth and an industrial strategy across several unions. [19] But this argument assumes that the CP as a political unit was proscriptive, and also successful, in its industrial interventions. Moreover, communist penetration of the unions was believed, by the party, to be a much more prudent path to their objective than relying on the electoral system. Nonetheless, this is a much more convincing explanation for the situation than the one offered by the historians James Hinton and Richard Hyman, who assert that the CP simply collapsed into 'a politics of militant reformism' because it tried to shape itself into a 'mass revolutionary party' at the time when conditions in Britain were not conducive to this.[20] Hugo Dewar, himself an academic writing from a more critical Trotskyist position, points out that by the CP's formation, in 1920-21, the 'heart had gone out of the industrial rank and file movement' but the CP looked to their failure to progress 'either numerically or in terms of influence' as the result of the organisational structure of the party. [21]Whatever the reasons for it the truth was that the CP, a political party and not a syndicalist organisation, was able to appear industrially potent. This chapter intends to give a brief historical overview of the CP in Britain, considering particularly the trajectory of the industrial strategy, before exploring its significance in the mining industry. The questions that must be addressed are: firstly, what was the CP's industrial strategy and what did it aim to do? Secondly, where did it come from? Thirdly, why was it considered so important? Finally, how was the strategy perceived by communists and observers?

1.2 The industrial strategy.

In the post-war period, the principles of the CP's industrial strategy always remained the same; this statement can confidently be applied until the mid-1970s, when the primacy of the party's industrial strategy was challenged by the neo-Gramscian/Eurocommunist ('modernising') group within the party. The fact that this strategy did not particularly evolve or develop is not especially surprising; almost from its inception in 1920, the CP sought no haste in the achievement of the ultimate objective. As such Harry Pollitt, the party's general secretary for most of the years 1929-56, had not worried about the gradualism of the strategy and, taking his lead from the Communist International (CI), he had no need to; the key, the CI believed, was

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[19] McIlroy, John, 'Reds at Work: Communist Factory Organisation in the Cold War, 1947-56', *Labour History Review*, (Vol 65, No 2, Summer 2000) pp181-199, 191.

[20] Hinton, James and Hyman, Richard, *Trade Unions and Revolution: the industrial politics of the early British Communist Party,* (London: Pluto Press, 1975), 51.

[21] Dewar, Hugo, *Communist Politics in Britain: the CPGB from its origins to the Second World War,* (London: Pluto, 1976), 23.

to 'work persistently and tenaciously' to 'capture all official posts' in whatever industry was being targeted. [22]

But there was not always consistency with the strategy and in the pre-Second World War period there was clear evidence of the mutating application of the CP's industrial politics. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution the British Bureau, which was linked to the Red International of Labour Unions, hoped to form 'militant industrial organisations' by the creation of 'industrial solidarity on the basis of class struggle' in order to create the chances of 'social revolution'. [23] From 1924 the Minority Movement was an attempt to form organisations against the official leadership and it moved away from communist efforts to construct or advocate a national rank and file movement. [24] The pre-1945 strategy was believed to be pliable in its application largely because communists believed that trade unions could be changed from defensive organisations to offensive ones and become 'organs of attack against the capitalist system as a whole'. [25] This was particularly the case during the Third Period, with its aggressive 'class against class' policy, where the party's work in trade unions was expediently geared to 'revolutionary mass work within the reformist trade unions'. [26] The subsequent Popular Front was a more conciliatory stage of industrial activity. The party's subsequent wartime pro-production position and support for the first majority Labour government of 1945 ended with the onset of the Cold War and, by the late 1940s, the CP's industrial strategy focused on two tiers of the trade unions.

The post-war industrial strategy was, theoretically, fairly simple. At the top of the unions, the party's industrial strategy envisaged that communists would be elected to leadership positions in numerically strong or influential unions. [27] Within the unions, the party intended to 'work for the election of accredited communist officials as officials and delegates to conference'. [28] This is, as the existing literature concurs, the area through which the CP

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[22] 'Instructions for Communist Fractions in workers' organisations and bodies outside the party', 21 February 1924, from Jane Degras' edited volume, 66, available at:
http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf
[23] Red International Labour Unions, British Bureau, October 1921, CP/CENT/IND/11/12.
[24] McIlroy, John and Campbell, Alan, 'Organising the Militants: the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions,1966-1079', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 37:1, pp1-31, March 1999, 4.
[25] Darlington, Ralph, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Socialism,* (Kent: Ashgate, 2013), 206.
[26] 'The Position of the MM and its Immediate Tasks', 4, CP/CENT/IND/11/01. For a full definition of the Third Period, see Worley, Matthew, 'Class against Class: the Communist Party between the Wars', (London: IB Tauris), 2002.
[27] Callaghan, John, 'The Plan to Capture the Labour Party and its Paradoxical Results, 1947-91', *Journal of Contemporary History,* 40:4, 2005, pp 708-725.
[28] Callaghan, John, *Rajani Palme Dutt: a study in British Stalinism,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), 50.

appeared to be the most successful; by 1975, for example, Tony Cliff of the Socialist Workers'
Party (SWP) was able to comment that 'for a long time, the main industrial strategy of the CP
has been to win official positions in the trade union hierarchy'. [29] How much of Cliff's
assessment was drawn from theoretical and strategic disagreement is unclear, but Francis
Beckett points out that the British CP enjoyed a greater level of trade union influence than the
Trotskyists could ever hope for. [30] At the bottom of the union structure, the CP believed that
rank and file members should be politicised, largely through wage militancy. Whilst there is
no definitive definition of exactly what this was, the Oxford English Dictionary defines
'militant', and its derivative 'militancy', as 'favouring confrontational or violent methods in
support of a political or social cause'. [31] With the exception of a violent methodology, which
the party formally abandoned from 1951, the above definition will be used to understand the
militancy around wages that the party believed would have politicising consequences. John
Callaghan points out the broad appeal of wage militancy, from the Leninist perspective, seeking
revolution at the point of production, to the 'labourist', who merely wanted 'a fair day's pay'.
[32]

For the bulk of the union membership, the rank and file, the party also believed that
communist trade unionists could use 'bread and butter issues' as a stimulus to initiate 'action
on current political issues, while explaining what was wrong with capitalist society' and of
course offering answers about how socialism could be achieved. [33] In this spirit, one party
guide suggested that 'every factory must be our fortress' and claimed that this objective might
well be achieved if communists were to 'apply the general line of the party in a way that solves
the concrete problems facing the workers'. [34] The CP believed that politicisation was
achievable through (often work-based) propaganda, much of which was presented through the
Daily Worker, the party's newspaper formed in 1930. Ideally, the newspaper should be sold to
curious workmates or, at the very least, the astute communist might produce it for some break-
time reading. The idea was that workers, on their breaks, might access party material in an

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[29] Cliff, Tony, *The Crisis. Social Contract or Socialism?* (Pluto Press: London, 1975), 174.
[30] Beckett, Francis, *Enemy Within: the Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party,* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), 174.
[31] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/militant.
[32] See Callaghan, John, 'Industrial Militancy1945-79: the failure of the British Road to Socialism', *Journal of Twentieth Century History,* 15:3, 2004, pp 388-409, for the full explanation of the economic analysis behind the CP's wage militancy, quote taken from page 398.
[33] Branson, Noreen, *The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1941-1951,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1997), 26.
[34] CP, *The CP in the factories,* June 1946, 2.

informal, non-political environment. Another succinct method of politicisation were the party-produced A4 sized guides, which the diligent communist might strategically place in a prominent position in the factory after he had read it. For the more interested comrade, or the prospective recruit, educational courses were offered. [35] The party's own rule book from 1948 made it clear that the party's aim was 'to achieve a socialist Britain' and in this spirit the CP compelled every member to 'belong to and assist in the work of his/her appropriate trade union'. [36] Party members were also expected to make an effort to promote the CP to all fellow workers, but especially those who might not be unionised. [37] Overall, the party's industrial strategy was of critical importance to its ultimate ambition.

The CP was not particularly innovative in these tactics and the party's prototype for success was Russia, where Lenin had proved that 'exposure literature' had created 'a tremendous sensation'; but had, more importantly, assisted with the 'widespread development and consolidation' of the Russian workers. [38] Therefore the CI required its members and their factory cells to 'distribute political literature in the factory'. [39] Hinton and Hyman have argued that the focus that the CP placed on industrial politics was unique; they claim that the Socialist Labour Party, from which some original CP recruits were drawn, was the only other left organisation before 1920 to place importance on industrial activity. [40] These observations go some way to explaining why the CP believed itself to be indispensable amongst the British working class. Willie Gallacher made this point in 1924, noting that 'no man or group can represent the workers or endeavour to carry forward the workers' struggle without following the leadership of the Communist Party. *For the Communist Party is the political party of the workers'.* [41]This view transcended the party and one of numerous examples, taken from a party-building guide in the early 1950s, instructed that 'the CP MUST be linked with the working class, as an inseparable part of it- hence the emphasis of the party on building organisation in

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[35] Examples of all of these materials are found in the Labour History and Study Centre, Manchester and Working Class Movement Library, Salford.
[36] CP, 'Rules of the CP', 1948, 1.
[37] For details see 'Agendas and Resolutions for Policy Conferences', London St Pancras, 18 and 19 March 1922, CP/CENT/ CONG/ 01/04.
[38] Lenin, V. L, *What is to be done?* Reprinted in Clarke, Tom, and Clements, Laurie, *Trade Unions Under Capitalism,* (London: Humanities Press, 1978), 66.
[39] 'Instructions for Communist Fractions in workers' organisations and bodies outside the party,' 21 February 1924, from Jane Degras' edited volume, p81, available at:
http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf
[40] Hinton and Hyman, *Trade Unions, op. cit.,* 10.
[41] William Gallacher quoted by Callaghan, John, *The Far Left in British Politics*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 38.

the factories'.[42] Students attending branch education meetings in 1952 could expect to learn that the CP's role in the labour movement was to give it 'a socialist consciousness, a theory and perspective of advance to socialism…only the CP can do this…..it will never happen spontaneously'.[43] Communists were encouraged to 'never miss an opportunity for a sale'; leaving a 'complimentary copy' of a document with the branch secretary 'with the offer of a speaker' was suggested as one way to do this. [44] This expectation transcended all ranks of the CP. Practically, of course, the best place to find the working class was in the 'place where the workers work' [45]and it was suggested that, to maximise the party's chances, 'everyone in a leading position' within the CP should have 'the closest possible contact with the masses'. [46]

Historians have agreed that the CP was always much better at capturing leadership positions rather than politicising the rank and file of trade unions. McIlroy argues that this part of the CP's strategy was weak, purely because it was content to work diplomatically with trade union officials 'as a substitute for their recruitment to the party'. [47] One explanation for this is that trade union work offered a career structure, including for communists, who rose through the ranks of the union to this position by their militancy, but then once in official position 'succumbed' to this role. [48] Beckett has observed that, by the start of the 1980s, the CP had lost control of trade unions. [49] Callaghan has argued that, during the wave of politically-peppered strikes from 1966-74, it was unlikely that the CP could have stopped the support for wage militancy even if it had wanted to. [50]McIlroy and Campbell take the view that the CP was chasing the tail of the grass roots militants. [51] But if the strategy worked, warned one party dissident in 1952, then it had the potential to become the 'the most important political weapon in the armoury' of the CP. [52] But ultimately, as Eric Hobsbawn pointed out in 1975, the CP

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[42] Pamphlet, Untitled, *Marxist Study Themes,* No 8 Part II, February 1954, 20.

[43] CP, *Marxist Study Themes: the role of the CP,* May 1952, 11.

[44] There are many of these guides. The example here is 'Literature as a Political Weapon: a guide for branch committees and literature secretaries', January 1955, 7.

[45] 'Report of the National Minority Conference' 23 and 24 August 1924, 'Emergency Resolution on Labour Government,' Resolution 4, Factory Committees (moved by JR Campbell), CP/CENT/IND/11/01.

[46] *The Party and its work,* 4, CP/CENT/ED/1/8.

[47] McIlroy, John, 'Revolutionaries', in *Industrial politics and the 1926 mining lockout,* edited by McIlroy, John, Campbell, Alan, and Gildart, Keith, (UWP: Wales, 2009) pp 269-999, 269.

[48] Colin Baker, quoted in Darlington, Ralph and Lyddon, David, *Glorious Summer: class struggle in Britain 1972,* (London: Bookmarks, 2001), 30.

[49] Beckett, *Enemy Within, op.cit.* 184.

[50] See Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit*., for details

[51] For details of the role of the LCDTU- 'a party pressure group'- in grassroots militancy, see McIlroy, John and Campbell, Alan, 'Organising the Militants: the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, 1966-1979', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 37:1, pp 1-31.

[52] Darke, Bob, *The Communist Technique in Britain,* (Penguine: London, 1952), 50.

had been unable to harness this militancy with any political capital; this had been the entire point of the strategy, as we will see.[53]

1.3 The Labour Party

What was the ultimate purpose of the party's endeavours? The whole point was to put the party in a position where it could dominate trade unions, particularly large and influential ones, who had block votes at the Labour Party annual conference. [54] The communists' rationale was that it would only be possible to get progressive policies onto the national executive of the Labour Party if unsympathetic trade union leaders were replaced by communists.[55] The CP believed that if it had influence in the unions, and moved them in a 'progressive' direction, then it could influence the Labour Party's policies; ultimately, and eventually, the communists hoped to engage in some sort of influential relationship with Labour. As J.R Campbell, the editor of the *Daily Worker,* put it: trade unions who were affiliated to the Labour Party could send delegates to the annual conference, who could then 'fight for the adoption of a progressive policy for the advance to socialism'. [56] Therefore, in 1961, one party critic was able to write with accuracy that the CP was so bothered about its industrial efforts because of the significant role that unions had in forming Labour party policy. [57]

Although the CP ultimately hoped to influence the Labour Party via the trade unions, they also had to address the fact that Labour already had a 'unique structural link' with the unions.[58] This was a different structure to Russia but the CP remained optimistic, mostly because they believed that there was a fundamental flaw with this relationship, and because Lenin had decided the CP's disparaging view of the Labour Party, noting that it was 'a thoroughly bourgeois party…led by reactionaries and the worse kind of reactionaries at that'. [59] The party constantly evidenced Labour's 'reformism' in order to strengthen its own indispensability, leading Gollan to conclude in 1954 that the problem with the Labour Party

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[53] Hobsbawn, Eric, *The Crisis and the Outlook,* (London: Socialist Society, 1975), 13.
[54] See Callaghan, *The Plan to Capture the British Labour Party, op.cit.* for details. In the NUM, bringing 'progressive' resolutions to the union annual conference was the best way to move the union in the direction that the CP wanted. The NUM conference was 'the supreme government of the union'. See
[55] Jupp, James, *The Radical Left in Britain 1931-41,* (London: Frank Cass, 1982), 156.
[56] Campbell, J.R, 'Socialism for Trade Unionists', January 1953, 5.
[57] Griffiths, Percival, *The Changing Face of Communism*, (Bodley Head: London, 1961), 199. The miners in 1945 had one delegate per 5,000 members, and had a membership of around 700,000 men; therefore, communist interventions in this industry could be fruitful.
[58] Callaghan, John, *Socialism in Britain since 1884,* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 100.
[59] Callaghan, John, *The Far Left in British Politics,* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 31.

was that 'they are in a political coalition with the conservatives, they act as servants of monopoly capitalism'. [60]

The hardest part of the strategy would be to build up enough of a presence in a union to get CP-sponsored resolutions moved by the union at the Labour Party annual conference. Once this had been achieved, the CP would be well on the way to influencing trade unions; any decisions made at the conference had to be carried by the party's National Executive Committee. [61] The annual conference was the engine room of the Labour Party; the party itself described it as 'the fountain of authority. It declares policy and elects the NEC, which is responsible to the whole movement for carrying out all phases of activities'.[62] As Lewis Minkin has noted, 'hence, in theory, decisions arrived at under the control of the dominant union votes determine the policy of the party in all the spheres of its operation.' [63]

Communists believed that the Labour Party was incapable of moving to the left of its own volition. McIlroy notes that the party felt that its industrial strategy was the only way to radicalise the Labour party, which could be done through a potent brew of 'left unity and industrial militancy'. [64] But the issue was that the Labour Party refused to dance to the communists' tune. As Callaghan asks, 'who would ally with an organisation claiming a monopoly of truth and openly swearing its determination to crush its rivals?' [65] This problem should have been obvious, and as the years passed the CP constructed ever-more imaginative ways to engage with Labour, and Labour responded with ever-more draconian ways to freeze the CP out.[66] Ironically, as Russia suggested ways that the British CP might work with the British Labour party, it was precisely because the CP was guided by the Comintern that the party had found itself facing bans and proscriptions from the Labour party from its inception.

The genesis of this strategy was again Russian. Despite his dismissal of the Labour Party's socialist credentials, Lenin realised that in order to avoid isolation, the early CP should

[60] Gollan, John, *The British Political System,* (London, 1954), 171.

[61] Minkin, Lewis, 'The British Labour Party and the Trade Unions: Crisis and Compact', *Industrial and Labour Relations Review,* 28:1, October 1974, 9.

[62] Barker, Sarah, *How the Labour Party Works,* (Labour Party Publication), February 1955, 11, CP/CENT/IND/GOLL/04/02.

[63] Minkin, *The British Labour Party, op.cit.* 9.

[64] McIlroy, John, 'Notes on the CP and Industrial Politics', in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: the high tide of trade unionism, 1964-1979,* (Kent: Ashgate, 1999). 216.

[65] Callaghan, *The Far Left op.cit.* 53.

[66] The CP published a pamphlet in 1956 which included communist trade unionists (Horner, for example) and the caption 'their counsel is missed', which bemoaned the fact that, despite paying their dues, CP trade unionists were not able to represent their union at Labour Party conferences and events, CP/CENT/IND/GOLL/04/02.

affiliate with the Labour Party; [67] but on the condition that the CP could enjoy 'free and independent communist activity'.[68] The CP were certainly not in any position to dictate the mechanics of any potential relationship. The CP's first attempt at affiliation, in 1920, failed and another attempt, in 1922, did not fare any better. It was rebuffed by Labour at its annual conference, by 3,086,000 votes against and with only 261,000 in favour, on the grounds that 'the basis of affiliation to the Labour Party is the acceptance of its constitution, principles and programme, with which the objects of the CP do not seem to be in accord'; thereafter, the cycle of communist attempt, and Labour rejection, was to become an on-going occurrence. [69] Despite communist protests that these limitations were an attack on 'democratic rights' Labour's patience with the CP's enduring affiliation efforts had run out by 1946, and it was made clear that any further attempts would be a waste of the communists' time. [70] Any attempt to build communist strategy from within also proved to be unpopular; for example, in 1925 2,870,000 Labour Party members rejected the possibility of communists having dual membership. [71] Any attempt at forming a coalition also failed. Despite the CP's effort of writing a 'special political letter' to all party members in July 1945,[72] which pushed for the need to form a coalition with Labour, by 28 August 1945 the CP itself had admitted that it had miscalculated the chances of any coalition. [73]

Therefore history had proven, by the mid-1940s, that affiliation and coalitions were impossible strategies for the CP-Labour relationship. There was also an historic example of why the CP could never pursue another option, the sort of entryism that Militant Tendency would later adopt. In the 1922 general election the CP had gotten two of its members, Shapurji Saklatvala and Walton Newbold, elected as Labour Party MPs; but the Zinoviev Letter in 1924, with its allegations of communist subversion, served only to get the CP barred from standing its members as Labour candidates to Parliament. [74] This did not stop Pollitt wistfully trying to find a solution, though, and in 1953 he believed that 'if our party was much stronger, then it could smash the bans and proscriptions and the way could be found to develop unity between

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[67] Callaghan, *Socialism, op.cit.* 99.
[68] Griffiths, *Changing Face, op.cit.* 53. The dedication at the front of the book- 'to John, who also studies these problems', conveys the book's main concern, anti-communism.
[69] Dewar, Hugo, *Communist Politics in Britain: the CPGB from its origins to the Second World War,* (London: Pluto, 1976), 37.
[70] Gollan, John, *End the Bans,* June 1956, 12, for example. Willie Gallacher presented similar arguments.
[71] Dewar, H, *Communist Politics, op.cit.* 40.
[72] CP Pamphlet, 'Letter to every member of the CP, July 1945, 25 years', (July, 1945).
[73] Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, op.cit.,* 88.
[74] Griffiths, *Changing Face, op.cit.* 17.

the Labour Party and the CP.' [75] Thompson summaries the party's assessment of the Labour Party:

The Trade Union milieu formed the connecting link between the CP's industrial and political strategies, as it not only represented power at the base of industrial society but also disposed of votes at the Labour Party conferences and in the selection of parliamentary candidates. The CP identified right-wing dominance in the leadership of the Labour Party as the major obstacle to a rapid radicalisation of the latter's political outlook and purposes. It saw in the replacement of that leadership the preconditioning for creating a united left that would be capable of isolating and defeating the power of monopoly capital and initiating the transition to a socialist Britain. [76]

1.4 Building British Bolsheviks.

The inspiration for the CP was the Russian Revolution of 1917, which 'brilliantly confirmed Lenin's theory of the party'. [77] Moreover, the events in Russia acted as an immense source of encouragement to the oppressed in Britain; Harry Pollitt remembers how the event 'sent a thrill of excitement through every revolutionary worker,' and reassured him that 'the knowledge that workers like me… had won power…kept me in a growing state of enthusiasm'. [78] Lenin subsequently formed the Communist International (CI) in January 1919 and it was the CI that officially directed the various British groups to 'drop their differences' and form a united party. [79] The aim of the CI was, quite simply, 'to promote proletarian revolution on a world-wide scale'; moreover, as the world Communist Party, it envisaged that national parties would be sections of it. [80]

The events in Russia had a strong appeal in Britain, where the significant industrial militancy between 1910 and 1916 had failed to produce any tangible change. Disappointed would-be-revolutionaries such as Rajani Palme Dutt, the future editor of *Labour Monthly,* commented with some frustration that collective bargaining in industrial relations was a reformist strategy, which served only to make the 'best of a bad bargain' and was 'based on assumptions that are indefensible'. [81] The events in Russia were a catalyst for trade unions

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[75] 'Pollitt Reports to the CP: the British Peoples' Opportunity', *Daily Worker,* 14 February 1953.
[76] Thompson, *Good Old Cause, op.cit.* 134.
[77] Molyneux, John, *Marxism and the Party,* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 81.
[78] Thorpe, Andrew, 'Comintern 'Control' of the CPGB, 1920-43', *The English Historical Review,* 1113:452 (June, 1998), pp 637-662, 640.
[79] Pelling, Henry, *The British Communist Party: a historical profile,* (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1958), 6. For who these main British groups were, see Callaghan, J, *British Left, op.cit.,* 27.
[80] Thorpe, *Comintern, op.cit.* 637.
[81] 'Trade Unions Old and New', September 1915, 2, CP/CENT/DUTT/08/05.

being viewed as more than syndicalist associations. [82] Certainly there was no mass support for syndicalism by the early 1920s, either within the nascent CP or outside it. For British socialists the success of Leninism had proven that revolution would not be based on a cataclysmic general strike as advocates of syndicalism, such as Tom Mann, had predicted. Instead, argued Lenin, a strike might have been a 'school of war' but it could only be fully effective in causing broader changes if it was accompanied by the development of class consciousness. [83] The crux of the point was that the growth of class consciousness through trade unionism could only be fulfilled by the growth of political party, which would create and sustain it. [84] Lenin had said that 'class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without,* that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers'.[85]

The formation of the CP, therefore, was the manifestation of these developments and the obvious prototype of success guiding it was the Bolsheviks/Communist Party. As such, events in Russia would be the inspiration for early British communist industrial interventions.[86] History has recorded the horrors of Russia, but this should not blight an appreciation of the hope that the nascent British CP had. To British communists, quite plausibly, Russia was an untainted example of their ideology's success. Nina Fishman has suggested that these pioneering British communists simply 'did not study the implications of democratic centralism nor the dictatorship of the proletariat'. [87] But there was no reason why when the CP was working out how to build British revolutionaries that the party's relationship with its Russian father might be ever problematic; only from 1956 would this change, at least publicly. Even if astute observers had worried about the direction that Stalinism would take, it is probable that little could have been done about it; both the party and its membership were structurally bound

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[82] For details, see Darlington, Ralph, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Socialism,* (Kent: Ashgate, 2013).

[83] Lenin, V, *On Strikes,* reprinted in Clarke, T, and Clements, L, *Trade Unions, op.cit.* 62.

[84] For more details, see Anderson, Perry, *The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action,* in Clarke and Clements, *Trade Unions, op.cit.,* 336.

[85] Lenin, V, *What is to Be Done?* in Molyneuex, *Marxism, op.cit.,* 69. Through literature, this rhetoric was dispersed to eager British ears. Abe Moffat, president of the Scottish miners, recited an almost verbatim account of it in his autobiography, following his reading of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism.* See Moffat, Abe, *My Life with the Miners,* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1965), 29. Moffat had experienced victimisation as a result of his politics, and had been instrumental in the establishment of the UMS. See http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=411:abe-alex-and-dave-moffat&catid=13:m&Itemid=114

[86] See Palme Dutt, Rajani, *World Politics 1918-36,* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1936), for more details.

[87] Fishman, Nina, 'Communists in the Coalfields' in Campbell, Alan, Fishman, Nina, and Howell, David, *Miners, Unions and Politics 1910-1947,* (Kent: Ashgate, 1995), pp 93-110, 95.

to accept all 'directives and decisions' of the communist strategy, and their ambitions for the dominance of their politics in Britain ensured that they were obliged to support it. [88]

By 1922, this relationship was further solidified in the party structure by Dutt's report at the Fifth Party Congress, which bound the CP to Lenin's Twenty-One Theses; the end product of this link was a strong organisation, cemented by democratic centralism. [89]This strength, Dutt believed, could 'organise the entire working class movement for the struggle' and, in this spirit, industrial advisory groups were formed to coordinate the party's work in specific industries and trade unions.[90] By 1937 Arthur Horner, president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and one of the founders of the CP, was able to report that 'the CP organises the advanced workers in a disciplined, revolutionary organisation'. [91]Dutt saw the point of the CP's work in trade unions as working to 'transform them into mass organisations of the revolutionary struggle under the leadership of the party'. [92] Lenin's argument that only a revolutionary party and not a trade union could bring about revolution had seen to that. This was an idea that would be constantly sustained by the party, even decades later. For example Gordon McLennan, Gollan's successor, noted in 1977 that 'it is not the task of the trade union movement to lead the political struggle for the transformation of society. This is what the political parties of the working class do…the most fruitful source of conducting the struggle for political and socialist consciousness amongst trade unionists is in the workplace'; hence the need for a 'revolutionary party organised at workplace level'.[93]Party education guides, therefore, had always been keen to tell eager learners that 'Lenin started from the basis of the need to prepare for revolution- not merely a voting party, but one that organised and led the masses in action'. [94]

Marxist ideology now had a functioning methodology, Leninism, which had been proven to work, at least in Russia, and the British CP had to find a way to apply it. Callaghan has argued that the British CP adopted the principles of their industrial strategy from Lenin,

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[88] Dewar, *Communist Politics, op.cit.* 36.

[89] Ibid. Democratic centralism was the principle that, although debate was healthy, once a decision had been made, public loyalty was expected.

[90] Dewar, *Communist Politics, op.cit.* 28.

[91] Horner, Arthur, *Trade Unions and Unity,* April 1937, 12. Horner had been influenced by Keir Hardie and Noah Ablett; he had been victimised in his employment due to his politics. As John Savile noted, in Horner there 'always remained a strain of near-syndicalism' in his 'ideas and activities'. See Savile, John, 'Arthur Horner', *Dictionary of Labour Biography V,* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1977).

[92] Dutt quoted in Callaghan, *Socialism, op.cit.* 103. Although with limited significance, these industrial advisory groups still existed in coalmining in the 1980s.

[93] 'CP and Unity: interview with McLennan', 1977, 17.

[94] 'The Party and its work', CP/CENT/ED/1/8, 4.

who had recommended 'the capture of working-class organisations of every type'. [95] Although Lenin had envisaged that the revolutionary lead should come from the party, trade unions could potentially impede the struggle, and as such must not be ignored. Lenin had warned that trade unions needed an 'unremitting struggle' waging against them because, as 'reformist' organisations, they were 'appendages of the bourgeois state inside the workers' movement'. [96] In *Left Wing Communism: an infantile disorder,* Lenin had addressed how this problem may be overcome, instructing potential revolutionaries to 'carry on communist work within them...whilst you lack the strength to do away with bourgeois parliaments and every other type of reactionary institution you *must* work with them'. [97]Therefore the Cl, guiding its international militants, suggested that 'it remains a condition of all party organisational activity that the centre of gravity is to be shifted to the establishment of factory cells to making them the foundation of the entire party organisation'. [98]At its Fifth Congress in 1924, the CI could not have been more direct about the point of communist factory work, and the implications of getting it wrong:

A Communist party that has not succeeded in establishing a serious factory-committee movement in its country....cannot be regarded as a serious mass communist party...no communist party will be in position to lead the decisive masses of the proletariat to struggle and to defeat the bourgeoisie until it has the solid foundation in the factories, until every large factory has become a citadel of the communist party. [99]

Therefore, the CP did their best to do the above in Britain; the party's seventh congress in 1925 repeated the CI's line from the previous year, saying that 'organisation on the basis of factory groups is the characteristic and specific form of Bolshevik organisation, in distinction from the organisation of the reformist parties'. [100] Like the sustained need to enact change through a political party, the emphasis on trade unions also remained pivotal to the CP's thinking. One 1955 guide, for example, suggested that the party should 'organise the vanguard at the point of production- the factory is the best centre for the mobilisation of the working class'. [101] One party member writing in 1961 suggested that trade unions were 'indispensable basic organisations, which protect not only the immediate working class interests, but which will

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[95] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.,* 389.

[96] Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain, op. cit.,* 98.

[97] Molyneux, *Marxism, op.cit.* 88.

[98] 'Instructions for Communist Fractions in workers' organisations and bodies outside the party', 21 February 1924, from Jane Degras' edited volume, p66, available at:
http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf

[99] Hinton and Hyman, *Trade Unions op.cit.,* 13.

[100] Dewar, *Communist Politics, op.cit.* 28.

[101] 'The CP and the Role of the Branches: a copy for branch secretaries and officials', September 1955, 7.

also play a major role in bringing socialism to our land'. [102] Although the root ambition remained the same, the way it was conveyed changed to reflect the contours of the party's position in Britain, particularly after 1951 when the party formally abandoned the revolutionary struggle. [103] Vic Allen, a party member and academic heavily involved in the miners' union, could in 1981 cryptically suggest that trade unions had a 'duty to prepare the way for a qualitative change by education and propaganda'; the ultimate change being 'structural' changes in society.[104] This was a much more subtle line than the 1924 instruction, when the point of communist factory cells was to take 'the lead in in the struggle of the working masses for their daily needs, the factory cell should guide them forward to the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship'.[105]

1.5 Perceptions of the strategy and party responses

To those concerned about the development of communism in Britain the party's industrial strategy was cause for alarm, and many observers were keen to discuss it. Ironically, although the party was never secretive about its politics, it was often perceived to be 'infiltrating' unions. These accusations were always a 'slander' that the party was quick to repudiate and, particularly after the Second World War, the CP was keen to present itself as the very epitome of British democracy.[106] The party continually responded to these observations by being transparent in their union interventions; the entire point of the strategy was to build the party's presence in the unions, and so being subversive would be futile. In July 1929, for example, Pollitt was publicly keen to demonstrate 'why we work inside the unions and how we are getting a foothold inside them'.[107] By 1955 Pollitt had reminded party members that they were obliged to 'set an example' in their trade union work; that they should uphold democracy within the unions by their willingness to 'stand for periodic elections'; and that they should strive to be 'the best leaders' in their trade union work.[108] The CP's own educational guide from 1959

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[102] Holland, *Let Nothing Divide Us, op.cit.,*6.
[103] Although a revolution had been abandoned some years earlier.
[104] Allen, Vic, *Militant Trade Unionism,* (Yorkshire: the Moor Press, 1981), 165.
[105] 'Instructions for Communist Fractions in workers' organisations and bodies outside the party', 21 February 1924, from Jane Degras' edited volume, p66, available at:
http://marxists.anu.edu.au/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf
[106] Campbell, JR, *New Ways: Communist Policies for Trade Unions,* (London: CP, 1963).
[107] Pollitt, Harry, 'The Only Way: work inside the unions', *Daily Worker,* 19 July 1929.
[108] Pollitt, Harry, 'How Communists Champion the Unions', *Daily Worker,* 7 September 1955. Although this did not happen in the Electrical Trades' Union, as we will see, the extent to which the CP was aware of the ballot rigging is dubious.

acknowledged that 'the CP does not deny that it endeavours to influence the policy of the trade unions'. [109]

But the party's open approach did not stop the accusations about its intentions, particularly prevalent during the Cold War. Sir Percival Griffiths, a former Indian civil servant, saw three purposes to the CP's industrial strategy. The first had a theoretical basis: 'the proletariat is to be the Marxist army'; the second was practical as 'unions count for a great deal in the formation of the policy of the Labour party'; and the third was Soviet-prescriptive; 'Soviet foreign policy demands that that communists should be able to hamper industrial production in industrial production in the democratic countries'. [110] Such concern was embedded amongst even respected organisations, and in 1949 the Trade Union Congress (TUC) claimed that:

Leaders of the CP have never regarded the trade union movement as a means of organising workers for either the protection of those workers, or to improve their standard of living. The so-called 'intellectuals' of the CP regard trade unions as being instruments for the development of 'mass struggle' to be used as a means of seizing political power. Once political power is achieved, then political power will be snatched away.[111]

These concerns were substantiated by a network of dissidents, who were keen to tell anybody who would listen what the party's illicit tactics were. Bob Darke, a former councillor for the party in Hackney, suggested that the party 'acts like a mole' and that it infiltrated the unions subversively. [112] Vic Feather, the future general secretary of the TUC, noted how communists at one branch meeting wasted enough time to make sure that the last bus was about to leave, which allowed the election of a communist to the union's annual conference. [113] Eric Wigham, in his 1961 analysis of what was wrong with the unions, was particularly concerned about the 'rise' of communists in the NUM; he worried that wage militancy, designed only to further the communist concern with the policy of the Soviet Union, forced non-communists on the left into militancy, to try and curtail the CP's power. [114] The extent to which these sort of claims damaged the party on the ground is negligible; trade unionists were mostly able to separate their local communist leader from Russia and its increasingly associated tyranny. For example William Pearson, of the Durham Miners' Association, was able to 'give credit where it is due'

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[109] 'Trade Union Educational Facilities', 1959, CP/CENT/MATH/05/02.
[110] Griffiths, *Changing Face op.cit.,* 199.
[111] 'Defend Trade Union Rights', May 1949,17.
[112] Darke, *Communist Techniques, op.cit.*, 51.
[113] Griffiths, P, *The Changing Face, op.cit.* 198.
[114] Wigham, Eric, *What's wrong with the unions?* (London: Penguin, 1961), 128.

noting that although 'the Soviet Union was a dictatorship', the communists that Pearson worked with 'are the most disciplined in our movement, and have worked very hard for a number of years in fighting the cause of the worker'. [115]

1.6 Perceptions of Strength

By the 1970s the perception of the party's industrial strength was often noted, amongst both the party and observers: the extent to which this had any accuracy will be considered throughout the thesis. Interestingly, however, boasts about the CP's potency in industry always emanated from those within the party, rather than party members who were actually situated in workplaces and unions. Bert Ramelson, the party's industrial organiser from 1965-1977, believed that 'the CP can float an idea early in the year. It goes onto the trade union conferences in the form of a resolution and it can become official Labour Party policy by the autumn. A few years ago we were on our own, but not now'.[116] In 1970, Ramelson had no qualms about boasting to The *Times* that 'we've never had a greater influence. Our ideas are getting generally accepted after a shorter and shorter period'. [117]Gollan was delighted to see the wave of militancy that gripped British industry between 1966 and 1974, scribbling in his private notes that the quantity of strikes was evidence that the party's industrial efforts 'had started to see fruit late 60s and early 70s'.[118]   By 1974 Dave Priscott, the party's Yorkshire district secretary, also believed that the CP had been the catalyst for the Labour party's move to the left, seeing the party as 'the 'decisive factor' in the success of 'left policy resolutions' at the Labour party conference, the success stemming from the party's work in trade unions. [119]

It was not only the communists who believed themselves to be in control in the factories and workplaces of Britain and by the early 1970s many newspapers had begun to comment on the extent of the communist penetration of the unions. The *Financial Times* believed that 'communists within the union are making an open attempt to wreck democracy. Of course there are no "reds under the beds" now, because they are all openly stating their views in public'.[120] The same newspaper also claimed that four specific regions of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), South Wales, Scotland, Derbyshire and Kent, had been 'communist

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[115] Fishman, *Communists in the Coalfield, op.cit.* 106.
[116] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.,* 389.
[117] Beckett, *British Communism, op.cit.,* 178.
[118] Notes in preparation for a lecture at Wortley Hall, undated, 1, CP/CENT/GOLL/05/01
[119] Priscott, Dave, 'The Communist Party and the Labour Party', *Marxism Today,* January 1974, 9.
[120] 'Communist Intervention in Pay Dispute Condemned', *Financial Times*, 1974, 1, CP/CENT/GOLL/05/01.

strongholds for years'.[121] Following the 1974 election, the right-wing 'Aims of Industry' group warned that the communists wanted to 'destroy the system under which we live'.[122]The *News of the World* reported that Ramelson was keen to 'foster strikes and strife' and that this was extended to encouraging unions to 'walk off the job' in pursuit of other unions' grievances.[123] The *Daily Telegraph* worried that 'the CP is leading extremists in their attempt to penetrate trade unions, manipulate industrial power and overthrow the democratic system'.[124]

The perception of communist strength in Britain's unions even became a matter of concern for the Catholic Church; Cardinal Heenan urged Catholics in unions to attend all branch meetings because 'the militants never miss a meeting'.[125] Concern about communist union activities also transcended the two dominant political parties, somewhat ironic when Labour was the subject of the communists' endeavours. Norman Tebbit, a member of Margaret Thatcher's cabinet between 1981 and 1987, suggested that the conservative's defeat in the 1974 general election was the result of 'a tiny minority of communists and leftists trying to overthrow a legally elected government'.[126]Nigel Lawson, also in Thatcher's cabinet and the Secretary of State for Energy, painstakingly listed communist shop stewards and members of union executives in The *Times,* in the process inadvertently giving the communists more kudos than their rivals by saying that 'Trotskyists are insignificant amateurs, compared with the highly organised and well-entrenched Moscow-inspired CP'.[127] Wilson viewed Ramelson as 'the most dangerous man in Britain'.[128] It is worth briefly pausing to reflect on this comment; the industrial organiser of what was by all accounts a politically weak party was held to be *the* most dangerous man in the country by the Prime Minister of Britain. For both the party and its concerned contemporaries, there appeared to be no better breeding ground for communists in industry than in the NUM.

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[121] 'British Communism: how the Party Gains its Strength', *Financial Times*, 8 March 1972, 1, CP/CENT/RAM/02/01. The fact that this article was found in Ramelson's papers shows that he was interested in the perception of the party's industrial interventions.
[122] Beckett, *British CP, op.cit.,* 180.
[123] *News of the World,* 29 October 1972.
[124] Beckett, *British CP, op.cit.,* 180.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Tebbit, Norman, *Upwardly Mobile,* (London: Pluto 1982), 136.
[127] Beckett, *British CP, op.cit.,* 178.
[128] Wilson, *A Personal Record, op.cit.,* 250.

1.7 The CP and the NUM

The NUM was in many ways an exceptional example, and so it provides a good case study through which to explore communist industrial politics. The conditions of the industry, which have been well-documented already and so do not need repeating here, theoretically created the ideal breeding ground for the kind of politicisation that the CP hoped to achieve. [129]The structure of the industry could be viewed as a case-study of all that Marx had said; men toiling in a dangerous, demanding job, often for low pay, whilst the industry's network of private owners profited. [130] The evidence suggests that were was, theoretically, plenty of potential for the ideology of communism to be intoxicating to the miners; in 1924 for example, 1,400 colliery owners owned Britain's 2,481 pits and, because just 323 owners monopolised 84 percent of the total output, job insecurity was rife. [131] This weakened miners' chances to do much about their situation. Of course, the CP was constantly able to compare this situation with the more congenial and civilised situation of Soviet miners. But the situation of the British miners presented opportunity for the CP's industrial strategy and, just three years after the CP had been formed, the party reckoned that the miners were the 'most advanced section of the working class'. [132] By 1925 the party noted the particularity about the mining industry that might give rise to support for communism and a factory building guide suggested that:

Their conditions are bad, and obviously bad. They are largely free from the distracting influences of the cities. Their time is not so broken up, as it is with workers who live in the big cities, by the long journeys and the many varieties of amusement the big cities provide….their minds are more fallow. The fact of exploitation is very obvious to them….the pits themselves, provide opportunities for instance contact and the development of the sense of solidarity amongst them. [133]

The general strike of 1926 rapidly, if temporarily, swelled the party's membership from 4,900 members to 11,271 by the end of the strike. [134] Moreover, although this figure had decreased to 9000 members by January 1927, by March 1927 the CP could still count more than half of its total membership as being drawn from mining; in Tyneside for example 86 percent of the

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[129] At the National Mining Museum in Wakefield, there is the opportunity to go down into a mine: although this does not provide a reflection of what working in one must have been like, it does give a sense of the environment.

[130] For a study of the sense of community and cohesion within a pit or even geographical area, see Outram, Quentin, 'Class Warriors: the Coal Owners' in *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout*, edited by McIlroy, J, Campbell, A and Gildart, K (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2009), pp. 107-137.

[131] Allen, Vic, *Militancy of British Miners*, (Shipley: The Moor Press, 1981), 13.

[132] Edwards, Ness, 'The situation in the mining industry', *The Labour Monthly,* 5, July-December 1923, 87.

[133] Morgan, Kevin, Cohen, Gidon and Flinn, Andrew, *Communists and British Society 1920-1991,* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), 63.

[134] Thorpe, A, 'Membership of the CPGB' ,*op.cit.*, 787.

district's members were miners. [135] Thus the Comintern recognised this disproportion as a potential area for growth and instructed the CP to correct this balance by recruiting in other 'basic industries'. [136] The CP enjoyed a strong presence across the industry before it was nationalised; the United Mineworkers of Scotland (UMS), a CP-led dissident union, had 3,000 members and was the area in which Abe Moffat cut his teeth. [137] In South Wales Arthur Horner was the President and also Chairman of the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) from 1936. [138] The CP-mining relationship was not just confined to the big names of the industry; some leaders of the South Wales Miners' Unofficial Reform Committee joined the party when it was formed. [139]

The sense that mining was crucial to the CP achieving its objective remained after the Second World War and by 1945 the industry had the second-highest number of block votes at the Labour party conference. [140] Moreover, by 1947, Horner could say that the miners had a 'high political consciousness'. [141] The industry, nationalised in 1947, had an exceptionally high unofficial strike rate; in the first 11 months of 1965 there were 700 strikes.[142] Although eighty percent of these unofficial strikes were confined to three coalfields, they were damaging and between 1956 and 1962 they had cost the National Coal Board (NCB) £25 million in lost coal. [143] The strikes also spread quickly and increased rapidly, from 1,637 in 1951 to 2,365 in 1952.[144] Along with South Wales and, later, Yorkshire, it was in Scotland where much of this unofficial militancy was concentrated in the post-war period. For example in Scotland between April 1947 and April 1948 there were not enough days in the year to accommodate the area's 374 unofficial strikes. [145] The miners' willingness to strike, albeit unofficially, indicated that there was discontent but, to be effective in the way that the CP wanted, this militancy needed to be harnessed effectively; there was no national strike in the industry between 1926 and 1972. The problem was that this was grassroots militancy, lacking the organisation or support from

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[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Jupp, *The Radical Left, op.cit.,* 179.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Fishman, *Communists in the Coalfields, op.cit.,* 93.
[140] Howell, David, 'Shut your Gob! The trade unions and the Labour Party', in A Campbell, J McIlroy and N Fishman, *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: the post-war consensus, 1945-64,* (London: Ashgate, 1999), 119.
[141] Horner, Arthur, 'Coal and the miners', *Labour Monthly,* January 1947, 14.
[142] Allen, *Militant Trade Unionism,* 102.
[143] Joint National Negotiating Committee Digest of Mr J Crawford's Reply to the Claims of the NUM for Increased Pay and Shorted Hours, 17 January 1962, 1, CP/CENT/IND/12/10.
[144] Heinemann, Margot, 'Mines and the Coal Board', *World News and Views,* Vol33, No 20, 23 May 1953.
[145] 'Scots' Miners' Chief Hits Out At Warmongers', *Daily Worker,* 9 June 1947.

union leaders to become national. Moreover NUM officials, including communists, enjoyed good relations with NCB officials until the late 1960s; Will Paynter, general secretary of the union between 1959 and 1968, considered that he and Horner were both 'good friends' with Jim Bowman, chairman of the NCB between 1956 and 1961. [146]

The NUM provides a good case study through which to analyse the CP's post-war industrial strategy for four main reasons: the first is that by 1945 communism had something of a historic a presence in the industry, particularly in Scotland and South Wales; the second is that mining was an industry where the party was perceived to be both ubiquitous and nefarious; thirdly, mining had particular structural difficulties that might show how the party could adapt its strategy; and finally, both the CP and the mining industry ended the Second World War in a position of optimism, but by 1985 both were irreparably divided. The NCB started the first day of 1947, when the industry was formed, presiding over 1,000 pits and 700,000 miners. [147] Nationalisation also achieved what the CP had been continually trying to implement in mining; the NUM was, at least in name, a single union. [148] One of the CP's biggest criticisms of the MFGB had been that there was a lack of unity; a 'far-reaching reconstruction' was needed, which would mean that 'there must be a general levelling process, until every worker in the industry can become a direct members on the same terms, whether he lives in Scotland, Yorkshire, Wales or Kent'. [149] The perceptions of the CP's influence and presence in industry, which was outlined above, is more surprising because of the change that it represents. By 1968 the NUM was 'the model Marxist-Labour alliance'.[150] But in the early 1950s, as Michael Crick recounts, one pioneering communist in the NUM struggled to get anybody to second his motion supporting nurses' pay rises. [151] Frank Watters, the CP's industrial organiser dispatched to

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[146] See Ackers, Peter, and Payne, Jonathan, 'Before the Storm: The Experience of Nationalization and the Prospects for Industrial Relations Partnership in the British Coal Industry, 1947-1972 - Rethinking the Militant Narrative', *Social History*, 27:2. 2002, pp 184-209 for details. Before taking this position, Paynter had already had a distinguished past, both in the party and the union: he had fought in Spain, and been on the Executive Council of the SWMF. See
http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=453:will-bill-paynter&catid=16:p&Itemid=119
[147] For a detailed discussion of the new NCB, see Fishman, N, 'The beginning of the beginning: the NUM and nationalisation', in *Miners, Unions and Politics, op.cit.,* 274.
[148] The CP had complained about multi-unionism before the NUM was nationalised. See Horner, Arthur, *Trade Unions and Unity*, April, 1937, for example.
[149] 'The Miners' Fight', National Minority Movement, U/D, 7. See also 'The Miners' Next Task', 1928, CP/CENT/IND/10/1.
[150] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy op.cit.,* 403.
[151] Crick, Michael, *Scargill and the Miners,* (London: Penguin, 1984), 12.

Yorkshire in 1953, arrived to find no 'cohesive left organisation', and in fact a left that was completely isolated and only three communists on the 136-delegate area council. [152]

Coalmining also provides an excellent case study through which to study the CP's strategy because from being the embodiment of Attlee's post-war 'new dawn', just ten years later the industry was in severe financial difficulty, with a five million pound drop in profit between 1956 and 1957. [153] One of the questions that this thesis will address is how the party adapted its industrial strategy to reflect this changing context. The human impact of the contraction was brutal and between 1958 and 1961 130,000 men lost their jobs, whilst numerous others migrated to more buoyant industries; it needs to be remembered that this was an industry that, just a decade earlier, was suffering a crippling recruitment shortage. [154]By 1964 the unemployment situation was serious enough for Abe Moffat to note that, were it not for the compulsory retirement and migration that the NCB had implemented, then the unemployment in the mining industry would 'be back at the level of the hungry thirties'. [155]

But it was not just unemployment that threatened to undermine the cohesion of the national union; structural problems added to this. Even when it was nationalised the union lacked any genuine sense of unity, largely retaining its autonomous and federal nature, and it was split across some 20 areas. [156] The union's complex pay structure also made the CP's attempts to use wage militancy effectively difficult, as it required unity. Wages in the industry were based around a pit basic and also a complex price list, with additions or deductions, piece rates, and allowances for 'special conditions'.[157] In 1952, when a commission was set up to investigate the pay structure of coalmining, 6,500 different jobs were found, all similar in nature but with slightly different titles. [158] The CP had been pondering how to overcome this problem since the early 1920s, when district wages' boards determined the wage settlement for each coalfield, making national action difficult to achieve. [159]But, as we will see in more detail in chapter four, nationalisation did not resolve this perennial problem; in April 1953, for example, Pollitt was able to point out that Durham miners earned three shillings more per shift

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[152] Watters, Frank, *Being Frank: the memoirs of Frank Watters,* (London: 1992), 14.

[153] June 1957, CP/CENT/MTH/04/05.

[154] 'Debate on the Coal Industry', 1 November 1961, CP/CENT/IND/12/10,.

[155] Moffatt, Abe, 'White Papers, or Real Plans?', *Labour Monthly,* December 1964.

[156] See Crick, M *Scargill op.cit.,* for a detailed study of the structure of the union.

[157] Jencks, Clive, 'British Coal: Labour Relations Since Nationalisation', *Industrial Relations: a journal of economy and society,* 6:1, October 1966, pp 95-110, 97.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Edwards, Ness, 'The Situation in the Mining Industry', *The Labour Monthly,* 5, July-December 1923, 93.

than their colleagues in Scotland and Lancashire, despite the area producing less coal. [160] In the Armthorpe strike of 1955 Doncaster 'flying pickets' travelled to West Yorkshire to show their colleagues how poorly paid they were, only to find that the West Yorkshire miners were actually worse off.[161]

1.8 Self-identification

There was obvious potential for conflict for those individuals who occupied the dual role of CP member and trade unionist; where, if pushed, did their loyalty lie? Paynter identified himself and Horner as trade unionists before communists and dealt with any potential conflict by 'acting as a communist who has accepted that his primary obligation is to the interest of the union and its members'. [162] Communists often chose their union duties before party careers; Horner, for example, replaced Pollitt as CP industrial organiser in October 1925 when Pollitt and others were imprisoned, but he relinquished this position in favour of his election to the SWMF Executive shortly after. [163] This meant that, whilst their communist politics was often not a barrier to their union work (although it did provide opportunities for criticism), it also meant that their politics was largely inconsequential. Thus even when individuals like Bert Wynn from Derbyshire left the party, his defection was, by all accounts, barely recognisable in his trade union work, allowing him to continue to enjoy amicable relations with communists in the area. [164]

Communists knew that the NUM membership, to whom they were ultimately accountable, could remove them: Jock Kane, the erstwhile NUM executive member from the Yorkshire area, found this out to his cost when he was removed from his lodge branch for opposing strike action. [165] There is an element of cynicism regarding communist trade unionists' intentions that has been suggested in the existing literature; Dewar believes that, more than just being in step with the union machinery in terms of policy decisions, even

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[160] Pollitt, Hary, *What do miners need?,* August 1953, 4.

[161] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 16.

[162] Paynter, Will, *My Generation,* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), 109.

[163] Fishman, Nina, 'Horner and Hornerism', in McIlroy, John, Morgan, Kevin and Campbell, Alan, *Party People, Communist Lives: Explorations in Biography*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2001), 127.

[164] Stevens, Richard, 'Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism in the Trade Unions', *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: the post-war compromise, 1945-64,* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp 168-192, 176.

[165] Kane had a brother, Mick, who was also in the party and the NUM: there seems to be less recorded about him. Kane had joined the CP aged 15 in 1922, and never relinquished his membership, despite victimisation. He also progressed up the union, punctuated by a three-year spell working for the NCB. See http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=320:jock-kane&catid=11:k&Itemid=112

communists were motivated by the fact that sitting in the union office was better than going down the pit and so were likely to dilute their own politics if it made them accountable to the members, on whose support their seat in office depended. [166] The extent to which this was true is of course difficult to measure: but men like Horner and Paynter were noted for their integrity and some, such as communist dissident Lawrence Daly, remained working miners even when they occupied high-level union office. It was often the harsh environment of mining that often instilled in erstwhile communist trade unionists their politics.[167] Through their experiences, they entered the union to advance the position of the workers that they represented, and their political convictions provided further evidence of why the need to change the miners' position was necessary. This was particularly the case with the first generation of mining communist trade unionists, many of whom experienced blacklisting following the general strike: Kane was forced to move to Yorkshire from Scotland as he was unemployable after 1926. [168] To the CP, however, the dominance of an individual's union position was not a problem. Pollitt commented that 'when Abe Moffat spoke at the United Mineworkers of Scotland (UMS) congress it was a good statement from a miner, but not a political statement from the party'. [169] The reason why the party realised it was shrewd to let trade unionists prioritise this position, without detriment to the party, was that members of the party's industrial department were chosen for their 'communist understanding of the work as a whole', not because they were experts about any particular industry. [170] In the middle, designed to link these two groups, were the party organisers, men like Watters, who identified himself as a 'professional revolutionary'. [171] In theory, the CP had structured itself with a strong and loyal union base, supported by a dedicated and directed party unit. But in reality, the impact of this organisation was that communist trade unionists were more knowledgeable about particular industries than their communist leaders in King Street.[172] The CP could not have been alert to this problem, however, because they took their lead from Russia, whose leaders instructed:

WHEN OUR PARTY MEMEBERS BECOME TRADE UNION OFFICIALS THERE IS A TENDENCY TO SOMETIMES SAY: 'NOW THAT YOU ARE A COMMUNIST TRADE

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[166] Dewar, H, *Communist Politics, op.cit*, 33.A similar claim was made some years later by Tony Lane in *Marxism Today,* where it was received controversially.
[167] A similar pattern occurred much later, for some. Both Joe Whelan and Jack Collins joined the CP after they were already in union office. See their respective interviews, held at the South Wales' Miners' Library (SWML), AUD 109 and AUD 126.
[168] See Allen, *Militancy,* 17, *op.cit.,* for example.
[169] Campbell, A, and McIlroy, J, 'Miner Heroes', *Party People, op.cit.,* 172.
[170] Dewar, H, *Communist Politics, op.cit.,* 32.
[171] Watters, F, *Frank, op.cit.,* 13.
[172] Beckett, F, *British CP, op.cit.,* 174.

UNION OFFICIAL YOU MUST DO AS WE LAY DOWN, AND EVERY PART OF OUR POLICY MUST BE PUT INTO OPERATION. Comrades, this is an impossible attitude towards trade union officials who are Communists. We must not put the comrades in an impossible position. This attitude will lose influence for the Party. If a comrade's influence as a trade union official is to be at least practical value, he has to keep himself down on the earth, and be practical. He must deal with the things that the workers want, leading them step by step. As we try to influence the Left trade union official towards Communism, so the Communist union official must try and influence the rank and file and Left officials towards Communism by practical steps. We have to be very flexible with our policy, we have got to be tolerant, because every worker does not reason alike. THE WORKING CLASS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THINKING AS COMMUNISTS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE PREPARED TO ELECT COMMUNISTS TO OFFICIAL POSITIONS. A COMMUNIST TRADE UNION OFFICIAL, LOADED UP WITH DETAILS, WHO EVEN DRIFTS AWAY FROM THE PARTY LINE, SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED BECAUSE OF THIS ALONE AS A HOPELESS RIGHTWINGER. [173]

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[173] Hyman and Hinton, *Trade Unions, op.cit.,* 67. (Caps in original).

II Literature Review

2.0 Studying the CP and the NUM

Chapter one broadly outlined the historical context of the CP, before considering the rationale for choosing the NUM as a case study. There are clear similarities between the CP and the NUM. Although 1945 brought reasons to be optimistic about the future, by the 1980s both organisations had imploded into civil war, largely the result of profound differences of strategy. As a historical topic there are also similarities, and historians of both organisations have in some ways been compelled to defend the organisation that they are studying. Peter Ackers, particularly, has rejected the claim of many scholars, who say that the industrial relations of the coal industry has been over-worked.[174] When the industry was nationalised on 'Vesting Day' (1 January 1947) the NCB became Europe's biggest employer.[175] Therefore the history of the NUM is a nucleus of many various currents, which affected many people in various ways. This review of the existing literature adopts a thematic approach, and is intended to be broad. It also purposefully excludes some areas which have been read in the preparation of this thesis, but have been deemed at the periphery of this research area. For example, I have excluded the literature around the 'New Left' and 1956, and the intricate divides within the party from the later-1970s.[176] I have also excluded the broader histories of the NUM, particularly those which include discussions of the social and cultural history of mining, and the strike.[177]

2.1 Why communist history?

This is perhaps a more difficult question to answer; the CP was never anywhere near the size of the NUM. But the CP warrants historical attention because it encapsulates many currents of modern British history and, as Kevin Morgan has put it, the study of the party provides 'a

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[174] Ackers, Peter, 'Life after Death: mining history without a coal industry', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations,* 1, 159-70, 1996.

[175] Pendleton, Andrew, 'The Evolution of Industrial Relations in the UK Nationalised Industries', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 35:2, June 1997, pp 145-172, 150.

[176] Although I am interested in the divides within the CP. See Buckley, Sheryl Bernadette, 'Division British Communism? Televising the Decline of the CPGB', *British Politics,* 9, December 2014. One of the best depictions of the problems of 1956 is Alison McLeod's *The Death of Uncle Joe* (London: Merlin, 1997).

[177] Although this is something that I am interested in. See Buckley, Sheryl Bernadette, 'The Police, the State and the Judiciary in the miners' strike: observations and discussions, thirty years on', *Capital and Class,* accepted for publication April 2014.

window onto British society'.[178] In some ways, perhaps the interest in British communism is generated because of what it did not, rather than what it did, achieve. Harriet Jones's imagery of the party as a 'Marxist dog that didn't bark' is in many ways an accurate perception. [179] The 43rd Congress, which was mentioned in chapter one, was a disappointing end for what was, as Callaghan has noted, 'the most important political phenomenon of the twentieth century'; although it was noted for 'its monsters, rather than the monsters that it set out to slay'. [180] Is there a morbid curiosity associated with studying the CP, a party that was known to have disintegrated after just 71 years of existence, arguably leaving little in the way of a tangible legacy to British politics and society? A.J.P Taylor suggested so, arguing that the study of CP history is something of a 'bizarre fascination', beyond which 'none of it mattered'. [181] At their most derisory, the party's critics could dismiss the CP as 'an insect of little consequence'; but, as we have seen, even hostile observers such as The *Times* perceived the communists to be a 'continual menace' industrially. [182]

We have already established the perceptions of the party's industrial presence in chapter one; is this, then, the motivation, perhaps even justification, for the scholarly attention that is out of proportion to a party that was perennially on the fringe of British politics? John McIlroy and Alan Campbell have suggested that the CP occupies a place in history only because of its trade union work.[183] There is certainly a clear paradox to be explored, of a party that appeared to be disproportionately strong in one area of its work, yet weak in all others. As Andrew Thorpe has argued, membership levels are 'one of the key criteria that can be applied to test the vitality or otherwise' of a political party. [184] The CP's membership only ever improved in reactionary circumstances, and then only briefly; for example, during the General Strike and also in response to the Nazi's invasion of the Soviet Union. But, as we have seen, the CP's presence in industry allowed it to claim that it dominated unions, and thus that its industrial strategy was working. But it was not until the mid-1990s that historians began to suggest that

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[178] Morgan, Kevin 'The Archives of the British Communist Party: a Historical Overview', *Twentieth Century British History,* 7:3, 1996, pp 404-421.

[179] Jones, Harriet, 'Is CPGB history important?', Conference Report, *Labour History Review,* Vol 67, No 3, December 2002 pp. 347-352. McIlroy and Campbell took serious objection with many of her assertions; see McIlroy, John, and Campbell, Alan, 'Is CPGB History Important? A reply to Harriet Jones', *Labour History Review,* 68:3, December 2003, pp.387-390.

[180] Callaghan, *Dutt, op.cit.,* 7.

[181] A.J.P Taylor, cited in Morgan, *Archives, op.cit.,* pp 404 -421.

[182] *The Times* cited by Callaghan, John, *Cold War, Conflict and Crisis,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2003), 237.

[183] McIlroy and Campbell, 'Histories of the CP: a user's guide', *Labour History Review,* 68:1, April 2003, 34.

[184] Thorpe, A, *Membership, op.cit.,* 777.

more work needed to be done on the CP's industrial efforts. As Nina Fishman stated, the party often attracted attention from 'mainstream' historians only when there was an event of significance, such as a protracted strike; all historians, Fishman argued, have ignored what the CP was doing in industry in the 'troughs and lulls'. [185] The need to dig into the history of communists in trade unions was also accompanied by a need to explore contemporary labour history: writing in 1999, McIlroy and Campbell suggested that trade unionism between 1945 and 1979 warranted further examination. [186]

2.2 Ownership of the communist past

The party's attempt to retain the jurisdiction of its own history is significant; its attempt to keep tight control demonstrates its paranoia around its self-image. The 1957 History Commission, formed in response to the demand of the party's Historians' Group following the events and mass exodus of 1956, ordered the writing of the party's history. [187] But Pollitt was in principle opposed to any history of the party 'prior to its attainment of power' and Dutt was concerned about the potentially inflammatory nature of the documents necessary to write a history of the party. [188] A history of the CP potentially gave ownership of the party's past to historians, rather than the party leadership; it represented a loss of control, in some ways. Perhaps the concern was that, should it relinquish control of its own past, it may impede its own future. Reflecting these concerns, the first volume of communist history was produced in-house, ensuring that the party could censor its own past. James Klugmann, the party's official historian and the editor of *Marxism Today*, was commissioned to produce an account that was, according to Martin Jacques, Klugmann's successor, 'essentially narrative, descriptive and often celebratory'. [189] Eric Hobsbawn, himself a historian who was also in the CP, was less diplomatic, suggesting that the work was not befitting of an 'extremely able and lucid man', suggesting that Klugmann was 'paralysed by being both a good historian and loyal functionary'. [190] But Klugmann was in an almost impossible position; he was in the unenviable

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[185] Fishman, Nina, 'No Home but the Trade Union Movement: communist activists and 'reformist' leaders, 1926-56', in Andrews, Geoff, Fishman, Nina, and Morgan, Kevin, *Opening the Books: essays on the social and cultural history of the British Communist Party,* (Pluto: London, 1995), pp 102-123, 102.

[186] McIlroy and Campbell, 'Still Setting the Pace? Labour history, industrial relations and the history of post-war trade unionism', *Labour History Review,* 64:2, Summer 1999, 180.

[187] See Robinson, Emily, 'New Times, New Politics: history and memory during the final years of the CPGB', *British Politics,* 6:4, pp 453-478, 458.

[188] Morgan, *Archives, op. cit.,* 408.

[189] Robinson citing M Jacques, 'Why Study the History of the CP?', *Our History Journal,* 2: 1978, pp 5-8, taken from Robinson, E, *New Times, op.cit.,* 453.

[190] Hobsbawn, Eric, *Revolutionaries,* (London: Weildenfeld and Nicholson, 1973), 9.

position of being obliged to submit numerous drafts to party committees, 'with the requirement that all of them should be satisfied'. [191]

Despite these clear difficulties, Klugmann did have the advantage not afforded to Henry Pelling and Leslie Macfarlane; as much as his party card caused him problems with the writing of his book, it did provide a pass to the party archives. Until the party archives were opened, only communists could use the materials. This was an effective fort through which to keep out the critics. But it also prevented, as far as is ever possible, the writing of an objective piece of work by those not biased by their membership of, and loyalty to, their subject. Thus, without access to the party's archives, those outside the party were seriously impeded in their attempts to study it. Morgan identifies Pelling's difficulties with trying to write a history of what was a 'forbidden no man's land'. [192] Leslie Macfarlane faced immense problems when trying to research his doctoral thesis, subsequently the controversial book. [193] Paradoxically although the party was committed to a democratic parliamentary methodology from 1951, and although it had always been overt in its union interventions, the construction of its own history remained one area where it retained the subversive and clandestine image that its critics had constructed for it. This issue continued, even when it was led by an arguably more 'progressive' leadership. Even when the party appointed an archivist, George Matthews, from the late 1970s, access remained restricted. McIlroy and Campbell argued that, until the 1980s, party histories were a reflux of the party line. [194] Even in 1991, one PhD study into party branch life opened its methodology section with a detailed discussion into the problems of studying a party with no archive access. [195]

2.3 Transparency

The end of the party in 1991 also marked the end of the communists' monopolisation of its own history. Aware that once the party ended there would be no CP left to control or manipulate the historical construction of the party, a month before the 43rd Congress the CP held a conference to encourage an open debate about the party's history. [196] Once the CP had ended, however, some former members were able to adopt a more objective stance. By 1992 Willie

[191] Robinson (*op.cit.,*) citing Monty Johnstone, 'What kind of CP?', *Our History Journal,* 4:1979, pp 5-9.
[192] Morgan, *Archives, op.cit.,* 404.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Campbell and McIlroy, *Histories, op.cit.,* 41.
[195] Gabbidon, Michelle, 'Party Life: an examination of branch life in the CPGB between the wars', unpublished PhD Thesis, 1991.
[196] For a commentary on the conference, see Hopkins, S, *The CPGB, op.cit.*

Thompson's *The Good Old Cause* benefitted from Thompson's long-term membership of the party, which allowed him to prosecute a comprehensive appraisal of British communism. But not all former comrades were able to be as critically objective and in 1997 there was one final attempt by Noreen Branson, who had been in the party and had been appointed Klugmann's successor, to present a favourable construction of the communist past; her *History of the CPGB 1941-1951* is a sanitised account, especially when compared to Thompson's more frank account. [197] Once the party's archives were made available, there was the opportunity for the party to be studied from a more academic position. It was not until 2003 that a more robust history was presented in Callaghan's *Cold War, Crisis and Conflict 1951-1968*. [198]Lawrence and Wishart, the party's official publishing house responsible for all the volumes, was at this juncture able to report a 'much better access to archives and the views of party members' which was written 'from a more critical position than previous titles in the series'.[199] This example was followed by the Geoff Andrews's 'final years' of British Communism, *Endgames and New Times,* which developed some themes from Andrews's PhD thesis; both of which conveyed an objectivity missing in the earlier histories.[200] Both of these two books further elucidate the flaws and subjectivity in the Klugmann and Branson works. The opening up of the archives allowed scholars to consult, utilise and even present the very documents to which only loyal party functionaries had been privy; thus Callaghan and Ben Harker were able to write a comprehensive history of the party, presenting excerpts of these documents and making them further accessible. [201]

2.4 Debates

Even when the party ceased to exist, the writing of the communist past has proved to be controversial. The best part of the party's final two decades were characterised by profound strategic divisions, and so there is an inevitability that the CP's historical legacy would be one of bitter sectarianism; ironically, even the protagonists of the sectarianism noticed it. Jones suggested that party histories were mostly only written by 'party members/fellow travellers

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[197] See Branson, *History of the CPGB, op.cit.* Branson had also written a volume covering the years 1927 to 1941, which was published in 1985.

[198] See Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.* Both Callaghan and Andrews had been, at some point, in the CP.

[199] This quote is from E Robinson, *op.cit.,* 473, and she cites and provides the reference to Lawrence and Wishart's description of Callaghan's book, here:
http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/books/archive/coldwar_crisis_conflict.html

[200] See Andrews, Geoff, 'Culture, Ideology and the Strategy of the CPGB 1964-79', unpublished PhD, Kingston University, 2002.

[201] See Callaghan, John, and Harker, Ben, *British Communism: A Documentary History,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

and Trotskyists', the conflict between the two having not been resolved in 1989 and so was fought out through historical study. [202] Hobsbawn, writing in 1971, suggested that CP history was invariably written from one of two perspectives; the 'sectarian' and the 'witch-hunting,' with apparently nothing in between.[203] But both of these 'schools' were afflicted by the same incapacitating problem; they were unable to 'stand at a sufficient distance from the polemics and schisms within the movement'. [204]

These debates were actively contested through academic outlets. Jones had organised a conference around CP history, and some of the contributors continued their debates across the pages of *Labour History Review,* for months after the original conference, until the journal finally ceased to print anymore correspondence. The debates eventually descended into vehement debates about the CP's ideology, structure and strategy. Nina Fishman's work proved especially controversial, and she separated historians into two camps: revisionists (who believe that Russia was the primary determinant of the CP's policies in Britain) and essentialists (who view the CP as loyal to Moscow, but also believe that it had a certain amount of latitude). [205] McIlroy and Campbell took serious objection with many of her assertions, both regarding the lack of empiricism in Fishman's evidence, and also alleging that those who disagreed with Fishman were purposefully excluded from the conference. [206] The debate extended to those historians who neither originally attended or were apparently involved. Keith Laybourn defended McIlroy and Campbell who, he said, had been curtailed in their ability to reply by the space permitted to their reply in the journal. [207] It appears then that even when it ceased to exist, the party had the ability to divide opinion; the difference being that historians, now armed with the party archives, could use them to deride each other's position.

2.5 The CP and the Soviet Union.

Fishman's attempt to divide historians of the CP into two groups had been met with controversy, not least from McIlroy and Campbell, but also by Laybourn, who rejected any point in 'labelling' these positions. [208] But subsequently historians have been broadly divided into three different positions. Andrew Thorpe has offered the most comprehensive synthesis of

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[202] Jones, H, *History op.cit.,* 348.
[203] Hobsbawn, *Revolutionaries, op.cit.,pp.* 9-11.
[204] Hobsbawn, *Revolutionaries, op.cit.,* 11.
[205] Jones, H, *History op.cit.,* 350.
[206] See McIlroy, J and Campbell, A, *Is CPGB History Important? Op.cit.*
[207] See Laybourn, Keith, 'A Peripheral Vision? A comment on the historiography of communism in Britain', *American Communist History,* 4:2, pp. 159-166.
[208] Ibid.

these positions. The first, associated with earlier historians such as Pelling, believed that individual parties were originally semi-independent, but then became 'slavish' agents of Moscow, a theory rejected by Thorpe. [209] Phillip Deery, for example, argued that 'Moscow's control over the CP continued into the post-war period….there is abundant evidence demonstrating this "useless obedience" to the Cominform position in the post-war CP records'. [210] McIlroy and Campbell suggest that the CP was subservient to a foreign state that 'prioritised its own interests and played a part in discrediting socialism'. [211] The second view, Thorpe argues, were the revisionist historians, like Stuart Macintyre, who were less concerned with the 'high politics' and more worried about what 'communists on the ground' were doing. [212]Finally Thorpe identifies the post-revisionist historians, who claim that communists were by no means puppets of Moscow, but they were inextricably linked to it. [213] There is no doubt that, as Hobsbawn has demonstrated, the Soviet Union was 'an operational necessity' for British communism. [214] A mix of all these perspectives seems the most prudent approach and is the one that this thesis has taken, in relation to these polemics.

2.6 The Cold War and industrial politics

Whilst the party's relationship with Moscow has become a matter of often vehement historical debate, to the CP's more hostile contemporaries, the perception of the CP's link with the Soviet Union often satisfied their agenda; thus there was no need to try and search for the reality of the relationship. As chapter one has demonstrated, the party's association with Soviet communism, particularly when it became Stalinist tyranny, was often an easy blow for its critics. The notion that the CP was invariably up to no good could mutate in its severity: it changed from the hysterical worry that the CP was a puppet of soviet subversion during the Cold War, to the satirical in the 1970s as television critics who, watching Roger Graef's

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[209] Thorpe, *Comintern, op.cit.*

[210] Deery, Peter, 'A Very Present Menace? Attlee, Communism and the Cold War', *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 44:1, 1998, pp 69-93, pp. 84-85.

[211] J McIlroy and A Campbell, *Histories, op.cit.,* 34.

[212] See Thorpe, *op.cit* and Macintyre, Stuart, *Little Moscows: Communists and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-war Britain,* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

[213] See Thorpe, A, *Comintern, op.cit.,* 661. For more debate on this area, before our period here, see McIlroy and Campbell, 'For a Reactionary Workers' Government: Moscow, British Communism and Revisionist Interpretations of the Third Period, 1927-1934', *European History Quarterly,* 2002, 32:535.

[214] Hobsbawn, *Revolutionaries., op.cit.,* 5.

documentary, mocked the British Communists' awe at a 'real, soviet communist appearing in their midst'. [215]

This perception caused the party its greatest problems during the Cold War and historians have debated the extent to which communist trade unionists were limited in their activities. Keith Gildart has suggested that the Cold War restricted communist activities in the unions. [216] Thompson, however, has pointed out that in industries with relatively high support for communism, to become embroiled in anti-communism might make one unpopular with one's workmates.[217] Moreover, anti-communist propaganda did not always work, for example in the NUM, where attempts to remove Abe Moffat failed, and where communist trade unionists were still elected and able to serve their members. [218] McIlroy notes that from 1947 the CP was perceived by the bulk of British society as 'the enemy within'; but whilst it suffered some losses in trade unions, the Amalgamated Engineering Union for example, it remained strong in other areas such as mining, engineering and the Fire Brigades' Union. [219]

The motivation of communist industrial interventions in the Cold War has also been discussed by historians. Pelling claims that communists 'seemed anxious to secure industrial stoppages for political purposes only'. [220] Pelling points to the dockers' strikes of 1948 and 1949 as examples where he believes that 'there is no doubt that this trouble was fomented and in several cases directly instigated by the party or by communists from overseas'. [221] This is a view also presented by Deery, who argues that instead of being infected by a 'Cold War virus' and an irrational fear of communists in industry, Clement Attlee's fears around the 'red menace', and his perception of the CP as an 'instrument of an alien dictatorship', was justified. [222] This is a view directly challenged by Robert Taylor, however, who argued that 'communists were able to exploit rank and file grievances, but they did not manufacture this discontent'. [223] Fishman adds to this view, by arguing that accusations of communist attempts at sabotage and

[215] Reviews of Graef's documentary can be found in CP/CENT/MATT/06/08. For more information on the documentary, see Buckley, *Division, op.cit.,*
[216] See Laybourn, *Peripheral Vision op., cit.*
[217] Thompson, *Good Old Cause, op cit*, 130.
[218] See Moffat, Abe, *My Life with the Miners,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965).
[219] McIlroy, John, 'Reds at Work: Communist factory organisation in the Cold War', *Labour History Review,* 65:2, (2000), pp 181-201, 181.
[220] Pelling, H, *History, op.cit.,* 218.
[221] Pelling, H, *History, op.cit.,* 44.
[222] See Deery, *A Very Present Menace, op.cit*. Deery mostly uses the dockers' strike as an example of his position.
[223] Taylor, Robert, *The Trade Union Question in British Politics: government and union since 1945,* (Oxford: Cowley, 1995), 44.

subversion, designed to unravel 'the very fabric of British society' as part of the Cold War, were inaccurate and lacking in evidence. [224]

2.7 The link between King Street and coalfield communists

To what extent were communists in industry perceived as synonymous with the agents of Soviet misery, as outlined above, and what was the link between these people and the CP itself, in the existing literature? Largely, writers have concurred that the relationship between communists and their members in industry was relaxed, and that communists were elected in spite of, and not because of, their political affiliations. One of the examples to have received the most historical attention is the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) where in 1961 communists from the union leadership were found guilty in court of ballot rigging in the union. Some historians have deduced from the ETU example that these kinds of activities were prevalent amongst the party or its members in industry. Pelling, for example, uses the ETU example to argue that 'once in control, a communist group may be exceedingly difficult to dislodge, for its members, not believing in genuine political democracy, will be quite willing to subvert the union's electoral system in their own favour'. [225] Thompson suggests that the ETU militants were 'unique only in getting caught'.[226] But as Colin Barker points out, the ETU example was 'never central to the CP strategy… (and) was a temporary and foolish lapse… (it) was symptomatic of an electoral orientation'. [227] Callaghan's focus on the ballot-rigging scandal found that the party leadership were 'genuinely horrified' by what had gone on in the union.[228] This raises a clear question: if the line between the CP centre and the ETU was so loose that ballot rigging could take place without the party's knowledge, then why should we imagine that the relationship in the NUM was any tighter? The ETU had, after all, been the model communist union until 1961.[229]

As Callaghan argues, 'it was a convenient simplification to depict communist trade unionists as politically motivated robots under the central direction of King Street'.[230] Certainly, as Beckett has observed, it is unlikely that by the 1960s the party even had the

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[224] Fishman, Nina, 'No Home but the Trade Union Movement: communist activists and 'reformist' leaders, 1926-56', in *Opening the Books op. cit.,* pp102-123, 118.
[225] Pelling, H, *History, op.cit.,* 239.
[226] Thompson, Willie, *The Long Death of British Labourism,* (London: Pluto, 1993), 47.
[227] Colin Baker, quoted by Darlington and Lyddon, *Summer, op.cit.,* 29.
[228] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.* 243.
[229] Ibid. The full record of the ETU incident is documented here.
[230] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 232.

resources to control trade union leaders. [231] But it is doubtful that the party even wanted to do this; as we explored in chapter one, the party had structured itself so that trade union leaders could retain autonomy, and so that the party organisers and departments could make the decisions. Sometimes this worked well and communist trade unionists may have run on a similar agenda to the party; but, when they did not, the CP was limited in how they could challenge this. Ultimately, as the party knew, if it attempted to be directive toward its trade unionists they may well leave the party. In areas such as South Wales, where 'it is as traditional that a communist be president of the South Wales NUM as it is that the Chairman of Cheltenham Women's Institute be a Conservative', being too forceful and potentially destroying this relationship could be disastrous for the CP. [232]

This was a potential problem that transcended industries and geographies. Communist trade unionists and the party well knew that it was not their communism that had got them elected. Malcolm Pitt, a miner who joined the CP after the 1972 strike, suggests that branch delegates in Kent were elected to an extent because of their politics, but primarily because of their knowledge of their industry, their ability to be good trade unionists, and even who was well-known in the miners' social club. [233] Beckett makes this point too; trade unions were independent from the party and many leaders did not have the time to get involved in party work. [234] For the party, weak as it was in other areas, it was better to have a trade unionist who was a communist, even if the party was not controlling them, than run the risk of upsetting them by interfering in union affairs and risking them leaving the party. It was, as chapter one demonstrated, the numerical presence of communists that created the perception of strength. McIlroy shows how communist trade unionists and even their members understood the precise dynamics of this relationship, and where the boundaries lay. Tommy Coulter, from the Executive Committee of the Scottish area of the NUM by the 1970s, recalls how 'the guys in the pit didn't mind me being in the CP, provided it didn't supersede what they wanted'. [235] According to Vic Allen, it was the NEC of the NUM, not the party, which communist trade unionists should fear.[236] Communists were in union positions because they were good trade

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[231] Beckett, *CP, op.cit.,* 152.

[232] Curtis, Ben, 'A Tradition of Radicalism: the politics of the South Wales miners, 1964-84', *Labour History Review,* 76:1, April 2011, pp34-50, 40.

[233] Pitt, Malcolm, *The World on Our Backs: the Kent Miners and the 1972 miners' strike,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), 87.

[234] Beckett, *Enemy Within, op.cit.,* 175.

[235] McIlroy, John, 'Every Factory our Fortress, Part I', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations,* 10:2000, pp. 99-139, 102.

[236] Allen, *Militant, op.cit.,* 121.

unionists, not communists, as Ralph Darlington points out.[237] Upsetting the union membership and/or its executive might cost the communist trade unionist his career. There was no equivalent penalty to upsetting the CP.

Callaghan suggests that communists 'adapted to the milieu in which they operated, rather than moulded it for the party's broader purpose'. [238] Ben Curtis cites one observer from South Wales, who noticed that 'communists in South Wales found themselves in the disconcerting predicament of having become almost as respectable as an eisteddfod'. [239] Communists were elected to their union positions in spite of, rather than because of, their politics and so, argues Callaghan, 'given this dynamic, it is hardly surprising that they were tempted to keep the party's politics in the background.'[240] Roger Seifert and Tom Sibley have claimed that this was a strategic move, claiming that 'he (Ramelson) understood that…they (trade union leaders) knew better than he what was possible within their organisations'. [241]

2.8 Proving the link: evidence.

Earlier in this chapter we noted some of the issues with the access to archive materials when writing the party's history; even when they became available, however, there were issues with them. Morgan identifies the scant covering of industrial politics in the party archives until the mid-1980s, perhaps suggesting the 'conscious kicking over of some interesting traces'; as he points out, the task is to 'look elsewhere' to try and piece together fragments of information to form a cohesive whole. [242] Perhaps the evidence is in the records of the industrial advisory committees; but McIlroy has argued that by the 1960s and 1970s the CP had come to see them as more trouble than they were worth and they were simply effectively rubber-stamping already decided policies. [243] From 1965, when the party sought to reorganise its industrial apparatus, it was explicitly decided by the party that no written materials should be issued apart from 'the bare details' of meetings; but there is little to document the work of these advisories even before

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[237] Darlington, Ralph, 'Shop Stewards' leadership, left wing activism and collective workplace union organisation', *Capital and Class,* 26:1, 2002, pp 95-126, 109.
[238] Callaghan, *Paradox, op.cit.,* 721.
[239] Curtis, Ben, *The Politics of the South Wales Miners 1964-1985,* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 137. An eisteddfod is a type of Welsh cultural festival, often featuring music and dance.
[240] Callaghan, *Paradox, op.cit.,* 721.
[241] Seifert, Roger, and Sibley, Tom, *Revolutionary Communist at Work: a political biography of Bert Ramelson,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2012), 113.
[242] Morgan, Kevin, 'The Archives of the British Communist Party: a historical overview', *Twentieth Century British History,* 7:3, 1996, pp 404-421, 413.
[243] McIlroy, *Factory I, op.cit.,* 95.

this. [244]Beckett places much emphasis on the party's 'Needs of the Hour', which were essentially blueprints of the party's industrial policies; Beckett asserts that Ramelson meticulously planned from this document who would say what at TUC conferences to an amazingly detailed extent. [245] This is a view shared by Seifert and Sibley. [246] Yet these documents, when consulted, are inconspicuous A4 double-sided coloured sheets, with single sentence suggestions; generally, they repeat the mantra 'wage militancy and free collective bargaining'. Moreover neither Beckett nor Seifert and Sibley have considered what would happen if these documents were ignored: did anybody within the CP itself challenge disobedience?

2.9 Horner and the party.

Fishman's political biography of Horner is one of the few detailed biographies of communist mining leaders. Her assertion of Horner's social democratic responsibility is inarguable; Horner knew, as did the rest of the union, that the miners may well have used their strength to meet their demands.[247] They also knew that, if the NUM should be seen to be irresponsible, it would vindicate the Conservative Party's case for de-nationalising the industry when they were next elected. But the relationship between Horner the trade unionist and his party, often presented as near-breaking point by Fishman, is complex. Horner's autobiography tells us that he never allowed the party to dictate union policy to him and he saw himself as in conflict with the Labour Party, not the CP. [248]Horner repeats his support of the CP's international policy, his anti-Americanism and his support (even through the difficult years of 1956) for the Soviet Union. [249] In light of these discussions, when many communists were in turmoil about the cause to which many had dedicated much of their lives, Horner was able to say that 'I was quite convinced that the future still rested with communism'. [250]Moreover one of Fishman's other works, *Horner and Hornerism*, sets the precedent of Horner as a rebellious character, willing to contravene the party line in the interests of his union responsibility. [251] It is logical, then,

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[244] Various notes on the 'reorganisation' can be found at CP/CENT/IND/12/08.
[245] Beckett, *Enemy Within, op.cit.,* 176.
[246] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 106.
[247] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,* 191.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,*187.
[250] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,* 216-218. Horner also took a position that John Gollan would repeat in 1976, of explaining the horrors of Stalinism through the cult of the individual; 'I, like many other sincere friends of the Soviet Union, resented the worship of one man which grew up during the Stalin period', said Horner.
[251] See Fishman, 'Horner and Hornerism' in *Party People op.cit.* John Saville argued that Horner was in dispute with the industrial and political strategy of the CP in the later 1920s and early 1930s, because he opposed its 'social fascist' line. Saville characterises 'Hornerism' as an 'opposition to the establishment of revolutionary

that the character of Horner should have been well-known to Pollitt, particularly, who knew him well, but Pollitt is presented by Fishman as perplexed at having to deal with Horner's apparent intransigence, as though it was novel.

It could be suggested that Fishman makes much of some sources and examples. Fishman uses the fact that Horner chose not to publish his 1960 autobiography with Lawrence and Wishart as evidence of the gulf between him and the CP. [252] But Paynter did not choose Lawrence and Wishart either, for his autobiography. [253]There is much made of (one of many) exchanges recorded by the security services between Pollitt and Horner's wife, Ethel, which Fishman perceives as evidence that Pollitt's patience, politically, was wearing thin with Horner. [254]The full source, when consulted, may also be interpreted as a worried wife and friend aggrieved at Horner's very public, and by many accounts embarrassing, alcoholism. [255] The party imagined, and its trade unionists were often perceived as, staunch defenders of workers' rights, but also 'men of integrity'.[256] Alcoholism, particularly the chronic and debilitating kind by which Horner was by all accounts often afflicted, does not fit the image of the virtuous communist that the CP endeavoured to construct.

The other issue with placing much emphasis on Horner and Pollitt's often troubled relationship as evidence that errant trade unionists ran into trouble with the party is that it ignores the tensions within political relationships, generally. Thus Fishman ignores the fact that between 1949 and 1951 the security services found evidence that Pollitt himself was largely out of favour with the party, to the extent that they reported that Kerrigan was flirting with the idea of some sort of coup. [257] There are also other examples of those in the party having difficult relationships. One report from the Security Services, dated 08 August 1951, found that both Horner and Moffat were out of favour with the CP leadership; but Fishman does not report this. [258]

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unions'. See Saville, John, 'Arthur Lewis Horner' in *Dictionary of Labour Biography Vol V,* edited by Saville, J, and Bellamy, Joyce, (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 112- 116.

[252] Fishman, Nina, *Arthur Horner: a political biography,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2009), 74.

[253] Paynter chose Allen, Page and Unwin.

[254] Fishman, *Horner, op.cit.,* 74.

[255] Fishman does sometimes, although not in this instance, explain some of the tensions between Horner and his party as a result of his alcoholism. Fishman, *Horner*, *op.cit.,* 734.

[256] Curtis, Ben, 'A Tradition of Radicalism: the politics of the South Wales miners, 1964-84', *Labour History Review,* 76:1, April 2011, pp34-50, 40.

[257] See National Archives, (NA) NAKV2/1049. 4 November 1949 and 8 December 1949, Kerrigan keen to get Pollitt (who was in poor health) into a nursing home, thus leaving a space for his own power. NAKV2/1046 15 and 24 May 1951, for documents suggesting that Pollitt was not held in great regard by the party.

[258] 8 August 1951, NAKV2/1528,.

2.1.0 Post-nationalisation changes?

One of the single most important changes to happen to the mining industry was the nationalisation of it, formally implemented on 01 January 1947. The extent to which this changed miners' working lives, however, has been discussed in the existing literature, and the general consensus is that nationalisation brought little of consequence to the daily working arrangements of most miners. [259]Pelling, like Michael Crick, sees little substantial change in the structure of the union, and suggests that the NUM was essentially 'a somewhat stronger federation that its predecessor'. [260] Peter Ackers and Jonathon Payne also argue that there was little substantial change, suggesting instead that it was the expectation, instead of the reality, that changed quickly in 1947. [261]This is a view shared by Church and Outram, who suggest that nationalisation changed little, especially at local level. [262] Similarly, Fishman has argued that in the immediate aftermath of nationalisation miners did not notice any change, but also that they were not particularly perturbed by this. [263]

But there is also the argument that, even if nationalisation brought little tangible change for many miners, the expectation and belief in it was, at least until the mid-1960s, enough for miners to retain some loyalty to the NCB and the concept of nationalisation. Andrew Taylor argues that miners' despondency and the willingness to act on it, as opposed to 'acquiescing' was only evident from the later 1960s. Part of the reason for this was that a younger generation of miners had started to emerge, who were less constrained by the memories of pre-nationalisation and particularly 1926; this, argues Taylor, was the primary reason why the union was able to engage in official strike action in 1972 and 1974.[264] Gildart has demonstrated the predicament of many miners who, although unhappy with the shortcomings of nationalisation, remained loyal to the party that had taken them out of the conditions under

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[259] The extent of the impact that nationalisation had has been contested. Along with the examples cited in the text, the claim that nationalisation brought fundamental change has been criticised by Jones, B, Roberts, B, and Williams, C, 'Going from the Darkness to the Light: South Wales Miners' Attitudes Toward Nationalisation', *Llafur,* 6,3, (1994), pp. 70-84. For a general discussion on the impact of nationalisation in this specific coalfield, which encompasses a review of the existing literature, see Johnes, Martin, 'For class and nation: dominant trends in the historiography of twentieth-century Wales', *History Compass*, 8, 11, (2010), 1257–74.
[260] Pelling, *History,* 210 and Crick, M, *op. cit* for details of the union structure.
[261] Ackers, and Payne, *Storm, op.cit.,* 181.
[262] Church and Outram, *op.cit.,* 221.
[263] Fishman, Nina, 'The Miners and Nationalisation', in *Miners, Unions and Politics, 1910-47,* Campbell, Alan, Fishman, Nina, and Howells, David, (eds), (Aldershot: scholar, 1996), pp253-273, 258.
[264] See Taylor, Andrew, *The NUM and British Politics,* (Kent: Ashgate, 1995- Volume One and 2003 Volume Two).

private ownership, arguing that 'it has been easy to marginalise the impact of nationalisation and, although disillusionment was to emerge, this was not directed at the Labour Party'. [265]

2.1.1 Unofficial strikes

The existing literature regarding the NUM has mostly been interested in the social and cultural history of the mining communities that built up around the pit, and it is also concerned with why there was a high instance of unofficial strikes in coalmining. One explanation of the cause of these unofficial strikes is Kerr and Siegel's 'isolated mass' theory. This theory suggests that miners were geographically isolated and their grievances were reflective of broader concerns, rather than only work, perhaps living conditions and so forth; strikes, therefore, were protests. [266] This view was popular amongst some scholars on the left, for example Vic Allen, Raphael Samuel and Vicky Seddon. [267] But it has also been criticised. Ralph Darlington has suggested that the work focuses too much on structure, rather than agency. [268] Alan Campbell identifies an issue with this approach, namely that this methodology 'seeks to reduce the complexities of miners' history to a manageable number of quantifiable variables'. [269] P.K Edwards suggested that the theory simply described rather than fully explained the problem. [270] Edwards develops his criticism to a methodological one, suggesting that Kerr and Siegel's claims were 'empirically falsifiable'. [271]

Much of the literature refutes the assumption that high incidences of unofficial strike action was the result of high communist presence. This assumption was often used as a convenient, if unfounded, explanation for the problem; thus Alf Robens, Jim Bowman's successor, repeatedly found in his autobiography a correlation between areas where there were communists and areas where there were lots of strikes. [272] The picture is far more complex and the genesis of these strikes, as Church and Outram show, were sporadic and difficult to trace; they observe that 'an individual strike might have no immediate cause but occurred when

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[265] Gildart, *North Wales, op.cit.,* 28.
[266] Church and Outram, *Strikes op.cit.,*139. See Kerr, Clarke, and Siegel, Abraham, The Inter-industry Propensity to Strike -- An International Comparison', in A. Kornhauser, R. Dubin, and A. M. Ross , *Industrial Conflict* (New York, 1954), 189-212.
[267] Church and Outram, *Strikes op.cit.,* 139.
[268] See Darlington, *Shop Stewards, op.cit.,* 100.
[269] Campbell, *Miners, op.cit.,* 156.
[270] See Edwards, P.K., 'A Study of the Kerr-Siegel Hypothesis of Strikes, and the Isolated Mass Theory: a study of the falsification of sociological knowledge', *Sociological Review,* 23(3), pp 551-574.
[271] Edwards, *Study, op.cit.,* 551.
[272] See Robens, Alf, *A Ten Year Stint,* (London: Cassell, 1973), for details.

diverse grievances produced the occasion for industrial action to take place'. [273] Church and Outram also suggest that the high level of unofficial strike action may be the result of the size of a coalfield and changes within it, arguing that 'historically the most rapidly growing coalfields have often generated high levels of strike activity'; Yorkshire was both growing, and the largest coal producing region. [274] Moreover, South Wales and Scotland (the other two regions of the union that had the most strikes) were also large, and so their high strike pattern might in some ways be reflective of, and relative to, their size. [275] Moreover, explanations such as Robens's ignore the deep-rooted traditions of certain coalfields, which Ackers and Payne draw attention to. They argue that deeply embedded cultural traditions help explain patterns of militancy, and use this explanation to demonstrate why there was high strike incidences in peripheral coalfields, like South Wales and Scotland. [276] The existing literature also draws attention to the fact that strike activity was variable, even within those coalfields supposed to be pre-determined to militancy. Church and Outram have argued that in South Wales and Scotland, some collieries did not strike, and some had only brief strikes or few participants. [277]Ben Curtis adds to this view, suggesting that even within the 'militant' South Wales coalfield, there were differences in the extent of this militancy between individual lodges. [278]

2.1.2 Official Strikes

The mining industry is peculiar, in the sense that it was characterised by unofficial strikes, which never progressed or developed into official action, until 1972 and then 1974; even before this, however, in 1969 and 1970, there were two near-official strikes in the industry.[279] The existing literature has focused on these examples of miners' militancy. Both Paul Routledge, Scargill's critical unofficial biographer, and Taylor have argued that this shift in the union's mentality was first demonstrated in the 1969 Yorkshire surface workers' strike. [280] The strike of 1972 has dominated the existing literature to a greater extent than the 1974 strike, and is largely perceived as a success in existing work. As Darlington and Lyddon have demonstrated, the 1972 miners' strike extracted more from the government in 24 hours of negotiations than

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[273] Church and Outram, *Strikes, op.cit.,*265.
[274] Church and Outram, *Strikes, op.cit.,*232.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ackers and Payne, *Storm, op,cit.,* 202.
[277] Church and Outram, *op.cit.,*261.
[278] Curtis, *A Tradition of Radicalism, op.cit.,* 38.
[279] This will be discussed in more detail in chapter five, but the National Power Loading Agreement of 1966 unified discontent around wages at a national level.
[280] Routledge, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 68. There is a sense amongst South Wales that Yorkshire has, or has had, their role in 1969 inflated.

the union had managed in the previous 24 years. [281] Jim Phillips has focused on the 1972 miners' strike and has challenged the perception that it was a 'victory for violence'; this was, he argues, a view that simply vindicated Thatcher's despotism in 1984. Phillips also disagrees with the 'top down' approach, which asserts that it was 'hard men' like Daly and McGahey imposing their militant will on a reticent membership; although only 40 percent of the NUM actually voted for strike action, once the strike got going, 'support was almost total'. [282]

2.1.3 Agitators or Instigators?

The more interesting question, in relation to this thesis, is what were communists doing in these official strikes? The perception was often distorted from the reality. As we saw in chapter one, the mainstream press and most of the party perceived that the CP was the organising brain of these disputes. George Bolton, president of the Scottish miners and a member of the CP's executive, suggests that the CP's role was mostly logistical, giving out pamphlets and building support. [283]The consensus of the literature is that communists in the union during the strike were working hard to give support to the union membership, and following the train of the membership's desires. Thus Phillips could write:

Popular agency analyses the emergence of Daly, McGahey and Scargill as neither accidental coincidence nor a determined leftist conspiracy. Rather it reflected the impatience amongst a large body of miners with the willingness of 'moderate' trade union leaders to tolerate pit closures and agree wage restraints that saw miners fall behind many groups of manual workers in the wage's league. [284]

As Darlington has demonstrated, it is inadequate to see communists (or any 'extreme' group) as causing, rather than agitating, existing grievances. [285] Phillips supports this view, and suggests that 'the personal politics of NUM leaders had a limited bearing on union policy; in office they operated at their members' calling'. [286] He further claims that their activities can be

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[281] Darlington and Lyddon, *Glorious Summer, op.cit.,* 1. Heath had always said he would never receive the miners' leadership at Number 10. I also imagine that he had never imagined receiving a communist to his home. This was quite a different outlook to Castle and Wilson's 'beer and sandwiches' approach. For details of what this was, see Castle, B, *Fighting all the Way,* (London, 1966), 373.

[282] See Phillips, Jim, 'Industrial Relations, Historical Contingencies and Political Economy: Britain in the 1960s and 1970s', *Labour History Review,* 72:3, December 2007, pp. 215-233. McGahey's lineage was socialist, his father had been victimised in the wake of 1926; McGahey junior joined the YCL the same year that he started to work as a miner, aged 14. He adhered to the policies of the party during the Cold War, and had ambitions of working full time for the party; he was Moffat's protégée. See McIlroy and Campbell, 'Mick McGahey', *op.cit.*

[283] Bolton interview, *op.cit.*

[284] Phillips, Jim, *Collieries and Communities in the miners' strike, op.cit.,* 34.

[285] See Darlington, Ralph, 'Agitator theory of strikes re-visited', *Labour History Review,* 47:4, 2006, pp. 485-509, for more details.

[286] Phillips, *Historical Contingencies*, *op.cit.,* 192.

described as 'moderate conduct sometimes combined with militant rhetoric' depending on the mandate of the union membership. [287] Phillips proves, through his use of the findings of the security service, that 'the NUM executive had not taken its lead from the CP', although McGahey had been in contact with Ramelson and union officials had co-ordinated picketing activities with CP branches. [288] McIlroy suggested that, even in the 'peak' of the party's influence in the industrial disputes of the later 1960s and early 1970s, the party failed to give any organisation to them.[289] Allen conceded that McGahey had not instigated or even lead the strike, either officially or unofficially. [290] The most recent piece of literature which challenges these arguments to some extent is Seifert and Sibley's biography of Ramelson, which suggests that the party's industrial organiser played a much more pivotal role. [291]

2.1.4 Wage militancy and surplus labour

Just as the existing literature concurs that the CP played little more than an agitating and organising role in the miners' militancy of the early 1970s, Callaghan has argued that there was no resultant growth for the party, as might be expected.[292] To what extent had wage militancy, which the party believed would be one of the key criteria for its industrial strategy to achieve its goals, worked? As Callaghan has argued, by the late 1960s it is unlikely that the CP could have halted wage militancy even if it had wanted to, certainly not without losing credibility.[293] It was unfortunate timing on the part of Bill Warren (inside the CP) and Royden Harrison and Stephen Yeo (associated with the Alterative Economic Strategy, or AES) that they should question the effectiveness of wage militancy just as it took off.[294] The CP, however, remained committed to wage militancy into the 1970s even though the NUM, including communists on its executive, were aware that 'the protection of jobs might be at the expense of wage rises'.[295] But a detailed analysis of wage militancy in the particular context of mining, examining the minutes of the union's annual conference in conjunction with the CP's own files, has not yet been done. Coal was operating in a market of surplus labour and product competition, an environment where the labour force had been cut by 60 percent between 1957 and 1970. [296]

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[287] Phillips, *Historical Contingencies op.cit.,* 190.

[288] Phillips, *Historical Contingencies op.cit.,* 199.

[289] McIlroy, J, *Factory II, op.cit.,* 94.

[290] Allen, *Militant, op.cit.,* 209.

[291] See Seifert and Sibley, *op.cit.,* 78.

[292] Callaghan, *Paradox. Op.cit.,* 720.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Callaghan, *Cold War,* pp. 262-263 for a detailed discussion.

[295] Callaghan, *Ind Militancy, op.cit.,* 399 and 408.

[296] Hawkins, *op.cit.,* 5.

Griffin argued that 'a sharp increase in wages must increase prices and reduce the quantity of coal demanded'. [297] Robens tried to make the same point. [298] But Ramelson's biographers demonstrate how he refuted the claim that wage rises priced workers out of jobs, instead showing that 'increased demand in the economy resulting from rising real wages saves rather than destroys jobs'.[299] Allen, who knew Ramelson well, concluded that inflation was not the result of wages; therefore, he argued, they should not be restrained.[300]

2.1.5 Economism and politicisation

Had the CP's industrial strategy descended into economism by the late 1960s and early 1970s? The existing literature seems to suggest not although contemporary commentators, possibly with a different agenda, argued that it had. Seifert and Sibley are keen to demonstrate that Ramelson never used economism as a strategy. [301]It is clear, from the existing literature, that the kind of demands that the party was making in the late 1960s and early 1970s did have a political edge. Allen had noticed that the strikes had reflected 'not a raised political awareness so much as the imposition of political consequences upon ordinary economic demands'. [302] Callaghan points out that the party's efforts in trade unions, especially wage militancy, did have 'political demands and appeals to join the party'. [303] McIlroy adds that the militancy of the CP generally, and particularly in the NUM, extended beyond just economism to 'briefly embrace struggles against the state and challenges to the logic of capitalism'. [304] The charge that the CP was economistic was often used by the modernising wing of the party disparagingly, most notably Hobsbawn in his 1978 Marx Memorial Lecture. [305] Stuart Lane, writing in 1983, suggested that the unions failed to face up to Thatcherism because 'their organisation, at all levels, are geared up to economism'. [306]

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[297] Griffin, A.R, 'Consultation and Conciliation in the Mining Industry: the need for a new approach', *Journal of Industrial Relations,* September 1972, 30. The situation was slightly different in 1974, in light of the OPEC oil crisis.

[298] See Robens, *Ten Year, op.cit.* for more details.

[299] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 98.

[300] Allen, *Militant*, *op.cit.,* 161.

[301] See Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* chapter three for details.

[302] Routledge, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 88.

[303] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.,* 409.

[304] McIlroy, John, 'Notes on the CP and Trade Unions' in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism: trade unions and industrial politics, 1964-1979,* McIlroy, John, Fishman, Nina, and Campbell, Alan, (Merlin: Ashgate, 2007), pp216-259, 258.

[305] Hobsbawn, Eric, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', *Marxism Today,* September 1978.

[306] Lane, S, in *Politics of Thatcherism, op.cit.,* 186.

Despite the intention to do more than reduce disputes to economic struggles, much of the existing literature suggests that the CP failed to politicise the union membership, as it had hoped. Bolton recalled that 'the truth was it was pure economism in the pit'.[307] This was observed by contemporaries; Ian MacGregor, the chairman of the NCB during the 1984 strike, suggested that the reasons why the miners had not returned mandates for strike action in the early 1980s was because they were not 'politicised' enough. [308] Bolton further points out that, after an arduous day in the pits, most miners would want to go home, rather than be 'politicised' as the CP wanted. [309] Discussing the inter-war period Malcolm Pitt, a Kent miner who joined the CP in the early 1970s, references the arrival of a cohort of Barnsley miners to Kent who were militant but for their own self-interest, and certainly not motivated by any 'working class or socialist consciousness'. [310] Mike Prior and Dave Purdy suggested that trade unions had failed to realise, or capitalise, on the industrial conflict in any political sense. [311] This view is rejected by Seifert and Sibley. They suggest that party policy was thrust into the labour movement, 'galvanising action, co-ordinating responses and developing socialist consciousnesses'. [312]This is not a perception shared by Bolton, who suggests that the party's growth in industry was not mirrored elsewhere and the party 'built nothing politically'. [313] Ben Curtis has demonstrated how, in South Wales, from the later 1970s the CP was beginning to lose ground even within the union and, apart from Arfon Evens, all new NUM members to the area executive from the late 1970s and early 1980s were Labour members. [314]

Even in pits where the party was well-represented, the extent to which the level of politicisation was any better is dubious. Betteshanger colliery in Kent had a healthy representation of 100 communists by 1945. [315] Yet in Church and Outram's study of the collieries that appeared in the 'top ten' for strike activity between 1943 and 1963, none of the Kent coalfields appear once. [316] Paul Rigg, through his analysis of two collieries, one moderate, one militant, argued that the militant colliery had a higher level of politicisation amongst its

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[307] George Bolton being interviewed by McIlroy and Campbell as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[308] MacGregor, Ian, *The Enemy Within: the story of the miners' strike 1984-85,* (London: 1986), 116.

[309] George Bolton being interviewed by McIlroy and Campbell as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[310] Pitt, *1972 op.cit.,* 83. Pitt joined the CP in 1974, although he is unclear if this recruitment was motivated by the party's activities in 1972.

[311] Prior, Mike, and Purdy, Dave, *Out of the Ghetto,* (London: Spokesman Books, 1979), pages 77 and 93.

[312] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 123.

[313] George Bolton being interviewed by McIlroy and Campbell as part of the CPGB Biographical Project

[314] Curtis, *Politics, op.cit.,* 39.

[315] See Pitt, *1972, op.cit.*

[316] Church and Outram, *Strikes, op.cit.,* 232.

leaders. But his method of evidencing this is dubious: although some officials in the militant coalfield had been to political study schools, only two of them were members of 'extreme' political organisations (the others were in the Labour Party) and neither of the two men attended branch meetings. [317]

Party membership did not assume militancy, which is the biggest criticism that can be made about Rigg's analysis. The CP's organisation department obsessed over how to get branches in a better shape, and how to recruit members from these workers. But membership of the party and total commitment to it within a workplace was not synonymous. McIlroy's interview with Willie Clarke, a Scottish communist miner, suggests that some trade unionists joined the party because they felt it might be 'a vehicle to a trade union job'. [318]The CP never missed an opportunity to recruit, and as such membership was not selective. Eric Browne, of the Armthorpe branch of the NUM, recalls how he bought the *Daily Worker* off Frank Watters, and donated the change to the fighting fund; 'this put me down as a recruit'![319] Scargill also recalled how he joined the Young Communist League (YCL) as party representatives turned up to meet him when he expressed an interest in joining, unlike representatives of the Labour Party, where Scargill had initially registered his interest. It was possible to join the pit branch of the party and not do much after joining: one could be pressured to sell the *Daily Worker,* for example, but the party could only apply so much pressure before one might leave. This view is substantiated by Bolton, who suggests that it was possible to pay a membership fee, only to then do little in terms of 'active' involvement in the party. [320]

2.1.6 Scargillism

The broad left, the idea of working in partnership with left wingers outside the CP, has also been discussed in the existing literature. Callaghan has argued that the broad left strategy emerged from mid-1960s, reflecting a 'more realistic' way of approaching its affairs. [321] This was obvious in the NUM where, as Watters recalls, the CP and left had stood a multiplicity of candidates in the 1960 presidential election which had allowed the right to win. [322] Seifert and Sibley suggest that the broad left came out the party's broader calls for left unity.[323] The broad

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[317] Rigg, *op.cit.* Both cases had 4 officials, but the militant colliery had 9 branch committee members, compared with 5 at the moderate colliery; thus, argues Rigg, it was more democratic.
[318] McIlroy, *Factory, op.cit.,* 97.
[319] Kane, *op.cit.*
[320] George Bolton being interviewed by McIlroy and Campbell as part of the CPGB Biographical Project
[321] See Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit,* pp 252-254.
[322] See Watters, *op.cit.,* for more details.
[323] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit,* 110.

left strategy even allowed the right to somewhat encroach on the party's tactics. Andrew Taylor demonstrates that Gormley, shrewd and certainly 'no friend of the left', knew that he needed to adapt to the new left-wing milieu of the early 1970s, and fought much of his successful election campaign on two main grounds: raise miners' pay and improve conditions. [324] The broad left strategy actively encouraged the advancement of any left wing candidate, their carrying a party card was at best a bonus, an admission made in Ramelson's biography. [325]

One of the most well-known products of this strategy was Arthur Scargill and the existing literature has debated Scargill's personality traits. John Saville, diplomatically, said that 'Scargill was a very difficult miners' leader to deal with'. [326] Routledge suggests that Scargill was a self-identified 'hardest of the hardliners'. [327] To MacGregor, Scargill was the 'theatrical performer and Marxist autocrat'.[328] To others, 'Scargillism' was a personality cult: Hywel Francis was accused by Kim Howells, the union's official researcher, of criticising Scargill's leadership precisely through his address at Paynter's funeral praising Paynter's 'qualities of leadership and hatred of the cult of personality'. [329] The literature has also attempted to address the complex question: what was 'Scargillism', politically? Taylor has suggested that Scargill was a syndicalist. [330] This is also a view supported by Francis, who notes Scargill's 'degenerate syndicalism'.[331] The strategy of Scargill has also been described as 'vanguardist' by Andrew Campbell and Mick Warner in their analysis of NUM leadership elections. [332]By his own admission, as Routledge quotes, Scargill was a student of his father Harold: 'a communist. Not the Eurocommunist variety, not the New Realist variety, but the real communist who wants to see capitalism torn down and replaced by a system where people own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange. It's called, quite simply, socialism'. [333]

The existing literature has also explored the relationship between Scargill and the party. Callaghan points out how Scargill had left the YCL, most probably because he realised that he

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[324] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.* 35.
[325] See Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,*for details.
[326] Saville, J, *Labour, op.cit.,* 145.
[327] Routledge, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 92.
[328] MacGregor, *Miners' strike 1984-85, op.cit.,* 116.
[329] Francis, Hywel, *History on Our Side: South Wales and the 1984 Miners' Strike,* (2009), IX.
[330] Taylor appears to suggest that he thinks Scargill was a syndicalist; see Taylor, A, *NUM, op.cit.,* 246
[331] Francis, *History on Our Side,, op.cit.,* 39.
[332] Campbell, Andrew, and Warner, Mick, 'Changes in the Balance of Power in the British Mineworkers Union: an analysis of national top-office elections, 1974 to 1984', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 23:1, 1985, pp. 1-2, 8.
[333] Routledge, *Scargill, op.cit,* 195.

did not need the party machine to do well.[334] Beckett suggests that, once not in the YCL but able to surround himself with the left caucus of the NUM, Scargill was able to make use of it or ignore it, depending on his own agenda. [335] Beckett draws the conclusion that Scargill was able to use the CP without giving anything in return, or the CP having any control over it. [336] As Beckett suggests Scargill was intent, and able, to exploit the left unity that the CP had meticulously spent years constructing. [337] Bolton says of 'the CP in Yorkshire, [that] Scargill killed it stone dead; he destroyed it for his own purposes'. [338] Seifert and Sibley argue that the CP played a 'clear leadership position within the broad left', of which Scargill was a product.[339] Yet at its most damaging, for the CP's endeavours, Scargill and the party might be perceived as one and the same, even by the rest of the NUM executive: Roy Ottey recalls how McGahey was perceived as 'the driving force behind Scargill'. [340] The misconception that Scargill was something of a CP puppet in the NUM was most clearly made in Nicholas Hagger's *Scargill the Stalinist,* written in response to the miners' strike. [341]

2.2.7 Main research objectives and originality

Following an overview of the historical context and the literature review, four main research questions have been formulated. These questions identify the main research gaps, and thus indicate the thesis's original contribution to knowledge.

- To conduct the first extended study that singularly focuses on the CP in the miners' union in the post-war period. Methodologically, the thesis is original because it uses materials drawn from the CP's own archive and the minutes of NUM meetings, combining them throughout the period 1945 to 1985, to explore the CP's industrial strategy in the miners' union. From this, it seeks to draw a broader hypothesis that could, in the future, be applied to other case studies: if the NUM was theoretically meant to be the CP's best example of its industrial interventions, then what can our observations here suggest about the party's industrial politics more generally?

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[334] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 252.
[335] Beckett, *Enemy Within op.cit.,* 208.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Beckett, *CP, op.cit.,*209.
[338] George Bolton interviewed by McIlroy and Campbell as part of the CPGB Biographical project.
[339] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 121.
[340] Ottey, Roy, *The Strike: an insider's story,* (London: Sidgewick and Jackson, 1985), 13.
[341] See Hagger, *Scargill, op.cit* for details.

- To explore and analyse the dynamics and structure of the relationship between the party centre, party organisers, and party members across all levels of the union. It is well-documented in the existing literature that the link between the CP and trade unionists was weak, but how was the industrial strategy in the NUM conducted if this was the case? Whilst the observations about the latitude of the relationship have been made generally, they have not been analysed in detail specifically in the miners' union.

- To analyse the concept of conflict, broader than the well-known CP divides most addressed by Thompson and Andrews. By the nature of the fact that there is not yet an extended study on the CP within the NUM, the existing literature does not consider the contours of these intricate relationships. Did conflict occur between the three main groups listed above and, if so, how? Moreover, how did the CP deal with instances of conflict?

- To conduct a thorough exploration of the role of wage militancy within the NUM. Although this has been discussed in the existing literature, mostly by Callaghan, there is scope to focus particularly on wage militancy in the NUM throughout this extended period. This can be done by using a combination of NUM annual conference minutes and the CP's archives to understand wage militancy in the miners' union. In this sense, there is scope to investigate if it is ever truly possible to measure and understand a complex concept such as wage militancy. Was the concept of wage militancy understood and applied differently by the three groups that I mention above and, if so, how was it addressed and what was its implications for the CP's industrial strategy?

III Sources and Methods

3.0 The Historical Method

The research uses the historical method: this allows, as Susan Grigg put it, three main stages in the research.[342] The first stage was the 'location of sources and the selection from them'; the second was the analysis of the data; and the third was the interpretation of it. [343] The thesis adds an original contribution to the existing knowledge because of its methodology. It focuses its study of the CP in the NUM in an unprecedented timeframe, but it also combines sources grouped from both of these organisations, over the period studied, to draw its conclusions. Whilst most of the existing literature has used these materials there is no other piece of work over this period that combines the records, detailed below, to reach its conclusions.

3.1 Sources

The first stage of the research was a comprehensive review of the existing literature, in order to identify areas where further research was required. [344]The next stage was to consult the published autobiographies, diaries and memoirs, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the broader context. [345]These were, as Brundage notes, the 'type of primary sources aimed for public consumption'. [346]The initial observation based on the primary sources available was that there was something of a paradox: the NUM, always the larger organisation, had far less sources relating to it than the CP which, even at its peak, had a far more modest membership. [347] The archives used, in the order that they were consulted, and what was drawn from there, are listed below.[348]

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[342] Grigg, Susan. 'Archival Practice and the Foundation of the Historical Method', *Journal of American History,* 78:1, June 1991, pp. 228-229, 228.

[343] Ibid.

[344] Ibid. The literature review was revisited every six months, in order to check and add any 'new' literature that had been published.

[345] Along with Graham Stevenson's comprehensive internet biography page. See:
http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&id=2&Itemid=92

[346] Brundage, *Going to the Sources*, *op.cit.,* 16.

[347] As a rough comparison, the CP's greatest volume of membership was during the Nazi's invasion of the Soviet Union, when CP membership grew to around 56,000; a few years later, on the eve of the nationalisation of the mines, the NUM had around 750,000 members. This puts the NUM approximately 13 times larger than the CP. Both declined somewhat proportionately and relatively.

[348] There are other archives relating to the CP that were not consulted because they were believed to be outside of the scope of this thesis, for example the Willie Gallacher archive in Glasgow.

3.2 Labour History and Study Centre, Manchester.

Once the existing literature had been analysed, the next task was to consult the CP's own archive, mainly concentrating on the files relating to the party's industrial, economic and organisational affairs along with the files of key individuals; these materials represent the engine room of British communism.[349] These files contain minutes of meetings, private hand-written notes, leaflets, letters, and draft publications. [350]One of the greatest issues that was faced was understanding the often illegible handwriting of individuals (John Gollan being a particular example), but another problem was that many of the minutes were recorded in shorthand and as such have not been able to be deciphered.

The papers of the industrial department, as both Francis King and Kevin Morgan have pointed out, are sparse until the mid-1980s. [351] Morgan suggests that this may mean the 'conscious kicking over of some interesting traces'. [352] One particular file (CP/CENT/IND/12/10) relates directly to the party's concerns with coalmining, but it is void of any detailed planning. This is unusual; Callaghan has noted that the party constantly documented what was going on, what was happening and how well it was doing it, a 'sort of peer review system'. [353] The party, generally, was keen to record everything; even the lunch options at a particular weekend school have been preserved for historical record. It is also possible to see examples of correspondence relating to unknown party members being afflicted with mundane illnesses and therefore unable to attend branch meetings. The CP's industrial work was essential to its strategy; it also represented an area where it was perceived to be ubiquitous, if not nefarious, whereas elsewhere it was quantifiably weak. The fact that there is a lack of primary documentation about the party's interventions in a key industry is significant; it may suggest that communists within the miners' union were given a certain amount of latitude. It may also indicate that the relationship and transmission of policy was done through conversation and was in many ways informal. Although the link between the party and those

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[349] For example, Bert Ramelson; John Gollan; George Matthews. Many of these collections have been used to construct autobiographies, for example Morgan, Kevin, *Harry Pollitt,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Callaghan, Jogn, *Rajani Palme Dutt: a study in British Stalinism,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993); and Seifert, Roger, and Sibley, Tom, *Revolutionary Communist at Work: a political biography of Bert Ramelson,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2012), 106.

[350] For a detailed discussion of the anatomy of these archives, see King, Francis, 'Archival Sources on the CPGB', *Science and Society,* Spring 1997; 61:1, pp 131-139.

[351] King, *Archives, op.cit.,* 133.

[352] Morgan, *The Archives of the British Communist Party, op.cit.,* 413.

[353] Quote from Callaghan. This is part of a wider conversation on the nature, and role, of CPGB history, which is noted in Jones, H, 'CPGB history ?' Conference Report, *Labour History Review,* Vol 67, No 3, December 2002 pp 347- 352.

in the NUM, for example, is not transparent from the industrial department's files we can surmise the essence of the relationship from other sources, not least the personal files of individuals. Gollan suggests through his private notes the interplay between party and union: 'if the final analysis or answer conflicts with own party policy- carry out decisions of union'.[354]

Conversely, the papers relating to the organisation department are extensive. [355] They quantify the party's industrial presence, for instance documenting how many factory branches existed in coalmining in a particular year. It could be interpreted that this was because the CP could easily control and maintain membership records, for example, whilst the contours of its industrial strategy was much more complex to track. Therefore, perhaps in order to inadvertently help the party construct its own notions of numerical strength as synonymous with influence, there exists more detailed records for the organisation department. The records of the organisation department portray the kind of fastidiousness that one might expect from a communist party. It is no surprise, therefore, that there was tension between the organisation department, who were tasked with building the party, and the industrial department, who were placed to formulate labour movement policy. [356]

The records of the industrial advisory committee for coalmining are sporadically preserved. They were the 'transmission belts for the formulation and dissemination of party policy'.[357] But, as chapter two showed, their details are sparse, even before this was an intentional policy in 1965. Their existence, however, raises a point of interest because their function was effectively denied by Gollan who suggested that the party 'does not discuss or pronounce on the internal affairs of a union or trade union election'.[358] The executive committee, however, was keen to record that, in coalmining at least, the industrial advisory committee met between two and six times a year. [359] The reality of the situation, the report of the executive committee in 1981 suggested, was that these branches were weak. They reported that 'there are huge industries concentrated in some of our districts, in which advisory work is at a very poor level. This applies to most mining districts outside Scotland and Kent'. [360] The archive also holds most of the party's journals, even the more ephemeral ones. The ones that were consulted are:

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[354] Undated, but assumed from his period as General Secretary, CP/CENT/GOLL/04/07.
[355] King, *Archives*, *op.cit.,* 133.
[356] Seifert and Sibley, *op.cit.*, *Revolutionary op.cit.,* 106.
[357] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit,* 10.
[358] Gollan's private notes, found at CP/CENT/GOLL/04/07.
[359] 'Industrial Advisories', 7 May 1981, CP/CENT/EC/18/03.
[360] Ibid.

<u>*Marxism Today* and *Comment.*</u> [361]

This journal, and to an extent *Comment,* became increasingly associated with the 'Eurocommunist' movement and so it was particularly useful for tracing the line during the 1984 miners' strike.

<u>*New Left Review.*</u>

This journal, itself an eventual product of the 1956 affair, was most useful for this thesis because it is the only journal where Scargill gave extensive interviews.

<u>*Labour Monthly.*</u>

This journal was edited by Rajani Palme Dutt (as he was known in this context 'RPD') until his death in 1974. *Labour Monthly* contained the 'Notes of the Month', which were written by RPD and were the dissemination of party policy to the readership. Most notably there is a clearer sense of direction in the earlier issues, which evaporates from the 1970s.

<u>*World News and Views.*</u>

This journal did not comprise too much of the research, as it did not have a large amount to say about industrial interventions. It was consulted in the earlier stages of the research in order to gain an understanding of the broader context.

<u>*Challenge.*</u>

This journal, the publication of the Young Communist League (YCL), was useful for understanding what the party was doing in relation to younger miners who would go on to be the adults that the party wanted to engage with in order to fulfil its industrial strategy.

<u>3.3 Working Class Movement Library, Salford</u>

The Working Class Movement Library (WCML) contains a substantial run of the *Daily Worker* and the *Morning Star*; the newspaper was, as the party put it in 1957, 'agitator, educator and organiser'. [362] Approximately 14,000 days of the newspaper were consulted during the research.

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[361] Available online from the late 1970s, via the Amiel and Melburn trust. *Marxism Today,* established in the late 1950s, originally had a readership of around only 3000 people and was 'extremely low' in the party's priorities. By the 1980s, not only had it become emblematic of the 'modernising' faction of the CP, but it was even stocked in outlets as mainstream as WH Smith. See Jacques, Martin, 'The Last Word', *Marxism Today,* December 1991, pp28-29, 28. For a detailed analysis of the distribution and broadening readership of *Marxism Today,* see Pimlott, H, 'From the Margins to the Mainstream: the promotion and distribution of Marxism Today', *Journalism,* 5:2, pp. 203-226, 2004.

[362] Marxist Study Themes, *Role of the CP,* May 1957, 23. The paper changed name in 1966.

Newspapers, as is well documented, need to be approached with caution but perhaps with even greater trepidation in the CP's case. [363] During the party's implosion, from the mid-1970s onwards, the newspaper was a main protagonist in these polemics, becoming particularly associated with the 'traditionalist' group. [364] In the research the newspaper became a way to view the perspective of this group during that period, a way of exploring what this group hoped to achieve via their commitment to the party's traditional industrial strategy. Just as in the actual event, the research used the newspaper and *Marxism Today* (and, to a lesser extent, *Comment*) to understand the factionalism within the CP. Aside from this use, the newspaper also assisted in mapping a chronology through which important events in relation to this research could be found.

The library also has a comprehensive run of pamphlets written by communists. These were used in two main ways: initially significant publications relating to communist policy were consulted in order to gain a narrative of key events and arguments. [365]Then pamphlets written by communist mining leaders were consulted; these documents were then compared to see if there was any similarity or disparity between them, in order to understand the relationship between CP trade unionists and the party.[366]The library also contains the TUC and Labour Party annual conference reports for the period that the thesis covers and these were used to see what resolutions were being moved by members of the NUM at these conferences. This was used as a barometer to measure the union's move to the left, which in turn was used to trace the genesis of these resolutions at the NUM annual conference. The WCML also has short runs of other publications that have been consulted, for example the *Collier,* the miners' anti-leadership newspaper in the 1970s.

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[363] From 1946 the newspaper had been owned by a non-party cooperative, the People's Press Printing Society (PPPS). For more details, see Morgan, Kevin, 'The CP and the Daily Worker' in *Opening the Books op.cit.,* pp. 142-159.

[364] Another source of strife was the paper's poor financial health. It lost 4,300 readers between February 1974 and January 1976. See Chater, Tony, 'The Morning Star', *Comment,* 14:10, 15 May 1976, 151. During the party's 35th Congress in 1977 a resolution was moved pushing a sales drive for the paper, and also seeking to expand the size of it, but were also critical of the party's style and presentation. See Thompson, *Good Cause, op.cit.,* 175.

[365] One of the most prolific authors was Bert Ramleson: for example, *Donavon Exposed,* 1968, and *Carr's Bill and How to Kill It,* 1970.

[366] For example See Bolton, G, *Act Now to End Unemployment,* 1981 and Moffat, A, *The Way Forward for the Miners,* November 1945.

3.4 The NUM Offices, Barnsley

Although not an archive I was fortunate enough to be able to visit and consult their range of NUM annual conference minutes. [367] These documents are initially difficult to understand: they assume a good understanding of the union constitution and processes, along with a knowledge of who key individuals were, as they are often referenced by an initial and surname. My experience here certainly confirms Andrew Taylor's argument, that there are methodological problems with the study of a large and complex organisation like the NUM. [368]The chance to work in the building where many of the events I was writing about took place was fantastic. As E.H Carr pointed out, objectivity is often difficult because a personal interest is often a motivation to study a topic.[369] Walking into the foyer, through the square-glass doors wooden doors that remain unchanged since the miners' strike, was the closest I came to a conscious awareness of this.

3.5 Modern Records Centre, Warwick

The Modern Records Centre (MRC) holds the complete run of NUM annual conference minutes, as well as the summaries of the meetings of the Midlands area. In addition, the MRC has sporadic minutes relating to the NCB, but one of its most useful collections for the research has been the Lawrence Daly archive, in which I found private correspondence between Vic Allen and the CP. [370]This correspondence, I believe, has not been used in any of the literature that I have read.

3.6 The National Archives

The main point of interest for this research at the National Archives (NA) was the broad selection of surveillance files relating to leading communists. Here the collection of files

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[367] This was a great experience. The building was known as 'Arthur's Castle', because of its turret- shaped roof. The national office had controversially moved from London to Sheffield, before settling in Barnsley in the 1990s, as the union shrank further. Little remains unchanged in the building, and it is a large building that now dwarfs the handful of staff who work there, a poignant reminder of the demise of the industry. I was allocated an office, which still had furniture and equipment from the period in it, creating a sense that the building was locked in the miners' strike. Further evidence suggests this inertia: all taxi drivers knew where the building was, and expressed a keen interest in my reasons for visiting it, some of them being former miners themselves. Rested along the wall of the office that I was in was a huge portrait, with the image hidden; I suspected it was of Scargill, but was too polite to look!

[368] See Taylor, Andrew, 'So Many Cases but so Little Comparisons: Problems of Comparing Mineworkers', in Berger, Stephen, Croll, Alan, and LaPorte, Norman, ed(s) *Towards a Comparative History of Coalfield Societies,* pp. 12-28.

[369] See Carr, E.H *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961),120.

[370] Daly, who we will come to later, was active in local Fife politics and was the NUM's general secretary from 1968 until February 1984. See Phillips, *Collieries, op.cit.,* for more details (p23).

relating to the surveillance of Arthur Horner were found and consulted. [371] The bulk of these files relate to the Cold War period although, as Christopher Andrew pointed out in his official history of MI5, the NUM was also observed during the increase in miners' militancy. Andrew found that communists in the NUM were trying to moderate Scargill's policy, to no avail. Yet, even after consulting with the archivist who arranged the recent release of NCB files demonstrating that the Thatcher government's planned run-down of mines was genuine, I could not find files relating to this. The NA also houses the minutes of the NCB, and these were consulted in instances where communists were present, and they also hold minutes of meetings between members of Heath's government, which were also consulted.

3.7 The British Library

The British Library (both its London and Boston Spa sites) contains audio files of individuals who were interviewed as part of the 'CPGB Biography' project. I listened to the interviews of George Bolton and Frank Watters, both of which were immensely useful. [372]

3.8 South Wales' Miners' Library (SWML)

This archive, largely established by Hywel Francis, contains (amongst other things) audio materials relating to communists and the broad left in the NUM. Most of these are interviews, although some are edited sections of the most poignant bits of the interviews, formatted into composite teaching cassettes, and some of the materials are also lectures delivered to miners by significant individuals[373].

3.9 Interviews

The existing interviews, at the British Library and SWML, cover many leading individuals relevant to my research. Listening to the interviews at the British Library demonstrated the depth of information that interviews can potentially yield and it was a methodology that I had used to some extent during my BA dissertation, where I had interviewed a policeman and a miner. The decision to do interviews came fairly late in the research process and I was initially

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[371] These were most widely used in Nina Fishman's biography. I also used them as a basis for a conference paper, 'The Limits of Privacy' at the University of Southampton in September 2014; I am currently producing a potential publication from this.

[372] The British Library also holds recordings of communists at meetings and talks; these were not consulted, because many of them were not directly involved in industrial matters, and they were the public presentation of communism, which has been well-documented, in this thesis and elsewhere.

[373] Sadly, some of the materials are polluted by sound interference from the tape itself, and some interviews initially appear blank, and long silences and inserts of random music have to be bypassed to find the interview. Future work might consider transcribing these interviews.

concerned about approaching individuals to be interviewed, given that the CP and the NUM both ended in effective civil war. I was concerned that interviewing individuals might be methodologically unreliable, and I was also unsure about how to protect the information I was given, particularly as it could be controversial. It seems that this is a common problem. In his 1990 article, reflecting on the American Historical Association's decision to produce seven guidelines for researchers using interviews, Oshinsky noted that oral history, although increasingly popular, 'is often done and used without proper attention to professional obligations'. [374]

I initially submitted my ethical approval form, which clearly outlined what I hoped to achieve from the interviews, along with how the information and participants would be used and protected. The application also included examples of initial 'recruitment' emails, consent forms and proposed interview questions. Despite contacting numerous people I had a poor response rate. For confidentiality reasons I have not included the list of individuals who I sought to interview and who either declined or ignored my contact. There are many speculative reasons for the poor response rate. It is possible that some contact details were incorrect. At its most simplistic, people may not have wanted to have been bothered by a PhD student. I also contacted some academics who had used the methodology, who all confirmed that they had had the same issue. I suspect that part of the problem in my case was that I am an unknown PhD student; there could be an issue of trust. I also suspect that many of the people that I am trying to locate could have succumbed to either old age or death.

Therefore my sample is very small and I did consider not including my findings in the thesis for this reason. Additionally, I had to interview one individual through email, simply because that was their preference, and I felt that any information from them, however it was collected, was better than nothing. [375]There are potential issues with this collection method: individuals have time to consider and edit their answers; they can under or over-answer certain questions; and there was no opportunity to press for more detail or adapt the interview as required. But even with these issues I still feel that the opportunity of speaking to these people gave the work more originality and depth. If interviews had been my primary methodology, then I expect it would have been a greater issue. Because the interviews were collected after much of the archive research had been done and used as extra information, I feel that including

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[374] Oshinsky, David, 'Oral History: playing by the rules', *Journal of American History,* 77:2 (September1990), pp. 609-614. This article lists the seven guidelines set out by the AHS.
[375] This pragmatism was compounded because, since my funding ended at the end of year three, I have been working full time in a non-academic job.

the material (with its limitations considered) was still a greater benefit than excluding it. Hopefully using the data from interviews to substantiate my existing findings will overcome the common criticism of interviews in historical research; that it can lead to a 'narrow empiricism' in which the results of the interviews are not fully explained.[376] Furthermore it will also overcome the problem of their being enough data from interviews to draw conclusions; Carr warns that that can be problematic when looking at human agency. [377]

3.1.0 Analysis

The data was analysed whilst other pieces of information were collected, simply due to the scale of the archives available and also because some sources needed to be revisited. This also made it clear where the gaps in the source material were, and what areas needed revisiting. One of the best ways that I was able to analyse the volumes of data was to capture it on a digital camera, which could then be uploaded, stored, and revisited. This allowed greater reflection on the source material, instead of trying to capture the gist of sources within the constraints of archive visits; photocopying would have been too expensive and time consuming. The majority of the primary sources that I looked at came from the CP and NUM themselves, and so it was important to be aware of subjectivity and agenda, particularly when both organisations began to implode. In one sense, though, these very problems were significant in helping me understand the particular context of the party's industrial strategy in coalmining.

3.1.1 Interpretation

The structure of the thesis is chronological rather than thematic. I chose this because the ultimate point of the CP's industrial strategy was that it had ambitions of facilitating some form of relationship between the party and Labour, and the test of if this ultimately worked has to be examined over time. Marwick has suggested that the chronological structure is the best approach for political history because it enables patterns to be examined over time. [378] A thematic structure would have been possible; for example, with sections such as 'wage militancy' and 'party organisation', but I feel that this would have been less clear to establish trends from. It is, however, an approach that I may consider if I was to consolidate the findings

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[376] See Samuel, Raphael, *Theatres of Memory. Vol. I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso: London,1995), 4

[377] Carr, *History*, *op.cit.,* 70.

[378] Marwick, A*, The Nature of History*, (MacMillan Press: London, 1989), 242.

from the thesis for publication as an article, as I feel that it would be more succinct for that audience.

3.1.2 Analysis of Methodology

One of the biggest issues with the historical method is that it assumes a linear research journey, that sources will be consulted, analysed, and then interpreted. In reality I found that I had to re-visit some archives; most notably the minutes of the NUM, which I was under-prepared for the first time that I used them. It became apparent, when trying to analyse the information from my first visit, that there were gaps or issues of clarity in my sources. I also realised, after a few months of researching, that it was much easier to take pictures of documents which I could then analyse and revisit later; this was much more effective but it meant revisiting documents that I had seen and not photographed. As the CP was a completely new area to me I also spent a lot of time looking at sources that gave a chronology of events. All three of these points would be much less of an issue in any future research.

IV War, wages, and nationalisation, 1945-1956.

4.0 A National Miners' Union

In chapter one it was noted how coalmining might seem to best represent all the criteria of Marxist theory; certainly, the industry was not known for sending men to the 'bowels of the Earth' without some justification. [379] Between 1920 and 1943 some 517,000 men had left the industry, many of whom had reached the conclusion that other industries might provide a more favourable source of employment. [380] But it was war that best demonstrated the gross inefficiencies with the privatised British coal industry. In this environment, of a labour shortage and increased demand, the miners were in a strong bargaining position, a fact that both the coalmine owners and coalition government were well aware of. According to Paynter attempts to address the labour shortage through the Essential Work Order (1941) failed to direct enough manpower into the industry.[381] Thus, the miners began to receive substantial monetary reward. The War Additions to Wages Agreement (1940) permitted wage rises in line with the cost of living. [382] The Greene Tribunal (1942) further raised wages and put a minimum weekly wage on all districts. [383] It also imposed compulsory arbitration, which effectively made official strikes impossible. [384] The ultimate result of these changes was that, in the immediate post-war period, miners suddenly found themselves elevated up the Ministry of Labour's wage list, moving from 59th place to 23rd. [385]

But by far the biggest achievement to come out of war was the commitment to a nationalised industry, agreed at the Nottingham Conference (1944). Thereafter, change was rapid; the NUM was formed 1 January 1945 and, although the industry was formally nationalised two years later, the principals of nationalisation became a working reality from 1945. [386]The CP, quite legitimately, allowed itself a sense of satisfaction and involvement from

[379] The National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield offers visitors the chance to access this environment, through underground tours with former miners.
[380] Horner, Arthur, *Coal and the Nation: A Square Deal for the Miners?,* October 1943, 3.
[381] Paynter, Will, *My Generation,* (London: George Allen and Unwin ltd, 1972), 20.
[382] Handy, James, *Wages Policy in the British Coalmining Industry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 26-27.
[383] See 'Lord Greene Award summary of interpretations' for details of the award and the MFGB's reception of it, CP/CENT/POLL/2/9.
[384] Jencks, C, 'British Coal: Labour Relations since Nationalisation', *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* Vol 6, Issue 1, October 1966, pp. 95-110, 97.
[385] Branson, *1941-51, op.cit.,*32.
[386] Under the NUM's constitution, its National Executive Committee (NEC) would decide if to support, oppose, or remit a resolution that was being proposed for the Annual Conference in advance(the conference took place at the start of each July). Resolutions were usually drawn from one geographical area and supported by others. As will be demonstrated, this by no means assumed communists formed 'cliques' around resolutions; sometimes they disagreed with each other, and often they supported non-communist led resolutions (and vice versa).

these developments. [387] During the war both the CP and its members in the industry had encouraged production and chastised workers who went on strike; the party had turned from 'poachers to gamekeepers', as Gildart has observed. [388] But the opportunity for the CP to take some credit for nationalisation had deeper roots and in their enduring efforts to secure an end to private ownership, there was commonality between communists in King Street and party members in industry, as pamphlets published though the party demonstrate. Pollitt had pursued this objective in *Take over the Mines* (1944), justified because it would help stimulate much-needed production for the war effort. [389]

Similarly communists in the industry recognised the need for the industry to be brought into public ownership. Moffat's *The Way Forward for the Miners* (1945) rejoiced at the realisation of nationalisation, 'a fifty year dream', and noted that 'nationalisation will be a great step towards socialism'. [390] Horner's *Coal and the Nation* (1943), for example, pressed for the 'establishment of a single control in the coal industry'. [391] Some four years later Horner, writing for the *Daily Worker,* could reflect on the benefit of the recent achievement: 'We fought for nationalisation because it would permit the ordinary worker to unleash his initiative and genius in production without fear of consequences, in the sure knowledge of reward for his thought and effort'.[392]

4.1 The post-war CP and Labour

It is hardly surprising that the CP sought to support the party that had committed itself to delivering this much-anticipated goal and, with the arrival of the first majority Labour government, 1945 signified cause for tremendous optimism. The result of the 1945 general election evidenced a resounding level of support and Labour won 393 seats compared to the Conservative's 213; even one of Labour's own MPs wondered 'if I should wake up to find it all a dream'. [393] In their delight, communists in the union and the party were in-step in their support for Clement Attlee's administration. For the CP Labour's success was 'a glorious

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[387] Bolsover, P, *CP Today,* October 1946, 7. The author reminded readers how the CP had always been loyal advocates of nationalisation. This was true.

[388] Gildart, Keith, 'Coal Strikes on the Home Front: Miners' Militancy and Socialist Politics in the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History,* Vol 20, No 2, 2009, pp 121-151, 126. The ILP took on the militant role.

[389] Branson, *1941-51 op.cit.,* 32.

[390] Moffat, Abe, *The Way Forward For The Miners,* November 1945.

[391] Horner, Arthur, *Coal and the Nation: A Square Deal for the Miners?* October 1943, 10. This had been something of a perennial objective. In 1929, he had published *The Mineworkers' Union.*

[392] Horner, Arthur, 'Production is the Key Now', *Daily Worker,* 4 January 1947.

[393] McCulloch, Gary, 'Labour, the Left, and the 1945 General Election', *Journal of British Studies,* 24:4 Oct 1985, pp. 465-489, 465.

political leap forward', according to Dutt. [394] Similarly Moffat noted how Labour's election offered unprecedented opportunities for the miners, which would 'provide the possibility for more far-reaching and basic changes than we dared to imagine'. [395] Horner allowed himself a moment to savour the miners' role in Labour's unprecedented victory, in October 1945 writing that 'it is largely as a result of the votes for Labour in the mining areas that the present Labour government has come into being'.[396] The CP saw the Labour Party as the vehicle that offered them the best possibilities and the party was able to find evidence of socialist inclination, or even intent, in Labour's election manifesto, *Let Us Face the Future.*

But what motivated the CP's support for Labour in 1945? [397] Neil Redfern has argued that the CP believed that Labour's programme was a means to the communists' revolutionary end, made possible because the 'bourgeoisie had been so weakened by the war that they would have no option but to support a progressive post-war reconstruction that would ultimately lead to their demise'. [398] But this is a somewhat cynical proposition, which assumed that the CP was intent on playing only the short game; in reality, as chapter one demonstrated, the party was committed to gradualism in order to achieve its ultimate goal of working with, rather than against, Labour. More likely, therefore, was that the CP was living in the moment, attempting to take advantage of a favourable situation and imagining, as Callaghan suggests, 'a role for itself in British politics alongside the Labour Party'. [399]

Labour would certainly need to maintain the miners' support; however, once Attlee's cabinet was in office, the government's post-war economic recovery was based on utilising coal to increase industrial output and exports.[400] But this was a gargantuan task and by October 1945 there was a shortage of 16 million tonnes of coal.[401] A protracted strike in this environment and/or falling production would be disastrous for both the country's production needs and the success of Labour's strategy; a fact that both King Street and coalfield communists knew full well. As such, there is again clear evidence of parity between the two

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[394] Callaghan, John 'Towards Isolation: the CP and the Labour Government' in *Labour's Promised Land? Culture and Society in Labour Britain 1945-51* Firth, J, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1995), pp 88-100, p 90.

[395] Moffat, Abe, *The Way Forward For The Miners,* November 1945.

[396] Horner, Arthur, 'Coal Situation in Great Britain', *Labour Monthly,* Vol 27, October 1945, 293.

[397] There are numerous historians who have worked on this, but detailing the full debate here is outside the focus of this thesis. Redfern's and Callaghan's respective points demonstrate the extent of the interpretation.

[398] Redfern, Neil, 'Winning the Peace: British Communists, the Soviet Union and the General Election of 1945', *Contemporary British History,* 16:1, (2002), pp 29-50, 32.

[399] Callaghan, *British Left, op.cit.* 163. Thompson has a similar view, see *British Communism, op.cit.,* 109.

[400] Taylor, Andrew, *The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners,* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 15.

[401] Horner, Arthur, *Coal Situation*, 293.

groups. Pollitt imagined that the CP had a role to play in winning 'the political conviction' of the workers, in order to secure greater production.[402] Campbell warned that without increased production, there was a real danger of the Labour Party's 1945 plan failing.[403] Moffat urged miners to 'cut out voluntary absenteeism. Work every shift there is to be worked. Let us entirely avoid sectional or pit stoppages'.[404]

Due to the shared objective, namely the support of the Labour Party, there was a glimpse of what might happen if the party and its members in industry worked in tandem and both Horner and Moffat were able to promote the need to increase production into the TUC and NUM conferences throughout 1945 and 1946. At the 1945 NUM special conference Horner moved a resolution pledging support for production, which was carried unanimously. In doing so, Horner made it clear that dissidence would not be tolerated by the union: 'if a person, having been made aware of our policy, flagrantly defies it, then in the interest of the membership we must apply sanctions against that person…he cannot be expected to be protected by an organisation whose policy he is defying'. [405] This commitment to production continued into the union's 1946 annual conference. Moffat moved a resolution to attract manpower to the industry in order to secure increased production; Paynter, the delegate for South Wales, and Emlyn Williams, the party's erstwhile broad left ally, both supported it. [406]

The result of all this was that communists in the NUM acted as foremen in Labour's factory. In 1946, for example, both Moffat and Horner attended the TUC conference, where Moffat supported increased production, in order to ensure full employment. [407] Horner knew that miners were operating 'in an industry which is at the base of Britain's economic life', but he also knew that without miners meeting the demand for coal 'there cannot be a policy of full employment implemented in this country'. [408] Horner warned that without greater production, the country would grind to a halt. [409] Horner's solution was the miners' charter, a set of suggestions which covered both wages and bread and butter conditions, but which was also

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[402] Pollitt, Harry, *Britain Will Make It*, October 1946, pp 6-18.
[403] Campbell, J.R, 'Where Is That Production Drive?', *Labour Monthly,* Vol 28, June 1946, 170.
[404] Moffat, Abe, *The Way Forward for the Miners*, 1945, 12. Paynter and Dai Francis both maintained, even into their interviews in the late 1970s, that support for the Labour government was the right thing to do. See Interview with Will Paynter AUD 109 SWML U/D and Interview with Dai Francis AUD B1 SWML U/D
[405] NUM Special Conference, 1945. Horner had been made National Coal Production Officer by the MFGB in 1945.
[406] NUM Annual Conference, 1946.
[407] TUC Annual Conference, 1946.
[408] Ibid.
[409] Horner, Arthur, *The CP and the Coal Crisis*, December 1945, 3.

intended to give 'continuity to the life of Labour government'.[410] In encouraging production to support the Labour government, communists in both the party and union were in sync with non-communists in the miners' union. But how much did this parity represent a clear dissemination of the party's line to its trade unionists or a coincidence? The latter seems more plausible as both communists in the industry and those in King Street wanted Labour's policy to succeed; although it is doubtful that this was in any way motivated by altruism.

But even with the significant support from the CP and communists in the NUM the Labour Party remained impervious to the CP's good behaviour and advances. Branson points out that by August 1945 the CP had drawn its own conclusions about the prospects of any coalition between the two parties. [411] But there was another tactic to be tried and the communists persisted in their affiliation efforts with admiral tenacity; the party's executive committee wrote to the party membership in January 1946, directing them to work 'especially hard' in achieving this task. [412] Hinton records how Attlee would never entertain this kind of offer for he worried (correctly, as it would later transpire) that the communists' position in 1945 may 'somersault', as it previously had. [413] Pollitt, trying to convince Attlee otherwise, attempted to justify the CP's case in January 1946 on the grounds that an affiliation of the two groups would secure a united labour movement. [414]

But these efforts were in vain. At its 1945 conference the Labour Party had already convinced itself that the CP was not to be trusted. It organised its members in trade unions, the conference warned, and it was also willing to subordinate British interests to 'outside' ones. [415] The NUM was also opposed to allowing the CP to become formally affiliated with a party that the union was inextricably linked to, and it voted against the proposals. [416] Although both the NUM and Labour were suspicious of the CP's intentions when it was at its most friendly and conciliatory, the party may have persevered diligently and tenaciously in the hope that it would prove itself to be have legitimate and honest intentions. Although this may have been frustrating for the CP, its commitment to gradualism must have sustained its patience with the

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[410] Horner, Arthur, 'Coal Situation in Great Britain', *Labour Monthly,* Vol 27, October 1945, 293.
[411] Branson, *1941-51, op.cit.* 88.
[412] 'Political Letter to all Members', 1 January 1946, CP/CENT/EC/12/09. See chapter one for earlier attempts to work with the Labour Party.
[413] Hinton, James, 'The CP, Production and Britain's Post-war Settlement', *Opening the Books,* pp 60-75, 174.
[414] Pollitt, Harry, 'The CP Congress', *Labour Monthly,* January 1946, 14.
[415] Labour Party Annual Conference 1945. Affiliation was rejected the following year.
[416] Branson, *1941-195 op.cit.,* 116. South Wales, with strong CP representation, voted against affiliation, and so did Durham and Yorkshire.

task. What loomed on the horizon, however, would cause a change of tact that would also illuminate the gulf between the party itself and communists in the NUM.

4.2 The Cold War

It was the onset of the Cold War that was the catalyst for the CP's sudden criticism of the government that it had once supported and which also created the conditions for the industrial strategy, outlined in chapter one, to be formulated.[417] The Truman Doctrine, the Brussels Treaty and the formation of NATO all evidenced the CP's new argument that the Labour Party had been polluted by right-wing reformism, which had allowed it to become a military ally of the USA. [418] This, the CP noted, made Britain subservient to 'American big business and the maintenance of large armed forces'. [419]There was, the communists argued, 'a reserve of troops ready to be mobilised in the ideological war against the Soviet Union'.[420] No longer could the CP encourage production, not whilst they held the view that it was geared only to 'helping the American financiers and industrialists to help themselves to Europe's markets'.[421]

Pollitt set about deconstructing Labour's victory of 1945 and by February 1947 he could write of the Labour Party's 'sunshine propaganda' during the election.[422] A sense of the Labour Party's treachery henceforth became the CP's dominant discourse. The *Daily Worker* started 1948 by reporting that 'Attlee swept to power in 1945 on the basis of socialist pledges, of promises of rising living standards, of lasting peace and of friendship with Russia, he now stands revealed as the betrayer of all these promises'. [423] The communists complained that 'the militant members of the trade unions have supported the Labour Party because they believed the party was standing for a socialist programme, but the middle of the road policy now being operated is one that the militants are forced to fight'.[424] This, of course, was based on the assumption that the so-called 'militants' in industry were answerable to the party, willing to

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[417] There had been some private misgivings about Russia within the CP. See Callaghan and Pythian, *Surveillance op.cit.* The files show that Kerrigan tired of Pollitt's loyalty to Moscow, and wanted to create a more revolutionary situation. See KV2 for many examples of this tension. Ultimately the CP stayed loyal. For these accounts, see Hobsbawn, *Revolutionaries, op.cit.,* 5. Also Thompson, Willie, 'British Communists in the Cold War', *Contemporary British History,* 15:3, (2001), pp 105-132.
[418] See Campbell, J.R., 'Who Hinders Production?' *Labour Monthly,* February 1948, 49. The sense that the Labour Party of 1945 had been 'polluted' by something negative, that had diverted it from the ideas outlined in *Let Us Face the Future* allowed the CP to switch course without an admission, or suspicion, that it may have misread the situation in 1945.
[419] Pollitt, Harry, *The Miners Next Step,* August 1948, 16.
[420] CP, *Bring the Men Home,* April 1947, 4.
[421] 'Pollitt's Report to the 20th Congress', *Daily Worker,* 23 February 1948.
[422] Pollitt, Harry, 'The Crisis: We Must Plan the Way Out', *Daily Worker,* 1 February 1947.
[423] 'Atlee Attacks New Imperialism of Soviet Union', *Daily Worker*, 5 January 1948.
[424] 'The Red Hunt is a Red Herring', *Daily Worker,* 10 February 1948.

dance to the party's new tune. This, in turn, supposed that the link between the CP and communists in industry was one of directed loyalty, and not autonomous latitude; as we have seen in chapter one, the party had not structured itself like this. It was not considered, however, how the CP would manage communists in industry in light of the party's new position.

4.3 The construction of the CP's industrial strategy

It was in Margate, at the party's 19th Congress in February 1947, where Pollitt initially presented the new industrial strategy, which we outlined in chapter one, and it was disseminated with some repetition thereafter. As it had been repeatedly proven that attempted coalitions and affiliations with Labour were futile, the party turned its attention to the Labour Party annual conference, the policy-making forum where an array of bans and proscriptions made it clear that the party was not welcome. These restrictions evidenced the party's extreme political marginality. Moffat, for example, was a member of both the CP and the Labour Party, but was prohibited from attending the party's annual conference and, as he complained, 'denied all democratic rights within the Labour Party'.[425]Nonetheless, the CP calculated that 'to become a real driving force, able to carry through a Labour Party conference, the left must have its roots in the factories and trade unions and must be able to influence mass thought and action there'.[426]This strategy was fundamental to the CP's agenda and was expressed with increasing confidence. By early 1949 the *Daily Worker* could write that 'there cannot be a real mass movement unless we win support from the masses organised in the Labour Party, whether as individuals or through their trade union affiliation, united with the masses in the unions'. [427]

4.4 Nationalisation and the NCB

Clearly, if the CP had reneged on its mission to champion support for production and the government, then it needed to find evidence to substantiate its new claim that the Labour Party was now an unprincipled class collaborator. The argument needed to be particularly strong in coalmining, whose nationalisation had been emblematic of the sense of optimism, of which the CP had been a most vocal advocate. The CP's tactic was to disparage not the principle of nationalisation, for that may have been an admission of error on the party's part; the critique rested on the implementation of Labour's concept of nationalisation. That argument was propagated on multiple occasions, and came from the top of the party. Pollitt used *World News*

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[425] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.* 114.
[426] Pollitt, Harry, 'The Lessons of Margate', *Daily Worker,* 15 May 1947.
[427]'Communists Fight Atlee and Morrison', *Daily Worker,* 28 February 1949.

and Views to confirm that: 'It is now clear that the aim of the Labour government in its nationalisation policy is to obtain cheap coal, power, transport for capitalism as a whole by creating a state capitalist industry run by capitalists, with the former trade union leaders occupying minor positions of responsibility on the boards'.[428] The CP's criticism of nationalisation extended to the governing structure of the industry, and in March 1947 Pollitt criticised the composition of the NCB for having only two of its nine members drawn from the working class.[429] But, just as Pollitt could make these criticisms, he was not willing to rectify the balance by sacrificing a key member of the party in the NUM to the NCB. In April 1947 the security services observed that Pollitt was keen to make sure Horner's wife continued to apply pressure to make sure that Horner refused the job that he had been offered on the NCB.[430]

Where did this leave communists in the NUM? When the party had supported Labour, it was a merry coincidence that they were in-step. But, as the party changed tactic, subtle differences emerged between communists in the union; as there is no evidence that the CP prescribed a coherent line for these men to take, it is invariable that discrepancies and interpretations arose. The temptation is to assume that 'communists in the NUM' were automatically working in synchrony with each other; in reality, largely due to the party's relaxed industrial structure, there was often a gulf and the opportunity for conflict between communists in the NUM. A file from the security services suggested that there was antipathy between Moffat and Horner and that it was 'scandalous that they never met, and that it showed what bad friends they really were'.[431] But the main evidence of conflicting opinions was not around the broader questions of Labour and nationalisation, but the NCB.[432] At the 1948 NUM conference Moffat first expressed his suspicions about the composition of the NCB.[433] But when delivering the results of a report that had been sent out to union branches, seeking their comments about nationalisation, Horner claimed that the intention of the union in this exercise was not to attack, but rather improve, the NCB.[434] These differences become more apparent

[428] Pollitt, H, 'The Trade Unions and Nationalisation; a Discussion Document', *World News and Views,* Vol 28, No 33, 21 August 1948, 371. Jock Kane, a communist from the Yorkshire area, joined the board in 1947, although there is no evidence that Pollitt attempted to intervene in this.
[429] Pollitt, Harry, *Britain's Problems Can Be Solved,* March 1947.
[430] 3 April 1947, KV2/1529.
[431] 14 March 1950, KV2/1529.
[432] Both had been offered jobs on the NCB, but turned them down because they felt that they could do better work in the NUM. According to Fishman, Horner was offered his on the condition he left the CP. See Fishman, *Horner, op.cit.,* 660.
[433] NUM Annual Conference 1948.
[434] Branches were most critical of the NCB's bureaucracy, see NUM Annual Conference 1948.

through the men's autobiographies. Reflecting on the first NCB in *Incorrigible Rebel,* Horner recalled that 'I think that much of the success of coal nationalisation was due to the personnel of the first coal board'.[435] But Moffat's *My Life* saw the main problem as the fact that the first NCB was made up of 'a majority of people who never supported nationalisation in their lives and never even supported labour'.[436]

Moffat's critique of nationalisation was also similar to the party's in relation to the compensation that former coal owners were paid when the industry was privatised. In August 1948, Pollitt predicted that in the first year of nationalisation the mines had a deficit of £23 million, yet the former private owners had still received £164 thousand in compensation.[437] But Moffat had criticised the policy two years earlier, before the union was even nationalised and when the CP was still an avid supportive of Labour. At the conference of Scottish miners in 1946 Moffat reminded delegates that 'we deplore the policy of huge sums of money being paid out in compensation to the owners who brought the industry to the verge of ruin'.[438] Interestingly, although Fishman places much emphasis on the sense of conflict between Horner and the party when Horner contravened the party's position, here is clear evidence that Moffat was publicly adopting a different position to the CP itself. There is no evidence that the party challenged this. Moffat's was a consistent critique and it eventually brought him more into synchrony with the party; by the summer of 1949 Moffat had a resolution opposing the levels of compensation being paid carried at the NUM annual conference. [439] In 1950 Moffatt moved a resolution at the TUC conference, which was carried, which proposed that the general council 'give early attention' to the amounts of compensation being paid. [440]

Both Horner and Moffat would later claim in their autobiographies that they realised that nationalisation in 1945 was not perfect; it was clear, however, that Moffat had been the most vocal critic of it. Horner understood the realistic possibilities of nationalisation under a Labour government; whilst he would have liked to have asked for workers' control and the nationalisation of coal distributors, he knew that nationalisation under capitalism was a completely different thing to nationalisation under socialism. [441] This logic of pragmatism and arguably gradualism was, to some extent, influenced by Horner's Leninism, and he reasoned

[435] Horner, A, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,* 195.
[436] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 86.
[437] Pollitt, Harry, *The Miners' Next Step*, August 1948, 4.
[438] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 87.
[439] NUM Annual Conference, 1949.
[440] TUC Annual Conference, 1950.
[441] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,*168.

that 'Lenin once said that it would take three decades for men to adjust themselves to new circumstances'. [442] Horner was 'conscious of the many deficiencies in the administration of this first great nationalised industry' but equally was committed to ensuring that 'whatever the faults…we will never go back'. [443] Wal Hannington's papers suggest that one of the reasons for the CP's 'disappointment' at nationalisation was because in 1945 they had assumed that it was synonymous with socialism. [444] It is probable, although not conclusive, that Horner and Moffat's disappointment with nationalisation, conveyed differently, was at least in part political; but that it was also motivated by the sense that, as noted in chapter two, little had changed in practical terms for miners under nationalisation.

4.5 Production and Saturday working

The onset of the fuel crisis in February 1947, the result of the fuel shortage that had perennially dogged the nascent union, put further pressure on the men and their union to produce more. A report into the industry by the TUC noted that not only had the government grossly under-estimated how much coal was needed, but also documented how 1,000 men per week were leaving the industry, seeking alternative sources of employment. [445] In March 1947, despite the CP now opposing increased production, Horner was able to use the *Daily Worker* to encourage production.[446] Whilst the reason for Horner's continued support was largely practical he also had a personal motivation for continuing to advocate production, particularly because he had committed the union to high levels of production when he had negotiated the five day week with six days' pay for miners in 1947. As the production demands got higher, the endeavours to honour the union's side of the agreement invariably got harder. Moreover there was a political motivation to this, which had been made clear in the letter that all members of the NUM had received in April 1947, calling for continued production to avoid discrediting the NCB and Labour government. [447] Horner's position is not surprising: but the fact that he was able to express it though party publications, when the CP's position had changed, is revealing.

But the numerous unofficial strikes in the industry threatened to do just that. Sammy Moore of the CP and Powergroup noted that unofficial strikes threatened to ruin nationalisation

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[442] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.* 20.
[443] TUC Annual Conference, 1951.
[444] CP/CENT/WAL/HAN/ U/D.
[445] TUC Annual Conference, 1947.
[446] Horner, A, '100,000 Extra Miners Can Transform Our Future', *Daily Worker,* 22 March 1947.
[447] 'Letter to all Members', 22 April 947. This was part of the miners' charter.

and place the 'life of the Labour Government in jeopardy'. [448] At the 1947 NUM conference Horner's frustration was clear and he told delegates that 'following the greatest single concession in our industry' there had been no decrease in strikes: his personal research into 120 of these unofficial strikes, over three weeks, had demonstrated that in ninety-nine percent of them 'men went back with nothing they wanted'. [449] At the same conference Moffat added his support for production, whilst absolving the miners and the Labour Government of any responsibility in the coal crisis. [450] Moffat also refuted any claim that the five day week had failed. [451]

Such support was needed because at the NCB's request, and in order to fulfil the demand for coal, an Extension of Hours Agreement was introduced by Horner at a special conference of the union later that year, although the blow was softened somewhat because districts were permitted autonomy regarding how to implement it. [452] The agreement was extended in 1948, however, and Horner justified it to the union on the basis of the commitment that he had made to the NCB.[453] Horner's actions evidence Fishman's observation of Horner's social democratic values; but Horner enjoyed Moffat's support on the grounds that the agreement 'supports the Labour government'.[454] Horner, Moffat, and Moore were still supporting the government in July 1948, at least six months after the CP's criticism of it had become most vocal. There is no sense of conflict between these men and the party; if there had been then, unlike Fishman's focus on Horner, surely Moffat too should have been in the same position. [455]Apart from criticisms of the NCB and levels of compensation, Moffat's position only noticeably changed once Churchill's Conservative party won the 1951 general election. [456] Moffat's autobiography suggests that it was the change of government that changed his

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[448] NUM Annual Conference, 1948. The Powergroup had derived from the National Union of Enginemen, Firemen, Mechanics and Electrical Workers. Instead of amalgamating with the TGWU, as many other small unions had done in 1923, the fact that many of its members were miners caused the NUEFMEW to become part of the MFGB, and then the NUM. It retained its own Executive, though. See Ottey, *op.cit.,* 11 and 142 for more information.

[449] NUM Annual Conference, 1947.

[450] Ibid.

[451] Ibid.

[452] Ibid. The choice was either longer weekdays or a Saturday shift.

[453] NUM Annual Conference 1947. It kept rolling over at the union's annual conference.

[454] NUM Special Conference 1948.

[455] Whilst Moffat was not general secretary of the national union, he was president of the Scottish area and he was also on the party's executive.

[456] 'Report of the Yorkshire District of the CP to the Political Committee', 1 May1951, 2.

outlook, so that he came to believe production would only be driving rearmament and not direction from the CP. [457]

4.6 Anti-communism

Invariably the CP's new position served to make it synonymous with Britain's Soviet nemesis. The extent to which the independent position of communists in the union was motivated by a desire not to be associated with the anti-communist Cold War hostility is difficult to ascertain. It is likely that these men were primarily motivated by what they felt was better for the union; but they must have been aware of their precarious position. The party was so isolated by 1948 and 1949 that Watters and McGahey were called into the Scottish office of the CP to be told that 'we could go underground'. [458] The CP was already small and, even during a period when it had been conciliatory, it had failed to make any political capital. Now, faced with the onslaught of hostility to the Soviet Union with which the party was presumed synonymous, it faced severe difficulties. In 1948 Morgan Phillips, the general secretary of the Labour Party and a former miner, produced a circular which warned that 'we can expect communist-inspired attempts to foment discontent in the factories . . . we can expect intensified attempts to undermine and destroy the labour movement from within'. [459]

Subsequently further attempts to tackle the communist threat followed: the Black Circular (1949) stopped communists being elected to trades councils; the Common Cause (1952) was formed as a means to unite anti-communists;[460] by January 1955 Charles Geddon of the TUC warned 'beware the wicked communists, who are out to undermine industry and destroy Britain's marvellous prosperity'.[461] But there was also the approach of simply giving the CP enough rope to hang itself. Reflecting on Pollitt's 1953 pamphlet, *What Do Miners Need,* the security services mused that attacking the pamphlet through counter-propaganda would only 'lead to resentment at the interference in the internal affairs of the NUM'. [462] It would be much more effective, the report said, to leave miners to draw their own conclusions about 'a party which puts up a boiler maker to tell the miners what they need'![463] The extent to

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[457] Moffat, A, *My Life*, *op.cit.,* 115.
[458] Watters being interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project. Watters suggests that only the party's 'service in the past' (the 1930s) permitted its survival.
[459] Horner, Arthur, 'Trade Unionism and Communism', *Labour Monthly,* Vol 31, No 2, February 1948.
[460] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 230.
[461] 'Prosperity for Whom?', *Daily Worker,* (Editorial), 3 January 1955. Geddon was in the TUC.
[462] Comments on Pollitt's *What do Miners Need?,* POWE/NA/ 37/396, 3 June 1953. This was a set of wage and bread and butter suggestions for the industry. Full pamphlet is available in the WCML.
[463] Ibid. This was a reference to Pollitt's former occupation.

which all of this impacted the position of communists in trade unions is negligible, however; by 1961 only three of the 183 unions affiliated to the TUC had formally banned communists. [464]

But this is not to say that life did not have the potential to get difficult for communists in the union who in some instances did face hostility because of their politics, even when they were only supporting resolutions made by right-wing areas. In 1951, for example, Paynter supported Yorkshire's resolution that viewed the rising prices caused by importing raw materials as indicative of the rearmament policy of the Labour government and its subservience to America. [465]Although the resolution was eventually passed one fellow South Wales delegate took the trouble to point out to the entire conference that Paynter's view was anomalous amongst the South Wales coalfield. [466] Sam Watson, of Northumberland, used the 1953 Labour Party conference to encourage stronger proscriptions in the union against communists. [467] Communists lower down the union had trouble too. Anti-communism was a convenient method through which non-communists could denigrate those in the CP, particularly in elections. Kane recalled the hostility against 'Kane the Red' during his successful election campaign for compensation agent for Barnsley.[468] Kane was told by the NCB area official that the miners wanted him to resign from the CP, which Kane refused to do. [469] When Kane asked the men if this was true he recalls being told '"No, we've never said nothing." The bastard was making it up'. [470]

But even in these clear instances of anti-communism the NUM itself largely remained loyal to its members who were in the party. [471]In 1955 a circular was in existence, which

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[464] 'Bans and Proscriptions', CP/CENT/RAM/11/04, U/D.

[465] NUM Annual Conference, 1951. Yorkshire was, at this point, relatively right wing.

[466] Ibid.

[467] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1953. See the recent article that has been published about Watson, cited in the bibliography. For the most recent analysis of Sam Watson, see Beynon, H, and Austrin, T, 'The Performance of Power: Sam Watson, a miners' leader on many stages', *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 10:4, 2014. Watson, according to the article, had a strong background in mining trade unionism before nationalisation, but was able to use his power within the NUM to support both the CP and Labour Party, as was required in the interests of the union.

[468] This is a posthumous autobiography, largely translated verbatim from a series of interviews conducted by Charles Parker, the 'radical' filmmaker with close links to the CP, and who was dismissed from the BBC as a result. The book is Kane, J, *No Wonder We Were Rebels* (NUM: Armthorpe, 1994). Also available at: http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=697&Itemid=63. This site is a tremendous resource for biographical details of leading Communists.

[469] Kane, J, *No Wonder.* There are no page numbers with the online version that I have used.

[470] Ibid.

[471] The exception being Horner's ill-received comments supporting the French miners' strike in 1948, to which the NUM was opposed. Horner got in trouble for his comments; these were not particularly associated with his communism, however, more his contravening of the union position. The comments were an obvious reflection of Horner's political conviction.

suggested that the Lanarkshire branch of the CP was arranging meetings to capture trade union branches but, at least according to Moffat, the entire NUM executive committee saw it and drew the conclusion that it was nothing more than a general bulletin of the party. [472] Following the pressure that the press put on the NUM to remove Moffat after the Hungarian Uprising, he was able to remain committed to both his party and his job, later stating that 'no one would succeed in compelling me to change my politics, no matter what the consequences'. [473]

4.7 Countering anti-communism

The continuity of communists in the union during the Cold War was largely because of their adherence to union democracy; as such they refused to conform to the image of a hostile Russian emissary that their critics attempted to create for them. Thus when Moffat was challenged that his party was undemocratic in its trade union work he dismissed, with legitimate confidence, the accusations as 'amusing', claiming that 'there is not one communist holding a union leading position in the miners' trade union who has not been elected by a majority vote of the members'.[474] William Pearson, the communist Scottish area secretary, recalled satirically that he had 'infiltrated' the NUM aged sixteen. [475] There is no sense that leading communists in the union rescinded from moving resolutions that they either had conviction in, even if they might be perceived as 'progressive'. For example at the 1950 NUM conference, Moffat told delegates that 'huge military expenditure, colonial wars and preparations for a third world war is having a serious effect on the living and social standards of the British people'. [476] In 1951 Paynter could second a resolution from the Scottish area seeking friendship between Britain and the Soviet Union, which was passed. [477]In 1956 Moffat and the Scottish area were able to secure a resolution not only proposing unity between Britain and the Soviet Union, but advocated the 'need for more trade and better understanding to the mutual advantage of both countries'. [478]

But communists in the NUM could also be shrewd in their actions when necessary and if it meant that they could avoid becoming the personification of the soviet threat. The most obvious example of this occurred in 1949 when Paynter, moving a resolution to 'heal the

[472] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 228.
[473] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 151.
[474] Moffat, A, 'The Miners Know Their Friends', *Daily Worker,* 26 February 1948.
[475] Branson, N, *1941-1951, op.cit.* 178.
[476] Moffat, A, *My Life* ,101.
[477] NUM Annual Conference, 1951.
[478] NUM Annual Conference, 1956.

breach' between the British trade union movement and the World Federation of Trade Unions, found that not only was his resolution rejected by the union executive in light of the Cold War, but that the conference descended into an attack on soviet communism. [479] In this example, however, the position of Moffat is interesting and demonstrates the ambiguous position of communist trade unionists in the NUM. Moffat (and Horner) both sat on the executive that rejected Paynter's resolution, although it is unknown (and unlikely) that both men opposed it. But, certainly, there is no record that Moffat attempted to formally support Paynter's resolution either. This may be surprising; Moffat was clearly interested in building links with the World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU). Just five months after the union's conference 1949 conference the security services tracked Moffat to France, with George Allison, where they suspected that the communists were collecting information on behalf of the WFTU. [480] This paradox is emblematic of the overall problem, of communists giving primacy to their union duties where it was needed. Therefore, in Moffat's case, it was possible to be a senior member of a trade union that was pivotal to the government's post-war economic recovery plan and simultaneously a potential enemy of the state.

But was there a difference in the way that the party and communists in the union dealt with the problems that the Cold War brought? Whilst communists in the union could disassociate themselves with the claims made about their party by continuing to fulfil their trade union obligations, the CP could defend itself by pointing to the 'gross confusion and perverse ignorance' of these claims.[481] Publicly, the party also refused to conform to its image of pro-Soviet saboteur. Despite trying, the security services found no evidence that a new CI was being formed, and the CP was notably absent from the Cominform. From 1951 the party's new programme, the *British Road to Socialism* (BRS), put the CP in the paradoxical position of being viewed as 'an agent of foreign power, whilst simultaneously advocating broad coalition politics'. [482] It was certainly in the party's interest that they were disingenuous about the trajectory of the BRS, and they kept the fact that 'Stalin was in favour of the sharpest possible expression of the main ideas of the programme' confined to the party's trusted inner caucus. [483] Leading members of the CP looked to the industrial strategy as evidence of their amicable intent. Campbell, hyperbolically, protested that 'the communists do not infiltrate the

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[479] NUM Annual Conference, 1949.
[480] 23 January 1950, KV2/597 (PF38).
[481] CP, *Defend Trade Union Rights,* May 1949, 20.
[482] Callaghan, J, and Harker, B, *Documentary op.cit.,* 73.
[483] This was the impression at least given to Matthews by Pollitt. See letter from Johnstone to Matthews 14/9/1978, CP/CENT/MATH/06/16.

working class, they are bone of its bone and the flesh of its flesh'. [484] Pollitt used the *Daily Worker* to reassure those who needed it that party members were obliged to 'set an example' in their trade union work; that they should uphold democracy within the unions by their willingness to 'stand for periodic elections', of which no communist should fear; and that they should strive to be 'the best leaders' in their trade union work.[485] There was parity between the party and communists in the union in their defence against these charges. Moffat, rebuffing 'an attack' by Herbert Morrison of the Labour Party regarding his communism, pointed to the fact that he had been democratically elected; he added that 'the great majority of miners are not mugs because they vote for someone whose politics are not accepted by Mr. Morrison'. [486]

Pollitt's insistence in the merit of democratic elections meant that the party could provide a legitimate defence. This respect for democracy was also shared by communists in the union; Moffat could point to the fact that in 1949 the Scottish area of the NUM, of which he was president, had submitted a resolution calling for all NUM officials to be re-elected every five years. [487]Communists in the union could stand in elections, even during the Cold War, and, even if they did not win, they could draw a credible number of votes. [488]Paynter's victory in October 1951, where he became president of the South Wales area of the NUM, was a case in point. [489] In 1954 Moffat stood in the union's presidential election and achieved 162,369 votes to Ernest Jones's 348,391. [490] As an effect of Jones's success Eddie Collins, a 'close friend and ally of the party' was elected to the position of Yorkshire area general secretary.[491]This in turn created a vacancy for a Yorkshire area vice president and the party was confident enough to field Sammy Taylor, who polled a respectable 13,000 votes against Sam Bullough, who won with 27,000 votes. [492]

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[484] Campbell, J.R, *New Ways: Communist policies for trade unions,* (London: CP, 1963).
[485] Pollitt, H, 'How Communists Champion the Unions', *Daily Worker,* 7 September 1955. This was before the ETU incident came to light.
[486] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* pp 223-224.
[487] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,*151.
[488] Horner was already general secretary at this point, a victory he secured in August 1946 with a majority of 60,000 votes.
[489] Paynter, W, *My Generation, op.cit.* 126. Paynter's predecessor was communist Alf Davies.
[490] '162,369 Miners Voted For Abe Moffatt', *Daily Worker,* 12 March 1954. Watters believed that it was the divided left and the union's voting system that caused these defeats, not the candidates' communism. Same point for footnotes 96 and 97.
[491] Watters, F, *Being Frank,* 14.
[492] Ibid.

4.8 Building the party: project Yorkshire

Yet there remained work to be done. In October 1953 this began in earnest when a former miner and CP area secretary for West Lothian migrated south to Yorkshire, much to the disgruntlement of his mother, but at the request of the party.[493] The man was Frank Watters and his mandate, according to his memoirs, was to build up a 'cohesive left organisation' and insulate the miners from the strong right-wing element which dominated the Yorkshire pits.[494] Watters's task was to unify Yorkshire's 150,000 miners, who were situated across 130 pits, in order to form a 'group of outstanding mining comrades' committed to the party.[495] The CP had identified a need for Watters in the area, recognising its potential, and in May 1951 a report from the Yorkshire district of the CP had indicated that the miners had been the 'weakest, rather than the strongest, link in the economic struggle'. [496] A memorandum from Yorkshire to the political committee in 1954 suggested that area be graced with visits from leading communists, including Pollitt, Gallacher and Moffat; whether the party was receptive to these suggestions, and if the visits materialised, is undocumented. [497]It is clear that the party had seen a potential for development, diagnosed a problem, and dispatched Watters, as the party organiser in the area, to build the solution. But there was over a two-year gap between the Yorkshire report and Watters's arrival. Although not mentioned in his memoirs, an interview with Watters in 2000 revealed that the CP had previously had a 'lad from London' trying to build the party's influence in the area's mines. [498]The nameless figure, whose identity Watters would not disclose, failed because he had not been a miner, thus he lacked the ability to communicate with the men. [499]What Watters also did not disclose was if the decision to replace the original organiser with Watters was his choice, or the party's decision. But the failings of the plan clearly demonstrated what would happen when communists who were not familiar with certain industries were parachuted into them to build the party.

4.9 Wage militancy and wage restraint

How did the CP envisage that the necessary politicisation would be achieved? Wage militancy was the crux of the strategy. Even during the war, Callaghan points out, Pollitt had already

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[493] Watters, F, *Being Frank*, *op.cit.*15.
[494] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.*13.
[495] Watters, F, *Being Frank*, *op.cit.,*15.
[496] Report of the Yorkshire District of the CP to the Political Committee, 1 May 1951, 5.
[497] Report of the Yorkshire District of the CP to the Political Committee, 1 February 1954, 3.
[498] Watters interview, *op.cit.*
[499] Ibid.

'justified wage militancy as a countervailing force to the inbuilt recessionary tendencies of a capitalist economy'.[500] But there were further motivations. A report in 1950 by the party's economic committee justified wage militancy because of its potential benefits, suggesting that 'an improvement in wages and conditions in nationalised industries would cause workers in the private sector to demand nationalisation also and so it would spread'. [501]Tommy Walker, an NUM branch delegate from the Yorkshire area, suggested that wage militancy might be used to rid the Labour Party of its reformism: it would have a politicising function because it created a link between communists in industry and the party and it would also cause a conflict between the government and the union. [502] The party's propaganda around wage militancy also presented the case on precise economic grounds, which it could then link back to its ideological position. British workers generally, the party claimed, had only seen a five per cent increase in real wages between 1949 and 1955, the lowest in Europe, especially in comparison to France, whose workers had enjoyed a 29 percent rise.[503] Therefore, the communists argued, to maintain their standard of living workers were compelled to work overtime in order to offset the rising prices that were allowed to remain unchecked by Labour and, from 1951, the Conservatives. [504] Campbell blamed this on 'the £1,500 million war budget that is driving up living costs'.[505] The cost of the war budget, Margot Heinemann noted, was equivalent to 11s 6d per week for every British man, woman and child. [506] This analysis could be applied to various industries, including the NUM. Heinemann reported how between October 1947 and April 1951 underground workers in the NUM had secured wage increases of between ten and twenty percent, but the retail price index had risen by twenty percent across the same period because of the war drive. [507]

The dominant discourse of both Labour and Conservative parties and governments was that increased wages caused inflation and the preferred cure to rising inflation was wage restraint, first used by Labour in 1948. [508] The Labour Party conference in 1951 suggested that without it 'a wave of inflation, which could do utmost harm to our economy with great harm

[500] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.,* 396.
[501] 'Notes on Nationalisation', 1950, CP/CENT/ECON/1/2.
[502] 'Tom and his Mates Want that Rise Now', *Daily Worker,* 6 January 1953.
[503] *Wages, Employment and the Struggle for Markets,* 1955.
[504] For one example, see 'The Economic Crisis of 1950', *Economic Bulletin*, 1:3, July 1952, 8.
[505] 'Real Pay is Going Down', *Daily Worker,* 19 September 1955.
[506] Heinemann, Margot, 'Robbing the Poor for America's War', *World News and Views,* Vol 31, No 16, 21 April 1951.
[507] Heinemann, Margot, 'Coal and the War Drive', *World News and Views,* Vol 31, No 25, 23 June 1951.
[508] Deakin preferred to see it as a way of restraining price rises, rather than an incomes policy. See Labour Party Annual Conference, 1948.

to the living standards of the workers, would result'. [509] By 1956 Anthony Eden's government had noted in its White Paper, the *Economic Implications of Full Employment*, the existence of a 'perpetual, upward spiral in wage claims and the cost of living'. [510] Invariably a clear conflict between the government and the unions, which the CP predicted and hoped to nurture due to its expected politicising benefits, was sure to erupt. In this critique there was a similarity between the CP and communists in industry. Both Horner and Moffat had spoken out against wage restraint between 1948 and 1953. In *Trade Unions and Communism,* written by Horner for the CP in 1948, he was highly critical of the Americans who were 'intensifying their campaign against socialism' and the complicit Labour Party who had abandoned *Let us face the Future* in favour of 'ill-conceived endeavours to keep wages pegged whilst profits riot unchecked'. [511] This was to some extent an enduring philosophy and in 1955 Horner criticised wage restraint through the *Daily Worker*.[512] Moffat was equally critical of wage restraint and in 1951 he noted that the miners' ability to push for, and in some cases secure, wage demands was evidence that workers would no longer accept wage restraint and imperialist policies. [513] The following year Moffat gave the example of a successful wage increase which was the 'biggest single increase ever achieved by miners'. [514]The claim had been cleared in three weeks, as evidence of the miners' 'strength and position'. [515] Whilst writing his autobiography in 1962, after he retired from the NUM, Moffat appeared to repeat the party line as regard to the relationship between wages, prices and profits, saying that 'wage restraint under any government will always mean increased profits for the employing class, and that is the reason why it should be opposed'.[516]

But although communists in the union wrote in party publications about the fallacy of wage restraint, and appeared to support wage militancy, this support did not always make the transition into their union duties. Theoretically, although the sentiment of wage militancy was not disputed, implementing it in the NUM was not as obvious. The NUM met in December 1949 to vote on the TUC's report, which advocated the government's policy of wage restraint. The executive committee of the union (inclusive of Moffat and Horner) accepted the TUC's

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[509] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1951.
[510] Dorey, Peter , *Wage Politics in Britain,* (Sussex: Sussex University Press, 2002)*,* 49.
[511] Horner, Arthur, *Trade Unions and Communism,* February 1948.
[512] 'Real Pay is Going Down', *Daily Worker,* 19 September 1955.
[513] Moffatt, Abe, 'British Workers in 1951', *World News and Views,* Vol 31, No 12, 12 March 1951.
[514] Moffatt, Abe, 'Coal- for War or Peace?', *World News and Views,* Vol 32, No 4, 26 January 1952.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Moffat, A, *My Life,* 95.

recommendation on the grounds of the 'serious economic position of the country'. [517] Horner admitted that not all miners were well paid, but also noted the need to restrain the wages of some in order to resolve the 'greater total problem'. [518] Paynter argued that it was prices that continued to rise whilst wages were checked and that was because of Britain's links to 'American imperialism'.[519] Moreover, Paynter said, 'we should see the crisis of capitalism as an opportunity for an advance to socialism'. [520] Indeed, seven months later, Moffat went to great lengths to avert the possibility of the NUM breaching wage restraint. At the 1950 NUM conference Kent, Scotland, and Cumberland moved a composite resolution to secure higher wages; Moffat knew that this would breach the TUC's recommendation of labour's wage restraint. [521]This was a potential for conflict, militant action on wages, according to the CP's rationale. But Moffat actively tried to circumvent the problem of infringing on Labour's policy by using the War Addition to Wages Agreement to claim that the wage increase could be justified under that agreement, rather than challenging the policy of wage restraint. [522] This position could cause communists in the union to work against each other. At the 1956 union conference, for example, Paynter moved composite resolutions 22 and 23 on behalf of South Wales and the Kent area seconded it; the resolution sought to authorise the executive to 'claim increased wages to offset any worsening of real wages'. [523]Horner followed the motion by making it clear that 'if this resolution means the use of the industrial machine for the purpose of achieving political ends, that is not the sort of motion this conference should support'. [524]Paynter retorted 'who suggested that it did?', and the resolution was moved. [525]

Communists in the NUM also debated with each other if wage claims and wage reforms could be simultaneously pursued. At the union's 1954 conference the reform of the wage structure for day wage men was the primary question. [526]Paynter believed that it was possible to pursue both the new wage structure and wage claims simultaneously. Les Ellis, of the Nottinghamshire coalfield, who was also in the CP, wanted the two demands kept separate.

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[517] NUM Special Conference, December 1949. In the event, the conference accepted the TUC's recommendation by 406,000 votes to 273,000, but a later ballot of districts rescinded this.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid.
[521] NUM Annual Conference, 1950.
[522] Ibid.
[523] NUM Annual Conference, 1956.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] This paragraph relates to the NUM Annual Conference, 1954.

[527]Jack Dunn, from the Kent area, then sought a wage increase but Horner defended the urgency of the wage structure over the pay award. Wage claims, Horner suggested, took so long to negotiate that tying the union up in wage claims would delay the new structure. Perhaps this was also a way to move the focus of the conference away from wage claims. Moffat resolved the immediate situation but in doing so gave primacy to the need to address the wage structure. This was something to which Moffat had been consistently committed and in 1947 the *Daily Worker* reported him as saying that 'nationalisation cannot be a complete success so long as we have the inequalities and anomalies which exist under the current wages structure, a relic of the days of private enterprise'.[528] In 1954 Moffat suggested that the wage claim be paused for six months, to give the conference the chance to commence the new wage structure. [529] In October 1953 the security services had captured Kerrigan wanting to talk to Horner to get him to 'lay off the wages structure thing'.[530] But, in their primacy of the wage structure amendments, as opposed to the wage demand, both Horner and Moffat disregarded the CP's instruction. [531]This demonstrates one of the great and enduring issues with wage militancy; even if communists in the union might have theoretically supported it, practically they gave primacy to whatever was the greatest issue in the NUM, even if this meant edging toward wage restraint. Moreover, due to the way that the CP had structured its links with members in unions, largely because of direction from Russia, it could not overcome these kind of fundamental, strategic issues.

4.1.0 Piecework

The pattern that is being evidenced should not be surprising, given what we have already noted about the motivations of communists in the union. There were serious issues, mostly around pay, which threatened to obliterate the national unity of the union, and reform to the day wage pay structure was the tip of the iceberg; by 1951 there were 1,160 different jobs in the industry. [532] The gulf between communist trade unionists supporting wage militancy, but applying it in the union, was made more complex by piecework. Although miners had benefitted materially from the particular conditions of war pieceworkers had secured a disproportionate advantage

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[527] Paynter argued against this and Ellis tried to respond, but was stopped because he raised a point not relevant to the discussion.

[528] , 'Scots' Miners' Chief Hits Out At Warmongers', *Daily Worker,* 9 June 1947.

[529] Moffat, A, *My Life,* 122. This worked and by 1955 daywagemen were permitted the same rate of pay for the same work, regardless of where they worked geographically.

[530] 13 October 1953, KV2/1529.

[531] I have found no evidence that the CP challenged this.

[532] NUM Annual Conference, 1951.

as a result of these developments. The Revision of the Wages Structure Agreement (1944) had over-compensated pieceworkers, who were already relatively well-paid, because it added flat rates to the piece rates. [533] By 1947 the agreement had caused a gap of 84.5 percent between the lowest paid and the pieceworkers. [534] There were even divisions between pieceworkers nationally and in Scotland rates were as much as 6 *s* lower than in England and Wales.[535] Piece rates were negotiated within districts, but also within individual pits, and autonomy was given to local and area union officials. [536] Moreover, on top of the tonnage produced, there were multiple allowances that were calculated at the point of production. Piecework was generally calculated on a team, rather than an individual, production level, which created grievances. [537] All of this meant that, as happened in the 1955 Armthorpe unofficial strike, Doncaster miners could try to bring their counterparts in West Yorkshire out only to find that when they waved their payslips at them the West Yorkshire men were actually paid less. [538]

But the CP saw potential, not problems, from this situation. The party used the *Daily Worker* to promote the case for higher wages, noting that the growing unrest in the coalfields was 'like a match waiting to explode'.[539] Watters found a coalfield 'rife with rank and file militancy' largely because of the piecework system, which did not reflect the amount of coal produced. [540] Watters's great hope was that he could overcome these divisions through the 'right pit and the right leadership' and push the 'bushfires' into something that would 'set the entire coalfield ablaze'. [541] George Allison's *Coal and the Miners* (1951), published by the CP, encouraged the view that 'nothing will be given to the miners, unless they are prepared to fight for it and if necessary use their organised strength to fight for it'. [542]The solution, he claimed, was not increased production, but 'a fresh dose of old fighting trade union spirit'. [543] But these sorts of sentiments were generic and they were not tailored to the miners or the particular

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[533] Handy, L.J *Wages, op.cit.,* 35. Pieceworkers are generally paid on output; now they had a flat rate to add to it.

[534] Ibid. Surface workers were generally the lowest paid.

[535] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 96.

[536] Moffat, A, *My Life,op.cit.,* 128.

[537] Watters, Frank, 'Interview with Peggy Kahn', *Bulletin, Society for the Study of Labour History*, Autumn 81, Issue 43, pp. 54-69, 59.

[538] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 26.

[539] 'Tom and his Mates Want that Rise Now', *Daily Worker,* 6 January 1953.

[540] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 23.

[541] Ibid.

[542] Allison, George, *Coal and the Miners,* February 1951. There was no biographical details included for Allison, which was somewhat unusual: pamphlets would usually include some details to frame the individual who was writing them. See the following link for more details: http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17:george-allison&catid=1:a&Itemid=97

[543] Ibid.

conditions of mining. They ignored the federalism of the union and the high instance of localised and unofficial strikes; this demonstrates that the party could never understand a specific industry like communist trade unionists could. Therefore communists in the union saw in piecework and wage disparity the potential for strife, which might ultimately threaten the nationalised industry. Horner knew that piecework caused strikes which threatened to obliterate the 'long and laborious work' that trade unionists put in to unifying the NUM.[544] But communists in the union also understood the potential for making a bad situation worse through meddling in the pay arrangements of pieceworkers. [545]Horner knew that abolishing piecework would be 'calamitous'. [546] Moffat also knew that 'unofficial stoppages will never be eliminated in the coalfield so long as this bad system prevails'. [547]

4.1.1 Unofficial strikes

Whilst conflicting policies between the party and communist trade unionists has so far been evidenced, and there have been occasions where communists at national level were in disagreement, it is in the area of unofficial strikes where the fragmented and chaotic structure of the CP's industrial strategy is most obvious. Unofficial stoppages were a growing problem, and in one year alone increased from 1,637 in 1951 to 2,365 in 1952.[548]Communists at the top of the union were against these types of strikes. Paynter gave the best rationale for why this was the case: they usurped the authority of the national leadership, they were sectional and they were unconstitutional. [549] Moore worried that unofficial stoppages, lightening and stay-in strikes was a threat to the vitality of nationalisation. [550]Part of the criticism tied into the sense that nationalisation had brought a profound change, where such tactics were not befitting of a nationalised union; as Horner waspishly told the Durham winders in May 1947 that 'the time has gone when you had to resort to strike action to impress the union'.[551] Communists in the union knew that these eruptions of sporadic militancy created the perception that the unions could not 'keep order in their own house', which might make a case for denationalising the

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[544] NUM Annual Conference, 1955.

[545] A resolution from North Wales in 1954 tried to get piecework abolished, but it was remitted to the EC. NUM Annual Conference, 1950.

[546] NUM Annual Conference, 1947.

[547] Moffat, A, *My Life op.cit.,* 129.

[548] Heinemann, Margot, 'Mines and the Coal Board', *World News and Views,* Vol 33, No 20, 23 May 1953.

[549] Paynter, W, *My Generation, op.cit.*131, and Paynter, W, *Trade Unions and the Problem of Change,* (London: Allen, Page and Unwin, 1970), 167.

[550] NUM Annual Conference, 1948.

[551] 'Miners Seek New Wage Claim', *Daily Worker,* 6 May 1947.

industry.[552] Despite recognising the problem, the issue for the union was trying to resolve the tendency for men to down tools before attempts at a negotiation could commence. Horner was well aware of the major issue here and in 1947 he told delegates to the NUM conference that 'there is no force that can make these men do what they are convinced they ought not to do. There is no power in Heaven or Hell that can make miners do things against their judgement'.[553]

The difficulty with controlling these unofficial strikes is most evident in the Yorkshire coalfield an area which by 1953 had a full-time communist organiser, Watters. In South Yorkshire collieries were organised into panels and in 1954 Edlington looked to the Doncaster panel for support for a wage claim that they were formulating for a 'substantial increase'. But Bob Wilkinson, the communist delegate for Woodlesford, called a strike over the same issue, before he gave Edlington time to put their case to the rest of the panel. [554] The result was that flying pickets landed in Doncaster, whose miners (not wanting to cross a picket line) then moved the picketing into West Yorkshire; here, the pickets were evicted by police and the panel officials were obliged to sign an agreement to end the strike. For Watters this event had two main implications: in the long-term it 'undid the years of work devoted to getting clarity along with the necessary preparation for an all-out coalfield strike' and in the short-term it lost Kane support in the Yorkshire vice-presidential election that year. Bearing in mind that this area was under the jurisdiction of Watters, whilst other areas did not have a full time organiser, Wilkinson at least had the benefit of having his errors pointed out by a 'furious' Watters who told him that 'he should have been consolidating his own area and then appealing for the support of others'. [555]

There was no sense that the CP learned from Wilkinson's actions. The chaos continued into the Armthorpe strike in May 1955, where Kane was the delegate. [556] The source of the problem was allowances for pieceworkers and the Armthorpe men were able to secure 90,000

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[552] Shanks, Michael, *The Stagnant Society*, (Penguin: Middlesex, 1961), 79.

[553] TUC Annual Conference, 1947. But, as shrewd union men, communists could try. Paynter recalls how he would need to end unofficial strikes, and would persuade men that the NCB would not concede their demands whilst they were on strike, already knowing that the demand 'was already in the bloody bag'; he still joined the strikers for a drink in the pub after, however. See interview with Will Paynter, AUD 105, SWML, U/D. One pub where Paynter was less keen to frequent, however, was 'The Shakespeare' in Neath, around which an anti-leadership, pro-unofficial strike committee formed. Often individuals were CP dissidents, who had not been elected to local union positions, eg Evan John. Hywel Francis discusses this in *The Fed, op.cit.,* but it was also discussed in my interview with him, October 2014.

[554] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 15.

[555] Ibid.

[556] The strike gained wage and supplementary concessions, but Kane was disciplined by the NUM for his efforts.

participants in the strike. [557] Fred Collinridge, the moderate Yorkshire area NUM representative, attempted to get a ballot in advance of the strike but Kane whipped up enough support at the mass meeting of Armthorpe miners that he was able to tell Collinridge 'there is only one way we vote at Armthorpe, and that is with a show of hands…you know where you can stick your ballot paper'. [558] The Armthorpe branch was able to secure the support of the rest of the Doncaster panel for their strike. [559] The decisions of local communists to lead their branches into unofficial strike meant that Horner was compelled to negotiate with the NCB on the union's behalf. Horner had originally been dispatched from London to try and persuade the strikers to go back to work, but had been unsuccessful. [560] Although Kane and Horner knew each other well, when Horner asked to meet Kane, Kane refused unless Horner would meet the entire branch committee'. [561] Moreover, Horner negotiated the resolution to the strike with Bill Sales of the NCB; but it was only through reading a tiny column in the *Doncaster Post* that Watters (the area organiser) heard of the settlement. Watters is rather non-committal about his role in the strike, saying simply that he and Ramelson (at this time the Yorkshire area secretary) 'were daily involved'. Where was the CP's industrial organiser, Peter Kerrigan, in all of this? The role of the industrial organiser, according to Seifert and Sibley, was to be the link between the party and the union. [562] It could be argued that perhaps Kerrigan was too busy to bother himself with another small dispute in the mining industry. But the implications of the disorganisation of the party's response to it, in a coalfield where the CP was trying to build influence, might suggest that Kerrigan should have been in some way involved. Perhaps Kerrigan's involvement was verbal, and undocumented; but, even so, we might expect to see it referenced in Watters's or Kane's account. Kerrigan is only mentioned by Fishman, who says that Kerrigan sought to encourage Watters and Ramelson to mobilise all available forces; but there is no footnote provided citing where this evidence comes from. [563]

What do these two strikes demonstrate about the party's industrial strategy in the NUM? On one hand they evidence the disorganisation in an area that the CP had identified as needed a dedicated organiser. But they also demonstrate the clear lack of communication between the organiser and communists on the ground. Perhaps part of the problem was that these men, such

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[557] Kane, *No Wonder, op.cit.*
[558] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 24.
[559] Watters, F, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 23.
[560] Ibid.
[561] This paragraph relates to Watters, *Being Frank op.cit.,* 25.
[562] Seifert and Sibley, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 106.
[563] See Fishman, *Horner, op.cit.*

as Wilkinson and Kane, had some degree of authority within the union; this allowed them to make decisions and they were not compelled to liaise or discuss with the party. A comparison of the Edlington and Armthorpe examples also demonstrates that for communists on the ground there was a lack of instruction from the party; thus, when they took the initiative, they invariably contravened either the party's line or the NUM's policy. It is hardly surprising that communist trade unionists largely chose to keep their politics out of their union business. The situation of a communist NUM leader having to negotiate with another communist who had called an unofficial strike must have happened on numerous occasions, if the volume of unofficial strikes is anything to go by. But Armthorpe, because it secured concessions and because it involved such large numbers of men, has been recorded in some detail. Armthorpe was a large unofficial strike: the CP could have either tried to develop it into an official strike or, more probably, suggested that it was an unofficial strike, and so advocate that it was called off. There is no evidence that the CP arbitrated between Kane and Horner, or instructed Watters to do this, although it had apparently committed to doing so. Paynter told the CP the problems with these 'tit for tat' unorganised strikes, often involving pieceworkers. [564] He suggested that the CP 'did what it could to reduce this kind of internal conflict' but does not elaborate on how this was the case and suggests that the party later abandoned this effort.

4.1.2 Prospects for unofficial strike action

Communists at the top of the union knew that these pockets of disputes were emblematic of the frustrations that miners faced; they also knew that they were unlikely to cause any positive change. There was a structural reason why these unofficial strikes would never be able to graduate to official strike action and the union's compulsory arbitration machinery, which did not disappear until 1961, effectively made official strikes illegal. Moffat was aware that 'national strike action in support of wage claims was ruled out by the compulsory arbitration agreement'. [565] Thus, at a special conference of the union in December 1950, he voiced his intention to try and change the conciliation machinery of the union; he envisaged a ballot vote to see if a deadlocked dispute should go to arbitration level. [566] Paynter knew this too; he knew that 'national arbitration is now the vehicle for operating wage restraint'. [567]Bolton knew that

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[564] Paynter, W, *My Generation, op.cit.,* 132.

[565] Moffat, A, *My Life, op.cit.,* 96. The willingness and militant confidence of an area could play a part, too. Lawrence Daly suggested that the regional geographical difficulties with extracting coal, which in turn made providing higher pay more difficult, was a factor in an area's level of militancy. Interview with Lawrence Daly, AUD 40 SWML U/D.

[566] NUM Special Conference, December 1950.

[567] Ibid.

the long-winded trajectory of taking a grievance through the arbitration process caused walk-outs. [568] Pollitt identified the need for the end of compulsory arbitration, but it did not appear to prompt him to evaluate the difficulties with the application of wage militancy in the union. [569]

There was another problem. The conciliation machinery in the union was brilliantly effective at curtailing their full potential; ninety percent of disputes in the industry in the 1950s and 1960s were resolved without a stoppage of work. [570] At colliery level there was the Pit Conciliation Scheme; this was where a miner could discuss their grievance with their supervisor, gradually progressing within the colliery hierarchy until a resolution was found. [571]After fourteen days, if there was no resolution, then the dispute would go to the district conciliation board and an umpire could arbitrate, before reaching a binding decision. There was also a National Negotiating Committee, comprised of thirty-two representatives, sixteen of which were from the NCB and NUM and, if the NNC could not resolve the problem, the National Reference Tribunal, with its four assessors and three part timers, would resolve it. [572]

If nurturing unofficial strikes into effective battles was made difficult because of pay disparity and the union's arbitration machinery, was there any prospect of politicisation, another of the party's rationale for wage militancy? Bolton suggest that aside from these structural problems the CP was unable to counter this potentially powerful force into something more productive that might have a political benefit. [573] Even miners who were in the CP were often 'raw materials, just members' rather than 'agitators or organisers'. [574]The prospects for changing this and politicising them was weak, suggests Bolton: 'the truth was, it was pure economism in the pit'; the unofficial strikes that I have outlined appear to demonstrate that.

4.1.3 Dissemination of the strategy

Seifert and Sibley have argued that 'the party cannot simply hand down a line for all its members to fight on'. [575] This is a fair comment, but we have already seen examples of where the party might have been expected to provide some guidance, which it could have done

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[568] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[569] Pamphlet available in WCML. Comments on Pollitt's *What do Miners Need?,* 3 June 1953, POWE/NA/37/396.
[570] Winterton and Winterton, *op.cit.,* 74, 1993.
[571] Jencks, C, *British Coal,* 97.
[572] Church and Outram, *op.cit.,* 221.
[573] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Seifert, R, and Sibley, T, *Ramelson, op.cit.,* 111.

without being dictatorial. Therefore, the subtleties of dissemination of the strategy need to be explored, and the first thing to note is a clear sense of informality in the arrangement; the mining advisory committee was held in Watters's dining room. [576] This causes a methodological issue for historians, which was explored in chapter three; if these meetings were so informal then there is likely to be little record of them and even less chance of any evidence being preserved. But this should not stop us seeking to understand the question; even if this were the case, it in itself is significant. This either meant that the result of these informal meetings was not disseminated formally outside of however many people were present (assuming that Watters had a modest house, as his book suggests, then not many), or that the crux of them was relayed verbally; this, in itself, poses all sorts of questions around the extent to which the CP could control how this information was transmitted.

This observation can be broadened out from what was happening in the Yorkshire area. Evidence demonstrating communications between leading communists in the union and the party are rare but one letter, from Moffat to Pollitt in December 1951, exists. It was written in response to Pollitt's request that the entire CP executive evaluates how the EC worked. [577] The reliability of this, in the sense of what it tells us about the relationship between King Street and communists in the NUM, needs to be considered. Not only is it the only letter of its kind that has been found during this research, but it represents a dialogue between an individual and their leader; it is expected that Moffat may well tell Pollitt what he imagined the general secretary may want to hear. Moffat may have been keen to give the letter his full attention- it was written on Boxing Day, when perhaps his mind was clear of other union business- and he told Pollitt that his 'connections with the executive committee has been very helpful to me in carrying out my work in other areas of activity'. [578] Through his response Moffat used the opportunity to tell Pollitt, very generally, that he had outlined the 'policy of the party in relation to the industry' and that this yielded 'positive results'. [579]

Despite the sense in the letter that Moffat was diligently carrying the party's line into the NUM and so conducting the industrial strategy, there were two clear examples in 1951 that may prove otherwise. Moffat's letter was framed by the events of August 1951, when Moffat had dissuaded miners to strike, and had infuriated the rest of the CP executive in the process.

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[576] Frank Watters interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[577] The fact that this evaluation went on stands in stark contrast to the records of the industrial department.
[578] Letter from Moffat to Pollitt, 26 December 1951, CP/CENT/CONG/18/04.
[579] Ibid.

[580] Moreover in 1951 Moffat had missed an important party meeting before the TUC conference because he was on holiday; why was a leading member of the CP and the NUM taking a holiday before a key event in the party's strategic calendar?[581] These meetings were, as Bolton later revealed, one occasion where communists met beforehand, unlike the NUM annual conference where none of the communists on the executive met beforehand to discuss tactics. [582] So, given both of these events, did Moffat want to use Pollitt's request to inflate the extent to which he was carrying the party line into the union in order to make up for these misgivings? Did the letter also reflect the intuitive deference, demanded through the party's structure? All of this is speculative and we will probably never know; but the sentiments in the letter should not be taken at face value, not least because there is little supporting evidence that Moffat, or any other communist in the NUM, was consistently and actively doing as he claimed.

The Moffat letter demonstrates another issue for individuals who occupied high-level positions in the NUM and the CP; they simply did not have time to attend to everything in detail. Moffat explained his poor attendance at his own NUM branch meetings, saying that he was busy with 'other commitments'. [583] His branch, therefore, had a leading communist in it but this did not benefit the party as Moffat rarely attended meetings. This invariably gave rise to an element of hypocrisy; just five months after the letter, despite Pollitt knowing that Moffat was too busy to attend his own branch's meetings, Moffat wrote a propaganda piece, *Coal for War and Peace*, urging 'more political discussion in the lodges'. [584] There is no evidence that Moffat attempted to circumvent this problem. Perhaps there was a reason for this; Bolton suggests that it might not have been just business that kept Moffat away from grassroots unionism and suggests that Moffat's absence from branch meetings was more intentional and in fact symptomatic of a general problem with communist trade unionists who 'once in office, turned into above their accountability in a certain sense'. [585] When asked if Moffat had continued to go into the branch meeting of the NUM where he had previously worked once he was elected into office, Bolton's response was laughter and 'no, no, no'! This may evidence that communist trade unionists were drawn into the careerism of their positions; given the

[580] 8 August 1951, KV2/1528.
[581] This was 17 September 1951. Horner also missed the meeting, but he was at Alf Davies's funeral, KV2/1528.
[582] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[583] Letter from Moffat to Pollitt, 26 December 1951, CP/CENT/CONG/08/04.
[584] Moffat, A, *Coal for War and Peace,* May 1952.
[585] The rest of this paragraph refers to Bolton interview.

nature of mining, this is hardly surprising. But did the party realise this? Did they do anything about it? There is little to suggest so. Perhaps, and this is a speculative observation based on what happened later, there was an element of careerism amongst the party too; whilst their members were moving up the union, they were satisfied that this provided evidence that their industrial strategy was working.

The problem appeared to be evident across other union branches. In South Wales a security service document suggests that party policy was disseminated in a fashion similar to Chinese whispers, noting that Frank Jackson 'often acts as a liaison between Pollitt and Horner'. [586]But Jackson, a communist from the Rhonda, was not a miner; misinterpretation and general chaos was probable. [587] Why would the CP not choose one of the many communist miners in the area to be its messenger? In 1946 the roll call of communists in the area was huge: Morgan Jones was secretary of Coegnant Lodge; Perry Jones was chairman; at Werntraw Lodge, F Hayward was secretary; Bryn Williams and Glyn Thomas were chairman and secretary of Cilely Lodge, respectively; D. W. Evans was chairman of Dillwyn Lodge; and F Thomas was chairman of Caerau Lodge. [588]

The party's chances of success in a particular pit was down to many variables and even more senior communists were not immune from these; prior to his arrival in Yorkshire Watters had been warned that if he did not get along with Tommy Degnan, a local mining communist, then Watters's chances of success were nominal.[589] Other ingredients for communist success included the quality of the pit delegate, who was 'the most important thing in the pit'. But the CP also failed to overcome these challenges by maximising opportunities where it could do well. For example, although the CP went to the trouble of holding an NUM fortnightly school, there was no follow up programme or correspondence to maintain the involvement of those who had bothered to attend, unless individuals actively sought this. [590] The sense is that, just as the union was federal, so too was the party organisation in it; as Bolton suggests, 'the party was not as organised as it should have been in the sense that it tended to be not syndicalist but almost pit orientated'. Communist branch members would primarily be engaged in propaganda

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[586] 13 April 1954, KV2/1529.
[587] According to Stevenson, he had studied Chemistry, had lived in Russia but escaped before the purges, and then set up a civil engineering group, which employed 600 people and made him rich. See http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=763:frank-jackson&catid=10:j&Itemid=111.
[588] 'Horner Elected Secretary of Miners' Union', *Daily Worker,* 23 August 1946.
[589] Frank Watters interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[590] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

activities; selling the *Daily Worker,* and knocking on peoples' doors. The sort of interventions that leading communists made into branches was as guest speakers where they presented the issues of the union although often, as in the case of Horner in March 1952, these meetings were 'poorly attended, very orderly and most unprovocative'. [591]The failure to address what may well have been teething problems, as the industrial strategy became established, was a huge oversight on the part of the CP and it was the origins of future weaknesses, although it was not until 1979 that Costello conceded that the party was paying the price for decades of neglect in this area. [592]

The CP instead looked to things that it could quantify as areas where it could improve. Paradoxically the party managed to be simultaneously incredibly fastidious and complacent. The party's enduring, obsessive focus on numerical criteria for measuring how well pit branches were doing invariably caused a failure to address these greater structural problems; one of the best ways to politicise through the branches may have been to make sure leading communists in them, such as Moffat, attended their meetings, but this did not happen. This created a tendency for a superficial appraisal of the situation. Bolton suggested how the CP would see a pit branch with 50 communists in it and assume that it was a model branch. [593]This claim is substantiated from the minutes of the organisation department; members often wrote in boasting of their recruitment successes, documenting exactly how they had done it. Moffat's autobiography boasts that of 20,000 miners in Scotland, 1000 of them were communists. [594]Watters saw the main problem in terms of numerical presence, also, suggesting that 'there were many members in the well-organised pits, but there were other areas where we were well represented'.[595]The party's tendency to judge the situation by numerical criteria, rather than active participation, meant that Watters's initial diagnosis of the situation in 1953 was conducted in precisely this fashion: the party had less than 100 miners of the 150,000 men from the Yorkshire area, with influence in only twelve from 130 pits in the area. [596] Pollitt used the same criteria in November 1953. He said that 5000 copies of the last party mining pamphlet had been sold and that 60 miners had joined the party during the period covered, although there

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[591] 23 March 1952, KV2/1528.
[592] Costello, M, 'Capitalist Work in Industry', 1 March 1979, CP/CENT/PC/14/33. Whilst issuing the membership cards at the start of 1972, the party noticed that of its 151 branches, only five were factory branches. By 1976 the situation was so bad that only one delegate of the 100 present at the National Conference of Workplace Branches came from the NUM. See CP/CENT/ORG/19/04 for documents relating to this.
[593] Bolton interview *op.cit.*.
[594] See Moffat, A, *My Life,* for details.
[595] Watters, F, *Being Frank, , op.cit.,* 12.
[596] Watters, F, *Being Frank, , op.cit.,* 14.

are still a number of mining villages where there are no party members at all.[597]Reuben Falber, later the assistant general secretary of the party, made a similar observation:

We have very few pit branches and in most mining areas our members are entirely organised on the basis of residential branches and there is no concentrated drive to win miners for the support of our policy. Some experiences in Scotland show that where we build pit branches a very big change takes place. One or two of our best pit branches have made a very remarkable transformation in our village…as many of one-third (of the workers) have bought the *British Road to Socialism* and our mining pamphlet, and the political levy of the village has been raised through the activity of the pit. [598]

Beckett suggests that Pollitt might have 'told communist trade union leaders what to do'.[599] But this somewhat spurious reasoning lacks substantial evidence and even outside contemporary observers noticed the flaws. The security services overheard one of the leaders of the WFTU telling Pollitt that 'in view of the number of prominent trade union leaders who were supposed to be controlled by the CP, it was strange that so little was done in the trade union movement to speed up re-affiliation with the WFTU'. [600] By May 1951 the security services also noted how 'the leadership…is gradually disintegrating…its influence on its members is steadily decreasing…in most cases members are just carrying on their work in industry, but in a completely syndicalist manner'. [601] Of course, even if instructions were given, communists could always choose to ignore them: Horner, for example, could choose to ignore these suggestions when he felt that they were 'more than his job was worth'. [602] As Horner put it 'no one suggested, or indeed could suggest, that my membership of the CP meant that I went to my party for instructions or consulted with them on matters concerning the union.' [603] The problem was that the party was not evaluating if or how this structure, by now thirty years old, was impeding its progress in light of its new strategy.

4.1.4 Other work

One area where the CP appeared to prosecute a coherent strategy was in its youth policy, primarily undertaken through *Challenge,* the publication of the YCL. It appeared that there was a much more concerted effort at carrying the party's policies to the youth of the NUM than to

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[597] Pollitt, H, 'Reports from the District', *World News and Views,* Vol 33, No 46, 21 November 1953.
[598] Falber, R, 'Communist Factory Workers the Key to Peace', *World News and Views,* Vol 31, No 26, 30 June 1951.
[599] Beckett, *CP, op.cit.,* 208.
[600] 8 August 1951, KV2/1528.
[601] 24 May 1951, KV2/1528.
[602] 16 August 1951, KV2/1528.
[603] Horner, *Incorrigible, op.cit.,* 190.

than to the adults. Moffatt urged young miners to consider 'very seriously' joining the YCL and becoming readers of *Challenge*. [604] One keen young miner, who may have seen Moffatt's 1954 recruitment drive, was Scargill, who himself joined the YCL in 1955. [605] The party's youth strategy was recognisable but was also tailored to particular issues that the younger miners faced and in 1951 the party established a working committee in order to press for a man's wage at 18, two weeks' holiday and better facilities in the workplace. [606] By 1952 the party led a campaign for young miners to receive higher wages, based on the adult rate, and also held a conference in Scotland where delegates unanimously called for a wage campaign.[607] The NCB rejected these concessions, not only because they were worried that young miners might 'squander their rise on beer', but because the NCB's losses for the previous year stood at £1 million.[608] How successful the party was in their campaign is difficult to assess but the NCB's patronising dismissal of the wage claim may have come back to haunt them later; the 18 year old youth, who sought an adult wage in 1952, would be 38 years old in 1972 and 50 years old in 1984, old enough to have family responsibilities, because of which declining wages and increasing unemployment would cause him far greater concern than how much beer he could buy.

There was another problem obvious by the end of our period here, which made the industrial strategy complex. It is difficult to differentiate between militant action and trade unionism; this becomes increasingly more complex in subsequent chapters. Communists were, by their positions in the union, elected to serve the membership on a broad range of issues; this was also what allowed them to remain in their positions, even in the Cold War. Thus communists were often moving resolutions that would be identifiable with non-communist unionists; this would be the start of the later issue, that militant action on wages was not the monopoly of the CP. The problem was that the CP had based its entire strategy on being accepted in the union, which it believed would develop into influence; but to the membership, this made communists indistinct from non-communists. This was clear from the type of non-wage resolutions that communists consistently moved. At the 1947 annual conference, for example, Horner moved successful resolutions that aimed to give miners help with transport, increased sick pay; all bread and butter issues that most trade unionists would be able to justify.

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[604] Moffatt, A, 'Tory Mines Bill Hits Youth', *Challenge,* 16 January 1954, 1.
[605] Hagger, Nicholas, *The Communist Role in the 1984 Miners' Strike,* (London: Oaktree Publications, 1984).
[606] 'Young Miners Want a Rise', *Challenge,* 21 July 1951, 1.
[607] 'Young Miners Call for Campaign to Defeat Tories', *Challenge,* 13 December 1952, 1.
[608] Ibid.

[609]At the 1951 annual conference Horner was able to move a resolution advocating reforms to miners' welfare, which was seconded by Paynter. [610] The following year it was Horner who seconded Paynter's resolution proposing subsidised transport for South Wales' miners. [611]In 1954 Ellis was able to move a resolution that was carried seeking better health and wellbeing in pits and subsidies for refreshment and travel. [612] The following year Ellis moved another resolution, seconded by Dunn, seeking improved safety. [613]

4.1.5 Conclusions

Chapter four has contributed to the existing knowledge though its analysis of the role of Moffat and his difference with Horner regarding the shortcomings of nationalisation. This is interesting for two reasons: firstly, it adds another dimension to the work of Fishman who emphasises the theme of conflict between Horner and the party. Moffat, as we have seen, criticised the compensation given to former coalmine owners at a time when the party was incredibly loyal to the Labour government and its 1945 programme. But there is no evidence of any dialogue between Moffat and the CP; why then, in line with Fishman's thinking, did the CP take such a hard line on Horner? But secondly, the role of Moffat at this time has largely been ignored in the existing literature; whilst McIlroy and Campbell dedicate a third of their book chapter to him, their interest lies in Moffat's earlier career in the UMS. Understanding Moffat demonstrates that there were differences between communists in the union; even if this did not dissolve into active conflict (in this case), unpicking their subtle differences, as this chapter has endeavoured to do, demonstrates further the latitude that these individuals had and reiterates that being a trade unionist was the primary identity of communists in the NUM. Moreover the chapter considers the subtle theme of conflict; between the union and the party but, more originally, between individual communists themselves. This occurred at all levels of the union and provides further evidence of the consequence of the CP's latitudinal approach to industrial politics.

This chapter has also made some observations that should be carried into future chapters. The party's industrial strategy, barely a decade old by this point, had already evidenced fundamental shortcomings. The strategy was a reaction to a particular situation whereby the CP, following a brief hiatus, had found itself pushed back to the fringes of British

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[609] NUM Annual Conference, 1947.
[610] NUM Annual Conference, 1951.
[611] Ibid.
[612] NUM Annual Conference, 1954.
[613] NUM Annual Conference, 1955.

politics, and personifying the role of pro-soviet menace. To counter this the party had publicly manoeuvred itself into a British mould although the extent to which this was arduous is negligible. Its programme reflected its respect for democracy and so too did its emphasis on getting party members to win trade union elections, which was credibly achieved in the NUM in this period. But the ultimate end game was to monopolise the union block vote at the Labour Party conference which, the CP imagined, would rid it of the reformism that had polluted the more utopian prospects of 1945. It needed to politicise the union membership to really achieve this, and it certainly tried to build influence: but the extent to which it had made inroads into this objective by 1956 is negligible.

The CP's misplaced obsession with numerical achievement as synonymous with party strength in pit branches only served to illuminate the chaotic link between King Street and coalfield communists. There was a bottleneck of information, a problem that transcended all levels of the union, not least because some of it was relayed second hand by non-industry individuals. But the party still felt aggrieved when the line was misinterpreted or ignored by communists in the NUM; this may add another explanation for why most communists left their politics out of their union duties. The CP also failed to arbitrate when it really should have done and Armthorpe was a clear example of this. The impact of this was to cause conflict, demonstrate the weakness of some communists in the union and, in the case of Wilkinson, destroy the election campaign of another communist. Sometimes the CP remained blissfully or even wilfully unaware of the major structural particularities of the union. This was made most apparent around wage militancy and the need to pursue changes to the wage structure, where there was a clear gulf between some communists in the union and/or the party. Moreover the overall confusion meant that it was possible for communists to attend the union conference and fight against each other. This happened year after year, but there appeared to be no effort by the party to address some of the obvious problems, such as communists on the executive committee not liaising before the meeting, or making sure miners who had been interested enough in the party to attend its schools were cultivated into effective comrades. If there were problems in the favourable environment of a labour shortage, then the foundations of the entire project would really be put to the test should the industry begin to contract which was, of course, what began to happen from 1957.

V The changing context of coal, 1957-1968

5.0 Response to Change

Chapter four considered the CP's industrial strategy in the NUM during a relatively buoyant and prosperous period in the industry. Wages had, as we saw in chapter four, been a divisive issue: the regional variation to pit closures would compound the problem. Between 1956 and 1957, however, profits in the coal industry dropped by some five million pounds.[614] The increasing possibility of using oil for fuel began to diminish the indispensability of coal and The Coal Plan (1965) demonstrated the reality of the situation. As the plan made evident, thirty million tonnes of coal production had been cut back between 1957 and 1965, but a further 180 million tonnes was forecast to be cut back by 1970. [615]Some men, taking advantage of the prospects of employment in safer, better paid, and more secure industries, voluntarily left coalmining of their own accord. [616] For those that chose to stay it did not take long for fear of unemployment to grip the industry and in July 1958 the NUM's president, Ernest Jones, conveyed a sense of imminence when he reminded the *Daily Worker* readers that pit closures were creating 'tremendous anxiety' amongst the men. [617] The men were right to be concerned and by 1968, the end of our period here, even 'safe' coalfields in the East Midlands, such as Kirkby Colliery, were due to close. [618]

The human consequence of this sudden depletion in finances was almost immediate and between 1958 and 1961 130,000 men across the industry lost their jobs; it must be remembered that the crisis that had afflicted the industry until this point was the inability to produce enough coal to meet demand. [619] Moffat suggested that around 10,000 miners were displaced from the Scottish coalfields between 1957 and 1960, a higher rate than in any other area.[620] Many men from Scotland were relocated to Yorkshire conveniently, if not coincidentally, creating something of an aggrieved and potentially militant diaspora in the very

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[614] June 1957, CP/CENT/MTH/04/05.

[615] This equates to 3.75 million tonnes less produced per year between 1957 and 1964 (actual) and a predication of 36 million tonnes lost per year between 1965 and 1970. The expected manpower reduction from 1965 to 1970 was 179,000 men. Original figure quoted in text is from Paynter, *My Generation, op.cit.,* 137.

[616] 'Coal Crisis May Come in 1962: the Drift from the Pits', *Daily Worker,* 11 August 1960.

[617] 'Closing of Pits', *Daily Worker,* 17 May 1958.

[618] 'Pit Closures Now Invade a 'Safe' Coalfield', *Morning Star*, 12 February 1968. In Kirby's case, 7000 jobs were at risk.

[619] 'Debate on the Coal Industry', 1 November 1961, CP/CENT/IND/12/10.

[620] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 179.

location to which the CP had dedicated Watters. But no area was immune from the problem, and by 1961 unemployment had spread to England, where twenty-eight pits were threatened with closure; [621] in South Wales 49,000 men lost their jobs between 1958 and 1968. [622]

The NCB tried to arrest the problem by forcing men aged sixty-five and over to retire. [623] The Board also ceased to recruit new labour, except for youth and craftsmen.[624] The sense that the union 'fiddled while Rome burned' did not immediately cause dissatisfaction amongst the rank and file. [625] The fact that some miners' leaders, such as Sam Watson from Durham, were instrumental in establishing a platform where colliery closures could be justified as both inevitable and progressive did not appear to cause unrest either. [626] But more critical observers, perhaps with an agenda, noted that the union leadership, inclusive of its communist members, was slow to react to the new situation. Two dissidents of the CP from 1956, Lawrence Daly and John Saville, were particularly keen observers of this situation. [627] Saville, although not formally connected with the miners, was able to diagnose the situation effectively. Writing to Daly and discussing how Daly's Fife Socialist League might gain support, Saville suggested that Daly should appeal on more than just pit closures, which were simply 'fighting thunder': what the miners wanted was 'security' and Saville reminded Daly that 'this single facet can make tremendous appeal'.[628] Jim Allen's *The Miner* noticed that: 'during the last twelve months the leadership of the NUM (both at local and national level) has failed to put up any real fight to defend the miners of this country against the attacks of the NCB and Tory Government'. [629]

The CP, however, remained firmly and optimistically focused on applying to mining their generic industrial strategy, by this point a decade old. Although the party accepted the need to develop the strategy across industry generally, there was no sense that this should be

[621] Moffat, *My Life,* 201. This was particularly unfortunate for any Scottish miners who had already been relocated to England.

[622] 'If All Followed Pit Example- No Trade Deficit', *Morning Star,* 7 May 1968.

[623] 'A Fuel Policy or Else: Paynter Names the Day', *Daily Worker,* 15 November 1960. The NUM Scottish area opposed compulsory retirement, because the state pension was so low. See Moffat, *My life, op.cit.,* 189.

[624] '1000 Leave Coalfield', *Daily Worker,* 3 April 1958.

[625] Gildart, K, *North Wales Miners: a Fragile Unity,* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 64.

[626] See Beynon, H and Austrin, T, 'The Performance of Power: Sam Watson, A Miners' Leader On Many Stages', *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 2014, 30.

[627] 1956 being the Hungarian Uprising and the Khrushchev 'secret' speech.

[628] Letter from John Saville to Lawrence Daly, 29 August 1959, MSS 302/3/13. The Fife Socialist League lasted from 1957 to1964, then Daly moved to the Labour Party. Daly had remained a faceworker until 1963 and joined the NUM executive in 1966.

[629] 'Witchunt', *The Miner,* 8 January 1960. *The Miner* was an anti-leadership, militant newspaper that Jim Allen, a miner then radical scriptwriter and playwright, who was in the Socialist Labour League, helped found. His archive is available at the WCML.

approached differently in the particular context of coal. In 1958 Finlay Hart observed that: 'the potential strength of the British trade union movement is greater today than it has ever been. But it is not fully mobilised, nor united under a militant leadership for the struggle that lies ahead'. [630] This was not least because by 1958 5,627,690 trade unionists were affiliated to the Labour Party: the chance to use the block vote of the NUM to influence the annual conference was still a prize worthy of pursuit.[631]

5.1 Pit closures

The failure of the CP to understand the difficulties of applying wage militancy in the NUM in this context is more surprising because the party and communists in industry had reached the same diagnosis of the cause of the industry's problems. The party held the failings of nationalisation as one of the factors that was culpable for the new problem that afflicted the mining industry, arguing that mining had only been nationalised to 'rescue derelicts' and had inherited defective industries. [632] Tom Drinkwater, of the economic committee, surmised that 'so long as the bourgeoisie controls the state, it will always be in a position to use the nationalised industries for its own purposes'. [633]In April 1958 Monty Meth, the party's journalist, reported in the *Daily Worker* that 300 miners in Durham were to be laid off without alternative employment.[634] Some communists in the union, for example Jack Dunn, began to make observations about the nationalised boards, criticisms that were similar to the ones that the party had started to make in the late 1940s. [635] For example in April 1958 Moffat blamed the declining consumption of coal on the government's 'disastrous policy'. [636] Mick McGahey argued that the situation was caused by the 'policies of those in control'. [637] Moffat used his invitation to appear on television to debate the industry's problems, to suggest that it was a mistake that oil was cheaper; government propaganda had suggested as such, he argued, but in fact it was government policy to switch to oil. [638] The party made a similar critique in 1959 when it suggested that the NCB was responsible for the situation because they had allowed the

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[630] Hart, Finlay, 'The CPGB and Trade Unions', June 1958, 14. Hart was an organiser within the party until 1963, although his personal trade was shipbuilding.

[631] Figure from Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 215.

[632] 'Nationalisation: problems of theory and practice', April 1960, CP/CENT/ECON/06/01.

[633] Letter from Tom Drinkwater to J.R. Campbell, 24 April 1960, CP/CENT/ECON/06/01. The letter added that 'Labour will be in the same position as regards nationalisation as a Tory government'.

[634] Meth, Monty, 'Coal Board Starts Sack Policy', *Daily Worker,* 3 April 1958. Until this point alternative employment had been almost guaranteed, even if it was in another industry. By 1962 the inability of the industry to accommodate displaced miners from other areas was noted by Paynter at the TUC conference.

[635] NUM Annual Conference, 1959.

[636] Moffatt, Abe, 'Paynter Points the Way for Mining', *Daily Worker,* 20 April 1958.

[637] McGahey, MICK, 'Coal- what now?', *Labour Monthly,* 47: 8, August 1965, 350.

[638] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 188.

Conservative government to strengthen oil interests. [639] Horner used the union's 1958 special conference to reproach the government's decision to import coal. [640] Paynter's *Outlook for Mining* (1958) argued that the government's policy of wage restraint was responsible for unemployment, which also reduced the purchasing power of the working class in relation to perennially rising prices. [641] The party suggested that higher wages would 'bring an increased demand for coal'.[642] At the union's 1959 conference Paynter claimed that the Tory government was purposefully causing unemployment and that a fuel policy, giving primacy to coal as an indigenous resource, was required. [643] Moffat supported him, condemning the declining production, unemployment, and closures. [644] Ellis suggested that the situation was worse than the 1920s because this time there was an alternative fuel. [645] Kane's *Spotlight on Coal* (1960) claimed that the crisis in the industry was caused by government policy, which aimed to promote the use of oil. [646]A similar argument was presented by Sammy Taylor's *Britain Needs Coal* (1962), which argued that coal was sold at a loss. [647]

Communist mining figures also constantly used the party's publications to express their views, notably with a much higher frequency than previously. In 1959 Dutt's *Labour Monthly* ran an article by John Wood that argued that although pit closures caused 'shock' this was not a 'shock of paralysis' but 'action'.[648] Dai Dan Evan's investigation into the decline of the industry, carried in the *Daily Worker,* criticised the exploitation of the 'nation's resources in order to meet the short-term goals of the capitalist economy'.[649]Such short-sightedness, Evans claimed, was evident from the fact coal was being sold at a price lower than the cost of producing it, leading to the conclusion that the miners were 'subsidising' the industrial concerns of Britain.[650] Moffatt also made this point, again via the *Daily Worker,* arguing that

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[639] CP, 'The Coal Crisis in Britain', 1959, CP/CENT/IND/12/10.
[640] NUM Special Conference, 1958.
[641] Paynter, WILL, *Outlook for Mining,* March 1958, 5.
[642]'National Fuel Policy: the coal crisis in Britain', 2, CP/CENT/IND/12/10.
[643] NUM Special Conference 1959.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Ibid.
[646] Kane, Jock, *Spotlight on Coal,* 1960, pp 3-5.
[647] Taylor, Sammy, *Britain Needs Coal,* 1962.
[648] Wood, John, 'Miners Fight Back', *Labour Monthly,* March 1959. According to Bolton, in his previously cited interview, Wood was a miner from Kelty colliery but was lacking in the 'political training'.
[649] Evans, Dai Dan, 'Behind the Clamour of the Coal Muddle', *Daily Worker,* 17 March 1959. Evans listed the causes as: repayment to the previous owners the capital cost of acquiring the industry; interest on this capital; payment of interest on subsequent borrowing; payment of losses incurred on imported coal; losses incurred through the selling of coal to private industry at an uneconomic price; the payment of profits, when industry is allegedly making a loss; the present policy pursued by the NUM.
[650] Ibid.

coal cost 86*s* per tonne to produce, but was sold at 77*s* per tonne. [651] Paynter was unusually caustic in his appraisal of the situation to *Labour Monthly* readers in 1960, suggesting that 'anybody who thinks that inevitable economic and technological changes in fuel consumption are solely responsible for this three years' crisis must be either a simpleton or somebody doped by the propaganda of the capitalist newspapers.'[652] By 1964 Moffat mused that were it not for the compulsory retirement and migration that the NCB had implemented, then the unemployment in the mining industry would 'be back at the level of the hungry thirties'. But, like the support for the Labour government in 1945, was this similarity planning or coincidence? There is nothing in the archives to suggest anything in the dynamics of the relationship. Instead this similarity showed the ability of the communist mining leaders to view the situation in light of their political convictions. [653]

5.3 The difficulty of applying wage militancy in the NUM

If wage militancy had not been applied by communists in the union as the party had hoped during periods of full employment, then the situation was even less promising in the context of increasing unemployment, as we saw in chapter four. Compulsory arbitration, which both the party and individual communists in the union had sought to abolish, ended in 1961 but there was no eruption of official militancy and the event passed uncelebrated by communists in the party and the union.[654] Even with official strikes decriminalised the union's constitution contained another effective barrier through which to extinguish militancy. A two-thirds majority was needed to permit official action, and it was this rule, for example, that halted the South Wales area's attempt at official action in May 1964, the catalyst being a rejected wage claim.[655]

Additionally wage militancy was made more complex because the causes of unofficial strikes were different across various regions. As the following table demonstrates, in Yorkshire between 1962 and 1965 just three per cent of all unofficial strikes were caused by allowances and bonuses; yet in Scotland allowances and bonuses accounted for just over fourteen per cent

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[651] 'Stop Palming off Blame for Coal Losses', *Daily Worker,* 23 January 1958.

[652] Paynter, W, 'Crisis in Coal', *Labour Monthly,* August 1960.

[653] Moffatt, Abe, 'White Papers, or Real Plans?', *Labour Monthly,* December 1964.

[654] Dai Dan Evans moved to end compulsory arbitration at the NUM 1959 Annual Conference, where he was supported by Moffat and Dunn. At the 1960 NUM Annual Conference, Kane reminded delegates that the compulsory arbitration in the industry 'have never at any time given us a fair crack of the whip insofar as meeting the justifiable demands of the miner is concerned'. See NUM Annual Conference 1959 and 1960.

[655] 'Miners' Wages' Crisis', *Daily Worker,* 22 April 1964.

of unofficial strikes in the same period. [656] Price lists caused just over forty-two per cent of unofficial strikes in South Wales between 1958 and 1961, yet caused only twenty-five per cent of unofficial strikes in Scotland in the same period. [657] The fact that the highest volume of unofficial strikes in all three areas came from 'other' sources of strife, which remained largely unquantifiable, further demonstrates that the federal nature of the NUM acted as a barrier to securing any mass grievance around wages. Moffat's autobiography conveys a clear sense of the regional fragmentation that continued into the late 1950s, to the extent that in 1957 the Scottish Miners' Union secured a special pay arrangement for face workers that only applied in that area. [658]

Table demonstrating the causes of strikes across the three coalfields perceived to be the most militant.

	Percentage Annual Average	
Division	**1958-61**	**1962-65**
Scotland		
Price Lists	25.0	29.4
Allowances/Bonuses	12.7	14.3
Other	62.3	56.3
Yorkshire		
Price Lists	40.7	40.1
Allowances/Bonuses	8.0	3.0
Other	51.3	46.9
South Wales		
Price Lists	42.1	52.6
Allowances/Bonuses	7.2	3.5
Other	50.7	43.9

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[656] Handy, L J, *Wages Policy in the British Coalmining Industry,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 223.
[657] Ibid.
[658] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 155. With the increase in power-loading and redundancies, the Scottish union secured a six-week guaranteed wage for workers, in lieu of available piecework, based on the average rate of piecework for that man.

5.4 Wage increases in a declining industry: fighting inflation

Chapter four noted how the CP's prosecution of wage militancy and the government's belief that wages caused inflation would invariably cause conflict, if wage militancy was transmitted into unions as the party planned. These polarised positions became more pronounced during this period. Callaghan has pointed out that by the early 1960s the party was aware that inflation was the main economic problem in Britain. [659] The CP's claim was that inflation was not only a 'manifestation of a crisis' but also one that was 'a definite act of economic policy'. [660] The most sophisticated transmission of this line was in *For a Militant Wages' Policy* (1962), which criticised incomes policies as responsible for slowing down the British economy, making prices rise, and imposing pressure on trade unions to restrict wages.[661] It also suggested that there should be a willingness to use 'solidarity action' at unprecedented levels. [662]

Such a critique became the dominant discourse of the CP and it was transmitted in various ways. Analysing 'Britain's Crisis 1962-1963', for example, the economic committee noted the 'fraud of wage restraint'. [663] Campbell claimed whilst the purchasing power of the capitalist class had continued to push prices up, the brunt of these price increases had been felt by the working class.[664] But the party explained this by a familiar analysis of wage restraint. Allen claimed that 'given full employment, prices would rise whatever trade unions do about the level of wages'.[665] Incomes policies, Ramelson claimed, existed only to disguise the ruling class's wage objective which was to 'achieve state regulation of wages at a level below that which would be attained by the trade unions on the basis of their present organised strength in free collective bargaining with the employers'.[666] Such statements by Ramelson, who became the party's industrial organiser in 1966, clearly proved that wage militancy would remain an indispensable component of the party's industrial strategy.

This was even the case in coalmining, although the evidence suggests that the party was fully aware of the precarious economic vitality of coal. In order to ensure that incomes policies would work, Campbell argued, a 'great unemployed reserve' was necessary; an example that

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[659] Callaghan, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.* 397.
[660] Grano, Amedeo, 'Inflation as an Economic Policy', *Economic Bulletin,* January 1965.
[661] CP, *A Militant Wages' Policy,* 21 August 1962, 4, CP/CENT/IND/10/08.
[662] Ibid.
[663] CP, 'Britain's Crisis 1962-1963', CP/CENT/ECON/5/14.
[664] Campbell, JR 'The Aim of the Government's Wage Policy', *Marxism Today,* December 1963, 363.
[665] Allen, *Militant, op.cit.* 199.
[666] Ramelson, Bert, '"Incomes Policy" in Britain: its Theory and Practice', *World Marxist Review,* 9:7, July 1966, 11. Ramelson became industrial organiser in 1966.

Campbell believed mining demonstrated.[667] In January 1958 Idris Cox sent a memo to the executive committee of the CP informing them that competition from oil threatened to create a situation where 'the just demands of the mineworkers can be resisted'.[668] In April 1958 the economic committee convened a special conference dedicated to analysing the 'Coal Surplus in Britain'. [669] But, even though it appeared alert to the problem, the CP continued to justify wage militancy as the solution although by 1960, two years after the conference, the party's economic committee recognised that manpower in the industry had dropped from 784,000 men in September 1954 to 733,000 five years later, and it predicted a further forty-six pit closures by September 1961. [670]

5.5 Commitment to wage militancy

Despite all of this, delegates to the party's 28th congress sustained their commitment to the economic analysis that had justified wage militancy as the solution. The congress called for 'no incomes policies' and the need to 'increase wages'. [671] The congress clearly recognised the limitations with the industrial strategy in the miners' union, noting that despite party presence in the union 'we have not seen these translated into a comparable political advance in mass consciousness'. [672] But the party remained characteristically sanguine and delegates were also told that 'our party is the organised, united and socialist force of the movement, for giving political leadership and generating mass action. Experience shows that nothing can replace it, and no other force in the labour movement can fulfil its function'.[673] But, certainly in the NUM, there was little evidence to substantiate these grandiose claims.

By 1964 the party was keen to discuss the 'trade union problems' of the year, yet it still concluded that there must be 'no suppression of the wage struggles' because 'in a capitalist society, where productivity and prices are rising, the workers have to maintain continual pressure for wage increases'. [674] Wage militancy and the preservation of free collective bargaining remained an explicit instruction for communist delegates attending the TUC conference in 1963 and 1964. [675] A private letter in 1964 between Tom Drinkwater and

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[667] Campbell, J.R, 'Back to the Old Stop Go', *Comment,* 3:11, March 1965.
[668] Memo from Idris Cox to the EC, January 1958, CP/CENT/ECON/5/1, 5.
[669] There is nothing in this document that questions if wage militancy in this context was a good idea. See CP, 'Coal Surplus in Britain', April 1958, CP/CENT/ECON/5/1.
[670] CP, 'Economic Prospects for Britain', 1960, CP/CENT/ECON/5/1.
[671] CP, 28th Party Congress 1964, 3, CP/CENT/PC/14/33, 3.
[672] CP, 28th Party Congress 1964, 3, CP/CENT/PC/14/33, 5.
[673] 'Britain's Crisis and the Way Out: CPGB 28th Congress', *Daily Worker,* 13 April 1963.
[674] CP, 'Trade Union Problems in 1964', CP/CENT/PC/07/17.
[675] CP, 'Needs of the Hour', CP/CENT/IND/12/07.

Campbell suggested that an incomes policy to control inflation as 'phoney'. [676] Was the continuation of wage militancy a bad choice by the party or were they bound to it? As Campbell pointed out in 1966, 'if we raise a clamour for an incomes policy, we are in effect raising a clamour for disciplining the unions'.[677] The rejection of incomes policies remained on the agenda at the party's 29th congress later that year. [678] Campbell's statement had resonance in the militancy that erupted across industry between 1966 and 1974; but in the NUM, there was no significant strike until 1969. There was no evidence, in 1966, that wage militancy in the miners' union was embedded.

5.6 Debates around the effectiveness of wage militancy

But some party members were beginning to challenge the merit of the CP's black and white view of the wage restraint/wage militancy polemic. It was largely Bill Warren who most publicly challenged the party line, claiming that the 'main revolutionary party of the working class is wielding a very limited direct political influence'.[679] The post-war period of full employment, with its material benefits for the working classes, had demonstrated that 'the state can control unemployment' and had raised a question of 'what has happened to the irreconcilable contradictions of capitalism'? [680] Therefore, Warren noted, the CP needed to 'develop a policy on inflation, not just wages'.[681] By 1968 Warren had advanced the necessity for a gradual and traditional programme which 'must be seen to be economically and politically feasible…this implies that nonsensical 'solutions' such as more for everybody and all round plans for nationalisation have to be ruled out'; instead, there should be 'an eventual transformation of strategic struggle into a revolutionary and successful trial of strength'.[682]

The party was also privy to a critique of wage militancy specifically for the NUM; John Hughes, of Ruskin College, published his observations in 1963. The fact that the document

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[676] Letter from Tom Drinkwater to JR Campbell, 15 November 1964, CP/CENT/ECON/01/01.
[677] Callaghan, *The Plan to Capture the Labour Party*, op.cit., 708.
[678] Gollan, John, 'Wilson's Crisis', *World Marxist Review,* 9:12, December 1966, 1.
[679] Warren, at this stage, published under the name William McCulloch, but used Bill Warren in party meetings. I will use Bill Warren, unless citing an article where Warren names himself as McCulloch. Warren, B, 'The Economic Policies of the Post-war Labour and Tory Governments until November 1964', CP/CENT/ECON/6/10, 16. It was also published in an extended form as an article under the same name in the *Economic Bulletin,* April 1966. Warren was not the pioneer of this critique, although he was perhaps its most recognised; John Eaton, from the previous chapter, had been making similar, if quieter, observations in the early 1950s. Warren would become the pivot in the fledgling group of economic scholars that would become more notable in the 1970s.
[680] McCulloch, W, 'The Economic Policies of the Post-War Labour and Tory Governments until November 1964', *Economic Bulletin,* April 1966, 21.
[681] Ibid.
[682] McCulloch, *The Economic Policies*, op.cit., 15.

was found in the party's archives suggest that at least somebody in the CP read it, but its observations had no impact on King Street's policy for the NUM. Hughes's investigation started with the observation that the union was in character federal; that there was a lack of unity within it; and that it lacked a distinct industrial policy. [683] Hughes noted that this situation presented a 'favourable moment for thrashing out a new set of industrial policies', but not based around wage militancy; he explicitly noted the 'utter inadequacy of money wage militancy'. Hughes went on to say that: 'The reason is patent enough. A further development of a price scissors movement as between coal and oil (e.g. persistent rises in coal production costs due to the still high wage and material element) would seriously impair the bargaining position of the NUM'. Hughes observed that wage militancy in the declining context of coal would make the industry 'less profitable'; and, with a remarkable degree of foresight, he noted that these issues would be 'particularly important in ten to fifteen years'. Hughes was not suggesting that miners' pay should be allowed to stagnate but instead argued that the NUM needed 'economic policies that will organise significant real wage advances in ways that do not involve rapid and persistent upward pressure in costs and prices'. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that these observations were considered by the party.

5.7 Wage militancy in the NUM?

Increasingly there were two perspectives within the CP regarding wage militancy. But to what extent did this theoretical division have any implications within the NUM? Moreover where did communists within the NUM align themselves within this debate, assuming they even thought of it in this way? At the 1958 union conference Paynter withdrew his wage claim because of the 'forces raged against the trade union movement'. [684] If wage militancy had permeated the NUM via communists in it, as the CP had hoped, then Paynter should have pursued the claim for the 'substantial increase' on the grounds that the potential conflict that it would cause would have some politicising element, as the CP had predicted. There is further evidence for this line of argument. Between 1958 and 1964, as the table below demonstrates, every wage claim that the union presented was settled with a substantial shortfall from the

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[683] Hughes, J, 'Notes on the Position and Work of the NUM', 1963, CP/CENT/IND/12/10. This paragraph refers to this source unless otherwise indicated. Hughes was particularly concerned that there was no national journal published by the union. The NUM 1962 annual conference passed a resolution in favour of a publication, but the first issue was not published until January 1969. Paynter suggests that it was only because the NCB started to publish *Coal News,* and the union journal had been stalled because of concern that it may 'become a medium for purveying left-wing views'. Paynter, *My Generation, op.cit.,* 151.
[684] NUM Annual Conference, 1958. There is nothing to suggest that the party challenged this.

original amount. [685] So why were leading communists in the union accepting lower wage claims when they may well have exploited the gulf between the expectation and reality of the miners' pay in the spirit of wage militancy, as the party had envisaged? [686] Clearly the answer remained the same; communists in the union prioritised their union obligations. Pressing for the higher amount permitted negotiation, which would secure the increase that the union really wanted, and which it knew was realistic. But, even with the clear evidence that wage militancy was not being prosecuted in the union as the party hoped, the CP continued to advocate it, as we have seen.

Wage claims (The desired amount and the agreed amount)

Year	Desired Rise	Settlement
1958	10*s*	7*s* 6*d*
1960	12*s*	5*s*
1962	£1 per week	7*s* 6*d*
1963	£1 per week	9*s*
1964	15*s*	11*s*

At the 1964 special conference Paynter reported how the Board had offered a rise of 8 *s* 10 *d* a week, in relation to the original claim of 15 *s*: Jack Collins congratulated the NEC for rejecting the offer and a resolution was passed to carry on fighting for more money.[687] At the year's annual conference, however, Paynter reported that the claim had been settled with an award of 11 *s* because it 'represented the climate'. [688] But Paynter had to convince Cliff True, a communist from South Wales, not to reject the offer, whilst Ellis and Moffat supported the NEC's decision. [689]The lack of uniformity amongst communists in the union about how to pursue wage militancy shows not only a lack of conviction in the policy by some mining communist leaders, but also a lack of direction from King Street.

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[685] NUM Annual Conference, 1964. The miners got no pay increase in 1959. See Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 192.
[686] Table drawn from data at NUM Annual Conference 1964.
[687] Ibid. Collins had left the CP in 1983, according to Graham Stevenson, due to the party's Eurocommunist position, and also due to the union candidates being moved for the Kent area. See http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=113:jack-collins&catid=3:c&Itemid=99 Further evidence of Collins's own position within the internal disputes of the party is evidenced from the fact that, in 1972, he had been of the belief that even more could have been extracted from the NCB had the NEC of the union 'held out for a little longer'. See Pitt, *World on our Backs, op cit.*203 for more information, and for general discussions around Collins.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid.

But those NUM communists who did not embrace wage militancy were not acting in defiance of the party line for any other reason than pragmatism. This was the same issue that was evident in chapter four; the party had always urged its union militants to give primacy to union business. Therefore when communists in the union, like Paynter, moved too far from central party policy, because they were acting in the interest of the union, then what could the party do? This was something of a perennial problem; we saw evidence of it in chapter three, and Fishman's *Horner* relies heavily on the theme of conflict. But I find no sense of conflict in this example; the party was rendered impotent by this ongoing problem. It was only those who were willing to challenge the party line who made an alternative argument; and in some ways the early challenges to wage militancy demonstrate a digression from democratic centralism.

Paynter demonstrates the reasoning here. At the 1964 conference he was keen to tell the delegates at the conference that the union could only extract so much from the board and there was little else that the NUM could do. [690] Paynter knew that the NUM was in a precarious position: strikes, he claimed, would place 'the security and employment of men at risk, for the state of a few shillings'; a one-day strike, he argued, was just an ineffective protest and, regarding an overtime ban, there was no guarantee that everyone would want it. Paynter understood the difficulty with asking men in the union to refuse overtime; the simple solution for the pit manager was to never ask the man to do overtime again, and to isolate him. Paynter also knew full well that miners who challenged the NCB and, ultimately, the state through militancy would 'fear that action of that kind would precipitate their own closure'. [691] According to Robens this had some grounding and he claimed to have known pits be shut 'by reason of being grossly uneconomic, because of incessant industrial disputation and general bad behaviour on the part of the union'.[692] It was this knowledge, gained by being experts in their industry, which permitted communists in the union a comprehensive understanding of their environment; equally, it was this that communists in King Street were obliged to defer to.

5.8 Good trade unionists?

But there was another increasingly apparent problem: even when communists in the union did move wage resolutions they were in-line with, and often supported by, non-communists. [693] Many of the resolutions that were moved by communists were composited. Moreover, in 1959

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[690] NUM Annual Conference 1964. The rest of this paragraph refers to this source, unless otherwise indicated.
[691] Paynter, *My Generation, op.cit.,* 135.
[692] Robens, *Ten Year Stint, op.cit.,* 16.
[693] Even before the 'broad left' became a formal policy.

Ellis told the union's conference that wage restraint was weakening the miners. [694] But the following year he presented a wage increase for day wageworkers, although he knew that 'it is true that over-all we are facing a fall in the effective demand for coal…the only hard economic facts are that many of our members have a struggle to live'.[695] So true was this that Moffat seconded it, but it was Dennis Skinner who suggested that the miners should use 'every weapon at our disposal' to secure it. [696]

Sometimes communist-led wage claims were in line with the union's policy. At the NUM's 1959 conference, for example, Moffat moved a wage claim for day wageworkers on the grounds that their wage claim at the 1958 conference had only achieved fifty percent of the original claim: Moffat justified this on the basis that wage claims did not lead to inflation and that it would be 'criminal and suicidal on our part in this situation to accept any form of wage restraint'. [697] But in 1957 the NUM nationally had joined the TUC in 'rejecting the principle of wage restraint in any form' with both formally voicing their willingness to 'take whatever action it deemed necessary to protect and improve the living standards of its members'. [698] The resolution that Paynter took to the TUC conference in 1966, on behalf of the NUM, opposed the Prices and Incomes Act. [699]

The ability of communists in the NUM to work with those outside the party did not just occur in relation to wages. In 1960 the government mooted the idea of decentralising control from the NCB centre to divisional coal boards and Paynter moved an emergency resolution at the union conference, noting that decentralisation could be 'the first step to breaking up our national agreements'.[700] Moffat was quick to second this, echoing his determination to do everything to prevent the suggestion becoming a reality, even mobilising 'the industrial power and strength of this organisation' if necessary. [701] Sam Watson and Joe Gormley added their support to Paynter's resolution. [702] The rejection of decentralisation then became a resolution

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[694] Ibid.
[695] NUM Annual Conference, 1960. It was carried.
[696] Ibid. Skinner was already a member of the Labour Party at this time.
[697] NUM Annual Conference, 1959. Moffat's claim, although supported by the EC, was rejected and ended up with the Joint National Negotiating Committee.
[698] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 163.
[699] TUC Annual Conference, 1966. The resolution also voiced the concern that income policies were becoming permanent.
[700] NUM Annual Conference, 1960.
[701] Ibid.
[702] Ibid.

that Paynter took to the TUC, where Moffat reassured delegates that the NUM remained opposed to unofficial strike action, to the extent that they were paid no strike pay. [703]

5.9 The National Power Loading Agreement (1966)

In chapter four it was argued that the party had given Horner the instruction to stop trying to reform the wage structure although Horner (and Moffat) had largely ignored these instructions. Moreover debates amongst communists, regarding the possibility of simultaneously pursuing structural reforms and wage increases, had been made at the union's annual conference. The party's views in this area continued and in 1964 they noted that 'reforms in the wage structure can become more urgent than formal wage increases'.[704] This was the argument that had been put forward in *For a Militant Wages' Policy* (1962), where the party had noted a particular disparity of pay in mining, but suggested that gaps in earnings could easily be solved without 'intricate wage structure negotiations'. [705] By 1963 the Fabians had become determined to abolish piecework in the industry in order to create unity, yet in October 1963 Campbell continued to argue that retracting piecework would mean a cut in workers' pay and 'a rise in bosses' profit'. [706]

But communists in the union remained committed to amending the wage structure of the union, particularly the removal of piecework from 1966, and Paynter was instrumental in the construction of the National Power Loading Agreement in that year.[707] But this was a gargantuan task. Paynter's private notes indicate that he was concerned about the logistics of implicating the NPLA: scribbled notes say '£5.00 a shift?! How are we going to implement it'??? [708] Data submitted by the NUM to the Joint Negotiating Committee in 1966 demonstrated the range of average earnings across the coalfields, the highest being Kent, with an average of

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[703] TUC Annual Conference, 1960. Although communists were often in-step with non communists, there was still evidence of a resistance to militant action from within the union. This is discussed at length by Gormley in his autobiography, *op.cit.,* and the observation that Gormley used the union's constitution to circumvent the growing power of the left has most frequently been made by Taylor, *op.cit.* The most thorough discussion of the anti-militancy in the NUM, from Lancashire, is in Stephen Catterall's unpublished thesis, 'The Lancashire Coalfield 1945-1972:the politics of industrial change', University of York 2001. Set in the context of the modernisation and 'rationalisation' of the industry, Catterall suggests that there was acceptance, indeed support for this change nationally, but also within the Lancashire coalfield.

[704] 'Long-term wage settlements', 20 December 1964.

[705] *A Militant Wages Policy,* 21 August 1962, 6, CP/CENT/IND/10/08.

[706] Campbell, JR 'Why Incomes Policies Undermine the Unions', *Comment,* 19 October 1963.

[707] The National Coalmining Museum has on display a pay slip from a pieceworker from 1965: it demonstrates well the complexity and individualism that this type of pay structure caused.

[708] Draft document: *Wages Policy, Coalmining*, 1966, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

89 *s* 5 *d* and the lowest being Durham, with 66 *s* 11 *d*. [709] But to what extent was wage uniformity motivated by wage militancy? Paynter's fellow communist, Joe Whelan, was opposed to the scheme and used the 1966 special conference to make the point that Nottinghamshire miners, if they accepted the NPLA, would see wages decreased; the removal of piecework would mean a guaranteed wage if you did 'owt or nowt', Whelan said. [710]

But, despite Whelan's reservations, Nottinghamshire did accept the NPLA. [711]Thus, some miners saw a stagnation or even decline in their wages whilst the lower paid 'caught up'; for example at Cresswell Colliery men received 'less for doing the same job'.[712] The implementation of uniformity caused disparity in itself and in Nottinghamshire and Kent miners received increases of between 4.4 per cent and 9.5 per cent between 1967 and 1970, whereas their colleagues in West Wales received increases of 17.4 per cent in the same period.[713] Wage parity was finally realised in December 1971. [714] As Phillips has pointed out, the NPLA 'diminished the extent of localised fragmentation….and fostered an unusual degree of solidarity across the coalfields'.[715] Moreover, as Ackers and Payne argue, the NPLA created 'equalised pay…but in doing so, low pay was nationalised and the unforeseen effect of NPLA was to nationalise dissatisfaction over wages throughout the NUM'.[716] For Dai Francis the impact was clear: the NPLA 'removed the contention from the wages' movement'. [717]Did this make wage militancy, as the CP imagined it, more applicable? Or did it simply unite a divided group around a common issue, which they could now hope to address? Both could be legitimately argued; but, as the following chapter will demonstrate, there was no sense that CP-sponsored wage militancy prospered to a greater extent than in the pre-NPLA period.

5.1.0 Winning leadership positions

Despite the problems in the industry communists continued to win leadership positions during this period, although the extent to which the CP benefitted from anything other than being able

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[709] Data calculated across a four-week period beginning 4 October 1965 Joint Negotiating Committee (NCB and NUM), source dated 24 March 1966, 3.

[710] NUM Special Conference, 1966. Some Nottinghamshire miners were on 120 *s* per shift before the NPLA.

[711] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[712] Ackers, Peter, and Payne, Jayne, 'Before the Storm: the Experience of Nationalisation and the Prospects for Industrial Relations Partnership in British Coal Industry, 1947-72- Rethinking the Militant Narrative', *Social History,* 27:2, 2002, 206.

[713] Handy, *Wages, op.cit.,* 166.

[714] Ibid. Pay parity via NPLA was achieved by December 1971.

[715] Phillips, Jim, 'Industrial Relations, Historical Contingencies and Political Economy: Britain in the 1960s and 1970s', *Labour History Review,* 72 (3), pp.215- 233, 222.

[716] Ackers and Payne, *Before the Storm*, *op.cit.,* 206.

[717] Interview with Dai Francis, AUD 31 SWML U/D.

to boast of its potency in the NUM is questionable. Abe Moffat had retired in September 1961 and his younger brother, Alex, had replaced him as the Scottish miners' president, a position that he held until 1967. [718]Alex was, by all accounts, less able than his brother. [719]Watters barely knew Alex, whilst he had known Abe from childhood, who was 'very capable, very disciplined'. [720] Bolton also viewed Abe as disciplined but 'hot headed'; sibling rivalry penetrated the brothers' union work, however, and it was clear to Bolton that they did not have 'the best relationship'.[721] Nonetheless, despite these apparent shortcomings, in the vote to find Abe's successor Alex secured a credible victory over his opponent, securing 23,124 votes compared Alex Eadie's 20,325.[722] The general secretary of the NUM remained communist when Paynter replaced Horner upon his retirement in 1959, securing 249,638 votes against Sid Ford, who got 197,334.[723] Even Sam Watson, who was in public 'a rabid anti-communist', announced at a union executive dinner that Paynter would win, which caused some embarrassment to Ford, who was also present. [724]

There was also a fair dispersal of electoral success across different areas of the union. Sammy Taylor became the first communist from Yorkshire to get elected to the NUM executive committee in 1959 with a majority of forty seats, and he would later become the area's compensation agent in 1961. [725] McGahey was elected onto the Scottish area executive committee in 1958 and would follow Moffat to the area's presidency in 1968, whilst Kane was elected to the position of area agent for Doncaster in 1962.[726] McLean became the Scottish area secretary in 1968. [727] Whelan, who had only joined the party in 1965, became a full time official in the same year. Through the election campaign, however, Whelan's new found political affiliation was to cause him problems. 40,000 leaflets, with the slogan 'a vote for Whelan is a vote for the communist control of the Nottinghamshire coalfield', only ended when Whelan

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[718] There was another brother, David, who had some success at local union level.

[719] Bolton's interview suggests that Alex had less self-discipline in his own life than Abe (the assertion seems to be that Abe's self-discipline was too much).

[720] Frank Watters interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[721] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[722] 'Alex Follows Abe as President', *Daily Worker,* 30 September 1961. Alex had been the area's compensation agent since 1946, and was elected to the vice-presidency in 1956.

[723] Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 287.

[724] Moffat suggests Watson supported Paynter because he 'recognised the capabilities and qualities of certain communists, and that it was wise to have at least one of them holding an official position'. See Moffat, *My Life,* 286.

[725] Watters, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 14.

[726] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 252.

[727] McIlroy, J, 'Note on the CP and Industrial Politics', in John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell (eds.) *The High Tide of Trade Unionism: Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79,* (Monmouth: Merlin, 2007), pp. 216-249, 229.

went to the police, who subsequently found that the East Midlands district of the Labour Party had paid for the printing of the leaflet.[728] There is no evidence to suggest that there was any support from the CP or guidance regarding how its erstwhile executive member should deal with this kind of political discrimination in the contest to secure union office. Instead, the party left the matter to be dealt with by the police, an agent of the capitalist state that Whelan and his political allies eventually hoped to replace.

Were these successes the result of clear management on the party's part? The elections where the party members did less well seem to suggest not. The disorganisation that was evident at local level in chapter four continued and was particularly evident through the union's 1960 presidential election. [729] In the presidential election of 1960, which Alwyn Machen won, there had been no communist candidate; Machen's untimely death, before he took office, facilitated another election. [730] This time multiple communists stood, a problem compounded by the union's transferrable vote system. [731]In the first round of the vote Alex Moffatt was 23,000 votes in front of Sid Ford, but Ellis had his 102,000 votes divided between Moffatt and Ford: the result was that Ford won with a 9,981 majority over Moffatt.[732] The same issue arose in 1961 during the contest for the Yorkshire vice president, whereby both Sammy Taylor and Jock Kane stood, divided the left's vote, and permitted Sam Bullough to triumph. [733] Such confusion was permitted to ensue by the CP itself: Gollan claimed that the party 'does not discuss or pronounce on the internal affairs of a union election'. [734] This suggests why Alex Moffat, from Scotland, and Ellis, from Nottinghamshire, were able to effectively become opponents in 1960. There was no clear cohesion or dialogue from the party, the absence of which meant that communists in their respective areas fielded the candidate that represented their area best. The fragmentation could occur even within coalfields, as in 1961: Taylor was

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[728] Interview with Joe Whelan AUD/109, SWML, U/D.

[729] An issue compounded by the complexities of the union's voting system. Voters mark their preferences numerically, and those with the lowest ranking are gradually eliminated. See Campbell, Andrew, and Warner, Mick, 'Changes in the Balance of Power in the British Mineworkers Union: an analysis of national top-office elections, 1974 to 1984', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 23:1, 1985, pp. 1-24.

[730] Although former communists, Jim Hammond (Lancashire) and Bert Wynn (Derbyshire), also stood. They stood in the second election too. Moffat, *My Life, op.cit.,* 288.

[731] There were six counts of the votes. In the first five rounds, Abe Moffat claims, his brother 'was leading all the way' with over 20,000 votes more than Ford. In the fourth count, he had 30,000 more, and by the fifth count Ellis (102,371); Moffat (160,238); and Ford (135,635) were left. In the sixth count, 62,219 votes were transferred to Ford from Ellis and 27,635 from Ellis to Moffat. Ford was from the COSA union, (these were not miners and were spread over the coalfield) and his union's 30,000 votes added to his total, giving him an overall majority of 9.981 over Moffat. For a full description, see Moffat, *My Life,* 289.

[732] 'Miners' Leaders Face Both Ways on Clause IV', *Daily Worker,* 2 July 1960.

[733] Watters, *Being Frank, op.cit.,* 14. Watters described Bullough as representing 'the right'.

[734] CP, private notes, untitled and undated, CP/CENT/GOLL/04/07. Gollan replaced Pollitt in 1956.

from the Barnsley area, whereas Kane was from Doncaster. [735]Gollan recognised that 'if members of the CP get together in any way by themselves or with others to promote candidates-that is their business, not ours'. [736]

Gollan, in his private notes, used Paynter as an example of how '(the CP) does not control trade union officials. They are responsible to their office. Do not need to give Paynter e.g. his instructions'. [737]Chapter four discussed in some detail the claim that Pollitt told trade union leaders what to do. Here is clear evidence that this was not the case. Was this a change of line, Gollan's disingenuousness, or a continuation of the previous organisational structure? The first suggestion supposes not only a clear line of communication but also clarity of interpretation and obedience from the party to members in the NUM: as should be clear from chapter four, the evidence suggests that none of these conflicts were in place. The second suggestion infers that Gollan would want to play down the party's influence or role in the union. This does not seem logical: chapter one not only demonstrated how the party had lofty ambitions for itself as the indispensable force for the development of workers' class consciousness, but also that Gollan was not reticent about identifying the later 1960s as the period of success for the party's industrial strategy. The third option seems most likely: if Gollan did not need to give Paynter his instructions, this infers an understanding on the part of Paynter of the dynamics of the relationship between him and the party; namely that communists in the union, not the party, were the dominant group.

This claim is substantiated by the frank appraisals around the state of the party's work in industry, particularly the advisory committees, which noted that 'we are a long way behind now, we do not anticipate events, we seek to deal with the reactionary issues too late and after the damage has been done by the right wing at the top'.[738] There remained a lack of communication between the party centre and its members in industry, as one participant at the same meeting noted: 'we fail in practice at the lowest level to involve industrial comrades in both discussions on policy and political problems, and in becoming activists in the fight for policies'. [739] There remained no effective mechanism for checking progress in this area, and it

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[735] The areas are about 20 miles apart.
[736] CP, private notes, untitled and undated, CP/CENT/GOLL/04/07.
[737] Ibid.
[738] Vic Wyman, 'Reorganisation', 7 December 1964, CP/CENT/IND/12/08, 1.
[739] Bill Smart, 'Reorganisation', 7 December 1964, CP/CENT/IND/12/08, 3.

was noted in 1965 that members of the industrial department needed 'to check and lead on industrial work'. [740]

The party was clearly aware of the problems but there is no real sense of any practical ability, or even effort, to overcome them; a sense of frustrated inertia permeates the documents. In 1962 the 28th congress had noted that 'today we are paying a high price for the long neglect of our workplace organisations and for the widespread failure to integrate the factory branches into the campaigning by the party as a whole' and had recommended a 'turn to industry' in the party. [741]The fact that the trade unionists were still debating the same problems three years later demonstrates the extremely rigid nature of the CP's industrial strategy. The situation did not improve and, despite setting a target to add an extra 50 branches by 1966, by 1968 not only had the party failed to achieve this target but it had lost a further nine of its original 1966 figure. [742]

The industrial advisories had been designed to bridge the link between the party and individuals in industry, 'to work on ways for the application of the line of the party', but in reality individuals often viewed the advisories as exclusive, leading to suspicion and even party members leaving the CP. [743] Moreover there is little sense that that weak link between the party and its factory branches, that chapter four discussed, had improved during this period. This is despite the fact that the party recognising in 1965 that 'the most effective' factory branches were those connected to the local party branch. [744]

5.1.1 The broad left

But there was one development to emerge from the appraisals of the mid-1960s. The growth of shop stewards across industry, plus the fallout from the ETU case, forced the CP into a new methodology. [745]From the mid-1960s the party actively encouraged party trade unionists to work with anybody with a similar outlook through the 'broad left' strategy. The executive committee's annual report for 1965 noted the need to form a 'broad alliance of broad progressive people'.[746] Allies of the party did not need to be 'near' the CP; this reflected an admission of the bitter reality of the party's marginality in industry. It was noted that 'if we are

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[740] Danny Ryan, 'Industrial Organisation', 7 January 1965, CP/CENT/IND/12/08, 1.
[741] 28th Party Congress, 1964, 3, CP/CENT/PC/14/33.
[742] 1966 there were 222 factory branches and by 1968 there were 213. Kerrigan, Peter, *Report to the EC,* March 1966, 3, CP/CENT/EC/12/07.
[743] Bill Smart and Les Dawson (ETU), 'Reorganisation', 7 December 1964, 6, CP/CENT/IND/12/08.
[744] Danny Ryan, 'Industrial Organisation', 7 January 1965, CP/CENT/IND/12/08.
[745] For more detail on the broad left, see Callaghan, J, *Cold War, op.cit.,*
[746] Annual Report of the Executive Committee, 1965, 17, CP/CENT/ECON/5/6.

only looking for the near ones, then we won't get the army that will be active on many fronts'.[747] In constructing the broad left, however, there was an unusually clear sense of coherence; a sense that the party could, when it wanted, push clear policy decisions into the union. Dutt used *Labour Monthly* in November 1965 to discuss who 'the left' were. The left that the CP wanted to work with and influence was:

The potential majority of the people which can be won, and which needs to be mobilised and won, against the policies of monopoly capital…the role of the relatively limited number of active socialist propagandists or militant trade unionists, whether communist or non-communist, is to work together on the basis of the common and immediate issues of struggle, to mobilise the majority.[748]

In the NUM the broad left had a very specific aim, which began to be implemented from around 1965. [749] This date is significant. Dutt and the EC report were dated late 1965; did the fact that the broad left was nascent in the NUM at this stage suggest that either communists in the union were quick to adapt to a new strategy, which would be anomalous in comparison to how new ideas were usually dealt with, or does it suggest that communists in the union had already been practising the broad left before the party disseminated it as a strategy? Allen describes that what the 'left-wing miners' leaders' wanted was to 'be able to control the NEC' through committing the NEC to 'their own resolutions, leaving it no space to deviate from them'.[750] Primarily this suggests that there was at least an element of grassroots dissatisfaction with the type of resolutions that the NEC, with communists on it, was recommending. [751] Allen is clear that the intention to move the NEC to the left emanated from 'left-wing miners' leaders', who were lower down the union and not on the NEC, rather than the CP. This view is substantiated by Bolton who suggests that the aim of the broad left was to 'build a left in the national union in order that the left could take a grip of the union and pull it in the right direction, as up to then it was right wing on all kinds of issues'.[752]

Somewhat paradoxically the 'broad' left was initially insular and clandestine. The early stages of the strategy explicitly excluded the NUM regional leadership, which potentially included communists, to the extent that members were encouraged to be dishonest about its

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[747] 'Reorganisation', 7 January 1964, 3, CP/CENT/IND/12/08.
[748] Palme Dutt, R, 'Who are the Left?', *Labour Monthly,* 47:11, November 1965, 484.
[749] According to Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 142.
[750] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 142.
[751] The NEC would recommend, at the Annual Conference, if a resolution should be passed, rejected, or remitted.
[752] Bolton interview, *op.cit.* This is also made clear by Emlyn Williams's interview, *op.cit.*

purpose. Meetings were explained as a forum for discussing compensation cases and when the Yorkshire president, Sam Bullough, compelled members to sign an undertaking to stop them, members simply ignored his instruction. [753] Such dishonesty and defiance was, as should be clear from chapter four, interdicted by the CP; a bitter reminder of the reasons why this was the case had presented itself in 1961 through the ETU case. [754] The entire ETU debacle had demonstrated what may happen when communists in the union, acting in the party's name, were permitted too much autonomy, to the extent that they were found guilty of ballot-rigging. Secrecy in the NUM continued for two years, until the more overt Barnsley Miners' Forum made itself public in 1967. But the extent to which the CP itself was involved in these debates is dubious. Watters, in his autobiography, claimed that he made sure that he distanced himself from the meetings because he did not want to 'offend' any members who disliked the party; but his physical absence simply disguised that fact that he was involved, and he claimed to have 'kept in close touch with what was going on'.[755]

5.1.2 Scargillism: syndicalism and the broad left?

As would become increasingly apparent, even before the CP identified the broad left as a strategy, CP membership was not a pre-requisite to progression within the union. [756]Scargill reached this conclusion in the early 1960s when he left the YCL. There is no sense that he made much of an impression in the communist youth section. At the party's 25th Special Congress, Scargill was evidently not well known and the party's report of his speech in *World News and Views* referred to him as 'Arthur Skargile'. Scargill's message to delegates was designed to boost recruitment to the YCL, recounting as part of this his own experience from his pit of how 'young miners will fight'; but the party also published a section of the speech in its own press that criticised the CP's 'criminal' neglect of the YCL. [757]

The reasons for Scargill's departure remain unconfirmed, although in 1977 he claimed to have been expelled from the party because he refused to stick to 'any rigid party line'.[758] According to Crick Scargill was particularly unhappy about the conflicting demands put on him by the party and the union; he was asked to sell the *Daily Worker* on Fridays but he also

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[753] Crick, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 23.
[754] See Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* for a details of the ETU case. Also Laybourn, Keith, *Marxism in Britain: Dissent, Decline and Re-Emergence*, (London: Routledge, 2005), 61. The original documents are also available in the party archive.
[755] Crick, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 21.
[756] Callaghan, *Cold War, op.cit.,* 252.
[757] 25th Special Congress Report, *World News and Views,* 4:18, 4 May 1957, 281.
[758] Crick, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 33.

had 'union business to look after.'[759] It is probable that Scargill had reached the conclusion that communist membership might actually hinder his fledging union career; in 1961 his Worsbrough union branch wrote to the area leadership asking them to expel all communists from NUM membership.[760] His own retrospective account conveys a personal recollection of anti-communist hostility during the late-1950s. [761]

Scargill, who in all accounts is presented as the driving force of the Barnsley Miners' Forum, organised weekly meetings and drafted in speakers, both communist and non-communist, to address them. [762]Meetings soon found a home in the Albert Club in Cudworth, just outside of Barnsley, which was booked 'on the cheap' and meetings often had an 'informal agenda' and various people chairing them.[763] But what was 'Scargillism'? [764]It could be argued that it was in some ways syndicalist, though this is unlikely to have been a conscious strategy by Scargill himself. There are numerous examples of Scargill's rhetoric and method that seem to suggest syndicalism, although it is arguable if Scargill actively viewed himself as a syndicalist. [765] He recalls how: 'I gradually began to be interested in the union itself, because it appeared to me that, irrespective of what I did politically…in any political organisation, the *real power*…lay either with the working classes or the ruling classes'. [766] But one of his most confident expressions of is as follows:

They (miners-edit) don't want to see anybody going onto a platform and yelling: 'I am a Marxist and I want to see dialectical materialism brought in as the order of the day'. They couldn't care bloody less, but I'll tell you what they could care about: they care about what's in their wage packet on a Friday, they could care about what their conditions are like. [767]

5.1.3 The logistics of the national broad left

The broad left represented a more coherent organisation than had previously existed. A national miners' forum met for the first time in August 1967. It was at this meeting where Lawrence Daly was chosen to be the left's candidate in the forthcoming general secretary election, due

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[759] Ibid.

[760] Crick, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 34.

[761] Scargill, Arthur, 'The New Unionism', *New Left Review,* July-August 1975, 5.

[762] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 139.

[763] Crick, *Scargill, op.cit.,* 21.

[764] An interesting argument is presented by Andrew Campbell and Mick Warne, which suggests that Scargill presented a public persona, becoming a household name, and so created the impression that the NUM was 'going somewhere'. Campbell, Andrew, and Warner, Mick, 'Changes in the Balance of Power in the British Mineworkers Union: an analysis of national top-office elections, 1974 to 1984', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 23:1, 1985, pp. 1-24, 10.

[765] Syndicalism had been strong, especially in South Wales, around the early twentieth century. This was evident in later communists, however; Dai Dan Evans combined communism with syndicalism.

[766] Interview with Arthur Scargill, 'The New Unionism', *New Left Review,* July-August 1975, 4.

[767] Scargill, 'The New Unionism', 11.

in December 1968. Paynter had previously 'earmarked' Daly as a successor, and Daly had been projected 'throughout the major coalfields in much the same way as a new packet of soap flakes was introduced to consumers'. [768]The meeting was attended by party and non-party mining leaders: Daly; McGahey; McLean; Dunn; Dai Francis; Emlyn Williams; Kane; Taylor; Owen Briscoe; and Tommy Mullany. [769] The Moffats had continually refused to enter Scotland into any debate around the broad left, but Abe had by this point retired, and Alex was ill. [770] The brothers' reasoning had been there was no distinction between communism and anti-communism; they were inherently suspicious that communists could build any form of alliance with the Labour Party and not be subverted in the process. [771] At the meeting the area was represented by Daly and McGahey, who deputised, and committed the area to the broad left. [772]

Allen was the link between the regional broad left and translated it into a more national capacity. But Allen is himself a curious figure and it would be fascinating if his papers came to light. [773]Bolton, certainly, is uncomplimentary about him, suggesting that he was 'a disaster…so hard left, so sectarian, and so much a Scargillite and so on, it was just disastrous'. [774] Moreover Bolton suggested that McGahey was 'a bit blinkered by Allen…it took him quite a bit of time to see through him'.[775] Nobody seems to know how Allen, a professor from Leeds University with apparently no connection to mining, ended up in this position; Bolton, certainly, 'couldn't work it out'. [776]

But the evidence relating to the lead up to the 1968 election really demonstrates the role that Allen played in the building of the broad left. Paradoxically Daly, the dissident, received clearer instructions from the party than the CP's member ever had. Allen's letters to Daly demonstrate this but, by the nature of them, the transmission of the information was not first hand. The process was Ramelson-Allen-Daly, not Ramelson-Daly. The party was also happy to allow Allen to write letters to Daly and there is no evidence that the CP checked them, even when they contained details of the CP's policies. For example in 1967 Allen wrote to Daly

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[768] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 125. Daly got 52.3 percent of the vote in 1968, 141.

[769] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 118. Paynter was absent, as he did not want to be seen to be 'campaigning for his own successor'.

[770] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 127.

[771] Ibid.

[772] Allen, *Militancy, op.cit.,* 130.

[773] He is by now well into his eighties. His last publication, as far as I can tell, was in 2009, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the strike through a personal recollection.

[774] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.

[775] Ibid.

[776] Ibid.

relaying a conversation that he had had with Ramelson, where Allen disclosed to Daly the CP strategy, future ambitions, and even courted his opinion on party policy. [777]

These letters have a clear instructional tone and are the only evidence of clear policy transmission that has been found. They have not been used in the existing literature but they are immensely significant. Allen informed Daly that the party's work should largely focus on Yorkshire but that it should also attempt to spread into Durham and Lancashire, where Joe Gormley 'has the advantage'.[778] Allen reported that Ramelson had suggested a similar idea to the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) in the Yorkshire area, based around education, and suggested that Daly should be central to these meetings, which should take place 'at least once a quarter.'[779] Allen told Daly that the CP were planning a new energy policy and that Ramelson wished to have Daly's thoughts on it. [780] But the letters also suggest that, in a sense, the CP was aware of its own marginality. The point of Daly's involvement in the CP's energy policy was to present the policy as 'acceptable to a broad left wing front in the union.' [781] A similar exchange between Allen and Daly took place in October 1968, this time around a Labour Party meeting which miners were likely to attend and where the CP wanted Daly to be 'the only speaker', and where Daly was instructed to 'talk about the situation in the mining industry'.[782]

Daly's *Miners and the Nation* published by the Scottish area of the NUM in 1968, was very similar to the CP's policy. Daly's manifesto suggested that the government should underwrite the industry at its present level; take on the social costs of pit closures; and attempt to use coal to its fullest capacity. It also argued that the union should push for higher wages for miners. [783] The party's energy policy, which the year earlier Allen had asked Daly for his opinion on, suggested that the main source of fuel should be indigenous, with imports used only when there were no natural resources left, and proposed that the government should underwrite coal at its current output and also accept responsibility for men and families impacted by closures. [784] The security services noted in 1967 that the party hoped to 'develop

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[777] Letter from Allen to Daly, 31 July 1967, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

[778] Ibid.

[779] Ibid. The LCDTU was a rank and file organisation, of the broad left, but it had limited significance in mining: see McIlroy, J and Campbell, A, 'Organising the Militants: the LCDTU 1966-79', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 37:1, March 1999.

[780] Letter from Vic Allen to Lawrence Daly, 31 July 1967, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

[781] Letter from Allen to Daly, 31 July 1967, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

[782] Letter from Allen to Daly, 15 October 1968, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

[783] Daly, (draft 'A Miners' Programme': in published form *The Miners and the Nation*), January 1968, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

[784] 'A National Energy Policy? Discussion Statement by the EC of the CPGB', 1967, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

and expand the coalmining industry as a source of indigenous fuel'.[785] The party's *A Future for the Miners* (1965) had called for the underwriting of the coal industry, a national fuel policy, inclusive of research into coal use, and no closures on grounds other than exhaustion. [786]

Just as the party had courted Daly's opinion on their energy policy the CP had reciprocated and offered comments on Daly's draft. Alex Moffat noted that Daly was correct to deal with the question of wages but suggested that he could use the miners' increased productivity to justify it. But this was not necessarily wage militancy and Moffat added that the fight for higher wages was 'what they expect the union to do and that's the reason they pay their contributions'.[787] Allen noted that: 'I do not think you have made out as strong a case as you would', claiming that Daly's argument could be supported by Gormley and the right, allowing them to 'steal your clothes'. [788] Allen advocated that a more 'defiant and aggressive stance' should be promoted and reminded Daly that 'when we discussed closures, it was agreed that once **we admit the right of the government** to close pits, then the only thing that we could argue about is the rate of closure'. [789] The section of emboldened text, that I have highlighted, is immensely significant. The use of the word 'admit' might suggest that Allen thought that pit closures were in some way justified. It could be argued that the CP viewed the fight against closures as a method to raise militant consciousness, when in reality the situation in the industry, regarding pit closures, was irreparable. Allen was certainly close enough to know the situation. Ramelson's comments substantiate this suggestion with more clarity: 'I like very much your argument for the need to take militant action…the absence of such action by the NUM, being content to offer verbal opposition but when it came to the crunch to acquiesce, which encouraged the government to develop its closures, confident they could get away with it'. [790]

5.1.4 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that, despite being aware of the continuing unemployment in the industry, the CP continued to advocate wage militancy. Although this was often a general policy, even when evidence emerged that it was problematic in the NUM the party did not change direction. Perhaps criticising the CP for this is slightly unfair; it is the benefit of

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[785] NA/EG 2/2494.
[786] CP, *A Future for the Miners,* June 1965.
[787] Alex Moffat's comments on 'A Miners' Programme', 26 February 1968, MRC MSS 302/1/1.
[788] Vic Allen's comments on 'A Miners' Programme', 7 March 1968, MRC MSS 302/1/1.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Bert Ramelson's comments on Vic Allen's comments on 'A Miners' Programme', 5 March 1968, MRC MSS 302/1/1.

hindsight that permits this analysis. Given the growing number of communists across the leadership of the union it may have appeared that politicisation through wage militancy was a plausible tactic. But the issue was that communists in the union were not applying wage militancy as the CP thought; this was evidenced by the fact that many resolutions that communists presented, pushing for higher pay, were composited. Militant action around wages, arguably a generous description of what was really motivating these wage increases, was not exclusive to the CP; this was the case even before the broad left became a tactic.

The broad left is interesting; in some ways it evidences the fact that the CP could disseminate a policy decision effectively. It is likely, however, that the parity between the party and communists in the union was coincidental, in much the same way as the commonalities in chapter four were. But within the broad left we can see a clear example of policy dissemination in the Daly letters; this is the chapter's biggest contribution to original knowledge, as they have not been used in other work. The broad left was in itself a paradox; it furthered the illusion of ubiquity, whilst simultaneously diluting the party's potency. As the 1984 strike would prove, through 'Scargillism', the broad left policy was ultimately fatal for the CP in the NUM. But even when it originated in the Yorkshire area the broad left had an element of the maverick about it. Its defiance and challenge to the official leadership evidenced grassroots dissatisfaction, a sense that the union was not doing enough; but it also marked a departure from the sort of policies that social democratic communists, like Horner and Paynter, had worked hard to achieve. The way that the broad left developed in Yorkshire was in some ways a more sophisticated form of defiance than the numerous unofficial strikes had once been. Despite all these subtle changes, the period that this chapter has considered marks a sense that there was a significant change in the mentality of many miners and the temper of the union: the manifestation of this is the focus of chapter six.

Chapter VI: Miners on the Offensive

6.0 The end of acquiescence

This chapter considers the period when the NUM engaged in its first official strike since 1926; this is the period where the remaining barriers to organised militancy ceased to exist. The NCB's ability to control the miners by reminding them how good life under nationalisation was in comparison to private ownership began to evaporate in the stark reality of pit closures and declining wages. Kane recalls that the NCB had adopted a strategy of controlling through congratulating, or perhaps patronising, and he remembered how 'we couldn't get off our bloody knees with the weight of the medals they had given us for being good lads'. [791] Robens substantiates the claim that reward sapped dissent through the following story, which he proudly recalled in his autobiography without a hint of irony. The NCB ran a national safety competition and offered a prize for the biggest improvement in the accident rate, both of which were awarded based on the number of working days lost through accidents. One worker at Silverdale Colliery broke his leg but 'insisted on coming to work with his limb in plaster…he didn't miss a shift, so the pit suffered no penalty'; and, presumably, did not blow the pit's chances in the competition.[792]

This change was one of the catalysts for the official militancy that history records; of course, the NUM was by no means exceptional in reaching the conclusion that militant action, coupled with political sentiment, was necessary to resolve falling pay and conditions. The miners, in the context of these problems, and their waning patience exacerbated by unwelcome and increasingly draconian government intervention in industrial relations, refused to be appeased any longer. In the tough, patriarchal world of the pit, even the later accounts of this change in mentality convey a sense of frustration, anger, and despondency; the historical narrative that is available has, across various accounts, preserved the blunt, masculine articulation of these problems. Summarising the temper of the miners in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Malcolm Pitt recalled a particularly unfortunate acronym that the NCB acquired from the men: 'No Cunt Brothers, which neatly sums up the bitter sense of betrayal and injustice which the NCB has managed to inspire in the minds of the miners in its thirty years of existence'.[793] George Bolton recalls that when men had previously tried to go on strike they

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[791] Kane, *op.cit.*

[792] Robens, *Ten, op.cit.,* 37.

[793] Pitt, Malcolm, *The World on Our Backs: the Kent miners and the 1972 miners' strike,* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), 100. Pitt was a miner from Kent, who joined the CP after 1972.

had been told 'we'll shut the fucking pit', but during this period men would be prepared to take other jobs, if needed, and had simply developed a new attitude of 'fuck 'em'. [794] Addressing delegates to the 1970 conference, in pursuit of a wage claim, Scargill reminded his audience that:

No longer will our membership accept that a small increase is better than none. They are fed up with being asked not to rock the boat. We have been told to remain passive. We have remained passive since 1956 and where has it got us? Half the coalmining industry has been obliterated in Great Britain. If this is what passiveness brings us, then we want none of it![795]

Sid Schofield made the same, if more measured, observations at the union's 1970 conference, reminding delegates that:

If we had exploited the circumstances that prevailed in the '50s…we could have demanded a much better deal for our members…but increases in the price of coal…would have been inevitable to pay for our demands…we did not take advantage of the private enterprise philosophy because…we cherished the ideals of nationalisation, as we understood them, and there was no place for exploitation of those ideals.[796]

The CP had long imagined that wage militancy, at least in its theoretical form, would act as an agent of politicisation, as the previous chapters have argued. The clash between state and union that characterises this period provides no better laboratory for the party's theory; but, as Callaghan has argued, the CP did not benefit from this event as it expected. [797] But the battle lines were, in principle, drawn from the arrival of Edward Heath's government in June 1970. Heath had barely unpacked his belongings when in July 1970 the Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy sat. It noted that:

The main point of attack on current inflation should be wages…while restraint on prices would have a psychological impact on the level of future demands and on the readiness of employers to concede them, it would in practice take a very long time to affect the cost of living index…in order to change the present climate, of expectations of extravagant wage settlements, the government needs to take a firm stand against such settlements…this may also mean facing up to major strikes in basic industries.[798]

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[794] George Bolton interviewed a part of the Biographical Project.

[795] NUM Annual Conference, 1970.

[796] Ibid.

[797] Callaghan, *Paradox, op.cit.,* for details.

[798] Minutes of Ministerial Committee on Economic Strategy 15 July 1970, PREM15/043. There are multiple records of the government's discussions around its strategy of wage restraint. See letter from Robert Carr (Employment Secretary) to Geoffrey Rippon (Minister of Technology) 29 July 1970 PREM15/043. At least one Conservative pondered the sense in using wage restraint in the context of rising prices, but as history documents, his concerns were not acted on. See letter from Lord Watkinson, 30 December 1970, PREM15/043. Generally interesting documents about the government's views on inflation (that it 'results from incompatible aspirations', for example) can be found in PREM 15/819.

This chapter is set in the context of these developments; for this reason it covers the period up to the end of the 1974 miners' strike and the events of later 1974 are dealt with in the next chapter. During this period the miners moved from being a relatively dormant union to one that became emblematic of militant trade unionism. Because of this perception communists in the union have received more attention in the existing literature than in previous periods, especially around the role that they played in the 1972 and 1974 strikes. The general consensus, most pronounced in the work of Phillips and Darlington, is that communists were a force of agitation, encouragement, and logistical assistance. [799] Thus McGahey's *Miners and Energy* reminded the union membership that they were 'militant and aware' and should use 'their collective strength to exploit their market position' and not rely on the NCB as an ally against the government. [800]

6.1 Debates within the party around strategy

In a sense there had always been an element of disunity around the CP's industrial strategy, manifested in two ways. The most consistent, and arguably primary, absence of unity was apparent in the actions of the communist trade unionists who, rather than actively opposing the CP's industrial strategy, were permitted sufficient latitude to act somewhat autonomously. Their 'defiance' was passive in its intent but also in its manifestation; the general absence of instruction circumvented the opportunity for conflict between the two groups. The link between the CP and industrial comrades was weak and individual communists, or units of communists in particular branches, simply occupied themselves with the ebb and flow of union life. But there was also a more active, sophisticated and increasingly vocal manifestation of discontent. In terms of the genesis of this current we might see Eaton's tentative recommendations from the 1950s as the first stage and Warren's more overt critique as a more confident, sophisticated example. The willingness of people to question the method of the industrial strategy increased in tenacity and conviction in the later 1960s and early 1970s. Betty Matthews, writing in November 1971, suggested that the Labour Party's 'reformism' had weakened the workers' confidence in the Labour Party. Therefore the strategy was re-asserted:

The Labour Party can be moved to the left and the way to do it is through the trade unions…the close connection with the union which, through affiliations, constitute the mass membership of the Labour Party, means that the power of building up to a victory of the left in policy and

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[799] See Phillips, *Historical Contingencies, op.cit.,* and Darlington and Lyddon, *Class Struggle, op.cit.,* both previously cited, for more details.
[800] McGahey, Mick, 'Miners and the Energy Crisis', 1971, 8.

leadership of trade unions is also the means of winning a victory over the present leadership into the Labour Party.[801]

But Matthews saw the weaknesses of this strategy in its existing form. Mostly there was an absence of an attempt to make political capital out of what was primarily a wages' struggle; only this, Matthews claimed, would change the right-wing balance in the Labour Party. [802] Observations such as Matthews's were symptomatic of the more general developments of communism, most associated with the international 'Eurocommunist' movement, but manifested in the CP around the likes of Mike Prior, Dave Purdy and, of course, Bill Warren. [803]This was, as history records, highly problematic for a party that had shamelessly constructed itself based on an ethos of monolithic unity. Facing criticism from within the party had, in the earlier days of the CP, been structurally prohibited through the party's rule of 'democratic centralism'; the notion that debate was healthy, but once a policy had been decided upon, it must be supported.

6.2 Economic approaches

A further challenge was evidenced in the economic strategy of the left, which emanated from the Labour left with the involvement of the CP. The AES was a means of 'resolving the crisis of the 1970s in a way conducive to socialist values'. [804] The CP defined it as 'a series of demands which, taken as a whole, would break the power of monopoly capital in Britain, solve the perennial crisis of the economy and put the country on the road to socialism'.[805] The means of achieving this was to expand the economy through a programme of large-scale public investment and nationalisation and to increase democratic control over publicly owned industries.[806] The CP were keen to note how the 'AES does not propose the wholesale takeover of manufacturing industry' as this might 'seem too many people like out-and-out socialism'. [807] Sam Aaronovitch argued that, once committed to the ideas that the left had presented through the AES, then people might support the need for a programme of socialist change. [808]

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[801] Matthews, B, 'Britain and Socialism', November 1971, 5.

[802] Matthews, *Britain, op.cit.,* 10.

[803] The most compelling case for this argument was articulated in Prior and Purdy's 1979 *Out of the Ghetto, op.cit.*

[804] Callaghan, J, 'Rise and Fall of the AES: From internationalism of capital to globalisation', *Contemporary British History,* 14:3, 2000, pp 105-130, 112. Labour Party's NEC from the late 1960s, and the AES as policy grew from NEC sub-committees. By 1972 these ideas were formed into a consultative document, *A Programme for Britain,* and by 1973 they were found in *Labour's Programme.*

[805] Bleaney, Michael, 'The AES', *Comment,* 15 April 1978, 115.

[806] Aaronovitch, Sam, *The Road from Thatcherism: the AES,* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1981), 3.

[807] Bleaney, *op.cit., AES,* 118.

[808] Aaronovitch, *op.cit., Thatcherism,* 3.

The proposals, Aaronovitch pointed out, were an immediate solution rather than being a set of proposals for 'a government of the left'. [809] The role of the AES was as a path, a stepping stone to a government that would impose more radical changes, which had previously been unobtainable. [810] Ramelson saw the AES as a step in the right direction for socialism but noted that the problems could never be eliminated 'for all so long as capitalism remains the system under which we live'. [811] The AES was emblematic of the changing strategy of the left. [812]There were variants within the detail of the AES. Some people saw the AES as needing to incorporate workers' control whereas others, such as private sector unions, viewed it as a way of diverting resources to manufacturing, whereas public sector unions viewed it as a means of expanding state employment, therefore reducing unemployment. [813] For the CP there was no better evidence of the party's view that it was 'having an impact on mainstream Labour opinion'. [814]

6.3 Protests

It was noted in chapter one how the CP and the NUM had parallel trajectories and as debates began to arise in the party so too was there opposition within the NUM, manifested through the *Collier,* an ephemeral rank and file newspaper set up in the wake of the 1972 strike. It is unclear if the *Collier* signified an act of political protest but I would suggest that it was certainly a manifestation of frustration and discontent. It was an organ of grievance, without much potential to cause strife; however its existence has been ignored in the existing literature and I suggest that it provides good evidence of the mentality of the miners at this time. The *Collier* sought to use its influence to protest against the NUM leadership, who voiced their concern against pit closures but then appeared, at least in the *Colliers's* view, to concede them. This view was expressed in a letter from Jim Deakin, a miner from Dodworth, who said that 'only rank and file coordination can stop pit closures AT A STROKE'. [815] Moreover once the union's discontent swelled into official action in 1972, the *Collier* sought to reprimand those officials who 'had the Coal Board and Tories down yet they didn't go the whole way'. [816] Of course we should not over-emphasise the words of one sectarian element within the union; the run of the

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[809] Ibid.
[810] Ibid.
[811] Ramelson, B, 'Social Contract: road to disaster (crossed out), cure all or con-trick? Draft', CP/CENT/RAM/03/10.
[812] The AES was TUC policy in 1977. By 1976, 'all the essential elements' of the AES was on Labour's programme, although it would be 1982 before the policy would be fully rolled out. See Callaghan, *Rise and Fall of the AES, op.cit.,* 118.
[813] Callaghan, *Rise and Fall of the AES*, *op.cit.,* 118.
[814] Andrews, *Endgames, op.cit.,* 127.
[815] 'Rank and File Need to Organise', *The Miner,* January 1973.
[816] 'Forward from the Strike', *The Collier: for Rank and File Control of the NUM,* March 1972.

Collier, at least in the sense of its preservation in the archival records, could never be described as prolific. But it demonstrated that there existed a militant element in the NUM; one that had no link with the CP.

6.4 Daly and Labour

It is interesting that the *Collier* existed in the same region where another rank and file, anti-leadership organisation had originated some years before. By the late 1960s one of the advantages of the broad left was that its members, for example, Daly, Briscoe and Williams, could attend the Labour Party conference as members, whilst the CP was still listed as a proscribed organisation. The sorts of resolutions that were moved by the NUM at the Labour conference were progressive; Daly, often described as being 'constrained' by his union position, presented many of them.[817] Through the broad left the CP had created a Trojan horse to get deeper into the very context that they had geared the industrial strategy toward eventually influencing; and, in the case of the NUM, it appeared to be working. But as Callaghan has demonstrated there was no resultant growth of the CP or any material benefit gained from this development. [818]Almost in recognition of the fact that the CP no longer presented a threat, the Labour Party removed the CP from its list of proscribed organisations in 1973. [819]Was this as a mark of its own respectability or progress in British politics? Or was it instead symptomatic of the party's marginality and weakness, signifying that it was no longer deemed a substantial threat?

6.5 Elections

The perceptions of communist influence and ubiquity, which were explored in chapter one, characterise the existing literature. The party was, at least superficially, doing well enough nationally to convince itself, and those who were hostile to it, of its nefarious ubiquity. McLean became Scottish general secretary in March 1969, when he polled 11,503 votes compared to

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[817] All these examples are in the Labour Party Annual Conference minutes, held at the WCML. In 1969 Daly supported Hugh Scanlon's resolution wishing to support the return of a Labour Government. In 1970, Daly was supporting Jack Jones's fight to secure increased wages and remove restrictions on free collective bargaining. In the same year, Daly supported Jack Jones's successful resolution, aiming to secure higher wages and end restrictions on collective bargaining. In 1971 Daly moved to support the railwaymen's resolution to extend nationalisation and he also seconded the successful railwaymen's resolution, which sought to re-nationalise industries. In 1973 Daly secured the acceptance of an energy policy, which gave primacy to indigenous resources. It was the 1973 Labour Party annual conference which allowed Daly to get the fuel policy accepted as an energy policy privileging indigenous resources. Similar efforts were made at the TUC annual conferences: in 1969, Daly supported Jones's resolution for higher wages, on the grounds of the rising cost of living.
[818] See Callaghan, *Paradox, op.cit.,* for details.
[819] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1973.

his opponent, who got 5,264 votes, mostly by campaigning on wage rises and opposition to Government legislation. [820] Nationally the party was also doing well in 1969: Kane, who had been part of the core militant base in Yorkshire, stood against 47 other candidates and was elected to the executive of the NUM with 48,250 votes, with his nearest rival receiving just 40,350 votes. [821] In 1955 Kane had been disciplined by the NUM for leading an unofficial strike at Armthorpe; yet not fifteen years later he was credibly elected onto the union's executive. Clearly the *zeitgeist* of the miners' union had changed and there was further evidence of this. Whelan, of the CP and Nottinghamshire, was initially elected to the union executive in March 1971, gaining the support of sixteen branches in comparison to his opponent, who won the support of twelve branches. [822] A re-election took place in May of the same year, after one delegate had voted against the mandate of his pit; the errant vote was a protest against Whelan's politics. [823] But the second result, where Whelan polled 402 card votes compared to his opponent's 284, further demonstrates the conviction that the miners had in their communist candidate. [824] There is no evidence to suggest, however, that this represented any sort of endorsement on the grounds of Whelan's politics.

Even where communists did not triumph the figures that they polled in elections were impressive; in the 1971 NUM presidential election, for example, the main contenders were Joe Gormley and McGahey. Gormley, the Lancastrian, secured 55.9 per cent of the 210, 546 votes that were cast; but in areas where the CP was traditionally perceived to have a large presence, like Scotland and South Wales, McGahey polled 80.6 per cent and 77.4 per cent respectively. [825] Although incredibly disappointed at his defeat in 1971, as Bolton recalls, McGahey was elected to the position of union vice-president in 1973. His rival, Len Clarke of the Labour Party, drew 126 votes in comparison to McGahey's 155. [826] Yet it was never guaranteed that communists who did well in one electoral milieu could translate their success into other areas. In the same conference where McGahey won the vice-presidency, he also lost the vote to represent the NUM at the TUC annual conference, losing out to Gormley and Daly. [827]

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[820] 'Communist is Elected Scots Miners' Leader', *Morning Star,* 26 March 1969.
[821] 'Miners Elect Communist to Executive', *Morning Star,* 19 September 1969.
[822] 'Miners Choose Communist', *Morning Star,* 24 March 1971.
[823] 'Communist's Pit Poll Victory', *Morning Star,* 28 May 1971.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Phillips, *Historical Contingencies*, *op. cit.,* 192.
[826] NUM Annual Conference, 1973.
[827] Ibid.

The general consensus in the existing literature is that communists did much better at the top of the union; this is certainly true. But the pattern outlined in the previous paragraph was also apparent in the period covered by chapter four. But to what extent did these successes represent a victory for the party, and to what extent were these victories the result of the party's instruction, or involvement? Certainly they represented a victory in the sense that they allowed the party to appear to achieve what its industrial strategy had planned to do; to get officials elected into important union positions, in order to influence policy. But where did it go from there? The CP was not a pressure group, it was always intended to be a political unit with its own identity; but in the successes in the NUM, largely inextricable from the broad left, the party had, at best, lost its identity. Moreover the perennial problem of union communists acting relatively autonomously persisted. The most problematic element of this dynamic, in this particular context of militancy and the perception of party influence, was that is masked the realities of the situation. All of this combined to evidence the case of Warren, Matthews, Prior, and Purdy, for example, who had identified what they believed to be the bigger flaws in the strategy.

6.6 Strikes

The greatest charge that the party's critics could level at the traditional strategy was that it was purely economistic, a claim most often directed at Ramelson, and one that is heavily refuted by his biographers. The CP, despite the shortcomings of the strategy, had always intended to be much more than a force fighting purely economic issues. Wages remained a key issue for both the party and communists in industry. Whilst the CP's motivation for increasing wages had always had a political motivation, there was increasing evidence of parity between the party and members in the union. But, as with the other examples of similarity that we have seen, this is representative of coincidence, rather than orchestrated policy-forming. For example Gollan recognised the strikes of the period here as being much more than economism, writing in his private notes that the 'wages struggle has become politicised'. [828] In the NUM, meanwhile, communists sought to use the fight for higher wages to convey a sense of political organisation. A national campaign on wages must be conducted, argued McLean in the *Morning Star,* 'so that the membership can see we have a policy and a national leadership prepared to fight for it'. [829]   McLean's statement is one of the most clear evidences of the potential to conduct militant action on wages that we have seen so far; was this the CP's

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[828] CP/CENT/GOLL/05/03.
[829] 'Union to Press for New Pit Wage Minimum', *Morning Star,* 9 July 1969.

projection of wage militancy, politicisation, coming to fruition? It is probable that this was a particular militant reaction to the conditions of the industry; but, even if it did evidence the kind of politicisation that the CP wanted, then it was immaterial for the party who still reaped no benefit from all of this.

The 1969 union conference pursued Composite Resolution I, a weekly minimum wage of £15.00 and £16.00, depending on the workers' job. This was a response to falling wages. Despite the surface workers' pay increase the year earlier, which had brought them an extra £1.27.5p, their pay was low and had even fallen behind local authority manual workers and dustbin men in the pay league. [830] The conference also sought a shorter working day, presented in composite resolution II. [831]The particularities of the claim, led by Yorkshire, was that surface workers should have their day reduced to seven and three-quarter hours, inclusive of mealtimes. In a demonstration of intent, the resolution also expressed the necessity for a report, detailing the state of the negotiations, initially to be fed back within five months, but the deadline was then retracted, and instead compelled the NCB to commence 'immediate' negotiations. [832]

Even before the pro-strike ballot was returned on 9 October 1969 some miners had already descended upon the NCB's London offices. But once the strike commenced participation quickly increased. Within three days all 76 of Yorkshire's pits were out, along with four from Scotland, two from South Wales and one in the Midlands. [833] Just twenty four hours later, 96 pits were out across the UK, which totalled 91,000 men. [834]The Kent area also offered support, seven days into the strike, if the NCB's offer was not improved. [835] At its height 43 per cent of the whole union was out on strike, still far short of the two-thirds majority needed under the constitution, but an unprecedented expression of national unity.[836]

At the following Special Conference on 30 October 1969 the wage increase was accepted by 193,985 votes to 41,322, with effect from 3 November 1969. [837] The strike was over, although only just, and 168,000 votes were cast supporting a return to work, with 165,000

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[830] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 30.
[831] Composite resolution I was the wages' claim, drawn from nine areas' individual wage claims.
[832] NUM Annual Conference 1969. The resolution was moved by M Welsh from Yorkshire- he is not somebody that I have come across. H Parkin (Derbyshire) seconded it, and it was also supported by J Henderson (Kent), L Clarke (NEC) and D Hayward (South Wales). None of these names are the usual names of 'militants' in these areas.
[833] 'Pit strikes spread: top talks agreed', *Morning Star,* 16 October 1969.
[834] 'Strike Still Spreads', *Morning Star,* 17 October 1969.
[835] 'Miners' Strike in More Coalfields', *Morning Star,* 15 October 1969.
[836] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 32.
[837] NUM Special Conference, 30 October 1969.

against. [838] In this vote the rank and file had parity with the NUM executive, who had voted 14-5 in favour of returning to work. [839] But the real issue was that the NCB, who had stubbornly refused to concede wage increases in the context of unemployment, granted a generous settlement in order to avoid curtailing another demand, a shorter working day. In a twist of irony the CP had always forecast the primary catalyst for politically-illuminating industrial conflict to be the prosecution of the wages' struggle; in the event, the first substantial unofficial and near-national strike since nationalisation was primarily the result of hours, not pay.

6.7 Perceptions of 1969

The 1969 strike demonstrated on an unprecedented scale the dissatisfaction amongst miners; it was, as Taylor put it, a 'grassroots rebellion'.[840] Although the original objective, a shorter day, had failed the 1969 episode demonstrated that the NCB would concede substantial wage demands when the threat of a substantial strike was presented. The NCB may have believed that they had got away with effectively giving with one hand and taking with another, but in reality they had set a precedent, one which Scargill, in particular, was alert to. But to what extent were Scargill and communists in the union acting in conjunction with each other in their confident pursuit of wage claims? The 1970 union conference was an opportunity for Scargill to move composite resolution III, justified on the grounds of the miners' relatively low pay, and it requested a minimum wage that ranged from £20-£30 a week. [841] The NCB's offer fell just short of the NUM's aim, with increases offered ranging from £18.50-£29.50, and it was rejected by the union.[842]As an added impetus Scargill referred to the October militancy and reminded delegates that, should the NCB refuse the wage claim, then the subsequent response would 'make last October look like a Sunday school picnic'. [843] The resolution also reflected a change in tactics; where resolutions previously had used the rather open-ended phrase, 'substantial increase', which had permitted the miners to be 'fobbed off', according to McGahey; this one was very specific in its demands. [844] McGahey, seconding the resolution,

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[838] 'Miners turn Down Offer', *Morning Star,* 31 October 1969.
[839] 'Union Move Angers Pit Strikers', *Morning Star,* 23 October 1969.
[840] Taylor, A, 'The Conservative Party and Trade Unions', in *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism 1964-79, op.cit.,* pp. 151-178, 159.
[841] Taylor, *NUM*, *op.cit.,* 37.
[842] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 38.
[843] NUM Annual Conference, 1970. The wage claim requested £20 a week for surface workers, £22 for underground workers, and £30 for those under the NPLA.
[844] It sought £20 a week for surface workers; £22 a week for underground workers; and £30 a week for those workers who were under the NPLA. Ibid.

added his support primarily because, even in the context of unemployment, some areas were suffering a manpower shortage as men left to work in better-paid industries. [845]

Taylor has suggested that the resolution 'committed the union NUM to the militant pursuit of wages'. [846] But the wage claim was not dominated by a militant caucus. Neither Scargill nor McGahey were being unusually radical in their pursuit of the wage rise; it was also supported by Dunn and Heathfield, but Roy Ottey also supported it. [847] The support for the resolution suggested that the wage claim was a reaction to the context. Whelan justified the wage claim because of the 'crazy economics of coal' which brought large profits to many sectors, as coal was sold cheaply. [848] As Bolton noted, 'the miners are looking for leadership, and if they do not get it they take the initiative'. [849] Scargill called on the union to bear the responsibility of the failure to 'maintain wages for our membership' and added that until the claim was met, the union was not able to call on the confidence of its members. [850] McGahey urged the delegates to accept the resolution unanimously, for fear that without it 'the industry may close up'. [851]

The lack of organisation was obvious. Emlyn Williams, the miners' president from South Wales, proposed resolution 12, a wage claim which pursued £1.00 a week less than the Scargill-led composite resolution III had. [852] Williams reassured delegates that his area meant no malice in contravening composite resolution III; instead, Williams explained, the temper of the South Wales coalfield was such that their individual wage claim was designed to convey their agitation and frustration at the wages' situation. Failure to concede their claim, however, would result in industrial action. This example illuminates an enduring problem; whilst it was probably not Williams's idea to move a resolution that had the potential to split the left, Williams was obliged to respond to the will of his area. It was Daly, joined by Gormley, who opposed resolution 12 on the grounds of its divisiveness; a subsequent card vote, however, rejected the obstruction by 169 votes in favour of carrying the resolution, with 160 against. [853] In the event the mandate for strike action failed; the outcome was 115,052 in favour and

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[845] Ibid.

[846] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 37.

[847] Ottey was a moderate from the Power Group. He would resign during the 1984 strike.

[848] 'Crazy Economics of Coal Justifies Miners' Claim', 3 October 1970.

[849] NUM Annual Conference, 1970.

[850] Ibid.

[851] Ibid.

[852] Ibid. South Wales wanted £20 a week for surface workers, and £21 for underground workers. Williams had been involved in union position since 1957, winning the presidency unopposed in 1973; more details can be found in his obituary at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-emlyn-williams-1592326.html

[853] Ibid.

143,466 against, a total majority of 55.5 percent. [854] This is a significant figure, but it still suggested that even though militancy existed in the NUM, it was not yet assured enough to graduate into mass strike action. At the key point, when the strategy appeared to be coming together, paradoxically its limitations were also becoming more apparent; the main one being that wage militancy, insofar as it existed, was not exclusive to communists in the union.

6.8 1971: militants on the march?

The ballot for strike action in 1970 had achieved a majority, but it was not sufficient under the union's rules. Resolution seven, moved by the North West area and seconded by Kent, proposed a change in the union's constitution, to the effect that the two-third majority needed for strike action be changed to a simple 55 percent.[855] The change in rule was a clear suggestion of the union's changing temperament and, unlike the removal of compulsory arbitration in 1961, had a much bigger impact on removing the difficulties with moving unofficial militancy into official action. Paradoxically the CP had been a constant critic of compulsory arbitration, but they had had little to say on the need to lower the majority needed for strike action; instead it was the moderate North Western area that took the initiative, rather than any party members or party-led areas. But the change of rule was in the union's interest. This was, for Scargill, 'the most decisive change of rule ever in the union'.[856] Why was such a significant change moved by a moderate area? Scargill claims that this was due to the right realising it was vulnerable and that if it did not grant some concessions then it might find itself displaced by the rank and file and an 'alternative leadership' put in its place. [857] For Jim Phillips, writing in 2007, the change was because the union needed to protect its 'integrity' following the large unofficial strikes. [858] Whatever the reason for the change the outcome was the same; the union had adjusted its own constitution to facilitate strike action and this provided an important weapon in the armoury through which to pursue higher pay.

All of this, whilst evidencing the union's left-wing temper, was not due to the CP's interventions. By 1971 even some campaigns that the CP had been fighting since 1955 were pursued by non-communists; resolution 30, moved by Leicester, called for men to be paid the

[854] NUM Annual Conference, 1971. The amount needed was 2/3 majority. 103,000 miners, from 116 pits, gave the union the percentage. Figures from Darlington and Lyddon, *Class Struggle, op.cit.,* 35.
[855] NUM Annual Conference, 1971. This was known as 'Rule 43'.
[856] Scargill, A, 'The New Unionism', *New Left Review,* July-August 1975, 13.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Phillips, *Historical Contingencies*, *op.cit.,* 222.

adult rate at 18 and was carried, although no communists spoke in support of it. [859] Significantly it was this resolution that became one of the NUM-sponsored resolutions at the TUC annual conference in September 1971; again, no party members had any role in this. Whilst Whelan, on behalf of Nottinghamshire, may have moved the resolution raising concern at the government's 'hiving off' of nationalised industries, which became a NUM-sponsored resolution at the Labour Party and TUC conferences that year, it was a composited resolution. Of course the ability of party members to fit seamlessly into the ebb and flow of union life was in many ways the measure of the success of the industrial strategy; in terms of wage militancy and resolutions, the CP's strategy appeared to be working. But what consequence did this have for the party? The CP was in no better shape. Wage militancy, even though it is unlikely that communists in the union thought of it this way, was not exclusive to the CP or even the broad left. This suggests that, although the CP may have viewed this as evidence of its ability to move the NUM to the left, it was in fact much more to do with a reaction against the context of this period, characterised as it was by rising inflation and government measures of wage restraint.

The 1971 conference sought a 'comprehensive' wage rise of between £9.00 a week and £5.00 a week, a minimum wage of £26.00 a week for surface workers, £28.00 a week for underground workers and £35.00 for face workers. [860] Even Gormley agreed that miners had become more militant since the late 1960s as they were not longer willing to live on a low wage, as the cost of living rose; since the end of piece-work rates under the NPLA, many miners had been forced to work overtime to boost their earnings. [861]The NCB, now under the leadership of Derek Ezra, offered an additional £2.00 a week for surface workers and £1.90 a week for the rest of the union. [862] Heath's phased income policy, where the maximum rise that could be permitted by the NCB was seven per cent, effectively capped what the NCB could offer. [863] The NCB's caveat was additional holidays, five days' paid extra, which the NUM rejected as part of a wage dispute. [864] The union commenced an overtime ban in order to, as Emlyn Williams put it, send out a clear message to Heath that miners would not subsidise 'cheap coal milked off by private industry'.[865] The Special Conference of the NUM held in

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[859] NUM Annual Conference, 1971. The campaign for an adult wage had been the subject of an enquiry by *Challenge* in 1955.

[860] Ibid.

[861] Gormley, J, 'Miners' Pay- We Are Determined to Win', *Morning Star,* 22 December 1971.

[862] *Wilberforce Report*, MRC, 1972.

[863] Barnett, A, 'Class Struggle and the Heath Government', *New Left Review,* January-February 1973, 9.

[864] *Wilberforce Report*, MRC, 1972.

[865] 'British Miners Won't be Scapegoats for Tories' Wages Policy', *Morning Star,* 22 October 1971.

December 1971 endorsed an overtime ban with a phenomenal 96.5 percent of the membership in favour of it. [866]

But in all of this the CP acted as a force of agitation. Its propaganda was laudable but I have not found anything in the archives that suggest that the party gave any instructions or changed tactics regarding the way it liaised with party members in industry. Perhaps this should not be a surprise; the dynamic between the caucus and periphery, of King Street and party members in the union, had long since been one of latitude and autonomy. Did the continuation of this policy reflect a sense amongst the CP that they felt the party's strategy was working and so no further instruction was needed? This is plausible. But for all the reasons that have been suggested, this was a short-sighted approach.

6.9 The CP and the 1972 strike

Following the successful overtime ban, the 1972 strike started with picketing from Yorkshire. [867] The percentage of miners voting to strike in 1972 was 58.8 per cent, which under the old rules would not have been a high enough majority, but now that the structural problem of the union's constitution had disappeared, the union was officially on strike. [868] There are two main debates associated with the logistics of the strike. Ottey, writing in 1985, argued that the 1972 strike was 'meticulously planned' by the national leadership. [869] Ottey's view, which recalls events of thirteen years before, was the product of his own particular outlook at the time of writing; he had recently resigned from the NUM NEC, in protest at the actions of the left. An interview with two members of the strike committee from Barnsley instead emphasises the role of the rank and file: discussing the successful tactic of picketing power stations they said that 'we at grass roots level knew where to go without being instructed'. [870]It is equally important not to inflate the number of the rank and file who were behind the strike either. Although the vote for an overtime ban had been strikingly high this still meant that less than sixty percent of union members had been in favour of a strike. [871] Scargill's own view, that the Yorkshire area was the catalyst and sustaining force behind the strike, is another perspective. [872] It is likely that a subtle mixture of all three was responsible but what is found across all three accounts is

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[866] NUM Special Conference, 1971.
[867] Scargill, A, 'The New Unionism', *New Left Review,* July-August 1975, 14. There are plenty of accounts of the chronology and event of the strike itself, and there is not enough space or necessity to repeat them here.
[868] 'Miners in the Forefront of the Battle for Britain', *Labour Monthly,* March 1974, 104.
[869] Ottey, Roy, *The Strike: an insider's story,* (London: Sidgewick and Jackson, 1985), 27.
[870] 'Never Seen Such a Response from Yorkshire's Miners', *Morning Star,* 22 January 1972.
[871] Barnett, A, 'Class Struggle and the Heath Government', *New Left Review,* January-February 1973, 7.
[872] Scargill, A, 'The New Unionism', *New Left Review,* July-August 1975, 14.

a lack of mention of the CP. There is nothing to suggest that the CP caused the strike or ran it; but again, for a party that boasted of ubiquity in these events, its name is curiously absent, even when it played an agitating role.

The result of the strike was Heath's inquiry, chaired by Lord Wilberforce, and a pay rise of almost thirty per cent, which completely undermined the Government's cap of seven per cent.[873] In addition the miners received eleven extra concessions, including bonus payments, the adult rate for 18 year olds and an extra week's paid holiday.[874] The end result was, according to Darlington and Lyddon, that the miners won more in 24 hours than they had in 24 years. [875] The miners had got what they wanted and BS circular No. 67/72 was sent to all NUM branches on the 25 February 1972 with the results of the return to work ballot announced: 210,039 miners were in favour of returning to work and 7,581 were against. Across what were traditionally classified as the most militant coalfields, Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire, only approximately five per cent of each area's membership rejected the return to work. [876] The *Morning Star* explained this by saying that these militant areas accepted the offer in order to 'preserve unity' in the union. [877]In Kent, however, communist Jack Collins suggested that a few extra days on strike could have won more and the NUM area executive rejected unanimously the pay offer.[878]Even in militant victory divisions between communists in the union remained.

How did the 1972 strike affect the party's industrial politics in the NUM? The union's resolutions at the TUC and Labour Party conferences confirm the continuation of the union's new-found left-wing identity. An indigenous fuel policy, composited from the Midlands, Durham, Nottinghamshire, Scotland, and Colliery Officials and Staffs Area (COSA), made its way onto the TUC agenda in September 1972. [879] The type of resolutions that the NUM moved at the Labour Party's annual conference that year were also certainly 'progressive'; for example, they called for economic sanctions to be applied to Rhodesia and also requested a conference of all European governments. [880] But these resolutions were composited and they

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[873] Barnett, *Class Struggle*, *op.cit.,* 8.

[874] NUM Annual Conference, 1972. The 'shopping list' of rewards included a pay increase to come into effect from 10 March 1972 and backdated pay to be paid on the 24 March; the efforts of the strike was therefore immediately gratified. In addition, the pay increase was backdated to November 1971.

[875] Darlington and Lyddon, *Glorious Summer, op.cit.,* 5.

[876] Copy found in NUM Annual Conference, 1972.

[877] 'Tremendous Blow to Trade Unions', *Morning Star,* 21 February 1972.

[878] Ibid.

[879] TUC Annual Conference, 1972. At the 1972 NUM Annual Conference, it was Durham who moved the composite resolution.

[880] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1972.

further reiterate the points that I made earlier. My argument can be countered by saying that, so far as the CP had set itself objectives they had been met; but what happened after this? The broader transformation to society that the CP wanted to see showed no signs of following the apparent success of the industrial strategy. Militancy around wages, although apparent, was not prosecuted by communists in the union to make the party's industrial politics work. The aim of communists in the union was more immediate and intended to improve miners' pay and condition. It was recognised that this change might come about politically but its broad ambition was evidenced by the fact that it was pursued by communists, members of the Labour left, and even moderates in the union/

6.1.0 1973

Nonetheless wage claims were presented at the 1973 conference and composite resolution IV, delivered by McGahey, explicitly rejected the government's claim that 'inflation is caused by high wages' and demanded wage increases of between £35 and £45 a week, which also pointed out that the concessions achieved through Wilberforce had all but been obliterated. [881] It was supported by Scargill and the Yorkshire area but also by Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and South Wales. Composite resolution VII, moved by Durham, was also supported by South Wales and Kent; communists were working with non-party members in the pursuit of the miners' interests. The miners' case was also strengthened by the actions of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which had by October 1973 increased the price of oil by seventy per cent, restricting its movement and creating increased demand for coal. [882] But the ballot on strike action over wages failed with 143,006 against and only 82,631 in favour. [883] As the table below demonstrates even the areas that were traditionally perceived to be the most militant, such as South Wales and Kent, failed to achieve mandates for strike action and even there were small margins in the pro-strike areas. [884] This further proves that wage militancy was a response to the problems of the union, rather than any sustained evidence of politicisation.

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[881] NUM Annual Conference, 1973.
[882] Ibid.
[883] Ibid.
[884] Table drawn from the NUM Annual Conference, 1973.

Table demonstrating voting percentages in the NUM

Area	'Yes' vote	'No' vote
Yorkshire	53.08%	46.92%
South Wales	49.95%	50.05%
Midlands	25.08%	74.92%
Scotland	51.18%	48.82%
Kent	49.25%	50.75%

Although South Wales had voted against strike action, albeit narrowly, it was that area who were pioneers in pushing the need to secure higher wages and in October 1973 the area voted decisively for an overtime ban. [885]The South Wales' miners were the catalyst for the union's convention of a Special Conference in November 1973, which decided on an overtime ban to begin immediately. [886]McGahey noted that the unanimous executive vote on the overtime ban in November 1973 was the result of 'rank and file pressure in all areas of the union' which was 'too strong for any NEC representative to ignore'. [887] The overtime ban was not, then, a calculated strategy of wage militancy.

Rapidly following the overtime ban Heath imposed a State of Emergency; during the first month of the overtime ban coal production was down by 750,000 tons a week at a time when oil prices were rising. [888] Negotiations continued without success and by 20 December 1973 McGahey and Daly met Willie Whitelaw, the Secretary of State. Here was the great showdown between worker and state, based on wages, which the CP had envisaged. The significance of a leading communist and one-time communist, a significant force of the broad left, being invited into the inner sanctum of government can only have heightened the illusion of the party's ubiquity. But both men were there as union emissaries and no evidence suggests that the party sought to influence the events of the meeting at all. Although the NUM representatives were initially hopeful that the meeting might 'indicate more in Phase Three than had already been extracted', this optimism was mis-placed.[889] A workable suggestion, from Gormley and Whitelaw, rested on paying miners for their waiting and bathing time but

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[885] 'South Wales Pits Vote for Action', *Morning Star,* 19 October 1973.
[886] 'Why it has to be Yes', *The Miner,* January 1974.
[887] McGahey, Mick, 'Why Miners won't Shore up Phase Three', *Morning Star,* 30 November 1973.
[888] NUM Annual Conference, 'Situation in the Coal Industry', 1973.
[889] Ibid.

the idea was hijacked by Wilson, which meant that Heath could not possibly accept it.[890] Another possible resolution was found at a meeting of the National Economic Committee (NEDC) on 9 January 1974 in which Sid Green, of the National Union of Railwaymen and TUC, offered to accept mining as a unique industry, therefore setting a precedent for other strong unions, and also giving Heath reassurance that a breach of Phase Three by the miners would not open the floodgates for other unions: but this was rejected by the Prime Minister. [891]By January 1974 negotiations had dried up and McGahey had concluded that the NCB were not 'free negotiators, but were acting at the behest of the government'. [892]

Heath's refusal to grant 'wage demands that go beyond what the nation can afford', because they would further damage the economy, meant that neither side would compromise. [893]Faced with a situation of stalemate the following ballot result of all miners was announced on 4 February 1974 and indicated that 81 per cent of miners were in favour of strike action. [894] Such a large majority demonstrated that the pro-strike majority spread across the union, rather than just being confined to what might be perceived to be CP-led areas. Scotland, South Wales, Kent and Yorkshire polled 87 per cent, 93 per cent, 89 per cent and 90 per cent respectively in their area elections, with even the more traditionally 'moderate' areas, such as Nottinghamshire, polling 77 per cent. [895] The behaviour of the union demonstrated that, as in previous examples of militancy, this was led by the rank and file. Like 1972 the strike did not run on for a long time and by 28 February the Labour Government was returned, peppered with left-wing minsters such as Michael Foot, Tony Benn, Peter Shore and Eric Varley.[896] Heath's risky 'who governs?' mandate, called at the start of the strike, had not paid off. The strike finished on the 10 March 1974 with a pay settlement. [897] The actual figures awarded ranged from a minimum wage of £32.00 a week to £45.00 a week; the lowest being £3.00 a week less than the figure originally proposed by McGahey, but this was accepted. [898] The impact for the NUM was positive and went further than just a wage award. The industry's deficit for 1973-

[890] Taylor, A. J, Consultation, Conciliation and Politics in the British Coal Industry, *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol.19 No. 3, September 1988, pp. 222-233, 225.
[891] Taylor, *NUM,* op.cit., 93.
[892] McGahey, M, 'Miners and the Crisis', *Labour Monthly,* January 1974, 10.
[893] 'What is an issue in this crisis?', *Comment,* 12:1, January 1974, 36.
[894] 'Miners in the Forefront of the Battle for Britain', *Labour Monthly,* March 1974, 104.
[895] A full list is given in 'How Your Area Voted in the Strike Ballot', *The Miner,* 15 February 1974.
[896] 'Relations of Labour Government and the Trade Unions', *Labour Monthly,* 152. Only 11,485,704 people voted and although Labour won a narrow majority of seats, it only achieved 39.3 per cent of the vote; the Liberals achieved 18.3 per cent; and the Conservatives 35.8 per cent. See Matthews, G, 'The Wilson Government and the Crisis', *Marxism Today,* February 1975, 37.
[897] NUM Annual Conference, 1973.
[898] Ibid.

1974, which stood at £150 million, was written off by the Government, giving the miners the sense that perhaps the fortunes of the coal industry were on the up.[899] The speed of the victory was impressive and this created the sense that the entire event was simply 'too easy'; the NUM was bound to win, Bolton suggests, largely because 'Heath was stupid and ill-advised'.[900] Materially, then, the miners had won. The problem, as history has demonstrated, was that the miners became symbolic of irresponsible and problematic trade unionism

Here were two episodes of wage-based militant action, in as many years, which may superficially suggest the triumph of wage militancy; but how should politicisation really be measured? Although undoubtedly political, what did the strikes of this period really want? In 1973 the miners did not immediately engage in action; if they had more political awareness as a result of their recent activities, as the CP imagined the situation, then they may have been expected to engage in further action when the opportunity arose. There is something of a paradox here. Whilst the strikes of this period were political across all unions, including the NUM, they were political in the sense that they were a reaction to the policies of the government; it was this immediacy, the need to change this, which motivated them. These were not political strikes with the characteristics that the CP had hoped that its industrial strategy would cause, as outlined in chapter one. The evidence for this is as follows. Leading members of the NUM associated with the party did not maximise the opportunity to extract the maximum political demands from the Heath government, which had been portrayed across left-wing propaganda as the embodiment of an oppressive capitalist administration. In short, they did not go as far as the communists would have liked and they were, as far as history records, relatively reasonable in their demands. [901] If wage militancy in the NUM had created a greater sense of politicisation, we may expect some resultant benefits for the CP; growing membership, or more receptiveness to its message, for example. But the CP was left languishing on the margins of British political life, haemorrhaging members, branches and, increasingly, void of a coherent identity. It is not unreasonable to assume that the party's fortunes would improve by the consequence of its obvious presence in a now militant union. The fact that it did not caused two intertwined problems; the first was that, until such an event had occurred, the CP could always look forward to it as an untested phenomenon. The second problem was that, once the

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[899] Ibid.
[900] George Bolton interviewed as part of the CPGB Biographical Project.
[901] Of course, as has been noted by Darlington and Lyddon, they were very successful and secured many concessions. Rather than being unreasonable or even greedy, this success should be understood in the relative decline of miners' pay and conditions since the 1950s.

clash had occurred, internal critics within the CP had ammunition to berate the traditionalists' commitment to the industrial strategy. This divide would only become more profound as the years passed by.

6.1.1 Politicising accidents

As with all trade unionists, communists in the union had consistently campaigned for better conditions to improve health and safety for miners; given the dangerous nature of the industry in which they worked, this was an enduring cause of the mining trade unionist. But from the early 1970s there is a greater sense of the horrific accidents and tragedies associated with mining being utilised to propagate a wider cause; this was a relatively brief strategy.[902] The examples of this were particularly pronounced around the strikes of the 1970s; for example in January 1972, the *Morning Star* recounted tales of miners experiencing broken hands, fingers, feet and pelvis injuries as a result of their work. [903] *Comment* cited the medical journal, the *Lancet,* to make their case. The risks to the men working in the industry spoke for themselves: along with the risk of chronic disability, affecting 61 per cent of all 55 to 64 year olds in one South Wales' mining village, bronchitis and pneumoconiosis, leading to a premature demise, were other issues. The party journal reached the conclusion that 'coalmining uses up men and discards them to an exceptional extent'.[904]

Of course, all of this was true, and sadly always had been; but the change is the way in which the CP was willing to make these observations political. [905] It is no coincidence that this development ties in with the period when Scargill became the Yorkshire area's Compensation Agent and it was he who was most clear about the link between accidents and political demand. An accident at Lofthouse Colliery, in March 1973, where the mine shaft flooded with water, trapping and killing seven miners, added to the sense of danger that the men faced at work. [906] Scargill saw the opportunity to link the disaster to miners' poor conditions, saying that 'the tragedy should convince everyone of the justice of the miners' case for decent wages and conditions', before urging miners to vote for the strike ballot in response to the wage claim that

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[902] I cannot find any evidence suggesting why this was the case.
[903] 'Picketing is better than Eating Dust', *Morning Star,* 26 January 1972.
[904] 'The Miners: the Medical Facts', *Comment,* 12:5, May 1974, 200. Compare this warning to *The Morning Star* of the immediate post-nationalisation period, which actively recruited and promoted the NCB as a model employer and mining as a vibrant, nurturing industry.
[905] At the time of writing, there is a large ESRC funded project taking place, involving Ben Curtis amongst others, which looks at disability and health within the mining industry from the 18-21 century.
[906] 'Effort by Rescuers at Flooded Pit', *Morning Star,* 27 March 1973.

McGahey lodged at the 1972 annual conference. [907] Another accident in July 1973 caused one miner to die in a flooded shaft in Llanelli. [908] Eighteen men died in a pit crashing cage the same month, all adding to the CP's argument about the exceptional nature of the job. [909] In the Markham disaster of February 1974, the men were killed ten minutes before they started to be paid and had been on the premises for 30 minutes when they died: McGahey used this example in the pay board inquiry for miners' wages, to demonstrate the 'injustice' of the payment system. [910]

6.1.2 Conclusions

During this period the party maintained its historic relationship with the miners; of the 459 delegates present at the 33rd Congress of the party in November 1973, 119 of them were from the NUM.[911] In the lead up to McGahey's triumphant election to the vice-presidency of the union, the party could boast that 'the solid left wing will have 11 of the 27 voting executive positions'.[912] They were right; the union was more confidently left-wing than it had ever been. But to claim that this suggested the party's strategy worked, or the CP was pivotal in these developments, is a misperception.

Of course, as with any political grouping, it suited the party's purpose to inflate its own potency in the one area it could convey a sense of strength, where it was elsewhere weak. As Ramelson boasted, the CP 'have more influence now on the labour movement than at any time in the life of our party. The Communist party can float an idea early in the year. It goes on to trade union conferences in the form of a resolution and it can become official Labour party policy by the autumn. A few years ago we were on our own, but not now'. [913]Ramelson was certainly correct that the CP was no longer 'on its own'. The other question is the extent to which wage militancy was viewed the same by the party and those pursuing wage claims in the NUM. As the Wilberforce Report noted, 'the miner had found himself at a fundamental disadvantage compared to workers elsewhere' and the Report recognised that miners' pay should have been advanced 'more rapidly than was the case in other industries' from 1968.[914]

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[907] Scargill, A, 'Disaster Exposes Dangers at the Coal-face', *Morning Star,* 26 March 1973.
[908] 'Trapped Miner Safe- One Dies', *Morning Star,* 18 July 1973.
[909] '13 Die in Crashing Pit Cage', *Morning Star,* 22 July 1973.
[910] '18 Markham Miners Died in Unpaid Time', *Morning Star,* 20 February 1974.
[911] 'The Hidden Face of the Labour Party', August 1974, 7, CP/CENT/RAM/02/02.
[912] 'Miners Pick McGahey for Key Job', *Morning Star,* 31 March 1973.
[913] Callaghan, citing Ramelson, *Industrial Militancy, op.cit.,* 389.
[914] *Wilberforce Report,* MRC, 1972, 5.

The fact that this had not happened had led to 'industrial injustice'. [915] Perhaps privately, some within the party recognised this. Although John Gollan boasted in his preparatory notes for a lecture at Wortley Hall that that the party had 'fully worked out trade union strategy at our 27th Congress, 1961- started to see fruit late 60s and early 70s', there was a private sense of awareness that this perception was inflated.[916] Although the miners had been a particularly good example in this 'the crucible of mass struggle' the causes were largely attributable to the 'deepening crisis of capitalism'.[917] The main catalyst for this militancy, argued Gollan, was the Heath Government's decision to legislate and make trade unions increasingly politicised. [918]

Moreover, the fact that people from the Labour left in the NUM were willing to work with the communists in the union was symptomatic of two things. The first was that communists within the union were not distinguished by their politics, as they continued to give primacy to their union duties. But the second point is that, just as the CP perceived its apparent success as a measure of its acceptability in the British political milieu it was, in fact, a reminder of its own marginality; no longer perceived as a threat, people could afford to overlook the communist 'problem'. This was the change that permitted the CP to allow itself to believe it was accepted into the engine room of British politics.

The unprecedented wave of industrial militancy that engulfed Britain during this period represents a fundamental shift in union expectations and the state's response to them; as such, it had a political dimension that was, in the post-war period, unprecedented. Perhaps then the sort of tripartism that Horner had envisaged for the union in the late 1940s may have been better practised in the tempestuous climate of the 1970s. But, as communists in the union found, the *zeitgeist* of the NUM by this point was the offensive pursuit of better wages, combined with a political dynamism that ensured communists in the union were content to agitate around the fundamental class conflict that manifested itself across the union membership who they represented. This was, however, only when required; in 1973 for example even those areas perceived to be the stronghold of communist influence did not vote in favour of strike action. This situation has been best explained by John Foster and Charles Woolfston, who note that although these strikes were explicitly political, and although the unions involved often had communist leaderships, and although these episodes increased the number of 'progressive'

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[915] *Wilberforce Report,* MRC, 1972, 7.
[916] Handwritten notes in preparation for a lecture at Wortley Hall, undated, 1, CP/CENT/GOLL/05/01.
[917] 'Trade Unions and the Strategy for Left Unity Lecture notes', U/D, 6, CP/CENT/GOLL/05/01.
[918] 'Trade Unions',7, CP/CENT/GOLL/05/01.

union activists, ultimately 'the CP failed to grow in this period'.[919] The natural question, particularly on the lips of those who were cynical about the party's strategy, must have been: if this protracted period of industrial politically-flavoured militancy did not grow the party, then what would?

This chapter's claim to originality is in the detail that it gives to wage militancy in the NUM; the existing literature largely focuses on the miners' strikes in this period, whereas this chapter has used those events to punctuate a study of the CP in the NUM more generally at this time. Moreover the observation regarding the temporary politicisation of accidents by the left, including communists, has not previously been evidenced, nor has the existence of the *Collier* been explored. These findings add an understanding of the intricacies of union life during this period. This period is probably the first time in the post-war years whereby the history of the miners' union is of general interest for 'popular' history, which has been studied not just for academic audiences; for example, in the work of Dominic Sandbrook. In a sense, the immediate connotation of this period is that the miners were emblematic of the sense of militancy that had permeated many trade unions during this period. Although this is certainly true, as this chapter has argued, the originality of the politicisation of accidents and the *Collier* adds another layer to this well-told story of the NUM in the 1970s.

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[919] See Foster, John, and Woolfson, Charles, *The Politics of the UCS Work-in* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1986).

<u>VII Implosion, 1975-1985.</u>

<u>7.0 Change</u>

This chapter covers a decade of significant change; the changes that take place here still have implications for present-day British politics. The chapter begins in 1975, the year following what was believed to be the miners' victorious triumph over the hostile Heath government. This was a year that looked relatively positive for both the union and CP. By 1985, however, both the union and party would be divided; and, most significantly, there was active conflict between the two groups, which was unprecedented. How did this situation change so rapidly? How did the CP move from a position where it could claim to have had an instrumental role in the 1972 and 1974 miners' strike to one where, ten years later, it was divided amongst itself and with the NUM? So far the thesis has argued that the extent to which communists in the miners' union were using wage militancy, as the party had envisaged it being used as a strategy, is dubious. Moreover, any militant action around wages was not exclusive to the CP. The 'success' of wage militancy in the 1970s was not a reflection of the politicisation of miners over the long term, as the CP had imagined, it reflected a mixture of economic and political demands, which crucially were a reflection of that particular context. These findings became more obvious and were played out during the 1984-1985 strike when communists associated with Eurocommunism, who were involved in the NUM, made the observation that there had been a lack of evidence of politicisation throughout the strike.

This chapter deliberately tries to avoid being encumbered by the strike's trajectory; this is well-documented in the existing literature and fresh in the mind of many and there is nothing to be added to it in this thesis. But an exploration of the CP's role in the strike, particularly how the CP's internal factionalism impacted on the party's work in the NUM, needs more investigation, which this chapter provides. This chapter questions the extent to which, for the miners who the strategy was geared toward, the internal rift within the party was significant. To get to this point, however, the genesis of the strike in relation to the CP needs to be explored and the starting point for that is 1975. What is noticeable, as it was during the research, was that much of the sources used are from the party's publications, particularly the increasingly polarised *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today.* Although there needs to be some care taken with these sources the fact that they are the main ones that remain, as opposed to the numerous internal documents that used to characterise the party, is significant. Was there a deliberate destruction of evidence? Or was the party so internally divided that it was unable to commit

itself to the sort of laborious documentation that it had previously recorded. Either, or a mixture of the two, could be possible.

7.1 Contracts and Plans

As discussed in the previous chapter the return of the Wilson government in 1974 marked the end of the miners' strike and it also signified success for the NUM, evidenced not least by the generous concessions that the new Labour government gave to the miners. But it was also evident that such politically-motivated generosity could not have an indeterminate period of longevity, and that the government's Social Contract was an attempt to constrain trade unions without utilising coercion, which Heath's government had demonstrated to be grossly ineffective. A comprehensive analysis of the Social Contract is outside the scope of this thesis, but its premise was reciprocal rights and responsibilities from all protagonists. [920] For those within the CP committed to wage militancy, it represented nothing more than an income policy. Ramelson remarked that: 'the real aim of the Social Contract is capitulation. Great claims are made that the £6.00 limit and the Social Contract have cut by half the rate of inflation. These are false claims, made on the false premise that wage increases are a major cause of inflation'.[921] This view was also shared by Scargill, who dismissed the 'Social Contrick' as nothing but a form of wage restraint. [922] But at the 1974 NUM annual conference the NEC of the union voted by 12 votes to 10 to put a resolution to the Labour Party conference offering their 'full support' for the principles of the Social Contract, a move that was heavily criticised in the *Morning Star.* [923]

Taylor makes the point that the NUM had a symbolic and practical role in making the Social Contract a success and, in return for the miners' good behaviour, the Plan for Coal was constructed; this was a tripartite agreement specific to coalmining between government, union, and employer. [924] Critically the Plan intended to increase investment and production in mines, in return for the miners' productivity. [925] Taylor notes that, despite numerous chances, the NUM made no attempt to 'fundamentally influence the policy', partly because it did not have

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[920] See Thorpe, A, 'Labour Party and the Trade Unions*', in *Trade Unions and Industrial Politics,* Fishman, Campbell, McIlroy, (1999), 142, for a detailed discussion of what, exactly, was expected from both sides.
[921] Bert Ramelson, notes, 16 June 1976, CP/RAM/11/04. This view was the opposite one to the argument that Warren et al had been proposing, see previous chapters.
[922] NUM Annual Conference, 1975. There seems to be no attempt to counter this traditional CP critique from the party modernisers, either from the CP or within the NUM.
[923] 'Miners' vote on restraint is ignored', *Morning Star,* 12 July 1974. The NUM rejected the Social Contract in 1976.
[924] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 112.
[925] NCB, Plan for Coal.

the resources, but also because it 'accepted and endorsed the assumptions underlying the Plan for Coal'.[926] It is noteworthy that the sort of tripartism that was being offered by Labour here was exactly what Horner, particularly, had tried to pursue in the late 1940s; yet when communists in the union were presented with the opportunity, it was not one that was exploited. It could plausibly be argued that the communists of the 1970s were acting in a way that was better suited to Horner's generation, and likewise.

There was another sense of the ethos of the 1940s being temporarily being repeated. The Plan offered a sense of security that had been absent in the industry for almost two decades; suddenly coal was promised a future as a 'key energy source' and the industry was offered an increased investment of £600 million over the following ten years.[927] But the Plan would only work if the industry had prospects, and this looked increasingly bleak as time passed. The Labour Party, at least, remained committed to increasing coal production and in 1983 the party's annual conference proposed that the government should stipulate a production target of two million tonnes of coal for the forthcoming year and that it should move toward a National Energy Policy.[928] As a meeting of the NCB in January 1983 noted, the main problem was that heavy industry, generally, was in decline. [929] The division between the NCB and the NUM was further evident in October 1983, when the union held a Special Conference. The clear message from the minutes of this meeting is that the relationship between the NCB and NUM was irreparably fractured. The NUM even accused the NCB of creative accounting: they claimed that in 1982-83 the NCB 'deliberately under-valued the stocks of coal….to the tune of over £200 million'. [930] By creative accounting, the NUM claimed that the loss for the year 'should have been a profit of well over £100 million, yet by simply putting a pen through their annual accounts and changing completely the format of presentation, they recorded a loss rather than a profit'. [931] The NUM suggested that running pits down, at the current cost, would cost over £4300 million over the next ten years, whereas subsidising the industry to keep men employed would cost £2000 million. [932] Throughout all of this narrative, the party itself remained curiously quiet.

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[926] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 112.
[927] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1974.
[928] Labour Party Annual Conference, 1983.
[929] See Meeting of NCB, London, 24 January 1983, MRC for details.
[930] Report of the Special Delegate Conference, October 1983.
[931] Ibid.
[932] Report of the Special Delegate Conference, October 1983.

7.2 Piecework

Previous chapters have demonstrated how piecework had consistently been a barrier to unity, and therefore militant action, in the union; the NPLA, although it had lowered pay for some, had also removed one of the biggest causes of unofficial strike action in the industry. [933] It had also offered the opportunity for a united fight around wages. Wages, of course, had been the catalyst for the militancy of the late 1960s and early 1970s and so it is unsurprising that the NCB planned to return to a potentially divisive pay structure to prevent this happening again, almost immediately after the strike 1974. In September 1974 the NCB suggested a new productivity scheme that would give productivity incentives when each pit reached 75 per cent of its overall target.[934] Scargill and the left more generally opposed the idea on the grounds that 'it is about to turn the wheel of history backward to the old days of the miners' federation, when the areas counted for more than the national body…we are common British miners first with common needs and interests!'.[935] In November 1974 the membership of the NUM rejected the return to piecework by 121,345 votes to 77,119, or 61.53 per cent. [936] Was this evidence of politicisation, caused by wage militancy? Clearly, the return to a divisive pay structure would be have been unpopular to the left because it would make a united fight on wages difficult and because it would split the unity of the NUM. The ballot result almost certainly reflected a confidence amongst the NUM membership to reject a return to productivity-based pay. But whether this was the result of political consciousness and militancy, or concern about take-home pay, is difficult to prove categorically. It is probable that many miners believed that a divisive pay scheme may split the union and perhaps even mark a return to the pre-NPLA period of numerous unofficial strikes. Moreover, following what was arguably the most successful miners' strike in British mining history there may have been a sense that to alter a structure that had brought miners tangible gains was unnecessary.

But by 1977 the issue of piecework was once again on the union's agenda; Gormley proposed an area incentive scheme, based on an area by area basis, and also a pit by pit bonus. [937] Various sentiments by the CP and Labour left evidenced their obvious objection to the idea but it was also rejected by Heathfield, who opposed the scheme on the grounds that it reflected

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[933] My interview with Hywel Francis, October 2014.
[934] 'Pits to vote on output deal', *Morning Star,* 12 September 1974.
[935] 'Miners beware divisive deal', *Morning Star,* 26 September 1974
[936] 'No deal', *Morning Star,* 16 November 1974.
[937] 'Scheme divisive', *Morning Star,* 17 July 1977.

'the efforts of the right to turn the clock back 30 or 40 years'.[938] The union executive voted by 13 votes to 11 in favour of balloting the membership in regards to the proposed scheme. [939] The result of the executive committee's decision was that the Kent area launched legal action against the union, claiming that the 11 members who had voted against the ballot represented a significant 250,000 members of the union. [940] A subsequent High Court ruling, on 19 October 1977, found the proposal and the ballot to be legitimate. [941] The result of the ballot, announced on the 2 November 1977, was 110,634 voting against the scheme with 87,901 in favour of it.[942] The executive of the NUM pushed on with the incentive scheme regardless, and in December 1977 voted by 15 to 9 in favour of allowing areas to introduce productivity schemes. [943]

A further attempt to stop the productivity scheme through a High Court injunction failed and a subsequent ballot of the NUM membership in January 1978 asked 'do you wish to oppose an area incentive scheme and take industrial action, or accept an area incentive scheme?': 62,79 per cent voted not to take industrial action, and therefore to accept the scheme. [944] The question was in many ways flawed and by asking members if they did not want to take industrial action, members were by association accepting the scheme. For those opposed to the scheme, there was little to differentiate between Gormley, Daly or McGahey. This point was made clear when miners at Markham colliery in Yorkshire sent each man a shovel, with a note saying 'do it yourself', claiming that they could not increase their productivity due to circumstances beyond their control, such as poor machinery. [945] There appears to be no sources from the CP internally discussing this or offering a line on it; was this a notable, intended omission from the party archive, or was it another example of the party staying out of intricate union decisions? Although both may be true, based on the evidence found so far, the latter has a certain extent of plausibility.

7.3 Wage Militancy

By January 1975 the meeting of the union's Joint National Negotiating Committee had met to discuss the NCB's plans to act 'wholly within the incomes policy of the government' by

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[938] 'Vote no, urge area leaders', *Morning Star,* 20 October 1977.
[939] 'Productivity poll', *Morning Star,* 14 October 1977.
[940] 'Kent miners act', *Morning Star,* 15 October 1977.
[941] Taylor, *NUM, op.cit.,* 136.
[942] 'Piecework jungle rejected', *Morning Star,* 2 November 1977.
[943] 'Local wage deals split pit leaders', *Morning Star,* 9 December 1977.
[944] 'Pit scheme vote opens box of troubles', *Morning Star,* 17 January 1977.
[945] 'Dig it yourself', *Morning Star,* 1 November 1977.

'offering a wage claim that was lower than inflation'. [946] Coupled with the wage offer, which offered to increase weekly earnings from £19.00 to £44.00 a week, was a productivity scheme, which would bring in an average of £3.00 a week per miner. [947] The offer was rejected as 'derisory' by McLean, whilst Whelan claimed that the events of 1972 and 1974 had not changed 'the Tory outlook of the Board'. [948] By February 1975 Scargill had started to call for industrial action on March 1st, unless the NCB improved its offer. [949] But when the call for strike action was put to the NUM executive it was rejected by 15 votes to 11, with Gormley stressing the need to 'be loyal to the Labour government and Social Contract'. [950] The NCB's revised pay offer of £1.00 was recommended for acceptance by the executive and they had voted, by 16 votes to 10, to ballot the membership to also support it. [951] In the ballot even all the 'militant' areas accepted the revised pay offer, although with the proviso that negotiations would be open for future discussions. [952] Clearly there was no prospect of the union membership entering into industrial action lightly.

A similar pattern was repeated at the union's annual conference that year when Scargill moved Composite Resolution VIII, which requested a £100.00 a week minimum wage, and was also an expression against the 'Social Contrick', which he claimed had been designed to 'deliberately restrain wage increases'.[953] Although the resolution was moved by Yorkshire it was composited and it was also formally seconded by the North Western area, which added its support because it felt the claim was 'legitimate', and not for any not for any 'loyalty or political reason'.[954] There was a clear political stroke to the resolution, although this was not confined to just the CP, nor those associated with the broad left. If this resolution was evidence of wage militancy, then the fact that the resolution was composited, and clearly supported by a moderate area for 'no political reason', then even if an argument could be made for the existence of wage militancy in the union, it was not exclusive to the CP or even the broad left. There were more examples of this. At the same conference George Rees and Jack Dunn used their support for

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[946] 'NCB heading for a clash with miners', *Morning Star,* 4 February 1975.
[947] 'Pit pay offer cut by social contract', *Morning Star,* 6 February 1975.
[948] 'Pit leaders turn down pay insult', *Morning Star,* 7 February 1975.
[949] 'Pit leaders call for industrial action', *Morning Star,* 11 February 1975.
[950] 'Miners' leaders call offer disgusting', *Morning Star,* 12 February 1975.
[951] 'Reject this pay offer', *Morning Star,* 14 February 1975.
[952] 'Miners seek new deal', *Morning Star,* 18 February 1975.
[953] NUM Annual Conference, 1975.
[954] Ibid.

the resolution to critique incomes policies; but so too did Alec Timpany, of the Scottish area and Labour party. [955]

It could be argued that this was the entire point of the broad left; but, if this were true, then how was the CP benefitting through this? The broad left might have inflated the sense that the NUM ws ran by communists and their allies; but in reality it had also diluted any jurisdiction that the party may have claimed to have in the NUM. In the above example, even if the CP made the argument that Timpany's support demonstrated the extent to which the CP had moved the Labour party to the left, is it possible to prove that the communists were responsible for this shift? Was the change in the Labour party's positioning in fact the result of its own internal dynamics? Even if the CP was in some way responsible for the Labour party's direction then, as Callaghan has argued, this was of no benefit to the party. [956] Ultimately even when militant wage demands were carried at conference there was no guarantee that anything would come of them. For example Composite Resolution VIII was carried at the conference, but in March 1976 the NUM executive committee, by 14 votes to 9, accepted an increase of £6.00 per week, less than the £100.00 minimum that had been demanded in the resolution, but instead keeping the pay rise in line with the Government's pay cap. [957]

The pursuit of the £100.00 a week was not rescinded in light of this defeat, however, and in early 1976 Will Haydn Thomas, of South Wales, again moved the resolution, which he said was intended to send a message to the Government that 'wage restraint would not be accepted in the NUM'. [958] But the claim was rejected by the miners' executive by 13 votes to 11. [959] Even the South Wales area rejected Thomas's resolution, with 53 per cent in favour of supporting the executive's recommendation and 46 per cent against it. [960] If wage militancy was working in the union as the party expected, then it is unclear why one of the most militant areas rejected a resolution based on wages, moved by a representative from its own area. The overall effect of the failed resolution, however, was that at the union's annual conference a

[955] Ibid.
[956] See Callaghan, *Paradox, op cit* for more details.
[957] 'Miners move to kill pay policy', *Morning Star,* 26 March 1976. There had been heavy campaigning from some areas of the NUM against the acceptance of the £6.00, which would also synonymously condone Labour's pay policy, but in a ballot of 77 percent of the membership, 60.5 percent of the voters chose to support the government's pay policy. See 'Miners vote to apply for £6 wage increase', *Morning Star,* 14 November 1975, for figures.
[958] 'Welsh pits wants £100', *Morning Star,* 6 May 1976. It is unclear who Thomas was affiliated to, politically.
[959] 'Miners to ballot', *Morning Star,* 12 May 1976.
[960] 'Pit vote for deal pleases city', *Morning Star,* 6 June 1976.

month later Gormley ruled that wages were off the agenda at the annual conference. [961] The decision to move wage claims to an annual round was rejected by the union at the 1977 conference; importantly, this was the union as a whole that rejected Gormley's idea, not just one 'militant' section of it.

The fight to improve wages continued to pepper the union's annual conferences, even when unemployment in the industry remained a critical and unresolved issue. In July 1979 Scargill moved Composite Resolution III, which demanded minimum wages ranging from £80.00 to £140.00 a week, and it was carried by the conference. [962] Again, this resolution was composited, but it was formally seconded by Bolton and the Scottish area who saw the increased wages as a means of inflating the economy by raising the 'purchasing power of the people'. [963] But by November 1979 the NCB had responded with an offer that was less than the union wanted, and equated to a rise of between 9 and 15 percent; but it was Gormley who was most critical about it, dismissing it derisorily as 'inadequate'. [964] Gormley, who had three years earlier attempted to stop wage claims, was now pressing for higher pay. Whilst Taylor has argued that Gormley worked with the left in order to try and constrain them, Gormley's position also demonstrated that the fight for higher wages was not the monopolised by the left.

The board's revised offer of a twenty per cent increase was also rejected and was accompanied by the decision to ballot for national strike action. [965] Communists in the union added their support to the need to get increased pay, even if it meant using industrial action. McGahey was keen for the episode to escalate, commenting that he was 'confident' that the members would give the executive committee the mandate for strike action, whist Collins, who had recently been elected as general secretary of Kent, considered the refusal of the board's offer a 'justifiable demand'. [966] But when balloted 48.75 per cent of the 87 per cent of the miners who voted chose to accept the twenty per cent wage increase. [967] If wage militancy was being exercised in the union as the CP may well have liked to believe that it was, then it might be expected that the union membership would by this point be sufficiently politicised to follow

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[961] 'Row over pay veto', *Morning Star,* 3 July 1976. The appeal to the EC against this was rejected by 15 votes to 9.
[962] Ibid. Eric Clarke also moved a resolution supporting the AES, which was carried unanimously.
[963] NUM Annual Conference, July 1979. Bolton's interview, previously cited, is very critical of Scargill and insinuates that he, if not McGahey, saw something of an ulterior motive in Scargill early on; either he does not mean this early, or this is another example of union duty taking precedence. The resolution was also supported by Moffat.
[964] 'Miners reject coal board offer', *Morning Star,* 1 November 1979.
[965] 'Miners to hold pit ballot on industrial action', *Morning Star,* 22 November 1979.
[966] Ibid.
[967] 'Miners narrowly agree to accept the 20 percent offer', *Morning Star,* 6 December 1979.

the united NUM leadership into industrial action. But they did not, and there appears to be no indication that the CP identified this as a problem.

The same point is evident at the 1980 annual conference, when the £100.00 minimum wage demand was back on the union's agenda, this time being moved by McGahey. [968] Composite Resolution IV had been derived from South Wales, Scotland, and Yorkshire. [969]It was not until October of that year that the NCB offered a 9.3 percent wage increase which McGahey dismissed, saying that 'it was so unsatisfactory it could not be considered. The Board will have to find more cash'. [970] The executive committee voted by 14 votes to 11 to reject the 9.8 percent offer and ballot the membership accordingly; not all 14 members of the executive who voted to do so were members of the CP or the broad left.[971] But even if the CP could find some way to evidence wage militancy at the top of the union, the final ballot of the rank and file was 56 percent in favour of accepting the NCB's offer and 44 percent against. [972]

In 1983 there was an attempt to link the two main issues in the industry, low pay and unemployment. The formulation of wage demands had gone from being ambiguous (usually in the form of 'a substantial increase') to calling for specific amounts, something that Allen claims was a calculated tactic in the broad left's attempts to change the political direction of the union, by using specific phrases to cement the Executive's position. But by 1983 Bolton's Composite Resolution II reverted back to demanding a 'substantial increase'. Perhaps this indicates that the broad left believed that, now they had greater control of the union, they could afford to be ambiguous when they needed to combine the fight for higher wages with tackling unemployment. But the fact that the resolution was composited once again demonstrates that Bolton and the Scottish area were not unique in their pursuit of the wage increase.

But it was not just wages that were on the agenda in 1983. The union executive moved an emergency resolution, which proposed to oppose all forms of pit closures and reductions in manpower. This claim was not especially new and the NUM had consistently opposed pit closures for reasons other than exhaustion. But the intent was evident in the executive's claim that the NEC would have the right to ballot the membership 'at a time deemed most appropriate'. [973] This became the crux of the union's special conference held in October 1983.

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[968] 'Pay challenge', *Morning Star,* 9 July 1980.
[969] NUM Annual Conference, 1980.
[970] 'Furious miners tell board to think again', *Morning Star,* 7 November 1980.
[971] 'Miners' leaders back offer', *Morning Star,* 13 November 1980.
[972] 'Narrow yes', *Morning Star,* 2 October 1980.
[973] NUM Annual Conference, 1983.

Scargill's presidential address referred to the union's need to allow the executive the 'industrial muscle' in order to fulfil conference decisions. The end result of this was to formally oppose the government's plan to close 70 pits in five years and the decision was made to impose an overtime ban from 31 October 1983.

Why had the NUM pursued the quest for better pay when unemployment was a significant issue in the industry? Arguably because, for those that remained employed, there was still a need to maintain pay. Curiously, in the battle against unemployment there was the most parity between communists in the union and the party; but this was not noticed, and exploited, by the party in an attempt to develop its politicisation which had been, after all, the ultimate point of the industrial strategy. This demonstrates that although there was a more radical current of change emanating from the modernisers, there was no evidence of a more gradual development of a strategy that was, by this point, almost four decades old. [974] Instead the party's 'Needs of the Hour' for 1981 continued to advocate wage militancy and free collective bargaining.

7.4 Disunity

Particularly in chapter three, we saw examples where communists from different areas were in conflict with each other, largely because of their union duties. This issue could still occur in the late 1970s, even when the left in the union was in a stronger position and seemingly united. At the 1976 NUM annual conference, for example, Dunn (from Kent) moved resolution 34 which called for the 'immediate implementation' of four weeks' holiday; Derbyshire moved resolution 35, which called for the NEC to 'press' for four weeks' holiday. [975] The main difference between the resolutions rested on the term 'immediate'. Jack Collins (also from Kent) supported Derbyshire's resolution 35 because he felt that Dunn's resolution 34 did not give the NCB the opportunity to consider the demand. [976] This example demonstrates that there was no unity assumed by the fact that both men were communists; Collins chose to support the resolution that he felt was the most appropriate for the union. [977] Moreover, the example also

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[974] NUM Annual Conference, 1983. The argument was that high unemployment was not caused by high wages; in fact, it was a consequence of low wages, because people did not have enough money to buy the goods that were produced. This is an example of an argument that was commonly made by the CP in the 1950s and early 1960s. It had not been confidently argued at NUM conferences, until this example. It had been made by Bolton two years earlier, in his *Act Now to End Mass Unemployment,* which used the argument to promote the AES.

[975] NUM Annual Conference, 1976.

[976] Ibid. In the event, the Derbyshire resolution was carried by 177 votes to 96.

[977] There was evidence of a personal division between the men, when Collins replaced Dunn in the Kent coalfield. This is hinted at in an interview with Collins, held at the miners' library in Swansea, although he refuses to elaborate on the details of the disagreement. I have not been able to find details of what the issue was.

demonstrates another reoccurring issue with the CP's industrial strategy; that a non-militant area, such as Derbyshire, could propose an almost identical resolution to an area that had a strong CP presence.

7.5 Scargill's manifesto

Miners in the 80s is the manifesto that led to Scargill's victory in the NUM presidential election, held in December 1981, where he received 70.3 percent of the vote, an unprecedented majority for any NUM president. [978] Why was Scargill so popular? There is a sense across the literature that he was in some way a maverick, and that he represented something new and different to the grey-suited official that most people associated with trade unionism. This was certainly partly self-constructed and evident across his relatively rare interviews with him is the sense that he had come from the ranks, leading the Yorkshire area to victory in 1972, and that he represented the rank and file miner. [979] *Miners in the 80s* was an extension of this and, although it was a manifesto, it had a hagiographic tone to it; whilst it explained Scargill's plan, should he be elected, it also praised his qualities. The hyperbole emanated from those in the broad left, such as Briscoe, but also leading communists and former communists, such as Paynter; this gave Scargill a sense of credibility and perhaps historical lineage. [980]

But Scargill and the communists in the union were less forthcoming about Scargill's involvement in the party, as evidenced from the biographical section of the document where his membership of the YCL was completed omitted. In the manifesto Scargill's trajectory began with him as a rank and file miner, who rose up the ranks of the union to lead the miners to victory in 1972, fighting for justice as compensation agent and working hard to extend miners' educational opportunities. In the midst of this sense of heroism and gallantry, which the tone of the document firmly conveys, is a notable absence of membership of the YCL. [981] Instead he is described politically as a 'committed socialist and well known member of the Labour Party'. [982] What can be drawn from this omission? Certainly Scargill personally was never forthcoming about his reasons for leaving the YCL and so it is logical that he would not

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[978] NEC Meeting, 19 December 1981. Scargill would take up the position from April 1982. Scargill's contenders, Trevor Bell and Ray Chadburn, achieved 17.3 percent and 9.1 percent respectively. Before the votes were even cast, Scargill had already secured nominations from every major area. See Campbell, Andrew, and Warner, Mick, 'Changes in the Balance of Power in the British Mineworkers Union: an analysis of national top-office elections, 1974 to 1984', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 23:1, 1985, pp. 1-24, p 4 for details.
[979] My interview with Hywel Francis October 2014.
[980] Briscoe praised Scargill's 'central concern for the well-being, health and security of the men in the industry.' Paynter noted Scargill's position as 'one of the ablest and most articulate trade union leaders in the country'.
[981] Pamphlet, *Miners in the Eighties,* published by the NUM Yorkshire Area, 1981, 2.
[982] Ibid.

include it in his election manifesto. In the archives there are drafts of the manifesto; but nothing that suggests that members of the CP attempted to assert Scargill's YCL past into it. The obvious conclusion is that either they too realised that it was an insignificant factor in the immediate task, which was getting a member of the left elected to the presidency of the NUM which had historically been occupied by the right, or perhaps they felt that Scargill's decision to leave the party would reflect badly on the CP.

7.6 Growing the party

The CP had always envisaged that their strategy would have politicising consequences. Whilst the strikes of the early 1970s had failed to yield any tangible evidence of politicisation, some in the party could see the move to the left of the NUM and the Labour Party as evidence of the CP's influence. But the other element of the strategy was at rank and file level. The following example, of the CP's attempts to grow the party during the strike, suggests that to many miners the CP was largely inconsequential. The following example supports this argument. In February 1984 the 'News from the Industrial Department' enthusiastically noted that there was the chance of recruiting six new recruits from Durham to the party and in an effort to do this, the Industrial Advisory Committee had 'signed up Mick McGahey' for the occasion. [983]By May 1984, Durham and Northumberland had added twelve new recruits between them. [984] Imagining that the twelve new recruits were equally divisible between the two areas, this evidence effectively suggests that a month into the strike, when anti-Thatcher pro-strike enthusiasm was at its height, the party had managed to recruit exactly the same number of new members as it had a month before the strike had started.

If, as the CP's theory had hypothesised, a strike should have politicising consequences and if, as the CP had always imagined, it was the indispensable leader of the working class, then it might be expected that more miners would join the CP. Like the strikes of the 1970s, and arguably to a greater extent, the 1984 miners' strike was clearly peppered with political awareness. The evidence suggests that the party knew this. The 'News from the Industrial Department' in June 1984 suggested that the CP should use the coalfield meetings to 'take politics to the miners' because 'many have joined the party since the strike began, and the possibility exists for strong party coalfield organisation'. [985] This was a generous interpretation

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[983] 'News from the Industrial Department', February 1984, CP/CENT/IND/05/09.
[984] 'News from the Industrial Department', May 1984, CP/CENT/IND/05/09.
[985] 'News from the Industrial Department', June 1984, CP/CENT/IND/05/09.

of the party's own prospects, given that it by this point barely had a coherent strategy itself. Nonetheless, the following month, July, McLennan told the audience at a London District CP rally that over 60 miners had joined the CP during the miners' strike. [986] That averaged twelve new members a month. By November 1984 the *Morning Star* reported that the miners' strike had brought a 'wind of change' and a new-found source of attention for the CP, boasting that between October and November 1984 'over 150 people have joined the CP in the past four weeks! It is a long time since there was anywhere at all comparable'! [987] But even this apparent swelling of the ranks did nothing to arrest the droves of party members who were leaving the CP and party membership fell from 15,691 members in 1983 to 12,711 members by 1985.[988]

7.7 Communist divisions and the NUM's strategy

Along with apparently growing the party, what else did the CP believe it was doing during the strike? In June 1984 Pete Carter, the CP's industrial organiser, suggested that the party's role in the strike was a tribute to the 'lefts and communists in the industry' who had consistently fought to win the membership, despite difficulties. [989] Carter paid particular attention to the CP members who had 'contributed so much in so many different ways' and who, during the strike, had demonstrated that 'no other political organisation can match what our party has done'. [990] The crux of what the CP had been doing, according to Carter, included rallies, distributing leaflets and making posters.[991] This was in line with what the modernising group within the CP were advocating.[992] This was a similar approach to other groups, with which the modernisers in the CP sought to build that contentious 'broad democratic alliance'; homosexual groups, women's groups and left-wing pressure groups, for example. [993]To its critics, it could be argued that this marginalised the CP to nothing more than another pressure group, many others of which were prolific during the strike. This may have been true, but what this strategy did was put the CP in-step with the *zeitgeist* of the pro-NUM support network. This was a much more credible tactic than allowing the CP to rattle around the periphery of Thatcher's Britain,

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[986] 'Communists call for solidarity', *Morning Star,* 2 July 1984.
[987] 'Communists find wind of change', *Morning Star,* 4 November 1984.
[988] Thompson, W, *Cause, op.cit.,* 218.
[989] Carter, P, 'The Miners' Strike', *Communist Focus,* 19 June 1984, 259.
[990] Ibid.
[991] Ibid.
[992] The most notable examples of this line of thought being Alan Baker, George Bolton and, although not in the NUM but closely linked to mining, Hywel Francis.
[993] As most recently portrayed in the film 'Pride'. See Campbell, Beatrix, *Wigan Pier Revisited,* (Viragro Press ltd, 1984), pp 191-216 for more detail about the role of women in the overall struggle. Campbell's key argument is that women were 'on the move', not men who 'appear not to have noticed' the changing political landscape, or adapted to it (p233).

resigned to a position as a depleted, once-radical force. But the problem was that it brought no gains for the CP as a political party, which is what it always was. It did not help it build its membership base, as we have seen. Yet the other option, to support a syndicalist and arguably illegitimate strike, did not appear to be benefitting the party either. Either way the party was in an impossible situation. [994]

The moderniser's strategic interventions into the miners' strike did little to alter the dominant method of the NUM, described by Francis as 'an archaic industrial strategy' that rested on the use of flying pickets and heavy picketing. [995] But one individual who could not avoid this problem, and who personified these divided loyalties, was McGahey who was, as Brotherstone and Pirani correctly point out, was most associated with the modernising group within the party politically. [996] The extent to which McGahey was in some ways difficult to 'place', in terms of his affiliation to either side of the CP's divisions, is clear from McIlroy and Campbell's assessment that the Eurocommunist group within the party were unable to identify McGahey with their own views. [997]But during the strike, publicly, McGahey remained a fierce critique of 'ballotitis', the apparent obsession with the need to call a ballot to legitimise the strike. [998]Here we have no better example of the practical failing of the CP's industrial strategy; McGahey, despite his own convictions, was obliged to fall in line with the direction of the

[994] The internal divides loosely rested between the 'Stalinist'/ 'traditionalist' group, who wanted to adhere to the traditional strategy and the 'Eurocommunist'/'modernising' group, which wanted to work across a broader front. There was also a harder-left splinter, in the form of Sid French and the Kent area. In the party's archive, in Manchester, there is a large volume of correspondence from beleaguered branches, particularly around the time of the party's 1977 re-drafting of the British Road to Socialism. The debate was hosted across the *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today* and *Comment,* with McLennan criticising Tony Chater and the newspaper for poor sales and coverage. The best secondary sources for this are Andrews, *op.cit.,* and Thompson, *op.cit,.* Although I do not feel that the divisions need repeating in the thesis in detail, only when they become significant in relation to the NUM, it is an area that interests me and has formed the basis of the wok in *British Politics, op.cit.,* which looks at how these divisions were publicised through a 'fly on the wall' documentary.

[995] Francis, H, 'NUM united: a team in disarray', *Marxism Today,* April 1985, 31. Specifically, Francis felt that the strike was a 'narrow syndicalist strategy'.

[996] Brotherstone, T, Pirani, S, 'Were there alternatives? Movements from below in the Scottish Coalfield, the Communist Party, and Thatcherism, 1981-1985', *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory,* 33:1, 99-124, 108. This is evident not least because McGahey joined the Democratic Left after the CP's demise.

[997] For more details, see McIlroy, J, and Campbell, A, 'Mick McGahey', *Dictionary of Labour Biography,* edited by Gildart, Keith, and Howell, David, Vol XIII, 2010, pp 242-249.

[998] The notion that the strike was a clash between Scargill and Thatcher, that it can be thought of as a simplistic battle or conflict between two diametrically opposed positions, has been challenged by Jim Phillips, who has argued that (in Scotland), there was already militancy before the strike started. See Phillips, Jim, *Collieries, Communities and the Miners' Strike in Scotland 1984-1985,* (Manchester: MUP, 2012).

NUM leadership.[999] There is evidence that McGahey and other CP mining leaders tried to persuade Scargill to change tack; but this was futile. [1000]

The strike also made apparent another major weakness in the industrial strategy of the CP. The CP had been instrumental in the construction of Scargillism and they had allowed it to flourish. This had been purely because it was to the left's advantage; they had actively supported it in 1981, when it meant securing the presidency from the right. But Scargillism in 1984, its practical application, was syndicalist and it helped to obliterate the careful work of two generations of communists, who had wanted to move their union to the left in order to secure better pay and conditions for the membership. But to observers communism and Scargillism, in the NUM, were perceived as synonymous.[1001]In May 1984 a letter arrived at the NUM headquarters, addressed from 'a miners' wife'. In the three-page tirade the writer noted how 'you union men are all dishonest in your actions'; perhaps one of the most unfair phrases, given the characteristics that communists in the union had always embodied. [1002]The writer claimed that the miners 'are on strike because Scargill instructed them to come out'. [1003] The cursory response of the NUM, to scrawl 'CRANK' across the letter in red, angry letters, demonstrates a disregard for any criticism.

1984 was an impossible situation for the CP; ironically, although each group within the party was by this point bitterly opposed to the other, they were united by the dismal prognosis of post-strike life, although probably not consciously. For the traditionalists, their strategy had split the union; for the modernisers, to impose their strategy was to potentially be seen to be anti-union. The divides within the CP may have been somewhat personified in the NUM during the strike, but in some ways it was also irrelevant, for they were superseded by the internal divisions in the NUM. The broader divisions in the union were already being played out across the media; as Francis noted 'attacks from left and right about the way the strike was conducted place an added burden on internal unity'. [1004] But the politics of the individual communists within the NUM leadership was forced to be marginalised. Ultimately individual members in

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[999] Although McIlroy and Campbell see a genuine support for Scargill's methods in McGahey during the strike, to the extent the McGahey tried to extend and sustain the strike, an observation made by MacGregor. See McIlroy and Campbell, *McGahey, op.cit.,* 248.

[1000] Peter Ackers makes the point that the Scargill method for 1984 was to use a similar method to the strikes of the 1970s, and that McGahey was quietly critical of this. Ackers, Peter, 'Gramsci at the Miners' Strike: remembering the 1984-1985 Eurocommunist alternative industrial strategy', *Labor History*, 55:2, 2014, pp. 151-172.

[1001] See, for example, Hagger, *Scargill, op.cit.*

[1002] Letter from a miners' wife, 10 May 1984, MRC MSS303/ARR/16.

[1003] Ibid.

[1004] Francis, Hywel, 'NUM united: a team in disarray', *Marxism Today,* April 1985, 29.

the CP were obliged by their union position to remain in step with Scargill's syndicalist strategy, even if they may have chosen a different strategy if they had the choice. [1005] Thus, by the summer of 1984, there was a myriad of confusion emanating from the CP and the NUM. On one hand was the CP, who was in the somewhat ironic position of being divided by the very industrial politics that it had dedicated much of the previous forty years constructing. But the strategy that the traditionalists were defending was far removed from the tactic that Scargill had forced the NUM into, which could be described as syndicalist.

But even for those in the CP committed to a broader strategy, what could they do to alter the NUM's strike methodology? Leafleting, educating and calling for a ballot, which was the suggestion of the CP modernisers was, in the context of the miners' strike, impossible to implement. Added into this picture are two additional factors. The first is that the NUM leadership's own aversion to change was made increasingly impossible by the dogmatic polarisation of each 'side'. The second issue lay within the CP itself: communists in the NUM had, to a great extent, had nurtured Scargillism, particularly Watters and Ramelson. To rescind on their support at this stage would be an admission that their entire strategy, of moving the union to a militant position and allowing Scargill to be emblematic of that position, had been flawed. All of this, however, is further muddied by the latitudinal link between party and union.

7.8 Nottinghamshire

The end result of the situation, outlined above, was something of political impotence from the CP; whilst the latitude from the party to communists in the union had always been weak, as this thesis has demonstrated, the party had at least been united. Now in the context of division beleaguered communists on strike in the Nottinghamshire coalfield looked to the party for direction as a letter from Jeff Staniforth, on behalf of the East Midlands district of the CP to Carter, demonstrates. Staniforth felt that his area was being excluded from national party meetings, where the discussions concerned the 'relationship of the Notts area of the NUM and the union's national organisation'.[1006] Staniforth suggested that the lack of political direction from the CP had contributed to the NUM choosing to expel the area from the national union, something that he also suggested McGahey and Bolton had argued in support of. [1007] This

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[1005] Alan Baker, the secretary of Oakdale Lodge and a member of the Welsh committee of the CP, was critical of the tactic of mass picketing, and particularly that, four weeks before the end of the strike, Scargill was still encouraging it. Baker also suggested that one of the biggest problems with the strike was that the NUM had the sense that it had its own industrial muscle, and that it was syndicalist. See Alan Baker 'The Miners' Strike; a balance sheet', *Marxism Today,* April 1985, 26.

[1006] Letter from Jeff Staniforth to Pete Carter, 19 January 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04.

[1007] Ibid.

assertion is dubious. Although it could be argued that both men may have wanted Nottinghamshire expelled from the union, perhaps to help cease the strike because of its strategy, this would have been to fulfil their political motivations. As union leaders, the last thing that they would have wanted was to split the NUM. Moreover, even as CP modernisers wanting to change the direction of the NUM's strategy, the tactic of this group within the CP was to preserve the union; Francis, for example, repeatedly made the case for the cohesion of the NUM. [1008]Carter immediately replied to Staniforth's letter, saying that 'the political committee were very concerned to receive your letter, and felt the contents would be quite damaging if leaked…the Political Committee felt that any copies you have should be destroyed'. [1009] Carter committed himself and Bolton to go and met communist miners to discuss Staniforth's problems. So even those communists who were critical to the style of the NUM's strike, when pushed, would ultimately support it. Why? Many speculative reasons, not least that they could not afford to lose members and they did not want to be seen to be anti-strike; but this did nothing to help the CP move forward from its own internal battles.

7.9 Communists criticising the union

It was only when it was obvious that the strike was clearly lost that the criticism of the NUM's strategy became increasingly confident. Privately McLennan and Scargill bickered about the need to end the strike; but it was left to Ramelson, Scargill's 'old mentor', to try and ultimately fail to reason with him. [1010] The analysis of the situation was not novel, but the confidence with which it was expressed was. Writing in *Marxism Today* in March 1985, Carter addressed the fundamental difference with Thatcherism.[1011] This, of course, was not a new argument and it was one that had been made by modernisers within the CP before the strike; but it had been curiously muted during it. [1012]Carter claimed that the strike could only be won by fighting on three fronts: the need for unity amongst the miners themselves; the need for solidarity with

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[1008] For example, in *Marxism Today.*

[1009] Letter from Carter to Jeff Staniforth, 24 January 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04. This is somewhat ironic, as Carter's own words, a few months later, would prove to be much more inflammatory.

[1010] Beckett, *British CP, op.cit.,* 205.

[1011] Carter, Pete, 'Striking the right note', *Marxism Today,* March 1985, pp 28-31, 28. Carter also argued that the strike had been viewed only in narrow class terms, when in fact it was 'much more than that.'

[1012] The most controversial discussion of this had been in Hobsbawn's 1978 lecture and article, where he had argued that manual workers were in decline, which had been ongoing for much of the century. Sectionalism and the decline of trade unionism compounded this problem. The result was that 'traditional', manual-based class consciousness had broken down, and the encouraging prospect was the development of 'white-collar' socialism. The most wounding observation for the CP, which had continually advocated wage militancy, was Hobsbawn's observation that the recent militancy had been entirely economistic; a potentially divisive, rather than unifying, exercise. For more details, see Hobsbawn, Eric, 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?', *Marxism Today,* September 1978, pp 279-286.

other workers; and support from the public. [1013] Carter's analysis of the situation, especially regarding the need for a united union, formed part of a broader analysis of the modernisers within the CP, for example Francis, who had also made this point.

But this point was only made by the end of the strike; the obvious question is, why? There are many speculative suggestions. Perhaps the confidence reflected the stronger position of the modernisers within the CP, although this would suggest that there was some direction and leadership emanating from the party to the union, a change which seems unlikely. It may have been that there was an attempt to alter the direction of the union and the fate of the strike, but this is a whimsical and utopian possibility. It seems most likely that, once it was clear the strike was lost and the 'trickle' of miners back to work increased, there was the sense that one could afford to be more critical, without risking accusations of being 'anti-strike' or lowering morale. [1014] Certainly there is evidence of a change. Bolton, in April 1984, had been dismissive of the criticism around the lack of ballot. [1015] But exactly one year later Bolton could criticise the aggressive and expensive infiltration of pickets into Nottinghamshire at the start of the strike and the lack of a ballot. [1016] Of course, it could be argued that the source was different- the *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today*- but the context is also important. This explanation also seems plausible because the piece attracted criticism from Nell Myers, Scargill's assistant, who noted 'an anxiety, an uncertainty' about who Carter's criticism was directed at.[1017] Interestingly, however, the criticism did not come personally from Scargill (although it is highly probable that Myers was his messenger) and it came in the form of a letter; did this suggest that Carter's comments were so inconsequential for the NUM that they did not warrant address in the media? [1018]

The most controversial critique, however, came from Carter and his pamphlet, which was written just after the end of the strike. Significantly the pamphlet was a microcosm for the 'old' and 'new' industrial politics of the CP, and as such it was Ramelson and Carter who were

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[1013] Carter, *Striking the right note,* 30.
[1014] This is suggested by Baker suspected that this was because 'anyone who tended to be critical, however well intentioned, could have been regarded as a traitor.' See Letter from Alan Baker to Pete Carter, 18 April 1985.
[1015] 'Miners' strike reaches crucial stage', *Morning Star,* 10 April 1984.
[1016] 'The miners' strike', *Marxism Today,* April 1985, pp 21-27, 23.
[1017] Letter from Nell Myers to Pete Carter, 13 March 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04.
[1018] It is interesting to compare the reactions to 'criticism'. Carter, when he received Staniforth's letter, panicked about the 'contents being leaked', as we have seen. Scargill (via Myers), addressed the criticism in a letter, but there is no sense of panic. This may indicate and evidence the dynamics of the NUM/Eurocommunist relationship by this point.

the main adversaries, with Allen and Watters supporting Ramleson. Carter's pamphlet was a culmination of the so far somewhat muted critique from the CP modernisers and it reflected a confident assertion of the modernisers' position, arguably for the first time. For Carter 'the nature, style and politics of the strike revealed a failure within the labour movement to understand the challenge of Thatcherism. There was a lack of political clarity on how to develop the struggle'.[1019] Carter also rejected the view that the strike was anything other than a victory, by arguing that the lack of a negotiated settlement reflected 'the compulsion of a drift back to work' which was 'a major set-back for the miners and working class as a whole'. [1020] Carter added that 'the total victory argument is a cover up for politics and strategy that did not succeed, nor could they have done'. [1021] Most notably, Carter said that the lack of ballot 'was a mistake both politically and tactically. Not only did it weaken and divide the membership of the NUM, but it allowed the focus of attention to be moved from the strike's aim of pit closures, to the question of democracy, and on the Government was not slow to exploit'.[1022]

Ramelson's response was to dismiss the pamphlet as 'defeatist, demoralising, mesmerised by Thatcher's invincibility', arguing that 'the publication of this pamphlet in anything like its present form would be a disaster with the party's relations not only with the miners' left leadership, but with the broad left in general, and create even sharper divisions within the party'. [1023] Ramelson added that 'in the light of such devastating criticism of the miners' leadership and as the party had some influence there, there is a total absence of self-crit *(sic)* The miners' leadership will be able to say with some justification that the party's leading rep *(sic)* on their leadership was a party to every decision now so sharply criticised'.[1024] Allen made the same point, suggesting that 'the attitudes of the critics is grounded in the policies which now acutely divide the CP'. [1025] Allen worried that 'the impatient and ill-thought out criticisms from its leadership can destroy the long and sensitive relationship with the NUM'. [1026] Perhaps this sentence tells us much about the traditionalists' reluctance to

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[1019] Carter, Pete, 'Coal pamphlet- first draft', CP/CENT/RAM/11/04, 21. This view was also presented by Beatrix Campbell, and her collection of interviews: the growth of the left had always been economistic, and therefore there was no transition to political struggle. See Campbell, Beatrix, *Wigan Pier Revisited,* (Viragro Press ltd, 1984), 149, for one example.
[1020] Carter, Coal pamphlet *op.cit.,* 29.
[1021] Carter, Coal pamphlet *op.cit.,* 30.
[1022] Carter, Coal pamphlet *op.cit.,*, 15. Carter also criticised the lack of support from other unions and the lack of public support
[1023] Letter from Bert Ramelson to PC, 30 April 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04
[1024] Ibid.
[1025] Allen, V, 'Ill thought-out criticisms of the NUM leadership', *Morning Star,* 16 May 1985. Allen also suggested that decisions were Bolton's as much as Scargill's.
[1026] Ibid.

change. Did this sentence reflect the sense that the industrial strategy was working perfectly, and so it was best not to alter it? Or, deep down, did even these traditionalists realise that their intervention into the NUM was too precarious to withstand any change?[1027]

Carter's pamphlet was leaked to the *Daily Mail* in May 1985. The headline, 'top communist hits at Scargill', added that 'most of the Eurocommunists who dominate the party's leadership agree with his analyses. [1028] The *Daily Mail* argued that 'it provides embarrassing evidence of the wide rift between the Eurocommunists and the old guard party members.'[1029] The CP disassociated itself from the contents of the article, claiming that they had only asked Carter to 'prepare a document analysing the miners' strike and assessing its outcomes'.[1030] But it took until the middle of June 1985 for Scargill to publicly respond and in doing so he criticised of the CP's lack of leadership, claiming that the only one time he met any of the leadership was to ask why 'the industrial organiser of the CP was conducting a campaign of vilification against Scargill and Heathfield'.[1031] Scargill noted that 'the irony was that the chairman of the party, who was part and parcel of that contribution, was also part and parcel of every single decision taken by the NUM'.[1032] Scargill claimed that McGahey would have, if he had have been asked, noted that the weakness of the miners' strike was that 'the CP was not strong enough in industry, was not organised in the branches'. [1033] By the winter of 1984 Bill Keys of the printers' union overheard McGahey telling Scargill that he 'will chain Arthur's mouth up for three years when this is all over'. [1034] But McGahey did not challenge Scargill's claims publicly; why would he? Union position had always been more important than party loyalty for communists in the NUM. Instead he maintained a notable and dignified silence. When Neil Kinnock launched a criticism of Scargill's tactics at the Labour Party's 1985 annual conference, McGahey did not publicly comment to defend him. But he did, assuming that we

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[1027] Interestingly, Watters criticised the CP as it failed to 'regulate, to monitor, developments.' [1027] Recall the period in the early 1950s, whereby Watters found out about the Armthorpe strike third-hand; the CP had always done what Watters now criticised them for. See Watters, F, 'Weakness in role played by CP leadership', *Morning Star,* 17 May 1985

[1028] 'Top communist hits at Scargill', *Daily Mail,* 3 May 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04.

[1029] Ibid.

[1030] 'Draft press statement', 8 May 1985, CP/CENT/RAM/11/04.

[1031] 'CP organiser vilified us', *Morning Star,* 11 June 1985.

[1032] Ibid.

[1033] Ibid.

[1034] Beckett, *British CP, op.cit.,* 206.

can trust *Marxism Today,* go 'out of his way' at the 1986 Scottish Labour Party conference to declare that he had no dispute with Kinnock. [1035]

But ultimately were these big questions of political strategy even consequential for the miners who the CP had been attempting to reach through its industrial strategy? Probably not; for most miners the immediate issue of the strike was the retaining of their jobs, either through striking or through continuing to work. Between 1975 and 1987 the membership of the NUM declined rapidly, from 261,871 members to 91,000 members; this was the real issue. [1036]The same pattern, and problem for a party looking to use industrial interventions to help it politically, remained: so long as communists in the union fulfilled their union obligations, then the positioning of these men within their political party was largely academic to anybody outside the intense world of the CP itself.

7.1.0 Challenges from the Left

Another issue developing in the background to the CP's increasingly public civil war was the growth of 'other' left wing parties. Although 1956 had demonstrated that Marxism in Britain could not be monopolised by the CP, the ramifications of the 'New Left' had largely been confined to intellectual critiques rather than, as during this period, alternative political parties who threatened to infringe on the CP's milieu. There were various examples: the Institute of Workers' Control; Militant Tendency; the Workers' Revolutionary Party; the International Marxist Group; and Tony Cliff's International Socialists (or Socialist Workers' Party from 1977). [1037] The SWP, particularly, appeared to be growing whilst the CP declined; presumably hovering up at least some dissatisfied CP dissidents. [1038]The SWP's membership increased from 880 members in 1970 to 4000 in 1979. [1039] In the same period, the CP membership lost 8000 members. [1040] The SWP sought to capitalise where the CP was weak and looked to build

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[1035] MacIntyre, Donald, 'Close up on Mick McGahey', *Marxism Today,* September 1986.

[1036] Eaton, Jack, and Gill, Colin, *The British Trade Union Directory,* (Langman, 1990). A proportion of this decline was also due to Nottinghamshire, and its membership being expelled from the NUM.

[1037] Militant Tendency's 'workerism' rendered it inherently suspicious of intellectuals in working class movements. See Callaghan, J, 'The Politics of the Militant Tendency', *Marxism Today,* August 1982, 19. For a concise explanation of each group, see McIlroy, J, 'Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned: Trotskyists and Trade Unions', in *High Tide, op.cit.,* 264.

[1038] More details can be found in *Unity is Strength* IS/SWP pamphlet, August 1977, MRC or 'Why we need a SWP', *Socialist Worker,* 509, 8 January 1977. Accessed online 17 August 2013: http://www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1977/01/swp.htm

[1039] McIlroy, 'Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned: Trotskyists and Trade Unions', in *High Tide,* Carter, Coal pamphlet *op.cit.,* 285.

[1040] Thompson, *Cause, op.cit.,*218.

an alternative at the base of trade unions, and marginalise the significance of Labour. [1041] Thus Cliff made some legitimate observations about the limitations of the CP's industrial politics; 'even the most 'left' of trade union officials is trapped by his environment', Cliff noted, before using the example of the NUM where officials, including CP members, received generous wage increases after the 1972 strike. [1042] The problem with the CP, claimed Cliff, was that it made 'requests' to trade union officials rather than 'put forward policies for action'. [1043] Does the growth of these other parties impeded directly on the CP's work in the NUM? Probably not; but their existence adds more evidence to the fact that, rather than putting the CP in a political position where it could monopolise the far-left and exert pressure on the Labour Party, as it had hoped its industrial strategy might do, it was not in a position where it could defend itself against new groups.

7.1.1 Conclusions

The problems within the CP were well in place before the miners' strike began. As Harker and Callaghan have argued, the decline of the CP in the 1980s has to be understood in the context of its longer term problems. [1044] Its shrinking membership, the reputation of communist regimes as violent and economically inefficient, and the party's inability to compete against newer left wing rivals, who were removed from this association, all added to the party's decline. [1045] All these factors were compounded by the problems in the industrial milieu; whilst once the CP had been able to shield its more fundamental shortcomings behind the façade of industrial ubiquity, the events of the miners' strike simply illuminated the terminal nature of the party's problems. In a bitter twist of irony it was ultimately the party's industrial strategy, which it had spent forty years believing would advance its political standing, which proved to be the main catalyst for its implosion.

The strikes of the early 1970s had failed to generate any tangible gain for the CP: materially, its branches and overall membership numbers had continued to decline. The argument of those who saw no need to revise the party's industrial strategy could always be

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[1041] McIlroy, 'Always Outnumbered', *op.cit.,* 261.
[1042] See Cliff, T, *The Crisis,* (London: Pluto), 1975, 120. This was a somewhat similar, if less defamatory, argument that would later be made by Tony Lane, an academic at Liverpool University, in *Marxism Today.* Lane, and the journal's decision to publish his comments, caused further divisions within the CP, not least because the article insinuated that trade union officials benefitted materially from office. See Tony Lane, 'The Union Caught on the Ebb Tide', *Marxism Today,* September 1982.
[1043] *Unity is Strength,* IS/SWP pamphlet, August 1977, MRC.
[1044] Callaghan, and Harker, *British Communism, op.cit.,* 254.
[1045] Ibid.

sustained until such an explosion of militancy disproved the theory. When this had happened, the industrial politics that the party had spent so long nurturing was the very thing that divided it. Those seeking to modernise the party had realised the fallacy of the party's position in the 1970s; Carter noted that, although inspiring, the strikes of the 1970s had failed to 'make deep and lasting changes in mass political consciousness'. [1046] The lack of political consciousness amongst miners that had led to them falling into the strategy of mass picketing and their inability to grasp that 'we were in a very new type of situation' helped the union, and communists in it, to fall into the disaster that was 1984. [1047]

The strike was a no-win situation for the CP and its industrial strategy. On one hand the 'traditional' group in the CP supported what was primarily a syndicalist strategy. Although those who had nurtured Scargill and who had helped the NUM move in the direction that it was now in may have publicly supported the strike, it was far removed from what the party had intended for its industrial strategy. But to rescind from the strike would be an admission that the communist project had been flawed, not least because of the Yorkshire strategy and its involvement in developing 'Scargillism'. With the structure of the party crumbling, the industrial strategy was all that some in the party could cling to. This compounded the sense of division and conflict. Despite efforts to propagate the miniscule numbers of new recruits as a result of the strike, this was inconsequential in the overall picture of decline that characterised the party by this time.

What could the party offer for miners? Wage militancy, if it even had ever existed in the way that the party had envisaged, was now impotent in this radically different context. It was becoming increasingly clear that a strike was not the solution to mass, state-orchestrated unemployment. It was also obvious that pay parity had been obliterated by 1977 and that militancy around unemployment was much harder to achieve. It was also becoming clear that the end result of the CP's intervention into the NUM, by moving it to the left, was to split the union. The strike also demonstrated the sad irony of the CP's industrial strategy; it had spent the best part of forty years believing that it was nurturing a strategy that would assist its political growth, when it was in fact a catalyst for its terminal divisions.

[1046] Carter, P, 'The Miners' Strike', *Communist Focus,* 19 June 1984, 261.
[1047] 'The Miners' Strike; a balance sheet', *Marxism Today,* April 1985, 24.

On the other hand the situation was no better for the 'modernisers'. Whilst their broad approach and practical support was a much better response to the *zeitgeist* of Thatcherism, it too had problems. Primarily it in some ways reduced the CP to a pressure group; there was nothing wrong with this, but it was in no way representative of what the party had imagined that its presence in industry should achieve. Those within the CP who took this approach were also in an impossible position in relation to the NUM; calling for a ballot, for example, potentially rendered the party open to suggestions that it was unsupportive of the miners. By the time that the 'modernisers' confidently began to assert their position, largely through *Marxism Today*, it was too late, both for the CP and the NUM.

How did all this impact on communists in the union? In some ways, not to a great extent; party members in the union leadership continued to supersede their jobs over their politics. The best example of this is McGahey who joined the Democratic Left in 1991 and then briefly the Communist Party of Scotland in 1994. [1048] The only evidence that I have found of him criticising the NUM's position, and not particularly confidently, was in his support for Bolton's claims. He privately attempted to reason with Scargill but this was only revealed later. Although it conflicted with his political loyalties he remained in step with the union leadership, criticising the scourge of 'ballotitis'. [1049] This demonstrates the over-arching continual issue with communists in the union in relation to the party's strategy; but it also shows the issue with trying to change the direction of the strategy. The CP had helped to develop the 1984 strategy, but even when it had members at the top of the union, there was no mechanism in place to change their position.

The division within the CP during the strike goes full circle back to the observations made so far. When boiled down the CP in the union remained, for most of the rank and file,

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[1048] McIlory, John and Campbell, Alan, 'Mick McGahey', in *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol XII,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp242- 251, 250, edited by Gildart, Keith and Howell, David.
[1049] *Marxism Today* keenly suggested from McGahey's actions at the 1986 Labour Party Conference that McGahey was moving away from his loyalty to Scargill, by his suggestion that the NUM should use the media more, and not put barriers in the way of Nottinghamshire's realignment with the NUM. Interviewed himself one year later, however, McGahey predicted that Scargill would remain President of the union for many years. McIlroy and Campbell have taken the view that although there was a difference around tactic, McGahey sought the showdown with Thatcher before the 1984 strike that Scargill wanted, and the there was a general shared view between the two men; they note the lack of real evidence for the argument that McGahey sought to constrain Scargill in the strike. Perhaps a broader consideration of all these perspectives is most accurate, reflecting McGahey's pragmatism, and the loyalty to his union, which superseded his political affiliation, to which he remained committed. See McIntyre, Donald, 'Close Up on Mick McGahey', *Marxism Today,* September 1986, and MacIntyre, Donald, 'Flexibility at the Coalface: interview with Mick McGahey', *Marxism Today,* July 1987 and McIlroy and Campbell, *McGahey,* op cit.

largely inconsequential as a political unit. Wage militancy from communists in the union, if that is what the party leadership thought was being applied, was received by the membership as trade unionists fighting for higher wages. This was probably the root cause of most incidences of communist-led 'wage militancy'. Anybody in the union could (and did) push for better wages; that is why communists and even those from the Labour-centre could support each other in wage demands. The CP may have mistook this, perhaps because it suited their needs to do so, as evidence that wage militancy worked; hence they kept advocating it, even in the particular context of mining and its rapid contraction. The CP's ability to travel in-step with non-communists in the union was also what allowed the CP to remain a credible presence in the union during the Cold War. Little had changed in this pattern by the time of the strike. So long as communists in the union fulfilled their union obligations, then the positioning of these men within their political party was largely academic to anybody outside the (increasingly) intense world of the CP itself.

This chapter has analysed the positions of the CP within the NUM, particularly during the 1984 miners' strike. Whilst the Eurocommunist position has previously been studied by Brotherstone and Parini, and more recently by Ackers, this chapter adds a contribution to knowledge because it considers these positions within the observations made so far. It makes a methodological contribution also, in the use of the Staniforth letter, which has not previously been analysed. Rather than exploring the strike itself, where little can be added, this chapter has used the events of 1984 and 1985 to punctuate and substantiate the general analysis of the CP in the NUM at this time, building on observations already made.

VIII Flying the Red Flag?

8.0 Endgame

For a party that liked to document everything, much material relating to its industrial interventions remains missing, if it ever existed in the first place. Writing this history of silence, drawing sound inferences and deductions from what is not there, is a challenge. The limitation of the thesis is that it has been compelled to understand what is not written. Whilst the sources are plentiful, the nuances of the relationship between the CP and members industry are not. Many of the conversations are likely to have been conducted informally, face-to-face or over the telephone; in short, undocumented and therefore inaccessible. Attempts to fill in this void through interviews has been equally problematic: as correspondence with other historians has proven, the difficulty with finding respondents is common, not least because old age and death has now curtailed the number of potential participants. In some ways, though, writing the history of what we do not know is itself significant as the silence and lack of documentation speaks volumes. Early on in its existence, the CP had realised that instructing its militants would not work, not least because they were more knowledgeable about the union they were working in than the CP itself was. [1050] This, of course, was perfectly rational: but, in terms of using an industrial strategy for the purpose of developing a marginal political party (which was the entire point of the CP's endeavours), this early structure left the CP vulnerable to extracting little benefit from their efforts, even in unions like the NUM where the party was increasingly perceived to be ubiquitous.

But, even with the assumption that much dialogue was undocumented, does this really explain the shortcomings of the CP's industrial strategy, which this thesis has found? For the first three decades of the strategy, in the post-war period, there was little evaluation of the strategy. The strikes of the early 1970s failed to generate any tangible gain for the CP. The argument of those who saw no need to revise the party's industrial strategy could always be sustained until such an explosion of militancy disproved the theory. But despite the arguments for change, by the 1980s the picture for the CP was no better. Throughout all of these years the Labour Party had been moving to the left, the most obvious sign being programmatic change (through the AES), and the sort of resolutions that affiliated unions supported. Reducing the industrial strategy back to its most over-arching objective, its need to build a forum through

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[1050] For an example of the conflict, see Fishman, N, 'Horner and Hornerism', in McIlroy, John, Morgan, Kevin, and Campbell, Alan, *Party People, Communist Lives: explorations in biography,* (Lawrence and Wishart, London), 2001, pp 122-142.

which the CP could eventually engage with Labour in a significant capacity, was still not coming true. If there was no evidence of CP growth or benefit amongst the miners who were, for all the reasons we identified in chapter one, the party's best bet, and who epitomised militant trade unionism throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, then a somewhat tentative and primitive deduction must be that, in other unions, the CP's strategy was an overall failure. Future work, therefore, may use the findings of this thesis as a hypothesis for further analysis in other unions.

8.1 Wage militancy in the NUM

The issue of wage militancy is a complex one. On the surface, the party's industrial strategy appeared remarkably simple: capture the top of the union and simultaneously politicise the bottom, through the vehicle of wages. The fight for higher wages would always ensure that the people moving them would be popular; but the primary issue for most miners was the money that they took home and their support for higher wages did not reflect any profound evidence of politicisation. [1051] It is in some ways difficult to define how wage militancy operated in a practical context. The sorts of wage resolutions that communists moved at the NUM annual conference (often composited) were often supported by 'moderates': this suggests that these were legitimate wage increases that were being pursued. The original argument made here is that in relation to wage militancy, there was a difference between the CP's theory and the way that communists applied it in the union. This, undoubtedly, reiterates the structural weakness of the party and communist trade unionist relationship. Although some of the rhetoric that went with wage claims was militant, even Gormley and the more moderate members of the union executive sometimes spoke in similar terms, as this work has demonstrated.

But even if we did class the actions of communists inside the union as fitting into what might example the CP's theory of wage militancy, the ultimate question still remains; so what? Because, as far as the party viewed it, the ultimate point of wage militancy was to further an industrial strategy that would materially help the CP. And, as has been discussed, this did not happen. If the NUM was the model union of communist industrial interventions, in the sense that wage militancy and the capturing of union positions worked, then two main consequences happened, neither of them good. The first was that the party did not tangibly benefit. It only benefitted superficially in the sense that it could present itself as ubiquitous during a brief period of militant triumph, but this did not help it as a political unit. Secondly, within the NUM,

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[1051] Interview with Mick McGahey, AUD 137 SWML U/D.

the growth of the left eventually served to help destroy the union. The party's strategy, believed to be have the best chance of success in the NUM, effectively destroyed its own laboratory.

The complexities of wage militancy are compounded by the problems of the NUM and the fact that from the late 1950s it was an industry afflicted by and in fear of unemployment. But the CP did not appear to discuss or instruct party members in industry to an alternative strategy, or even to acknowledge that a contracting industry was a less than opportune time to press for pay increases. The party knew this, through Hughes's pamphlet, for example. But the CP did not address these issues: if it had have done, they may have been able to change the ultimate outcome of the industrial strategy. Mike Prior recognised this in 1975 and the following lengthy quote captures the argument perfectly:

The basis of a revolutionary demand is to choose those demands which are simultaneously within the scope of capitalism to grant and which will raise most clearly the issues of exploitation within capitalism and the necessity of socialism. The problem of the present left strategy, to agitate for ever higher wages and the smashing of incomes policies, is precisely that it fails to meet these requirements, and that the failure is determined not by any lack of militancy or consciousness in the working class, but because the objective base of capitalism has changed to the extent that the strategy is not revolutionary but utopian. [1052]

But there was no sense that communists in the NUM, who shared this position politically, tried to alter the course of Scargill-led syndicalist in the union until the middle of 1984.

8.2 Communist identities

In 1973 the Labour Party dropped its ban on communists, something that the CP had consistently campaigned for, especially in the party's earliest years. But, as far as I can see, there was no mass celebration of this in 1973; in fact, it was something of a non-event. The obvious question is, why? There are various possibilities and there is scope to investigate this in future work. The Labour Party's 1973 decision may reflect the fact that the CP was no longer perceived to be a threat. As the television critics would demonstrate a few years later when the party publicised itself through its participation in Granada's *Decision* documentary, the CP was so far removed from its once-held image of Soviet tyrant that it was mocked. [1053] The party's new congenial image was not necessarily a good thing, as at least when it had been perceived as nefarious it had an identity. Now it had lost the very thing that made it unique and there was a plethora of new groups on the left. Acceptability, then, brought a lack of identity: the CP,

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[1052] Prior, Mike, 'Inflation and Marxist Theory', *Marxist Today,* April 1975. Similar arguments were made by James Harvey in *Marxism Today* in 1977: see 'Theories of Inflation'.

[1053] See Buckley, S.B. *Division British Communism, op.cit.*, for more details.

rather than celebrating the achievement of a historical goal, should have seen 1973 as evidence that it was about to be further absorbed into the fringes of British political life. As Prior noted in 1978, although the CP may have seen closer ties with the Labour Party as one step on the path to the eventual Labour/CP relationship, in fact that CP's 'influence, membership, and policy' were in decline. [1054] Moreover there was a greater structural problem that Prior identified. The Labour Party had sustained working class support and although the CP was 'accepted up to a point in the trade union movement', it remained external to the working class. This, if we recall chapter one, was exactly the same problem that had been identified around the time of the CP's inception.

8.3 Scargillism

A further question that has arisen during this research, which could be a potential ground for future work, is around the question of what Scargillism was. Nicholas Haggers's 1985 book scare-mongered that Scargillism was synonymous with the CP. I do not find this to be the case. Scargillism, even if not by intent or awareness, was more aligned with syndicalism. The extent to which this was the conscious pursuit of a strategy is dubious. When Scargill was explicitly asked in an interview if he advocated syndicalism, he appeared to attempt to avoid the question, but he did suggest that the 'NUM could shape the direction of British politics'. [1055] The methodology of Scargill, outside of seeking to use politics to improve the NUM's position, had a limited political dimension. [1056] As he wrote in 1980, the only thing that could have saved the mining industry when it started to contract was political action, through industrial action. [1057] Collective bargaining, rather than the boardroom, was the key to getting the union's demands met, believed Scargill. [1058]

Scargill's ambiguous resignation from the YCL further demonstrates the sense of him as a 'free agent'; he realised that party support was not essential to progress in the NUM. In a sense this was not different to communists in the union, who had not needed the party's assistance to secure their positions. What bound them to the party, unlike Scargill, was their personal conviction in the party's politics. What also distinguished Scargill, however, was just how popular he was. He was able to secure 70.3 percent of the vote in the presidential election

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[1054] Prior, M, 'Labour/Communist relations', *Marxism Today*, February 1978.

[1055] Composite Teaching Themes Tape 8 Audio 155, SWML.

[1056] Although by 1987 it had moved to a critique of the CP's apparent abandonment of class politics, which Scargill felt had been replaced by a 'new realism' and 'Mondism'. See Scargill, A, *New Realism: the politics of fear,* 1987.

[1057] Scargill, A, and Khan, P, *Industrial Democracy: the myth of workers' control,* 1980.

[1058] Scargill and Khan, *Industrial Democracy, op.cit..*

for the NUM and he was also able to get communists to support him, most publicly through *Miners in the Eighties.* His popularity was not least because of the size of the Yorkshire area, which secured him a strong number of votes in the presidential election from the off. [1059] His character was undoubtedly also significant. Existing accounts indicate Scargill's personality, his dominant persona being a mask for his innate shyness. [1060] But it was this popularity that allowed the left to win the presidency of the union. McGahey, the left's first option, had been curtailed through Gormley's strategic planning, designed to freeze out the left from the union's top job. But as much as the left were willing to unite around Scargill, in order to build the left, ultimately Scargill's actions in 1984 led to even the CP trying and failing to moderate his conduct. [1061] The only person who can fully answer this question is Scargill himself and, tracking back to the history of silence, he was unwilling to be interviewed as part of this research.

8.4 Communists in the NUM: future research

Both the CP and NUM were significant actors in British politics, and as such have remained important factors in British political history. Both bring with them methodological issues for historians. One of the earliest decisions that I needed to make was whether to analyse the NUM as a national organisation or if to look at regional dimensions. Taylor argues that scholars of mining often look for commonality unnecessarily when in fact there should be an acceptance of the diversity of the NUM.[1062] I chose the first option as I feel that the breadth of studying the NUM nationally, rather than the depth of doing a more narrow case-study approach, was the best choice because it allowed a broader analysis of the CP's efforts in the NUM. Perhaps this could be considered a limitation of this work; other students working on the NUM took a different approach and chose to compare areas of the union. [1063] Future work could use the findings here to compare communist activities in different regions of the miners' union: Nottinghamshire, with Les Ellis and Joe Whelan as particular examples, is one area that could be developed. The infamous charge levelled at Nottinghamshire in 1984 was that the area was comprised of 'scabs', that it was inhibited by 'Spencerism'. [1064]This popular narrative ignores

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[1059] My interview with Francis, 2014.

[1060] Allen, for example, says this.

[1061] See Andrew, Christopher, *The Authorised History of MI5,* (London: Penguin, 2005).

[1062] Taylor, *So Many Cases*, *op.cit..* 25.

[1063] Unpublished PhD thesis by Adrian Park, 'A comparative study of community and militancy in two coalmining settlements in Britain,' University of Kent at Canterbury and University of Rheims, 1999, 2.

[1064] David Amos argues that the reticence of the Nottingham area was not the result of the genesis of 1926, but a defence of the right of the union to preserve its federal nature, to protect the 1944 Rule Book; this adherence and respect for local mandates, and a sense that the strikes of 1969 and 1970 had been unconstitutional. Unpublished

the history of that area: Nottinghamshire participated in earlier strikes, and through NPLA the area accepted lower pay in the interests of the union. Moreover the election of Ellis and then Whelan adds another dimension to this traditional 'scab' narrative.

In the course of this research, further gaps have been identified. As previously discussed, there is the possibility of using the findings here as a hypothesis for the CP's work in other industries, and also comparing different areas of the NUM. Currently I am using some of the material from this thesis, the surveillance files of Horner during the Cold War, to explore how 'private' records of individuals drawn from these files creates historical characters, once they are released for public consumption. This, I hope, will become a publication and it is drawn from a conference participation in September 2014. There also exists the opportunity to analyse the interesting figure of Lawrence Daly. Despite there being an abundance of archival material about him, little exists about him, although he is a significant figure in British mining and labour history.

8.5 Communist politics

In 1979 Collins (who would leave the CP in 1983) posed a pertinent question in *Comment,* asking 'why do people elect communists at work, but nowhere else'?[1065] Collins mused over various possibilities, such as the fact that the party did not take full advantage of the potential to expand political theory, for example not standing candidates in the 1979 general election. But this was not a new question: even in 1950, when the CP lost both of its elected MPs, the problem existed. The potential answer to Collins's question is not definitive but the evidence suggests that it is probably because of various factors. In the particular context of Britain and not Russia the CP, originally perceived to be subversive, was forced to compete with a Labour Party who already had a link with the working class. Voting for a communist trade unionist was not an endorsement for the party and communists were often good trade unionists who happened to be communists. Whilst these men were never secretive about their politics, there was never reason to boast of them either. Their communism was an article of faith, it perhaps guided them in their union duties, but their party never drove their union work.

The CP could never have structured the situation differently, though. If it had have been dictatorial to its union members in industry, and pushed them to choose their party or their

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PhD thesis by David Amos, 'The Nottinghamshire Miners, the UDM and the 1984-1985 miners' strike: scabs or scapegoats', University of Nottingham, 2011. The thesis also provides a detailed regional study of this area.
[1065] Collins, Jack, 'Strengths and Limits of Miners' Muscle', *Comment,* 23 June 1979.

union position, the CP knew which one would have won. The reason why people elected communists in the workplace but did not support the party was because they were not perceived as synonymous; we saw evidence of that position in chapter four. The difficulties that the CP faced was symptomatic of many other small, fringe parties in British politics, frozen out by the dominant two-party cartel. Perhaps the CP's endeavours would have been better invested in pursuing some sort of electoral reform, rather than trying to influence a Labour Party that not only monopolised the working class, but was fifty percent of the very cartel that froze the CP out.

8.6 Research questions and originality

To conduct the first extended study that singularly focuses on the CP in the miners' union in the post-war period. Methodologically, the thesis is original because it uses materials drawn from the CP's own archive and the minutes of NUM meetings, combining them throughout the period 1945 to 1985, to explore the CP's industrial strategy in the miners' union. From this, it seeks to draw a broader hypothesis that could, in the future, be applied to other case studies: if the NUM was theoretically meant to be the CP's best example of its industrial interventions, then what can our observations here suggest about the party's industrial politics more generally?

This thesis does not purport to have any detailed knowledge of the party's interventions in other industries; but, if coalmining had a historic relationship with the CP and the strategy still failed, then the prospect for other industries appears less encouraging. It does not seem logical that the dynamics between the party and other unions was any different, indeed better or stronger. But an understanding of what was going on in these unions would be useful for future work. Any future work would have the advantage that the materials for the CP would be familiar to me. Whilst the constraints of a thesis dictated that there needed to be a case-study, of which the NUM was chosen for the reasons outlined in chapter one, it is easy to forget the broader context that the CP was trying to implement this strategy across various unions. Does the fact that the CP, a small and shrinking party, was attempting to run this strategy across various unions explain or even excuse the shortcomings of the industrial strategy that this thesis has identified? The fact that the party had kept itself so distant from the intricacies of each industry, even employing organisers like Watters where it was deemed necessary, suggests not. Rather than being hopelessly stretched cross various unions, which might suggest that the problems

with the strategy were logistical, the latitude that had been established between the party and communists in the union, explained in chapter one, was the big problem.

<u>To explore and analyse the dynamics and structure of the relationship between the party centre, party organisers, and party members across all levels of the union. It is well-documented in the existing literature that the link between the CP and trade unionists was weak, but how was the industrial strategy in the NUM conducted, if this was the case? Whilst the observations about the latitude of the relationship have been made generally, they have not been analysed in detail specifically in the miners' union.</u>

As this thesis has argued, this question can be loosely answered as one of latitude and autonomy, with local initiative generally having primacy over central party direction; this somewhat naïve approach allowed the ETU debacle to occur in 1961. [1066] But the ETU did not cause the party to challenge this dynamic in the NUM. There was an enduring insularity between party members in industry and those who were only in the party, with the first being focused on their workplace. [1067] This observation is not original but how it impacted in the NUM, specifically, is. The particular context of the miners' union, explained in chapter one, made the CP's strategy more exposed to problems.

Across the three national miners' strikes that this thesis covers, there is a lack of political direction from the party evident across all examples. Although the CP had established itself on the basis that it would not instruct union officials (after all, they were the experts in each industry), this immediately set the party up with problems. If, as it theorised, its industrial strategy would succeed by politicising the rank and file of the unions and getting its members elected to union leadership positions, then if the party could not instruct these officials, what was it doing? It appears that it may have felt that simply having committed communists in the union would be sufficient; and, as the number of them on the NUM executive grew, so too did the party's belief in the façade that its strategy was working as it had believed.

But the CP also sometimes made poor choices, both consciously and unconsciously; for example, sending a non-miner to organise the Yorkshire area before Watters but also, perhaps more controversially and less consciously, allowing and even helping Scargill to lead communists in the NUM into a syndicalist strategy. Both of these examples, with varying

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[1066] Graham Stevenson, who I interviewed in May 2014, confirms this. There are clear methodological issues with relying on Stevenson but he is confirming what the bulk of the other evidence suggests, in this particular context.
[1067] Ibid.

degrees of severity and consequence, were made possible by the initial structure that the party constructed its strategy around. This problem was compounded by the fact that, as we saw in chapter one, the foundations of all this were based on an example that had worked in the particular context of Russia.

To analyse the concept of conflict, broader than the well-known CP divides, most addressed by Thompson and Andrews. By the nature of the fact that there is not yet an extended study on the CP within the NUM, the existing literature does not consider the contours of these intricate relationships. Did conflict occur between the three main groups listed above (namely, the party centre, party organisers, and party members across all levels of the union) and, if so, how? Moreover, how did the CP deal with instances of conflict?

In some ways this question is linked to the above, for an analysis of conflict invariably encourages an examination of the protagonists in conflict. There is clear evidence of this and it is not something that has been covered to a detailed extent in the existing literature. Aside from the most notable 'conflict' thesis, Fishman's, the skirmishes lower down the party hierarchy, and particularly between communists in different areas of the union, remain under-researched. This thesis has intended to fill this gap. The catalysts for these conflicts varied. In the Armthorpe strike of 1955, explored in chapter four, there is a clear issue arising from permitted autonomy, not least because the party's own organiser in that coalfield found out about the event second-hand. Interestingly in the Armthorpe example, although the event was punctuated by conflict between the left at the time, it was viewed as a victory and it became emblematic of a heroic class battle. But the Armthorpe example also demonstrates that, should communists in the NUM offend the miners' executive, they may risk punishment from what was, universally, valued as the primary loyalty; the union. [1068] Yet the CP seemed impotent to address these fundamental structural strategic issues, and so they were never rectified; by the 1980s, it is not illogical to assume that these issues were more entrenched. In the context of Thatcherism the picture was bleak and it was the wrong time for the party to be re-analysing a strategy that had been demonstratively flawed, arguably since its inception. The fact that members of the CP and NUM could get into conflict was in some ways consequential of the engrained federalism of the union; but also compounded, to a large extent, but the party's industrial structure.

[1068] Horner also found this out in 1948, of course.

To conduct a thorough exploration of the role of wage militancy within the NUM. Although this has been discussed in the existing literature, mostly by Callaghan, there is scope to focus particularly on wage militancy in NUM throughout this extended period, by using a combination of NUM annual conference minutes and the CP's archives. In this sense, there is scope to investigate if it is ever truly possible to measure and understand a complex concept such as wage militancy; was the concept of wage militancy understood and applied differently by the three groups that I mention above and, if so, how was it addressed and what was its implications for the CP's industrial strategy?

The general argument in the existing literature is that communists did better at the top of the union; their success was more quantifiable and obvious. It is much harder to measure the success of the CP's strategy at the bottom of the union. Its strategy at the bottom of the union was to politicise the rank and file, the main way being through wage militancy. The greatest problem with 'wage militancy' in the NUM was not that militant action around wages did not exist, as it clearly did; but that it was not being used in the way the CP hoped. As such, it did not have the fundamental consequence that the party willed it to have; for the CP, wage militancy was a tool through which to politicise. But for communists in the NUM, wage militancy was primarily a means to secure better pay and conditions, a belief that their politics instilled in them. It was not exclusive to the CP, nor was it exclusive even to the left, as numerous examples in this thesis have demonstrated. A fight for higher pay would always be popular. [1069]

Had wage militancy been applied as the party thought, then given the high presence of communists in the union there would have been some evidence of politicisation for the party. There was a strong political stroke to the militancy of the late 1960s and 1970s; but this was a spontaneous, worker-led reaction to an increasingly draconian set of government legislation, as opposed to a consequence of the industrial strategy of the CP. [1070] So too could strikes over jobs have political overtones, but this was something that the CP did not formally add into their industrial strategy, with wage militancy and the protection of free collective bargaining

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[1069] Rather ambiguously Graham Stevenson, when asked what did the CP believe that wage militancy would achieve, replied that 'workers fought to maintain their share of the wealth and communists helped them to achieve this' and added that 'any focus on wages declined from the control of Britain's markets and not some plan'. Was this a deliberate omission that wages were even intended to be utilised for a political end? Possibly, given Stevenson's position. But did it also, genuinely, mean that communism acted as an article of faith to push for better pay; this being the job of trade unionists. That point is also evidenced elsewhere in the thesis. My interview with Graham Stevenson, May 2014.

[1070] As Emlyn Williams noted, before 1972 'miners were in the gutter, they were ready to come out'. Interview with Emlyn Williams, AUD 33 and AUD 55, SWML, U/D.

remaining the CP's only written instruction for its 1981 'Needs of the Hour'. As Paynter pointed out, interviewed around the same period, 'men would stand against pit closures, not so pronounced on wages'. [1071]

Moreover even if we move the 'militancy' away from wages, communists in the union did not always act militantly. The Oxford English Dictionary defines militancy as 'favouring confrontational or violent methods in support of a political or social cause'. [1072] There are numerous examples of where communists in the union stepped away from confrontation, especially when it was in the interests of the union; this was apparent across the entire date period of this thesis. Communists in the NUM diligently and laboriously helped to move the union to the left, so that their members would benefit. Their politics instilled in them an often zealous passion that this was necessary. But this did not mean that they prioritised their political conviction over union vocation.

So, what could, or should, the party have done differently? That question, I feel, remains unanswerable, although there are suggestions. Perhaps the CP should have nurtured the link between the party and the union better; it should have developed the strategy as the context changed; it should have understood the issues with wage militancy earlier than some in the CP did are all legitimate suggestions. But these ideas are also in some ways utopian for, as George Rees pointed out, there is a 'very fine line between militancy and anarchy'; sensibly, the party had long since abandoned the revolutionary struggle. [1073] The failings of the CP's industrial strategy can be seen as a microcosm for the failure of the party generally, and the British far-left, whose fate was finalised by the Thatcher Government and its legacy. Certainly in today's (often transient) service economy the need for any type of industrial strategy is obsolete, at least insofar as the how the CP thought of it.

What can the findings of this thesis add to today's politics and why are they relevant? The problems that the CP faced demonstrate the enduring problem of the left in Britain. The Green Party today uses the electoral system and as such it has secured one MP to parliament; but on the right, UKIP have two. We are on the eve of a General Election, and how this may change is yet to be made apparent. Perhaps the problems that the CP faced demonstrate that the left today should focus on securing some sort of structural change to the system, perhaps through some sort of pursuit of proportional representation. The study of the past helps avoid

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[1071] Interview with Will Paynter, AUD/105 SWML, U/D.
[1072] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/militant
[1073] Interview with George Rees AUD 140 SWML U/D.

the mistakes of the future, which is in some ways the traditional defence of those who have to justify their passion for history. A post-mortem on the skeleton of British communism evidences one failed attempt to make a more equitable society. In light of all of this, it is understandable to see why the three old ladies that we met at the beginning of the thesis sat discussing the whimsical prospects for an opportunity long since passed.

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